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Special Issue:

Crossing Organizational Boundaries

Guest Editors: Kirsten Jæger, Anne Grethe Julius Pedersen

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Understanding organizational boundaries

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Abstract: This article investigates various conceptualizations of organizational boundaries and seeks to establish a point of departure for the Globe special issue: Crossing organizational boundaries. It reviews literature that has paid attention to organizational boundaries in their own right and presents and discusses various definitions and categorizations of these boundaries. Because of the special issue's concentration on the *crossing* of organizational boundaries, two concepts that have been particularly helpful for the understanding of cross-boundary interactions are discussed as well: the notion of *boundary spanning* implying the ability of maintaining and facilitating relations between distinct organizational entities and the concept of the *boundary object*, originally defined as a conceptual response to the challenge of understanding inter-organizational collaboration in practice. The notion of the boundary object has been a useful conceptual instrument for researchers studying the successful collaboration of actors with differing understandings of and interests in the subject of collaboration. In the article's final section, the different contributions to the special issue are presented.

Keywords: boundary concepts, boundary spanning, boundary objects, organizational boundaries

1. Background

Today, both individuals and organizations need to handle changing organizational boundaries. The ability to cross disciplinary, professional, and cultural boundaries and collaborate in interdisciplinary and inter-professional teams is in high demand. "The appropriate individual" (Alvesson & Willmott 2002) is flexible and adaptable, and first of all on the move, with an appetite for new challenges, new experiences, and whatever else might be beyond the boundary of the known routine. Mirroring this emphasis on getting beyond boundaries is the larger part of recent literature on organizational boundaries in management and organization studies: most contributions address processes that go 'beyond' and 'across' boundaries (e.g. Coun et al. 2019; Dee & Leisyte 2017; Dick et al. 2017).

Considerably fewer contributions have addressed organizational boundaries in their own right. Arguments for investigating boundaries in their own right include that boundaries take multiple forms, have a broad variety of functions, and are established, maintained, and dissolved in a myriad of different ways (Vakkayil 2012). As Hernes (2004) explains "boundaries are composite", implicating that multiple forms of boundaries coexist in the organization. Some boundaries are ephemeral, fluid, and invisible; some are tangible and reified in regulations, documents and structural arrangements. Given their complex nature and their complex interplay with organizational processes, boundaries must be studied as they are experienced and made sense of by members of organizations. In his call for complexity-embracing theorizing in organizational studies, Tsoukas (2017) reminds the reader of the axiom of "understanding backwards – living forward" characterizing the divide between the researcher's and the practitioner's stance. Advancing theory-building that allows for organizational complexity to be recognized and theoretically understood narrows this divide. "Understanding backwards and living forward" is indeed a meaningful approach to the study of organizational boundaries. Organizational boundaries are created, maintained, respected or contested, crossed or broken down by organizational members acting in a living forward mode. The resulting boundaries frame future practice and organizational members' understanding of the organization's past and present. Tsoukas' call for complexifying research urges us to observe individual actors' role

in organizational processes (both in organizational change and in maintenance of routines). For organizational boundaries, this implies studying how individuals communicatively perform boundaries, and how they individually and collectively are inscribed and involved in organizational boundary-making. Furthermore, boundaries are not peripheral but intrinsic to organizing (Hernes 2004; Vakkayil 2012). As argued by Barth (1969), the existence of boundaries is not to be understood as a trivial corollary of the essence of a group (or an organization), the boundary is what defines the group vis-à-vis other groups – and also vis-à-vis internal diversity: "The critical point of investigation […] becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (Barth 1969: 15).

The contested nature of boundaries has been investigated in previous studies (e.g. Lamont & Molnar 2002). In the study of concrete organizations or of inter or intra-organization collaboration, boundaries and their meaning to organizational actors can rarely be determined on beforehand but need to be subject to empirical investigation (Garsten & Nyqvist 2013). This special issue takes as its point of departure that one of the contexts in which the polymorphous character of organizational boundaries can be studied is in the context of communicative practice. Thus, this special issue takes an interest in the *communicative* activation of organizational boundaries. Such an approach enables the recognition of how diverse forms of organizational boundaries emerge, intersect, and overlap as organizational members address boundaries directly or indirectly in communication with each other or with outsiders (such as researchers).

The communicative activation of boundaries may serve the purpose of crossing or removing boundaries. But when it does, it still constructs specific boundaries as real and consequential. That organizational hierarches have become flatter, and the formal boundaries around positions and roles more blurred and fluid does not mean that boundaries disappear. One example illustrating this is Van Laer and Janssens' exploration of "subtle discrimination" in the workplace (Van Laer & Janssens 2011). While blatant discrimination erect visible boundaries (such as non-employment of ethnic minorities), subtle discrimination combines empowerment and disempowerment and seems to cross boundaries while at the same time keep the boundaries around majority privilege in place: "in a world in which the blunt force of open discrimination is often no longer accepted, subtle discrimination can be seen as a more sophisticated tool to maintain the powerful position of the majority and to *fix the barriers* preventing a new generation of skilled and educated minorities to escape their weak positions." (Van Laer & Janssens 2011: 1220). Formally, boundaries around ethnic majority privilege are perforated (e.g. through diversity policies); informally they are kept in place. It often takes the sensitive ear of the affected, such as minority employees, to detect and understand the subtle implications of this form of boundary communication. Concepts such as subtle discrimination illustrate the complex political and social nature of organizational boundaries and their intricate and ambiguous realization in communication. Thus, how boundaries emerge in communication needs to be studied in concrete contexts. This is the purpose of this special issue.

2. Conceptualizing organizational boundaries

Even advocates of the boundaryless organization realize that "Organizations have always had and will continue to have boundaries" (Ashkenas et al. 2008: 184). For some management scholars, this realization encourages questions relating to the link between boundaries and economic performance: which boundaries contribute to positive identification with the organization, to effective customer service, and to rational decision-making – and, on the other hand, which boundaries lead to a stifling of organizational processes and a misalignment with the fast-moving, globalized world outside the organization's boundaries? How many boundaries should an organization have (e.g. between layers of management), where should the boundaries be placed, and how permeable should they be?

For scholars more broadly interested in organizational processes, seeing organizations and boundaries as inseparable and mutually constituting entities inspires an interest in the link between

boundaries and the meaning that individuals and organizations ascribe to them. Arguably, an in-depth and nuanced understanding of relations between an organization and its members, of organizational changes, and of individual and organizational aspirations can be obtained by focusing on boundaries. How organizational members communicate boundaries reflects professional and organizational identification (including identity dilemmas and conflicts), but boundary communication also sets the scene for collaboration within and across boundaries. Are boundaries communicated as impermeable and rigid? As creating unnecessary hindrances for development and cooperation? Or as a group's hard-won victory in the struggle for status and recognition?

Understanding boundaries starts with the realization that the notion of organizational boundary has multiple meanings. Most scholars operating with the notion of organizational boundaries agree on a distinction between visible, formal boundaries on the one hand and invisible, imagined boundaries on the other. For example, Santos and Eisenhardt (2005) distinguish between *efficiency, power, competence,* and *identity* boundaries. Only the efficiency boundaries have a formal/legal existence and a physical/visible manifestation (e.g. in the form of physical buildings and legal documents). Large portions of organizational change happen at the intersection of these two types of boundaries and can be understood as a struggle for better alignment between the organization's formal legal boundaries and imaginations of "who we are" and "who we want to be". Likewise, organizational changes such as a flattening of hierarchies, centralization or decentralization, and even the introduction of the so-called boundary-less organization take place as a rearrangement of boundaries, not a removal of them. Consequently, scholars contributing to this special issue have followed the direction suggested by Barth (1969) and paid more attention to the organizational boundaries themselves than to the "stuff" that they enclose. Consequently, the focus of the following discussion is on literature that directly and explicitly has sought to contribute to a theoretical unfolding and underpinning of the notion of organizational boundary.

2.1 Categorizing and characterizing organizational boundaries

Lamont and Molnár (2002) and Lamont, Pendergrass and Pachucki (2015) review multiple contributors to the understanding of social boundaries, ranging from Durkheim and Weber to present-day scholars investigating the production of difference and inequality in today's globalized and multicultural societies. These authors take a broad approach to the study of boundaries and include social processes that lead to the production of boundaries, the boundaries themselves, and the resulting social identities and distinctions. Through this approach, several scholars become boundary thinkers. For example, Marx because he studied the relation between the working class and the capitalist class; Weber because he explained the mechanisms of status differentiation; Bourdieu because of his contribution to an understanding of the multiple systems leading to the production of differences in habitus and distribution of various forms of capital. Although these contributions and others are invaluable for an understanding of social and economic processes involving the production of boundaries, this broad view may, however, complicate a precise understanding of the boundary phenomenon itself. Concrete, perhaps naïve but potentially useful questions such as: what is the nature of the boundary, what does it look like, how is the boundary experienced, for example when "trespassing", and what precisely does it take to uphold the boundary? may remain unanswered. At the micro-level, such questions are highly salient to organizational members in their attempts to question or maintain boundaries. For example for women trying to get through the glass ceiling to the upper echelons of a male-dominated management, knowing the precise procedures, discourses, and formal and informal practices that constitute such an invisible boundary is highly useful as a point of departure for action. Thus, in the following, the focus will be on scholars whose primary interest is in organizational boundaries in their own right.

In his analysis of bureaucracy Weber (1922/2013) provides a clear answer to the question: what constitutes organizational boundaries? Boundaries in the bureaucratic organization consist of formal,

legal, written rules. Such rule-based boundaries circumscribe each office and the duties of each office-holder. Importantly, legal boundaries also establish the organization as an independent entity and separate its functioning and its economy from that of the private household. Obviously, rule-based boundaries still define organizations, although many scholars pay more attention to non-formalized boundaries, for example symbolic (Lamont et al. 2015), social (Lamont & Molnár 2002) and identity boundaries (Santos & Eisenhardt 2005). Santos and Eisenhardt (2005) also address legal boundaries but focus on the nature of these boundaries in terms of *efficiency.* From a business economic perspective, organizations seek to place the legal boundaries (reflecting ownership or non-ownership) efficiently. Thus, the exact location of organizational boundaries often reflects an organization's decisions on whether it is profitable and cost-efficient to hold certain resources within the organization or to rely on external actors for the completion of certain tasks (Vakkayil 2012).

Hernes (2004) categorizes legal boundaries as a subcategory of *physical boundaries*. Referring to boundary functions as *ordering* organizational life, as *defining* the organization as distinct from other organizations, and finally as *regulating* traffic across an organization's "internal and external spheres", Hernes argues that formal/legal rules "regulate the work of members", they "set the organization apart from other groups or organizations" and they may allow or "hinder the recruitment of outsiders" (Hernes 2004: 13). Whereas the definition of an organization as a legal entity would seem to draw the boundaries around an organization in an unambiguous way, today's organizational constellations often consist of highly complicated, distributed and heterogeneous arrangements that bear more resemblance to networks (in which some nodes are closely and others loosely connected) than to the well-ordered organizational hierarchies that Weber modelled in his theory of the bureaucratic organization. That in itself generates more tensions around and along boundaries, as organizational actors strategically activate certain boundaries and ignore others in the pursuit of specific organizational purposes (Giskeødegaard 2016). Such strategic activations of boundaries (and the acceptance of or resistance towards them) justify an increased scholarly interest in the explicit and implicit communication of organizational boundaries.

In addition to physical boundaries, Hernes (2004) addresses *social* and *mental* boundaries. Social boundaries exist around the social relations among (groups of) organizational members and potentially also non-members, for example as found in interorganizational relationships (Werr et al. 2009) or among professionals who may generate strong relationships and defend the boundaries in order to maintain the status of their profession through so called *boundary work* (Gieryn 1983; Lamont & Molnár 2002). Social boundaries bind actors together in mutual relationships. Social ties do not, however, guarantee smooth and harmonious relationships, because, as Werr et al. (2009) point out, there are also boundaries within the groups circumscribed by social boundaries. Organizational members' engagement in a given social relationship may be influenced by competing identities and loyalties to partly overlapping groups. Boundaries within social relations can also be felt as difficulties of understanding each other because of differing terminologies and interpretive frameworks. In other words, relationships may be strained by mental boundaries.

Social boundaries may also be perceived from a more strategic perspective. In addition to legal boundaries, Santos and Eisenhardt address *power boundaries* and *competence boundaries.* Power boundaries mark the limits of an organization's influence, for example in a market. "Reducing dependence and increasing power are seen as two sides of the same coin, each leading to greater control over external forces" (Santos & Eisenhardt 2005: 495). Organizations need to pursue the "appropriate sphere" of power implying that organizations may jeopardize control over external forces if they seek to expand the power boundary beyond the appropriate. *Competence boundaries* refer to the scope of the organization's capacity, a boundary type that is closely related to the competences of organizational members. Defining the competence boundary involves the organization's strategic reflections on which resources to hold within the organization and which to buy, for example in the form of external consultancy services. *Power boundaries* and *competence*

boundaries are based on the organization's strategic decisions and are as such contestable by the organization's stakeholders, for example employees, customers, clients, and competitors.

Santos and Eisenhardt finally address *identity boundaries,* resembling what Hernes (2004) categorizes as *mental boundaries.* Hernes understands such boundaries as circumscribing and pinpointing distinct ideas and concepts, in others words ways in which groups see their ways of thinking and working as something that differentiates them from other groups and organizations. The notion of mental boundaries seems to be the most suitable concept for the analysis of potentials and barriers in inter-professional collaboration. Such boundaries may well exist within the smallest of organizational units, for example, in inter-professional teams.

Seeing mental boundaries as circumscribing shared repertoires (e.g. professional vocabularies) suggests that mental boundaries may in fact be boundaries around the type of collective that Wenger (1998) identifies as a "community of practice". In a similar vein, Carlile (2002) introduced the concept *knowledge boundaries* in order to address the problem that knowledge is "localized, embedded and invested in practice" (Carlile 2002: 442) turning knowledge exchange across organizational boundaries into a challenge. Carlile (2002) distinguished between three different approaches to the understanding of knowledge boundaries: syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic approaches. A syntactic approach understands knowledge boundaries as a difference in terms of the quantity of knowledge possessed. Thus, boundaries can be crossed through communication as understood in Shannon and Weaver's mathematical theory of communication. In semantic approaches, boundary crossing requires a consideration of the fact that boundaries around groups and communities also involve diverging interpretations. In pragmatic approaches, political consequences of knowledge boundaries and the crossing of them are included and the significance of diversity in knowledge interests considered. In Carlile (2004), the approach is slightly different in that the boundaries themselves are understood as syntactic, semantic or pragmatic. The notions syntactic, semantic and pragmatic denote increasing levels of boundary complexity.

To Santos and Eisenhardt, the identity boundaries help organizational members answer the question of "who we are" and offer cognitive frameworks for "reduc[ing] ambiguity and facilitate[ing] decision making" (Santos & Eisenhardt 2005: 500). Santos and Eisenhardt see the identity boundary in continuation of two strands of scholarship: one that focuses on how managers communicate the organization to its members ("the manager as author" (Weick 1995: 183) and one that focuses on what organizational members feel are the "central and distinct" elements of the organizational identity. Although the concepts "mental boundary" and "identity boundary" are similar to the extent that they are non-visible or imagined boundaries, they differ in terms of meaning and perspective. Identity boundaries as understood by Santos and Eisenhardt seem to emerge in the interplay between different identity claims, especially the organizational identity professed by the management and the identity experienced by members of the organization's staff. Imbalances around identity boundaries are felt as misalignments between members' understanding of "who we are" and what others suggest the organization to be. Such misalignments occur in multiple relations both in internal organizational relations and in relations to external parties. Kreiner et al. (2006) give an example of a university professor who is told to arrange the exams in her class around the availability of certain students in her class who happen to be top athletes and players for her university's team. The professor feels her professional academic identity challenged because of the misalignment between her perception of what the identity boundaries of the university (an academic institution and not a sports manager) should be and also because she feels this requirement as a trespassing of her own identity boundaries, in the words of Kreiner et al, this is an "inter-identity boundary conflict" because it plays out between aspects of the organization's and the individual's identities

Table 1: Boundary concepts

Source	**Boundary concept**
Lamont & Molnar 2002	Symbolic and social boundaries
Carlile 2002	Knowledge boundaries
Carlile 2004	Syntactic, semantic and pragmatic boundaries
Hernes 2004	Physical, social and mental boundaries
Santos & Eisenhardt 2005	Legal, power, competence and identity boundaries
Kreiner, Hollensbee & Sheep 2006	Intra-identity boundaries and inter-identity boundaries

Boundary literature oriented towards the sociology of the professions (Macdonald 1999) investigates the efforts or the "work" that status groups (especially specific professions) engage in, in order to maintain their positions. Such contributions emphasize the constructed – and contested – nature of professional boundaries. Gieryn (1983) demonstrates how scientists construct group boundaries (and thus group identities) differently depending on the context in which they present their arguments (e.g. for attraction of resources or for exclusion of non-scientists from their areas of expertise). Gieryn's argument is made against the backdrop that essentialist conceptualizations of science and scientists seem to be untenable:

> Characteristics once proposed as capable of distinguishing science from non-science are found to be common among intellectual activities not ordinarily labeled scientific, or they are found not to be typical features of science-in-practice […] characteristics of science are examined not as inherent or possibly unique, but as part of ideological efforts by scientists to distinguish their work and its products from non-scientific intellectual activities (Gieryn 1983: 781-782).

According to Gieryn, group identities are not inherent but constructed as part of the boundary work of the group's members. In a similar vein, Hernes writes "These mechanisms [social boundaries] are connected to identity because our identity is based on the boundaries we draw in relation to other groups" (Hernes 2004: 14). Thus, Gieryn and other scholars writing within a sociological understanding of group boundaries confirm the centrality of boundaries, their role in the constitution of group identities, and their discursive manifestations.

2.2 Boundary spanners and boundary objects in the communication of and across boundaries

The boundary literature offers concrete concepts enabling analysis and understanding of communication of boundaries. Here, *boundary spanners* and *boundary objects* stand out as the most frequently addressed and the most relevant concepts for cases exploring communication around or across organizational boundaries.

2.2.1 Boundary spanners

Boundary spanners can be defined as "human agents who cross and connect various organizations or units" (Vakkayil 2012: 210). However, definitions of the boundary spanner often includes the idea that for the boundary spanner it is a part of his or her professional responsibilities to cross organizational boundaries and pave the way for collaboration. E.g. "The boundary spanner is considered to be an individual who has a dedicated job role or responsibility to work in a collaborative

environment" (Bordogna 2017: 4).

Having been assigned a position that formally involves boundary spanning activities does not automatically turn a person into a boundary spanner (Levina & Vaast 2005). Levina and Vaast distinguish between *nominated boundary spanners* and *boundary spanners-in-practice*. Nominated boundary spanners have boundary spanning activities as part of their officially assigned job tasks. However, they "are not engaged in boundary spanning" (Levina & Vaast 2005: 340). Boundary spanners in practice perform boundary spanning activities, and these activities may be assigned to them as official duties, but boundary spanners in practice may also engage in these activities without being officially appointed to do this. Engaging in boundary spanning means "relating practices in one field to practices in another by negotiating the meaning and terms of the relationship" (Levina & Vaast 2005: 339). Roberts and Beamish (2017) find that in an international context boundary spanning activities involve *scaffolding*, in other words the active support of colleagues' learning processes in order for these colleagues to become familiar with "foreign knowledge", a term denoting knowledge of non-domestic business practices, foreign language competence, and intercultural understanding. In a more concrete sense, scaffolding would consist of guidance, mentoring, and even regular teaching. Organizations that have employees performing boundary spanning-in-practice will also benefit from more effective resolution of internal and external conflicts (Schotter & Beamish 2011). Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2014) provide a *typology of boundary-spanning functions*: *exchange* (typically of information), *linking*, implying the use of personal networks to unite otherwise "disconnected actors" (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014: 888), *facilitating*, involving "assisting in cross-border interactions of others" (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014: 888), and finally *intervening,* referring to actions performed by the boundary spanner in order to secure a positive outcome of cross-boundary interaction, for example conflict resolution. The boundary spanning functions are listed in ascending order in terms of the demands that the individual functions make on the boundary spanner. Disseminating information is easier and less risky than mediating in a conflict and run the risk of marginalization.

Levina and Vaast argue that "Boundary spanners-in-practice engage in building a new joint field between the two fields" (Levina & Vaast 2005: 339), in other words, boundary spanners-in-practice do not leave the boundaries intact but break certain boundaries and establish new ones. Theoretically, Levina and Vaast construct the boundary spanning position as a temporary one. Also in practice, staying in the boundary spanner position permanently or for a longer period of time is associated with emotional strain (Levina & Vaast 2005; Wenger 1998). This involves the risk of being marginalized in both communities (or both fields, as Levina and Vaast put it). Thus, real boundary spanners will create or facilitate the creation of new fields or communities, in which they then become insiders – or they will escape the emotional pressure and become nominated boundary spanners. The assumption that new fields necessarily emerge from boundary spanning activities is not shared by all contributions to the boundary spanning concept. Both in Roberts and Beamish' investigation of Korean returnee managers' role in building organizational internationalization capabilities and in Schotter and Beamish' investigation of boundary spanning in headquarter-subsidiary conflicts, it is assumed that boundaries persist. In both contributions, it is mentioned that boundary spanners value their role and understand its importance for the organization.

Vakkyil's definition of the boundary spanner is quite broad, and it might be argued that a wide range of organizational members could be understood as boundary spanners as they regularly establish contacts across the organization's internal and external boundaries. Given that boundaries also need to be understood as dynamic, fluid, and composite (Hernes 2004), would that not lead to a situation in which all – or at least the majority of members of most organizations - are engaged in boundary spanning? Then the notion of boundary spanning would simply denote a prevalent feature of modern working life and would contribute little in terms of conceptual clarity and analytical applicability. Inherent in most understandings of boundary spanning is, however, the idea that it is a

difficult and (socially) risky task, and that the success of the boundary spanner's efforts is far from guaranteed (Levina & Vaast 2005; Schotter et al. 2017; Kane & Levina 2017). How can boundary spanning be defined in a way that clarifies that the boundary spanner function is for the select few rather than something that most people do on an everyday basis? Kane and Levina (2017) suggest that three criteria apply when determining whether an individual is a boundary spanner-in-practice or not. Firstly, they need to be (at least) legitimate peripheral participants (Lave & Wenger 1998) in both groups. This entails a basic understanding of the knowledge areas and practices of both groups. Secondly, such interprofessional and/or interdisciplinary insight will have to be combined with a formal role as negotiator or mediator. This seems to imply that an organizationally legitimized position as boundary spanner contributes to the effectiveness of the boundary spanning process and ensures the recognition and uptake of boundary spanning results in the organization. Finally, the boundary spanner-in-practice must also have the *inclination* to perform the boundary spanning role, which often implies representing and being the spokesperson for groups of a lower status in the organization. This happens when the boundary spanner represents the views of for example lower ranking employees or ethnic minority groups in the organization.

Kane & Levina's tripartite definition of the boundary spanner exposes the demanding and challenging nature of boundary spanning in practice. In a concrete sense, it makes clear that boundary spanning requires individuals who possess (at least) dual competences, for example both mastery of their professional field and management skills. Secondly, acting on a moral and social commitment to speak for lower status groups may, at least in some organizations, threaten the spokesperson's own status and problematize his/her loyalty towards his/her "own kind". However, without the willingness to run such a risk the boundary spanner is likely to be expelled from the community in question. In such a case, boundary spanning becomes impossible: "in cases when an individual is marginalized by one of the groups due to an affiliation with the other group, he or she may be denied access to the practices of that group, which could undermine his or her ability to be effective." (Kane & Levina 2017: 543). Understanding boundary-spanning as involving multidisciplinary and interprofessional knowledge, an organizationally recognized bargaining position and a commitment to facilitate social change across organizational power hierarches goes a long way to explain that real boundary spanning takes both organizational and individual efforts and rarely happens occasionally as part of everyone's day-to-day business. As illustrated by Kane and Levina's study, boundary spanning without inclination stabilizes existing power relations and hinders exchange of knowledge and ideas. Boundary-spanning without organizational recognition of the boundary-spanners themselves and of the contributions of lower-status groups enabled through boundary-spanning may create an initial impression among lower-status groups that they are listened to. These employees are, however, likely to realize the pro forma nature of the boundary spanning activities.

If boundary spanning activities are actually performed, these activities need to be investigated in order to understand which functions the boundary spanner actually performs (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014), and what the outcomes for the organization are likely to be. All cases included in the special issue concern individuals crossing organizational boundaries. It remains a question to be investigated in each individual case if crossing organizational boundaries also involves spanning organizational boundaries. For example, in Jæger's article in this volume, internationalization is in focus. Internationalization in higher education obviously implies boundary-crossing (Holtbrügge and Engelhard 2016). But to what extent, can we also observe processes of boundary-spanning? Are international students able to contribute with 'foreign knowledge' (Roberts and Beamish 2017) and thus function as boundary spanners between a local university and academic traditions from a broad variety of countries? And do domestic students function as boundary spanners who assist in scaffolding international students' learning of new working methods?

2.2.2 Boundary objects

Physical or symbolic objects that travel across organizational boundaries and enable or enhance communication and understanding across such boundaries are often referred to as 'boundary objects' (e.g. Wenger 1998; Oever 2019). Dillon (2008) defines boundary objects as "artefacts, documents, institutional and administrative protocols, etc. that have to be addressed by people from different communities if shared understanding is to be built" (259). The concept originates in a case study of Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (MVZ) conducted by Star and Griesemer (1989). The case of the foundation of a museum of natural history, which demanded the collaboration of a diverse collection of amateurs, professionals and scientists - and thus of university, museum, and social movement organizations – bears much resemblance to present-day arrangements of inter-organizational, inter-sectorial and inter-professional collaboration. For the authors, the intriguing question was: why and how did the key actors in this project succeed in establishing collections meeting scientific standards, in marshalling large groups of volunteers, and in securing the scientific authority of the director and primary initiator? In a boundary perspective, what is interesting about this case is that the project's success seems to depend on the simultaneous maintenance and crossing of organizational boundaries. For example, the amateur enthusiasm for natural preservation important to volunteers and scientific rigor important to involved scientists were successfully combined. The case showed that for multi-interest and interprofessional collaboration to work, consensus is not of the essence. What is important is meaningful, mutually beneficial exchange. For this exchange, boundary objects play a crucial role.

Boundary objects have the interesting quality that they can pass organizational boundaries without damaging neither the boundary nor the object itself in the process. Thus, Star and Griesemer (1989) understand boundary objects as "analytic concepts of those scientific objects which both inhabit several intersecting social worlds and satisfy the informational requirements of each of them" (393). This is in opposition to what Star and Griesemer refer to as other means of dealing with boundaries separating diverging interests and concerns: "imperialist imposition of representations, coercion, silencing and fragmentation" (Star & Griesemer 1989: 413). Boundary objects gain this quality by being at the same time adaptable to different contexts and "robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weakly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual-site use" (Star & Griesemer 1989: 393). Star and Griesemer identify four types of boundary objects: repositories, ideal types, [objects with] coincident boundaries (but distinct contents across contexts. Wenger (1998) provides the example of a building being used for multiple purposes by different groups), and finally standardized forms ("methods of common communication across boundaries") (Star & Griesemer 1989: 411).

The boundary object concept has played a significant role in research on knowledge in organizations (Carlile 2002, Carlile 2004, Wenger 1998). Addressing the challenge of collaboration barriers in knowledge-intensive environments, studies of professional interaction among groups holding advanced, domain-specific knowledge found the notion of the boundary object useful. The notion applies to abstract and concrete objects that establish a channel or medium through which communication between different groups of domain specialists can take place (Carlile 2004). In knowledge-intensive environments reliant on diverse forms of expertise, objects that represent the shareable gain importance as facilitators of communication and coordination. Sometimes, such objects are deliberately designed for boundary-crossing purposes such as in Carlile's study on the use of a simulation tool in a manufacturing company. The tool enabled coordination among diverse groups of engineers in a situation where each would insist on their own aspects of vehicle design. Other objects simply become boundary objects through the diverse uses that are made of them.

As Wenger notes "Not all objects are boundary objects, neither by design or through their use" (1998, 107). Only objects that travel across community/sector boundaries and that "satisfy the informational requirements" of each of the communities or sectors qualify as boundary objects. As

Wenger points out, satisfaction of informational requirements does not entail alignment of the interpretations made of the object. At the same time as this constitutes the strength of the boundary object, it also illustrates its weaknesses. Carlile (2004) explains how boundary objects serving informational needs function well in cases where syntactic boundaries need to be crossed. However, when it comes to semantic and pragmatic boundaries the successful function of the boundary object relies on the ability of the actors to use the object in a way that serves collaborative boundary-crossing: "when a semantic or pragmatic boundary is faced, the ability of the actors to use the boundary object can no longer be taken for granted" (Carlile 2004: 565). In other words, whether something can be a boundary object depends on situational factors. Situational factors may constitute what Carlile (2002) refers to as 'knowledge boundaries' implying that the level of knowledge specialization within professional groups generates boundaries that may not be surmountable through any form of object.

Still, successful communication across organizational boundaries would seem to involve the skilled use of boundary objects. To return to the example of "subtle discrimination", well-meaning attempts to cross boundaries between minority and majority employees that involved "imperialist impositions of representations" (Star & Griesemer 1989: 413) such as treating the minority employee as an exception from an otherwise negatively evaluated group led to communicative breakdowns. Instead, minority professionals asked that professional standards be activated as a boundary object enabling communication of recognition across ethnic boundaries in the workplace. Taking an interest in how boundaries are communicated is hardly possible without investigating the role of boundary objects. Scholars have for example investigated knowledge sharing and conceived of information sharing systems and enterprise social media as boundary objects (e.g. Sapsed & Salter: 2004; Filstad et al. 2018). Such platforms may mean different things to different people and still serve purposes of exchange and boundary crossing (Thøis Madsen, this special issue). The concept of boundary object is specifically interesting in relation to strategic and leadership communication. Often, such communication involves what Star and Griesemer refer to as "imperialist imposition of representation", in other words communications reflecting the interests and perspectives of management coupled with the expectation that this perspective will be adopted by other groups or layers in the organization. In contrast, successful use of boundary objects involves the creation of objects that legitimately can mean (more or less) different things to different people while still retaining an identity across contexts. "When a boundary object serves multiple constituencies, each has only partial control over the interpretation of the object" (Wenger 1998: 108).

Organizations themselves can be boundary objects according to Star and Griesemer. The authors mention libraries and museums as examples of boundary objects of the type "repository" (Start & Griesemer 1989: 410). Organizations and groups sharing this boundary object can selectively draw on the features of the object that they find useful. "People from different worlds can use or borrow from the 'pile' for their own purposes without having directly to negotiate differences in purpose" (Star & Griesemer 1989: 410). Concretely, MVZ was a shared boundary object – a point of connection – for multiple groups: scientists, NGOs and members of the general public taking an interest in the natural environment of California and its preservation. The museum itself would support the interests and activities of each group without demanding similarity in identity or purpose. In this special issue, Knorr's study on a regional business development organization shows how diverse groups can utilize such an organization as a boundary object to pursue own and collective interests and, at the same time, demonstrate varying degrees of commitment.

3. Contributions to the special issue: crossing organizational boundaries

All contributions to this special issue take their point of departure in the realization that boundary crossing is a vital and integral aspect of every organization's existence. Furthermore, all contributions understand organizational boundaries as an important research focus because it takes thorough

investigation to disclose the nature and impact of organizational boundaries. Despite the ephemeral character of many boundaries, they effectively govern the everyday life of organizational members. The breadth of studied organizations confirms the prioritization of boundary-crossing by contemporary organizations. Most organizations see outreach, collaboration and active engagement of stakeholders as a condition for survival. For some organizations, this does not only lead to new opportunities but also to concerns over loss of autonomy and integrity. In a study of individual-level consequences of increased university-business collaboration Lam (2015) found that individual academics handle ensuing boundary dilemmas in quite diverse ways. Some evidently deplored the fading away of clear boundaries between university research and business collaboration, fearing the loss of academic integrity, while others embraced the merging of research and commercialization fully. Most of the participants, however, represented some form of hybrid position but were acutely aware of the boundary processes and their consequences. The example illustrates how navigating in a world of boundary-crossing and –contesting challenges organizations' ability to uphold recognizable identities and secure legitimacy among key audiences.

This is illustrated in Schmeltz' contribution to this volume. She studies the identity presentation of social enterprise organizations that establish themselves at the boundary between organizational forms: the private for-profit company and the non-profit charity. Striving to succeed on market terms and at the same time demonstrate full commitment to social goals subjects the social enterprise to critical scrutiny from multiple perspectives. Schmeltz investigates how such crossing of – or perhaps rather balancing at – the boundary between public and private is accomplished in these organizations' web-presentations.

Two contributions address universities' involvement in boundary-crossing processes. Jæger studies the experience of boundary-crossing students. Today, students often cross university boundaries in order to build up attractive academic and professional profiles. At the same time, universities maintain distinct scholarly and pedagogic identities, which may increase the student's experience of unfamiliarity when entering new educational contexts. Jæger investigates how crossing the boundaries of a university practicing problem-based learning leads to both enriching and confusing student experiences. Wilgaard examines how university academics increasingly need to be involved in the university's third mission, its engagement with external private and public sector actors. This requires the researcher to perform the role of a boundary spanner facilitating collaboration and – at the same time – to extract research data and findings through this very collaboration. The author argues that university staff is often poorly prepared for such complex interactions and illustrates via two cases that third mission collaboration can fruitfully be studied through the lens of action research.

Obviously, all contributions pay attention to the organizational context of the boundary-crossing efforts. Large companies constantly face the risk of having corporate mishaps or scandals reach the public eye. Consequently, it is valuable for management to detect and contain employee concerns and criticism in order to avoid leaks to external media. Internal social media may provide employees with a platform allowing them to articulate positive and negative aspects of organizational life and, first and foremost, to cross organizational layers and reach the attention of senior management. Such communications are studied in Thøis Madsen's contribution to this special issue. She investigates such attempts to circumvent the organizational hierarchy on internal social media in a large Danish bank.

The challenge of communicating across the levels of large organizations also takes center stage in Sanden's study of two manufacturing companies headquartered in Denmark. Operating transnationally, their communication challenges not only include establishing effective communication platforms but also handling diverse linguistic situations involving speakers of different languages. Sanden demonstrates that companies communicating across language, education, and organization hierarchy boundaries face a distinct set of communication problems that call for

more attention, also within the area of language-sensitive management research.

Among scholars interested in organizational boundaries, the interest in crossing and going beyond organizational boundaries is increasing in today's globalized and competitive organizational environments. Knorr investigates how collaboration between 11 Danish municipalities in the network organization Business Region North Denmark facilitated the development of a sense of determination and visibility in the region. The willingness and ability of key political actors to engage in "transformative" boundary spanning plays a key role in continued efforts to establish the region as a national and global actor. Knorr's article emphasizes the importance of concrete collaboration practices and interpersonal relations for the success of such an endeavor.

Knorr's article as well as the other contributions to this special issue reflect the growing scholarly interest in organizational boundaries as conditions for and enablers of external collaboration rather than as constraints. Boundary spanning is generally seen as fostering organizational creativity and renewal (Andersen et al. 2013) and the concept of the boundary object as helpful for understanding inter-organizational collaboration. Against this backdrop, the contributions to this issue demonstrate how boundary practices play out in diverse organizational settings. Collectively the contributions cover a broad spectrum of organizations and provide a diverse and multifaceted picture of boundary practices conducted at employee and organizational level. A specific focus has been on the communicative activation of organizational boundaries, for example in web presentations, internal social media or in interviews on everyday practices in organizations. Unsurprisingly, concrete case studies uncover a wealth of tensions and challenges around organizational boundaries embedded in the mundane activities of organizational everyday life. The studies demonstrate, for example, how conditions for boundary spanning activities are complicated and constrained by local circumstances and particular stakeholder interests. They also illustrate the impact of internal organizational boundaries and thus the complexity of social relations and identities. As a whole, they demonstrate the value of a focused interest in organizational boundaries for the understanding of what organizations are, and what they aspire to become through their efforts to maintain, cross or expand their own boundaries.

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Heartcore business?
A study of how social enterprises, as organizations crossing traditional sectorial borders, communicate their corporate identity

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Abstract: The social enterprise, i.e. a private enterprise carrying on business for the purpose of promoting and supporting social purposes beneficial to society, is a type of organization that is characterized by both crossing traditional sectorial borders and by questioning and challenging traditional management practices. In Denmark, it has been reported that social enterprises face considerable challenges in terms of not being considered legitimate by their surroundings, and it has been suggested that a lack of awareness and communication of identity may be the main barriers for social businesses aiming to expand and strengthen their business and to be considered legitimate. The strategic identity communication by social enterprises is still underexplored, and, thus, the aim of this paper is to investigate social enterprises' communication of identity in their corporate communication through the lens of institutional theory and especially the notion of legitimacy. This theoretical frame has been chosen as the idea is that a high degree of alignment between identity and social responsibility in the enterprise's corporate communication could enable the enterprises to communicate a clear identity and consequently increase their legitimacy. The findings seem to reflect the reported difficulties of establishing and communicating a clear identity towards stakeholders as the enterprises in the sample tend to, much like 'ordinary' companies, work with two different sets or systems of values: primarily competence-based values when presenting who they are, and moral and social values when presenting their mission/vision and responsibilities. The paper suggests that combining and integrating the two sets of values would enable the enterprises to communicate their identity in a much clearer manner and hence create more awareness of the emerging field of social enterprises where they could be considered legitimate.

Keywords: social enterprises, corporate identity, strategic communication, institutional theory, legitimacy, values.

1. Introduction

Within the last decades, increasing expectations and demands for corporate responsible behavior and engagement (Schmeltz 2012) have forced companies to cross the traditional borders between business, government and civil society (Ellis 2010). Furthermore, it is expected that organizations continuously will be faced with increasing complexity as "the emergence of economic and political disruptions question traditional governance structures and management practices" (Dick et al. 2017: 129). One particular type of organization that is characterized by both crossing traditional sectorial borders and by questioning and challenging traditional management practices is that of the social enterprise.

The concept of social enterprises is still relatively new in Denmark, and the potential of such businesses is still largely untapped. A report (2014) issued by The Committee for Social Businesses appointed by The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Employment in Denmark points to a lack of awareness and communication of identity (focusing on being a social enterprise) as one of the main barriers for social businesses aiming to expand and strengthen their business and to be considered legitimate by their surroundings.

The aim of this paper is thus to investigate social businesses' communication of identity in their corporate communication. Institutional theory (e.g. DiMaggio & Powel 1983), and especially the notion of legitimacy (Dowling & Pfeffer 1975; Meyer & Rowan 1977; Suchman 1995; Deephouse & Carter 2005), provides the frame for understanding and exploring the enterprises' identity communication in an organizational context. Within the institutional theory field, it is generally

agreed that when "two value systems are congruent we can speak of organizational legitimacy" (Dowling & Pfeffer 1975: 122). Hence, through a value-theoretical framework, the study seeks to identify the extent to which these enterprises manage to create alignment between their corporate identity values, traditionally emphasized by "ordinary companies", and their social responsibility values, characterizing the social enterprise, or if they are working with two, or even more, different value systems. The reason for exploring the degree of alignment between these two types of values is that what makes this particular type of organization special is that - as opposed to many other organizations – it has a social aim as the core component of its identity, i.e. corporate social identity (CSR) is actually key in the identity. At the same time, the social enterprise is crossing sectorial borders and can be seen as a hybrid between the traditional organization from the private sector and an NGO or a public organization from the public or the social sector. For these types of organizations, it could thus be argued that it is pertinent that they succeed in combining and aligning corporate identity values and CSR values exactly because it is a hybrid calling for legitimacy in several sectors simultaneously. Accordingly, the assumption put forward by this paper is that a high degree of alignment between identity and social responsibility in the enterprise's corporate communication will enable the enterprises to communicate a clear identity and consequently increase their legitimacy.

2. Theoretical framework

In this section, the theoretical background against which the study is developed will be introduced. First, the concept of social enterprises as a research field is presented. This is followed by a short introduction to organizational institutionalism, which forms the overall realm of understanding behind the study. Here, the concept of legitimacy is especially relevant and will lead to the next part about the challenges of crossing identity boundaries. After this, corporate identity communication is discussed with a particular focus on communicating the social enterprise identity, which leads to the final theoretical part of the paper on the role played by values as identifiable markers of both CSR and identity in corporate communication.

2.1 Social enterprises

The debate about and interest in the concept of social enterprises has literally exploded since the beginning of the new millennium (Defourny & Nyssens 2010). Research within the field can overall be divided into two schools of thought: the European approach and the American approach. In Europe, research has focused on the social enterprise as originating and developing further from the third sector, i.e. the civil society, or the social sector. Here, the enterprise is seen as some sort of hybrid organization mixing elements from the public, the private and the social sector, e.g. using voluntary employees to produce and sell products on ordinary market terms (Deforny & Nyssens 2010; Hulgård & Andersen 2012; SFI 2013). This approach is said to mainly originate from the European research network EMES (Deforny & Nyssens 2010).

The American approach to studying social enterprises has, on the other hand, tended to focus much more on the connection to the *market* and how goods and services from social enterprises are produced and sold on the market. This approach is furthermore characterized as having a very critical view on the welfare state, which is considered as bureaucratic and a hindrance for social enterprises to flourish (Hulgård & Andersen 2012; SFI 2013). In Denmark, the current political view is aligned with the European approach in that the increasing governmental, and in particular municipal, focus on and interest in social enterprises sees this type of organization as part of the social sector. But what is really interesting in this connection is that many Danish social enterprises are reported to see themselves as part of the private sector (Wüsching 2012). This opposing or even contradicting view of identity, arguably, poses serious challenges when it comes to communicating corporate identity.

The category of social enterprises is often divided into two groups (The Committee on Social Enterprises 2013) depending on whether they work *with* an exposed target group, e.g. employing

physically disabled people, or *for* an exposed target group, e.g. producing cheap facilities for physically disabled people. As a relatively new and unknown type of organization in a Danish business context, the social enterprises are faced with a number of challenges in their struggle to establish and legitimize themselves in the organizational field. They do not immediately fit into existing, well-known structures. For example, the enterprises employing people with a reduced ability to work in so-called flexi-job positions are challenged by the upper bounds on firms' subsidized employment, which "impose[s] a limit to the number of individuals employed in company training schemes or through wage subsidy schemes per regularly employed" (The Committee on Social Enterprises 2013: 34). This is particularly a problem for social enterprises working *with* a vulnerable target group. Other problems are related to creating a balance between financial sustainability and viability without compromising the social aim (The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs 2014: 11); to finding new investors when profit is to be reinvested in either the enterprise or the related cause; and by the fact that this type of enterprise can be seen as anti-competitive by colleagues and competitors. The well-known crisis risk associated with CSR (Coombs & Holladay 2015) is also pertinent for social enterprises as they are more likely to be exposed to public criticism if they do not live up to their responsibilities. Finally, social enterprises are often founded by passionate, but not necessarily experienced, people who really have to struggle to become acquainted with all the managerial tasks that running a company entails. Thus, since government as well as municipalities would like to see an increase in the number of social enterprises, an agenda to strengthen general awareness about social enterprises and increase their ability to operate under ordinary market terms in order to fulfill their potential was developed in 2014 (The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs 2014: 8). Creating awareness and knowledge about social enterprises is seen as a precursor for establishing a clear identity for social enterprises, enabling them to "legitimize themselves and market their company to the broad range of stakeholders" (The Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs 2014: 11).

2.2. Institutional theory

The social enterprise has been argued to have "emerged as a businesslike contrast to the traditional nonprofit organization" (Dart 2004: 411). In trying to recognize the challenges social enterprises encounter when trying to communicate who they are - i.e. their identity - institutional theory here provides the frame for understanding the social enterprise as an organization in an organizational field – actually even several fields simultaneously. According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), institutional theory can help explain why organizations behave in a certain manner, why they change, and not least why they often seem to change in the same way as other organizations within the same field. In this study, especially the key concept of *legitimacy* is important and is understood as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions" (Suchman 1995: 574). Furthermore, it is important to note that legitimacy is "a symbolic value to be displayed in a manner such that it is visible to outsiders" (Scott 2008: 59), e.g. demonstrating legitimacy through corporate communication. Seen from an institutional perspective, this is thus where social enterprises are particularly challenged as they belong to at least two different organizational fields simultaneously: the private sector and the social sector (sometimes also the public sector), or perhaps even a new sector which has yet to be defined and fully accepted, at least in a Danish context. Consequently, the social enterprises' aim to be considered legitimate by other actors in the field is further complicated as the field is not yet established and the "sources of legitimacy" (Deephouse & Suchman 2008) are therefore not easily identified. The social enterprises can thus be faced with opposing demands for pragmatic, moral or cognitive legitimacy (Suchman 1995; Dart 2004) that they must meet in order to be considered legitimate. These demands are in turn dependent on whether the enterprises see themselves, and are perceived as belonging, within the profit-oriented private sector field or the

socially-oriented social sector field. This is close to the paradox of *strategic balance* described by Deephouse (1999) as "the tension between differentiating to attain profitability and conforming to attain legitimacy" (Deephouse & Suchman 2008: 52). Exactly this tension, as well as the sometimes contradictory demands for legitimacy for an organization crossing traditional sectorial borders, may be contributory factors in the reported difficulty for the social enterprises in communicating their identity clearly and convincingly.

2.2.1 Crossing identity boundaries

As mentioned by Jæger & Pedersen in this special issue, boundaries are not only physical in character, but also to a large extent symbolic (Lamont et al. 2015); social, focusing on social relations between members; and mental, focusing on members' self-understanding as being different from that of other groups (Jæger & Pedersen 2020; Hernes 2004). The latter is also addressed by Santos & Eisenhardt (2005) as one of four suggested conceptions of boundaries; *efficiency*, *power*, *competence* and *identity*. Boundaries of identity, which resemble Hernes' (2004) understanding of mental boundaries, focus on creating coherence between the identity of the organization and its activities and on providing answers to the question of who we are as an organization (Santos & Eisenhardt 2005). The authors further argue that these identity boundaries can function both as a competitive strength (by way of a strong, clearly communicated and commonly agreed upon understanding of who we are, and what we stand for) but also as a competitive weakness (as they are firmly anchored in emotional components and thus difficult to detect and to change), and that a way of easing these identity boundary tensions could be to "increase the consistency between "who we are" and "what we are good at"" (Santos & Eisenhardt 2005: 502). The question is whether social enterprises can strike that balance in their corporate identity communication as they are not only crossing identity boundaries, but also traditional sectorial boundaries, cf. their organizational structure.

2.3 Corporate identity communication

A recurring theme in corporate identity literature is that in order to create a strong identity, which makes the organization recognizable and identifiable from other organizations, the identity needs to be characterized by being core, distinctive and enduring (Albert & Whetten 1985), consistent across vision, image and culture (Hatch & Schultz 2008) and able to succeed in ensuring that relevant stakeholders can identify with the organization's values (Cornelissen 2017). Corporate identity can thus be defined as "the self-presentation of an organization: it consists in the cues which an organization offers about itself via the behavior, communication and symbolism which are its forms of expression" (van Riel 1995: 36). Two dominant categories in corporate identity communication in terms of content are those of 1) the traditional "who we are" introduction focusing on goods/services offered, level of quality and experience, etc., and 2) that of CSR, defined as "A view of the corporation and its roles in society that assumes a responsibility among firms to pursue goals in addition to profit maximization and a responsibility among a firm's stakeholders to hold the firm accountable for its actions" (Chandler & Werther 2014: 6).

2.3.1 Communicating the social enterprise identity

The strategic identity communication by social enterprises has not yet been studied in great detail, and, consequently, the identity communication of social enterprises with its inherent tensions has also yet to be explored. A few studies have, however, touched upon the complexities of identity communication specific to social enterprises, but often they focus on either the communication of social enterprises as part of a larger field or as an extension of existing NGOs or NPOs. One such example is Feldner & Fyke (2016), who in a recent study explore how social entrepreneurship identity is constructed at both the organizational level and, simultaneously, at the level of social entrepreneurship as a field or sector in its own right. Their point of departure is that it adds to the

complexity of the identity work of social enterprises that they have to communicate both who they are as an individual organization, but at the same time also what the sector, in which they belong, is and what task or need in society the sector fulfils. In other words, the identity dilemma, according to Feldner and Fyke (2016), is having to both legitimize the organization itself as well as the overall field or sector of social entrepreneurship.

Smith et al. (2010) study the identity question with a particular focus on whether the social enterprise was established as a later add-on to an already existing NGO, or if the NGO and the social enterprise component are born simultaneously. As such, their focus is on the NGO's identity communication, and they note that "while nonprofits must often manage issues related to organizational identity, these issues are likely to become more complex and difficult with the introduction of a social enterprise" (Smith et al. 2010: 111).

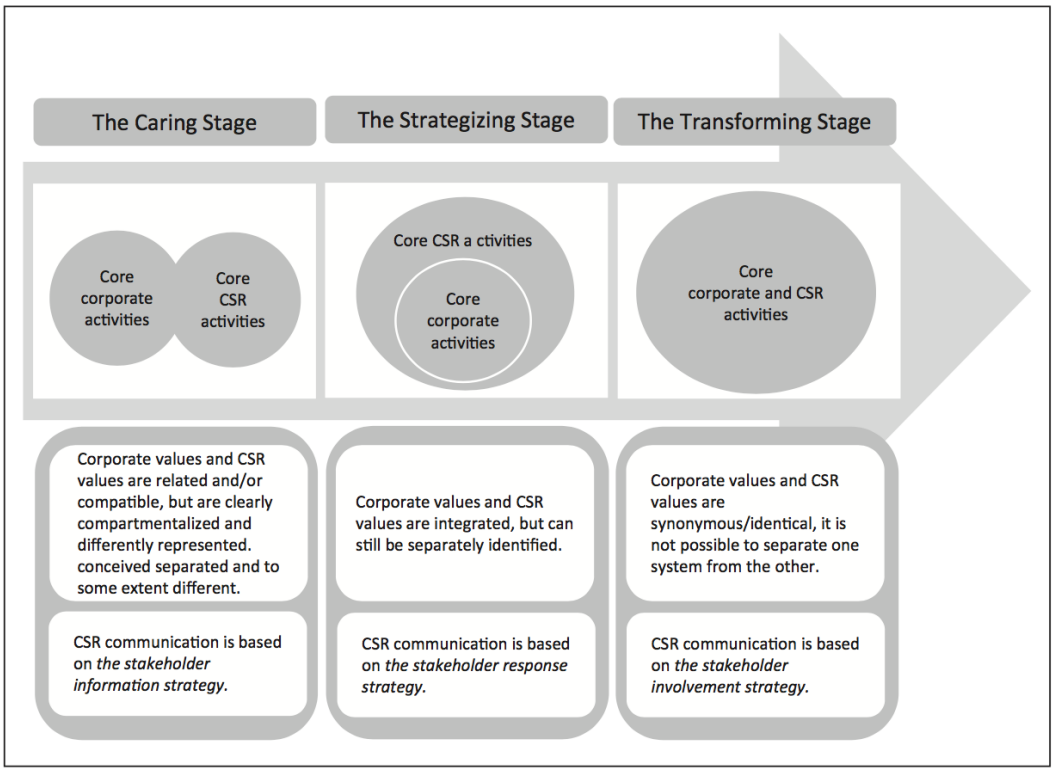
A final example is drawn from the study of Roundy (2014) who explores how social entrepreneurs construct narratives and use these narratives to acquire resources. Emphasis is thus on communication as an important means to getting the funding and resources needed and not on how to combine and communicate the business as well as the social aspect of the enterprise's identity simultaneously. However, what is perhaps more interesting for this particular paper is the finding that "…some social entrepreneurs expressed a clear preference for the social-good narrative and an aversion toward constructing business narratives. In contrast, others expressed comfort in communicating both messages" (Roundy 2014: 216) and the call for further research into why some entrepreneurs prefer one logic over the other. In this paper, a first step towards such an understanding is taken, as it seeks to identify if there is a pattern in the alignment (or lack of it) between values in the official identity communication and CSR communication on the social enterprises' presentation of themselves on their websites.

2.3.2 Values as denominators of both corporate identity and CSR across sectors

The concept of values is here studied as the link that can communicate and consequently also bridge corporate identity and social responsibility, as values can be considered as common denominators for, and constitutive of, both identity (Williams 2008; Cornelissen 2017) and CSR (Morsing & Thyssen 2003; Aust 2004). It has been debated whether companies or organizations can be said to possess values (see e.g. Melewar 2008) as that would also entail that the company has a conscience and a personality just like a human being. This view has, however, been defended (see e.g. Pruzan 2001) and the benefits of working strategically with communicating corporate values and demonstrating their compatibility with those of important stakeholders have also been established (Dowling 2004; Siltaoja 2006). In order to operationalize the very intangible concept of values, the value-theoretical framework by Rokeach (1973) is applied. Rokeach's (1973) framework categorizes our values along the dimensions of personal/social and moral/competence. Personal and competence values can be said to be characteristic of traditional corporate identity communication emphasizing the competences, skills, gains and targets of the organization, whereas social and moral values are typical of traditional CSR communication focusing on responsibility, willingness to help and equality (Schmeltz 2014). Rokeach's value-theoretical framework (1973) will be explained in further detail in section 3.

This study further builds on the *CSR implementation and communication model* (Schmeltz 2014), which was developed for a study exploring Danish CSR frontrunner companies' ability to adapt and align their identity and CSR values so as to reflect their new CSR commitment:

Figure 1: The CSR Implementation and Communication Model (Schmeltz 2014)



The model is based on Maon et al. (2010) and Morsing & Schultz (2006) and serves to illustrate the development many companies go through from seeing CSR as a complimentary component of the company to an integrated part of the corporate DNA where it is impossible to distinguish corporate values from CSR values. The study demonstrated that "even though the companies studied work with the CSR concept in a strategic and systematic manner, they are operating with two quite separate systems of values with no apparent correspondence between corporate identity values and CSR values" (Schmeltz 2014: 22). It seems plausible that this would not be the case for social enterprises, as they, as opposed to 'traditional' businesses, would see it as less complicated to communicate their identity and social responsibility because they, logically, would have CSR as a required, even primary, component in their corporate DNA. Consequently, it could be argued that social enterprises may be presumed to be positioned in the last stage, the transforming stage, as social responsibility constitutes their core, i.e. what defines them as organizational type. However, as mentioned, this is not necessarily the case. Hence, the aim of this paper is to explore what types of values, of either moral or competence character, are brought into play in social enterprises' corporate communication, and how they are combined and possibly aligned. The argument presented here is that combining and aligning these two types of values is particularly important when seeking legitimacy in several sectors simultaneously.

3. Method

In this section, the particular context of the cases will be introduced, followed by an overview of the value-based analytical framework applied. Then, the sampling criteria for the Danish social enterprises studied are presented before the method of analysis, interpretive content analysis, is described.

3.1 Context of the study

In Denmark, social enterprises are defined as: "private enterprises carrying on business for the purpose of – through their activities and earnings – promoting special social purposes and purposes beneficial to society" (National Centre for Social Enterprises 2014A). To be more specific, in order to be recognized as a social enterprise, the enterprise has to meet the following five criteria of 1) having a social purpose, 2) carrying out significant commercial activity, 3) being independent of public authorities, 4) maintaining high standards of corporate governance, and 5) having a social approach to management of profits (National Centre for Social Enterprises 2014B). Thus, the enterprises are characterized by having a social goal which they aim to promote or support through the production and sale of products or services on ordinary market terms. Furthermore, a defining feature of the social enterprise is the fact that the majority of the profits generated are reinvested in the enterprise or the social cause (SFI 2013). The social causes promoted by the enterprises are diverse, ranging from support of environmental causes, to support in third world countries, or support of people with physical or mental disabilities. Even though the social enterprise's *raison d'être* is to support and promote a specific social cause, this does not imply that a conflict between generating profits and promoting the cause can automatically be detected; a social enterprise can generate substantial profit as long as it is reinvested, at least for the main part, in the enterprise (SFI 2013).

In 2014, the Danish Parliament passed the act called "Act on Registered Social Enterprises" which allows social enterprises to be registered and consequently to use an official seal of approval as "registered social enterprise". The Danish act is the first of its kind in the European Union (National Centre for Social Enterprises 2014C). In other countries, for example the UK, membership of networks or organizations for social enterprises can entitle social enterprises to display and promote a membership badge (Social Enterprise UK 2018), but it is not officially approved by legal authorities as in Denmark. There are no official statements as to the number of social enterprises in Denmark, but in 2017 the association 'Social Entrepreneurs in Denmark' estimated that 400 enterprises can be considered social enterprises according to the definition offered by the National Centre for Social Enterprises (Hjerl Hansen 2017). As of November 2018, 289 enterprises have so far decided to apply for status, and consequently be registered officially, as social enterprises. As such, the possibility to register officially as a social enterprise has yet to prove itself as a legitimizing tool for the enterprises as more than 25% have not registered. Registration of social enterprises is managed by the Danish Business Authority (National Centre for Social Enterprises 2014C).

During that same period of time, the Danish Government also established The National Centre for Social Enterprises with the purpose of facilitating knowledge sharing and corporations between social enterprises and public authorities, strengthening social enterprises' business foundation, etc. (National Centre for Social Enterprises 2014A). The centre was, however, closed down by 2016, and today the agenda to push and support social enterprises in Denmark is mainly driven by the municipalities, many of which have developed specific strategies and initiatives for furthering the establishment of social enterprises (Dialogforum for Samfundsansvar og Vækst 2017). At the same time, municipalities take on the role as the largest and most important customer for many Danish social enterprises (Hjerl Hansen 2017) which only adds to the complexity when the social enterprises communicate who and what they are to their main stakeholders.

3.2 Analytical framework

The analysis is built up around a value-theoretical framework because, as an organizational unit, the social enterprise can be argued to be the epitome of value as its aim is the "creation of value that is good for society as a whole" (Feldner & Fyke 2016: 104) by way of delivering solutions to problems that government and nonprofits cannot (Pless 2012). Thus, values are here considered to be the link that can communicate and perhaps also bridge corporate identity and social responsibility, consequently assuring legitimacy across sectorial borders.

The value system developed by Rokeach (1973) is applied as the framework of the analysis as the value system distinguishes itself by offering a rather simple, yet applicable, taxonomy of values. Rokeach defines a value as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (Rokeach 1973: 5). The value system comprises 36 values in total, which can be divided into instrumental values (desirable modes of conduct) and terminal values (desirable end-states of existence). The instrumental values are further divided into competence values and moral values, and, similarly, the terminal values are divided into socially-oriented values and personally-oriented values:

Figure 2: Rokeach's Value System (Rokeach 1973)

Instrumental values (desirable modes of conduct)	
Competence values	**Moral values**
Ambitious (hard-working, aspiring)	Broadminded (open-minded)
Capable (competent, effective)	Cheerful (lighthearted, joyful)
Clean (neat, tidy)	Courageous (standing up for your beliefs)
Imaginative (daring, creative)	Forgiving (willing to pardon others)
Intellectual (intelligent, reflective)	Helpful (working for the welfare of others)
Logical (consistent, rational)	Honest (sincere, truthful)
	Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient)
	Loving (affectionate, tender)
	Obedient (dutiful, respectful)
	Polite (courteous, well-mannered)
	Responsible (dependable, reliable)
	Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined)
Terminal values (desirable end-states of existence)	
Social in orientation	**Personal in orientation**
A world at peace (free of war and conflict)	A comfortable life (a prosperous life)
A world of beauty (of nature and the arts)	An exciting life (a stimulating, active life)
Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity for all)	A sense of accomplishment (lasting contribution)
Freedom (independence, free choice)	Family security (taking care of loved ones)
National security (protection from attack)	Freedom (independence, free choice)
	Happiness (contentedness)
	Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict)
	Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
	Pleasure (an enjoyable, leisurely life)
	Salvation (saved, eternal life)
	Self-respect (self-esteem)
	Social recognition (respect, admiration)
	True friendship (close companionship)
	Wisdom (a mature understanding of life)

As mentioned earlier, in brief, traditional corporate identity communication tends to reflect competence and, to a certain extent, personal values, whereas CSR communication very often is reflective of moral and social values, focusing on assuming responsibility for the environment, equality of opportunity, etc. (Schmeltz 2014). Although developed as a system for understanding and categorizing human values, it is still applicable in a corporate context, cf. the discussion on corporate

values resembling human values in section 2.3.

3.3 Sampling and method of analysis

The sample contains four Danish social enterprises selected through purposive sampling (Neergaard 2007). The enterprises are characterized by fitting the definition by the Danish National Centre for Social Enterprises, by operating on traditional market terms, i.e. selling products or services, and finally by working *with* an exposed target group. The sample is diverse in that the four enterprises belong to different size categories in terms of number of employees. Please note that as the size is determined by full-time equivalents (FTEs), meaning that the enterprises employ far more people than the number indicates, as many employees (if not most) are part-time employees or flexi-jobbers. An overview of the enterprises included is given below:

Figure 3: Sample overview

	Line of business	Employees (measured by FTEs)
Enterprise A	Grocery shop	2-4
Enterprise B	Bike maintenance and service	10-19
Enterprise C	Construction company	20-49
Enterprise D	Service provider	50-99

Drawing on Rokeach's value system, the paper applies a qualitative approach to interpretive content analysis (Baxter 1991; Krippendorff 2004) based on semantic units, which serves to illustrate how corporate values and corporate social responsibility values, respectively, are communicated and possibly aligned by the selected Danish social enterprises on their corporate websites. Thus, for each of the enterprises, the website texts presenting who the enterprise is and what it offers (often headed 'About Us') and the texts presenting its mission/vision and CSR/responsibility, respectively, are analyzed and categorized (coded by semantic units) according to the taxonomy in Rokeach's value system just described. By using theoretically driven, closed coding categories, the analysis will allow for comparing value systems across the social enterprises in the sample. In 'ordinary' companies, a former study has shown that companies tend to primarily apply competence values when describing who they are, and what they do, while shifting to a moral value focus in their CSR texts (Schmeltz 2014). The question is whether social enterprises, which logically belong in the transforming stage cf. the CSR Implementation and Communication Model, apply a more aligned value system across text type, or if they too struggle with balancing competing value systems in their communication as they are further challenged by addressing stakeholders from several sectors simultaneously.

4. Findings and discussion

The texts from the sampled social enterprises have been interpreted and coded following Rokeach's system of values framework (1979). For each of the texts included, an overall assessment has been made as to which values are most dominant in the individual texts (referred to as *primary values* in the table overviews below) and which values carry a more supportive (referred to as *secondary values*) role in the texts.

From an institutional perspective, it is interesting to note that the enterprises, although a relatively new type of organization, have more or less the same pattern in their use of value systems in the two types of text. Thus, the findings indicate that the enterprises, much like 'ordinary' companies, work with two different sets or systems of values: primarily competence-based values when presenting who they are, and moral and social values when presenting their mission/vision and responsibilities. The question is whether this is a reflection of organizational isomorphism within this particular sector, or if it is reflective of a call for legitimacy in one or more already established sectors,

i.e. the private sector and the social sector. An overview of the findings is presented below:

Figure 4: Overview of findings – Enterprise A

Enterprise A: Grocery shop		
Text type	Who we are and what we do	Mission/vision – our responsibility
Primary values	Capable (competence) Ambitious (competence)	Helpful (moral) Responsible (moral)
Secondary values	A sense of accomplishment (personal)	Equality (social) A sense of accomplishment (personal)

Figure 5: Overview of findings – Enterprise B

Enterprise B: Construction company		
Text type	Who we are and what we do	Mission/vision – our responsibility
Primary values	Capable (competence)	Responsible (moral) Helpful (moral)
Secondary values	Ambitious (competence)	Capable (competence) Ambitious (competence) A world of beauty (social)

Figure 6: Overview of findings – Enterprise C

Enterprise C: Bike maintenance and service		
Text type	Who we are and what we do	Mission/vision – our responsibility
Primary values	A world of beauty (social) Ambitious (competence)	A world of beauty (social) Ambitious (competence) Responsible (moral) Equality (social) Helpful (moral)
Secondary values	Responsible (moral) Equality (social) Helpful (moral) Capable (competence)	Capable (competence) Obedient (moral) Honest (moral) A sense of accomplishment (personal)

Figure 7: Overview of findings – Enterprise D

	Enterprise D: Service provider	
Text type	Who we are and what we do	Mission/vision – our responsibility
Primary values	Capable (competence) Ambitious (competence)	Equality (social) Responsible (moral) Helpful (moral) Capable (competence)
Secondary values	Equality (social) Responsible (moral) Helpful (moral) A sense of accomplishment (personal orientation) Imaginative (competence)	Honest (moral) Clean (competence)

The findings seem to reflect the reported difficulties of establishing and communicating a clear identity towards stakeholders. Hence, it appears that social enterprises are struggling to communicate their identity as social businesses (based on moral and social values), because they are simultaneously very eager to demonstrate that they are competent businesses (focusing on competence values). One might wonder why, seeing as they are, contrary to 'ordinary' companies, indeed born with CSR or responsibility as part of their DNA, the enterprises do not combine or merge the value system to a greater extent? In an institutional perspective, this could be seen as a call or search for legitimacy, as mentioned in the beginning of this section, in two sectors at the same time: the one based on competences is aimed at the private sector, the traditional field of businesses. The other, based on moral and social values, is a call for legitimacy in the social sector.

As a consequence, the enterprises are communicating and sending mixed, at times even contradictory, signals about who they are, perhaps because they have to cater for two very different fields, and hence different sources of legitimacy. It should be noted, however, that the findings also indicate that the larger (and perhaps more established) the enterprises get, the greater the propensity to mixing the values is. Enterprises A & B have a very clear division between applying competence values when explaining who they are, and moral values when explaining their mission/vision. A possible explanation could be that the aforementioned reported problems of having difficulties being recognized as a serious business, competing on equal terms and offering the same level of quality as 'ordinary' businesses, are predominantly to be found either in the early stages of the organizational lifecycle (determined by organizational age) or perhaps in the size of the organization. Thus, the more well-established, experienced and successful (in terms of higher number of employees), the more the enterprises dare break with the traditional ways of legitimizing themselves, and, consequently, the more willing they also are to expose and explain themselves as crossing the traditional sectorial borders and belonging in the new, fourth sector.

5. Conclusion

When organizations are crossing boundaries, in this case both organizational structural boundaries and consequently identity boundaries, it may be beneficial to see communication as the link or the boundary spanner between the different identities that this new type of organizational structure encompasses. But in the cases explored here, the communication does not perform that role as its content in terms of values portrayed differs quite a lot depending on whether the objective is to describe who the enterprises are, and what they offer or their mission/vision in terms of CSR.

Such differing, or perhaps even competing, value systems might explain why enterprises of this

particular type of organization struggle to communicate who they are. Thus, greater alignment between value systems communicated could be a way of both communicating clearly who they are, while simultaneously starting to establish social enterprises as a fourth sector, and thus organizational type and structure, in its own right. Other researchers (Smith et al. 2010; Dees 2012) have also pointed to the necessity of reconciling the value systems that, in this particular example focusing on the communication, result in the communication of two separate identities of the organizations. In his study, Dees (2012) argues that in the particular case of social enterprises, the different value systems applied are caused by the underlying, sometimes conflicting, cultures: "one is the culture of charity; the other is the culture of problem solving" (Dees 2012: 321). In order for social enterprises to become successful, Dees claims, they need to "adopt a data-driven, analytic value-system that blends the passion that attracts people to the cause with a rationality that will improve performance" (Dees 2012: 331). Much the same could be said for communicating and achieving a strong, coherent, yet unique, corporate identity.

In conclusion, the findings of this study offer new insights that can inform social enterprises in their planning and execution of their corporate identity communication. The dual approach of attempting to claim legitimacy in two very different fields by way of two different, sometimes opposing, value systems may not be beneficial. Instead, social enterprises could opt for claiming legitimacy, and thus enter into, in a possible fourth sector, by some referred to as the for-benefit sector (Sabeti 2009). This would also enable them to communicate their identity in a much clearer manner and hence create more awareness of this emerging field where they could be considered legitimate.

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Crossing university boundaries: Students' experience of PBL as a new epistemic game

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Abstract: Today, educational trajectories take university students through a range of different institutional and organizational contexts. Many students choose to earn their master's degree at a university different from their bachelor university. This increased mobility causes many students to cross university borders, both nationally and internationally. While the principles of collaborative learning, student-centered pedagogic approaches, and engagement with real-life problems are now widely applied principles at most universities, and are also promoted through large-scale transnational policy processes such as the Bologna Process, a few universities have demonstrated their strong commitment to such principles by dedicating themselves to the pedagogic approach of problem-based learning (PBL). This commitment may further internal cohesion and the development of a distinct and recognizable identity. In other words, a university's commitment to the teaching and learning philosophy of PBL creates *identity boundaries* (Santos & Eisenhardt 2005). This study explores the experience of students who cross these boundaries and make an effort to learn PBL, in other words, to study in a PBL context. Theoretically, PBL is understood as an overarching epistemic game (Perkins 1997; Markauskaite & Goodyear 2017a) that students seek to master. The empirical investigation was carried out at a PBL university that strongly encourages group work. Three focus group interviews were conducted at two different points in the project-writing period: once mid-term, when the project work was ongoing, and at a later point right after the (collective) oral defense of the project work. The findings suggest that while students seek to identify clear and manifest rules of the epistemic game of PBL, supervisors and censors expect students to be able to "learn through design of inquiry" (Markauskaite and Goodyear 2017b), in other words, to make their own choices regarding the epistemic framework.

Keywords: problem-based learning, multicultural groups, epistemic game, higher education mobility.

1. Introduction

In today's global higher education market, the individual university can gain much from developing a distinct profile that is attractive to students both nationally and internationally. While the principles of collaborative learning, student-centered pedagogic approaches, and a socially relevant and engaged curriculum are now widely applied at most universities and are also promoted through large-scale transnational policy processes such as the Bologna Process, a few universities have demonstrated their strong commitment to such principles by dedicating themselves to the pedagogic approach of problem-based learning (PBL). Offering students a different learning experience may help PBL universities to stand out from the crowd. In order to achieve this, the teaching and learning philosophy of PBL must figure prominently in the university's presentation of itself. In Santos and Eisenhardt's words, PBL functions as an *identity boundary*, creating internal cohesion and external recognition (Santos and Eisenhardt 2005). The present study takes an interest in students who cross these boundaries and enroll at a Danish PBL university (hereafter referred to as "the PBL university"). The group of boundary-crossing students is composed of both Danish and international students. PBL-organized programs often involve extensive periods of group work (e.g. Christensen 2016), and multiple studies have already addressed collaboration problems in multicultural project groups (e.g. Burdett 2014; Harrison & Peacock 2010; Strauss & Young 2011). It is important to note, however, that domestic students may find the transition from a non-PBL to a PBL university challenging as well. Hence, the present study addresses the experience of all students who cross university boundaries.

Theoretically, the study understands boundary-crossing as involving a transition from one epistemic culture to another (Knorr-Cetina 2007) and the expectation that students learn to master new epistemic games (Perkins 1997; Markauskaite & Goodyear 2017a). Thus, the paper establishes a framework for understanding the epistemic implications of crossing university boundaries. Furthermore, it investigates these implications empirically through a study of three multicultural student groups consisting of students representing different nationalities and different levels of PBL experience. The groups were interviewed twice in relation to their semester projects: once in the middle of the working period and once after their oral project exam.

This contribution to the special issue on boundary-crossing focuses on students who cross organizational boundaries to pursue academic careers. The students have been raised in particular cultural and disciplinary traditions, which they carry with them into new learning settings. On the one hand, this may cause clashes with domestic customs (and students), as demonstrated in much of the literature on multicultural groups (e.g. Harrison & Peacock 2010). On the other hand, boundary-crossing may also contribute to an enrichment of learning cultures and the availability of new resources, for example in relation to the number of languages spoken (Leki 2001). This study offers a micro-level analysis of how student groups at a PBL university handle boundary-crossing, in other words how they handle the associated challenges and benefits of the opportunities that are enabled precisely through boundary-crossing. Thus, the analysis seeks to answer the following research questions:

Which form of epistemic game do students expect PBL to be?

How do they experience the teachers' expectations regarding their mastery of the PBL game?

What are the consequences of these expectations for students who cross university boundaries?

2. Epistemic approaches to collaboration in student groups

Although group work dynamics in university education has received some scholarly attention (Strauss et al. 2011), surprisingly little is known about the role of knowledge in such collaborations. More is known about the social, intercultural, emotional, and gender aspects of student group work than about, for example, the differences in group work dynamics across disciplines or the influence of the kind of knowledge that students are expected to engage and develop in their group work. Given the fact that students are expected to be able to function as professionals in knowledge-intensive contexts, in which they are required to not only draw on acquired knowledge but also continuously renew their profession's knowledge base, knowledge practices in student groups need to be subject to more intensive research efforts. Consequently, the following contributions to a theoretical understanding of collaborative epistemic practices have largely been identified in the literature on professional work and not in the literature on group work rooted in educational settings.

2.1 Epistemic culture

The field of intercultural communication offers a rich vocabulary when it comes to explaining how cultural differences may trouble both interpersonal relations and teamwork. However, the study of encounters between educational traditions and epistemic cultures sits uncomfortably in the intellectual frameworks that are most common in this discipline. While the categories of nationality and ethnicity often dominate research agendas in the field of intercultural communication (Moon 2010), educational cultures escape such categorization. On the one hand, higher education cultures

understand themselves as being inscribed in a global rather than a national order. Significant familiarities exist, for example, among the university cultures of Northern Europe, which often consider themselves as the heirs of the Humboldtian university (Josephson, Karlsohn & Östling 2014), even if the influence of Anglo-American university systems has grown stronger (Ramirez 2006). On the other hand, disciplines often generate much more profound cultural differences and similarities between academic practices than do either national or regional traditions. Interdisciplinarity may generate as many misunderstandings and collaboration problems as interculturality understood in terms of nationality or ethnicity (Davies 2016). In other words, interdisciplinary and multicultural academic contexts offer a rich variety of manifestations of disciplinary and regional/national traditions and cultures. A mundane example: conventions for writing a social science paper may differ between a German and an American university, as would conventions for writing papers in history and sociology (Rienecker & Stray Jørgensen 2013). What we need to recognize is that students – both international and domestic – may cross multiple boundaries when engaging in multicultural group work. An investigation of precisely *which boundaries* becomes part of the empirical investigation of concrete contexts. Consequently, if we are to understand the importance of boundary-crossing in multicultural project groups at a PBL university, concepts must be developed that accurately reflect the academic context and the type of work that students are expected to perform in this context. In this contribution, the literature on *epistemic cultures* and *epistemic games* will be explored in order to establish a vocabulary enabling the analysis of the importance and impact of the differences in terms of academic experience and familiarity with particular educational cultures.

A key contribution to the understanding of knowledge work in contemporary societies is offered by the sociologist Karin Knorr-Cetina and her notion of *epistemic culture*, defined as "cultures of creating and warranting knowledge" (Knorr-Cetina 2007: 363). Addressing, firstly, the diffusion of scientific epistemic practices to broader segments of society, she points to macro-level changes in the role of knowledge in society (Jensen, Lahn & Nerland 2012). Knorr-Cetina (2007) observes: "The extent to which lifeworld dimensions of epistemic settings are reproduced in other areas says something about the depth of current transformations and the reach of knowledge cultures" (371). In other words, cultural practices characteristic of certain epistemic contexts (e.g. diagnosis and medical research) are adapted by lay people (performing self-diagnosis and research in illness and disease using internet-based material and internet fora).

Secondly, Knorr-Cetina also makes clear that epistemic cultures differ from domain to domain. Referring to Knorr-Cetina's work, Jensen, Lahn and Nerland (2012) explain that "these logics and arrangements [of epistemic cultures] carry features that are distinctive for the knowledge domain in question and thus provide analytical means for distinguishing between different domains and disciplines" (6). The virtue of the concept of epistemic cultures is that it "adds a more explicit concern for the role of knowledge" and "integrates and highlights the relationships between the epistemic practices in play when knowledge is created, distributed and validated" (8). The notion of epistemic culture is linked to a broader reflection on the knowledge concept itself, where the focus is on an understanding of knowledge as the product and producer of power relations (Foucault 1980) and as being embedded in specific social and cultural contexts (Knorr-Cetina 2007). As Knorr-Cetina explains, understanding knowledge as situational, contextualized and embedded in social practice, rather than as universal and objectively true, calls for new research approaches in the form of field and site explorations. This has resulted in an acknowledgement of the diversity of knowledge-creating and warranting practices: "Epistemic unity is a casualty of the cultural approach to knowledge production" (Knorr-Cetina 2007: 364). The diversity of knowledge production practices is closely linked to the materiality of the research processes: what the research objects are, where they are studied, and with what instruments and methods. "The focus on practice moves the level of analysis 'down' to the realm of material regularities and the ways these are associated with the material"

(Knorr-Cetina & Reichmann 2015: 873).

While disciplines and professions share epistemic practices across national and regional borders, they are also governed by what Knorr-Cetina calls "macro-epistemic" arrangements, which are the national and international constellations of institutions monitoring and approving the truths produced in local epistemic contexts. Actors in macro-epistemic arrangements include universities and international publishers, but also actors in non-academic epistemic systems such as international rating agencies that evaluate the economic health of states and financial institutions (Knorr-Cetina 2007).

The notion of epistemic culture has been used to explain the challenges of interdisciplinary collaboration (Mørk et al. 2008). Detailed qualitative studies on collaboration issues related to differences in terms of epistemic cultures are rare. Mørk et al.'s study reveals how a collaboration project between professionals with highly advanced technical skills and scientific knowledge failed to realize the full potential of a collective knowledge pool that included nurses, engineers, medical doctors, radiologists, and radiographers. Nurses and radiographers, especially, experienced barriers to having their practice-based insights included in the project because their knowledge was not founded on the most recognized forms of medical knowledge (randomized clinical trials), but rather on everyday experience with patients. This study illustrates how certain boundaries are never crossed because of the clash of institutionalized epistemic cultures. Members of practice-oriented professions were simply never invited to contribute their knowledge to a project because their knowledge was only deemed relevant to the actual implementation of the research design.

Summing up, we can characterize the merits of the notion of epistemic culture as threefold. Firstly, for a discussion of interdisciplinary and multicultural group collaboration, it provides a needed focus on the core of such collaborations: the production of knowledge. Collaborators may originate in different national contexts, but the notion of epistemic culture urges the observer to focus on such differences only if nationality is connected to relevant differences in *epistemic* cultures. As indicated above, differences in epistemic cultures seem to be more associated with regional differences than national ones. As is the case with national stereotypes, stereotypes in relation to epistemic cultures must be addressed critically (e.g. "the Chinese learner" (Chan 1999)). That being said, the differences in macro-epistemic arrangements are likely to engender different epistemic approaches in students. For example, the turbulence in the higher education systems of post-communist countries (Dakowska 2014), the highly competitive higher education systems of China and South Korea, and the rights-based and publicly funded higher education systems of Scandinavia inevitably leave very different marks on students raised in these systems. Secondly, similar to Foucauldian and practice-theory–based contributions, the notion of epistemic culture points to the relativity of scientific truths and to the value of "neglected knowledges". Concretely, the medical and engineering scientists in Mørk et al.'s study produced publishable scientific knowledge on improved surgery through new imaging technology. However, the nursing knowledge on increased post-operative pain was not recorded and recognized to the same extent. Thirdly, the notion of epistemic culture provides a concept that enables the analysis of difference and its importance in the context of today's multiplicity of interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaborative projects.

2.2 Epistemic games

Another concept often related to the notion of epistemic culture, the *epistemic game,* offers an even more finely tuned instrument for the identification of knowledge-related differences in cross-boundary collaboration. Initially, this concept was suggested as an idea countering the notion of situated and culturally embedded epistemic processes. When introducing this concept in 1997, Perkins claimed that the notion of epistemic games represented a counter position to Lave and Wenger's emphasis on situatedness, as introduced in their seminal work *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991). He argued that it is possible to identify general

intellectual processes – the so-called epistemic games that human beings engaged in inquiry perform across disciplinary and professional boundaries and across the boundary between scholarly/professional thinking and thinking in everyday contexts. He identified three basic epistemic games: characterization, explanation, and justification. When we make claims about the nature of things, we engage in the epistemic game of characterization; when presenting how a certain situation has come about, we engage in the epistemic game of explanation; and when we defend our claims against criticism, we engage in justification. All three types of epistemic games are characterized by having a form, a set of goals, a set of moves, and finally a set of rules. Fulfilment of these four criteria justifies the reference to these intellectual processes as "games." These overarching types can be divided into more specialized types. For example, establishing a typology or a set of categories that enable categorization would constitute a specialization of the characterization game. In the same paper in which Perkins suggests that epistemic games can be seen as general and overarching, he introduces the idea of specialized epistemic games and the understanding that different specialized epistemic games are played in different professions and disciplines.

> There is a bond between the demands of particular disciplines or professions, as they have been socially constituted, and epistemic games. One can hardly function as a mathematician without facility in handling axiomatic systems and deductive proofs. One cannot deal with the law in any serious manner without facility in dealing with rule and precedence-based reasoning. While some disciplines and professions may not demand mastery of highly specialized epistemic games, other disciplines and professions plainly do (Perkins 1997: 57).

This position is obviously very close to Knorr-Cetina's analysis that disciplines and professions are characterized by different epistemic cultures. The idea that different epistemic games are played in different epistemic cultures has been further elaborated in the work of Markauskaite and Goodyear (2017a), who define the epistemic game as a "form of action that entangles rules of thought and rules of culture with affordances and constraints, symbolic inscriptions and the physical world" (396). Markauskaite and Goodyear (2017a) developed a comprehensive taxonomy of professional epistemic games encompassing the following basic types: the propositional game, the situated problem-solving game, the meta-professional game, the trans-professional discourse game, the translational public discourse game, and the weaving game. The propositional game involves contributing to the profession's knowledge base primarily through research activities (research games, concept combination games, conceptual tool-making games). Situated problem-solving games involve applying professional knowledge in professional action. They range from producing solutions to a broad category of similar types of problems to the creation of solutions to situation-specific problems. These games "are highly contingent on a specific instance and situation" (Markauskaite & Goodyear 2017a: 411). The three types of discourse games all involve explicating elements of the profession's field of knowledge, but with varying audiences. Meta-professional discourse games involve the articulation of knowledge within the profession (e.g. the articulation of tacit knowledge), trans-professional discourse games involve the import and export of knowledge across disciplinary and professional boundaries, and finally, the purpose of the translational discourse games is to communicate to the public outside the profession or discipline, creating epistemic tools that can be used by such a public audience (e.g. patients). Weaving games are games that involve the combination of some of the above-mentioned games, but in a way that fosters a positive change in the situation. Teaching in a way that not only meets the curricular requirements but also responds – in the situation – to the interests and needs of learners, the atmosphere in the classroom, and other situational factors would be an example of the weaving game.

2.3 Problem-based learning understood in terms of epistemic games and epistemic cultures

The concepts of epistemic culture and epistemic game are to be used in a specific context that calls for some additional theoretical reflection. Multicultural collaboration will be studied in a university that places a strong emphasis on group work, interdisciplinarity, and problem-oriented learning. This emphasis is articulated in the institution's principles of problem-based learning (PBL): the problem as the point of departure, project organization, student cooperation, exemplarity and responsibility for one's own learning (Aalborg Universitet 2015). Whereas the university hosts a multitude of disciplines, specializations, and interdisciplinary fields representing a broad variety of epistemic cultures, all programs need to adopt what can be understood as one overarching epistemic game. The principles specify at a general level the goals (employment-relevant learning, the acquisition of communicative, collaborative, analytical, and results-oriented competences), the "moves" ("a time-limited and targeted process in which a problem may be phrased, analysed and solved, resulting in a tangible product" (Aalborg Universitet 2015: 4), the form (group work, supervision), and rules (point of departure in an authentic problem, the problem must be exemplary). In other words, the institution's principles satisfy the conditions for defining PBL as an epistemic game.

Given that this game needs to accommodate different epistemic cultures, it is less clear to what extent we can characterize PBL as a *specific* epistemic game according to Markauskaite and Goodyear's typology, which states that epistemic games played within educational and research settings are primarily propositional games. These are games aimed at developing and disseminating a discipline or profession's knowledge base. It is important to note, however, that there is a strong emphasis on outreach in the university's PBL principles. Students are encouraged to collaborate across project groups and, first and foremost, with (business) partners outside the university. They are also required to address authentic problems (problems that are experienced as pressing problems outside the walls of the university). Importantly, the student's work must also be "exemplary," meaning that what the students choose to work on and the way they go about it should bear some resemblance to how similar problems are addressed in professional (post-educational) situations. In other words, students are required to combine propositional games with problem-solving games. One might even say that the particular problem orientation of the university comes to the fore in the request that students take on such games. All higher education and research institutions require staff and students to play propositional epistemic games; however, they normally do this without demanding that students address specific types of problems (authentic ones) and without requiring students to establish the form of close connection to employment settings that is referred to as exemplarity.

It is also remarkable that the problem-solving game is here presented as the agenda-setting game, whereas propositional games are presented as subordinate in the sense that they support and assist the players in playing the overarching problem-solving game (i.e., the problem, not the discipline, governs the work process; students do coursework *in order to* use presented theories and methods in their project work). In other words, if the principles are taken at face value, profession or employment-oriented problem-solving games are put in the driver's seat of the epistemic machinery of PBL, whereas propositional games take on an ancillary role.

Markauskaite and Goodyear (2017a) point out that it is characteristic of games that rules, goals, well-defined forms, and moves are combined with flexibility, allowing for both mutual understanding and individual creativity (Markauskaite and Goodyear refer to Wittgenstein's notion of language games, but also to Bourdieu for a more structure-oriented game concept). In the PBL game, flexibility pertains to two aspects of project work: the content of the project (as long as it stays within the framework of the curriculum) and what is referred to as responsibility for one's own learning outcomes and the organization of one's own learning processes. The PBL principles phrase this largely as a collective responsibility. The epistemic game approach seems to offer little in terms of understanding a concept like responsibility for one's own learning. Epistemic games are always played in collectives according to socially set goals and rules and with shared understandings of

accepted moves and forms. Learning implies becoming a better player and mastering an increasing number of games. Markauskaite and Goodyear's model is a taxonomy, implying that students advance through the acquisition of the skills required to play new types of games. Obviously, playing the problem-solving game in a real-life setting is associated with independence and responsibility and as such is more advanced than propositional games. Using the example from pharmacy provided by Markauskaite and Goodyear, handing out the correct medication and providing adequate information to the patient is a more complex and consequential act than presenting the required propositional knowledge in a paper. But new players in both games have been taught how to play the game during their training and within communities of experienced peers. Markauskaite and Goodyear emphasize: "The focus for teaching is to devise ways to help students master the rules and principles that guide knowledge-producing conversations in specific epistemological frameworks: to help them become skillful in playing the epistemic games of the discipline or profession" (564). In other words, ensuring that students master the game is understood as being a joint responsibility of teacher and learner.

In contrast, students playing the PBL game are in some respects asked to devise their own version or specialization of the game. This request is made in relation to the content (determined by the problem formulation) and the organization of the work process leading to the completion of the project. Markauskaite and Goodyear address such levels of freedom and responsibility only in relation to learning activities aimed at teaching students to address a specific type of problem termed a "wicked problem". Wicked problems are ill-defined and dynamic problems; even the character of the problem is contested and subject to debate among stakeholders who have differing interests in relation to the problem (Alford & Head 2017). Wicked problems change as they are addressed. Wicked problems do not have optimal solutions, and the proposed solutions will often produce both desirable and undesirable effects. Important in relation to learning contexts is the fact that existing knowledge is inadequate, and no known methods will yield satisfying results when applied to the problem. Learners engaging such problems will have to "learn by designing their inquiry" (Markauskaite & Goodyear 2017b: 580). The fact that "Wicked systemic problems are increasingly common in many professional domains" (Markauskaite & Goodyear 2017b: 580) is a challenge to educational systems, while learning by designing the inquiry is a form of learning that is difficult to facilitate.

Firstly, this form of learning is only possible if content learning is associated with a form of *second-order learning* involving seeing the discipline, the course, and the communicated knowledge as an *epistemic device* (Markauskaite & Goodyear 2017b: 585). Concretely, this refers to the student's awareness that, for example, a discipline's preferred methods, valued theories, and foundational problems in themselves form the student's understanding of an issue, and that multiple other approaches are possible and equally valid. At the same time as the student adopts the knowledge of a course or a discipline, he/she also realizes that this knowledge is purely a lens with its own affordances and constraints. Learning always takes place against the backdrop of a critical awareness of alternatives and of a plurality of possible perspectives. Secondly, when students work on their own on projects or on other types of student-directed work, they find themselves in the role of "designers". They must choose among methods and be able to critically evaluate the affordances and constraints of these methods: "the focus on the use of a range of techniques and tools for knowing, the need to choose, and adapt them to the situation, and finally to use them in action, makes explicit the role of learners as designers of their own epistemic practices" (Markauskaite & Goodyear 2017b : 586).

Leaving students to design their own epistemic game (within the overall framework of the PBL game) undoubtedly comes close to the notion of *learning by designing inquiry*. There may well be good reasons for adopting such an approach: as noted by Markauskaite and Goodyear (2017b), students increasingly need to engage wicked problems – wicked problems may indeed be another term for the notion of *authentic* problems. Non-wicked or "tame" problems may not qualify as problems because the knowledge, expertise, and methods applicable to such problems already exist and can be identified. At the same time, if this form of learning is to be achieved, students need to

"learn how to learn" by design; in other words, they must be able to identify a wicked (authentic) problem, design the inquiry towards that problem, and understand the limits of their own design.

Vis-à-vis such demands, the following analysis will address the research questions in relation to students who have crossed university, discipline, and/or national boundaries.

3. The study

The study took place in the fall of 2017 and involved three multicultural project groups who were interviewed twice in the course of their work on their semester projects. At the PBL university, which is founded on the abovementioned PBL principles, semesters are normally divided into two periods: an intensive course teaching period and a subsequent (equally intensive) project writing period, in which the students' work is supervised by a member of the academic staff. Students are strongly encouraged to work on and write their projects in groups, and most of the students do so. As the result of their project work, they finally hand in a lengthy academic text called a project report, which usually takes the form of an extensive research paper. The written work is considered a joint accomplishment, but the students are graded individually based on their performance in the oral exam (which is a group exam). As has been reported elsewhere (Moore & Hampton 2015; Strauss, U-Mackey & Crothers 2014), graded group work in heterogeneous groups often creates tensions among students because the contribution of each individual student influences the collective result. For this reason, students often express concerns regarding group composition and try to find group members who share their level of ambition and conscientiousness. This was indeed the case in the three groups that participated in the study.

Two of the groups consisted of three students and one group consisted of five students. All groups were multicultural in that they were composed of Danish and international students (students from Eastern Europe and Germany). Some of the Danish students had completed their bachelor degree at another Danish (non-PBL) university. The groups participated in focus group interviews in the sense that the interviews were conducted with the group and not with individual members. The groups were interviewed once in the middle of the working process and once when they had completed and handed in their project and participated in the oral defense of the project. It turned out to be very valuable to include the exam experience in the study. Especially when it came to the exam experience, concerns and insecurities related to the epistemic game of PBL came to the fore.

In order to identify relevant participants, a larger pool of multicultural groups was contacted and asked if they could imagine participating in the study. Three groups volunteered to do so. Among the groups who politely declined to participate, the reason for non-participation was mainly lack of time due to project writing. It should be noted that the fact that students volunteered to participate may have contributed to a certain bias in the study. Willingness to devote time to the study indicates that these students already felt relatively successful. During the interviews, the students would sometimes refer to *other* groups and students for whom things did not work so well, for example, groups experiencing collaboration problems. Unfortunately, attempts to include such groups in the study were unsuccessful, which may be related to the method used to select interview participants (voluntary participation).

The format of the focus group interview was chosen because of the interest in knowledge-creation practices as a joint accomplishment of the project group. How do group members establish the terms of their epistemic practices? What are their expectations of the different roles involved in playing in the PBL game? How do they, collectively, systematize their inquiry into the problem they have chosen to work on? The desire for the students to produce a collective narrative of their journey from a vague interest in a topic to a written report had to be balanced against the obvious risk that the participants would feel constrained by the presence of the other group members in the interview room. Normally, when conducting focus group interviews, the participants are unrelated (Lune & Berg 2017), which reduces the risk of social pressure.

Admittedly, having members of the same project group in the same room and asking them questions about their collaboration practices is not unproblematic. Students working in project groups are highly dependent on each other, and no one would be interested in causing any problems for continued collaboration. This may have led the participants to express themselves more cautiously than they would have done had they been interviewed individually. However, the last interview took place after the final exam, in other words at a point where the students were no longer constrained by any obligation towards each other.

Table 1: Participating groups and their members

Group 1	Student A (bachelor from another Danish university), Student B (bachelor from the PBL university), Student C (international student)
Group 2	Student D (international student), Student E (bachelor from another Danish university), Student F (bachelor from another Danish university), Student G (bachelor from another Danish university), Student H (bachelor from the PBL university)
Group 3	Student I (international student), Student J (international student), Student K (Danish student)

Without directly activating the theoretical vocabulary of epistemic cultures and epistemic games, the focus of the interviews was the knowledge-creation practices applied in the project work: how did the students arrive at their problem formulation, how did they experience the requirements of doing a PBL project, how did they organize the working process, how did they distribute their work, and how did they interpret advice and criticism from the supervisor and censor? The focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Subsequently, the transcripts were coded in NVivo using a combination of theory-generated and data-generated codes. The concepts "epistemic culture" and "epistemic game" offer an abstract terminology enabling a general analysis and discussion of knowledge practices across contexts, disciplines, and professions. Whereas the interview questions were phrased in terms normally employed in the institution's communications on project and group work, the analysis took its point of departure in a theoretically determined understanding of the project work as an epistemic game. Thus, codes reflecting this understanding were developed. Perkins (1997) understood epistemic games as being rule-based. Markauskaite and Goodyear (2017a) built upon this understanding when defining epistemic games as involving both "rules of thought" and "rules of culture". Thus, it was important to include codes enabling the identification of the various ways in which the students talked about PBL as based on or regulated by rules. For example, students would talk about PBL as being based on "rules of thought" when they reflected on whether they actually had taken their point of departure in a problem (as opposed to a topic). Students also characterized PBL as involving "rules of culture". For example, they mentioned that the dimensions of the philosophy of science and methodology were emphasized much more "here" (at the PBL university) than they were used to. Theory-based codes were used in order to "open up" the analysis qua the systematization of data according to these categories. The theoretical construct of the epistemic game includes a conceptualization of how individuals normally conceive of being involved in an inquiry in a given context. They expect the inquiry to take place within certain perimeters, in other words, to be goal-oriented, structured, and regulated by certain rules (Perkins 1997; Markauskaite & Goodyear 2017a). These "game conditions" are set by the social and cultural context of the inquiry, in other words, by the epistemic culture (Knorr-Cetina 2007). Using the concepts included in the theoretical construct of the epistemic game in the analysis revealed several instances in which the students talked about PBL in a way that correlates with epistemic game

concepts (for example, when a student asked a censor, "Is this a PBL problem formulation?"). Thus, the use of codes based on the epistemic game construct was also instrumental in arriving at the finding that expectations of rules and well-defined forms and moves were not met in the feedback from supervisors and censors.

The theory-based codes were used in combination with what could be defined as in-vivo codes, concepts introduced and used frequently by the participants themselves. However, these were not concepts specific to the individual participants or groups, but concepts that figure prominently in the institutional discourse on problem-based learning, e.g. "problem", "problem formulation", "theory", and "methodology".

4. Boundary-crossing students experiencing the PBL game

The purpose of the following section is to present identified student expectations regarding PBL as an epistemic game and the identified disjunctions between these expectations and their actual experience. Subsequently, these disjunctions will be discussed vis-à-vis Savin-Baden's notion of PBL as a "disjunction-prone" learning process and the understanding of PBL as an epistemic game (Savin-Baden 2016). The presentation of the findings follows the chronology of project work: group formation, development of problem formulation, and finally, presentation of the project at the final oral exam. Research questions 1 and 2 will be addressed in relation to the different phases of project work, whereas section 4.4 is devoted to research question 3.

4.1 Group formation, or, learning how to pick your team

For all involved project groups, insecurities about how to play the PBL game arose continuously throughout the project period. One of the challenges in terms of knowing how to play the PBL game well appeared to be knowing how to pick your team – the kinds of people you can play well with. All participants had been through an open group formation process in which they were required to present their interests while also assessing their fellow students in terms of compatibility with their interests. The individual student enters this game with the epistemic goal of establishing a social and academic frame for pursuing a more or less well-defined interest in a topic. The students are aware that their chances of achieving their epistemic goal depend on finding the "right" people. Designing the social frame that will enable a student to achieve this epistemic goal is complicated. The students describe the process as socially awkward and emotionally uncomfortable. When theorizing group relations in student groups, the emphasis has often been on social aspects. However, when listening to student reflections on the right project partner, it becomes clear that epistemic concerns are not unimportant. Factors like academic interest and level of ambition are important, as is the way students present their epistemic goals:

> Student E: "some people were really passionate […] that topic, they knew something and they could talk about it, but then the most of them were actually just sitting there and listening and saying, 'Yeah, I am interested in the topic but [...] didn't look into it'".

In group formation processes, others are referred to as "people you don't know". Neither language nor national background was mentioned as a form of difference that mattered in students' reflections on whether someone could be a suitable project partner. Instead, how one presents project ideas and interests is thought of as a marker of difference important to group formation. Being too passionate and knowledgeable about a specific topic apparently scares other students off:

> Student F: "But I would also actually be a little bit scared, actually, if I knew that someone was so much into the topic, […] I would say like, 'Okay, I'll just do what you say because

> you obviously know anything, everything about this.' So, I wouldn't feel like she would want to compromise with me".

Another student points out that it might be a strategic advantage to pick someone who had already done a significant amount of work on a topic before the group formation. However, knowledgeable students might not want to share their insights with others: "it's super complicated because this person just doesn't want to share anything or like, then that you feel like, 'Oh, I'm just like, pushing this person back'" (Student G).

Knowing too much (or too little) seems to be one of the markers of suitability as a project partner. "Knowing too much" signals a lack of flexibility and a prioritization of academic interests over interest in people. The uncertainty around how to pick one's team caused one of the participants to refer to group formation as a "gamble": "I mean I think there's always a little bit of a gamble when you pick someone you never worked with before, but, yeah, so thankfully there was no problems". Students are acutely aware that picking one's team is an essential part of reaching the epistemic goal of PBL. Positive social relations are described as beneficial to academic results. However, there are several references in the material to "friendship groups", in other words, groups in which students base their project work on existing friendship relations instead of an interest in a topic and a more professional approach to the selection of project partners (level of ambition, level of commitment, sense of responsibility, etc.). Stories about friendship groups are all examples of how project collaboration based on an existing friendship went wrong and led to poor academic results.

4.2 Learning through design: which rules apply when designing the problem?

One of the basic rules of the epistemic game of PBL is that the problem defines and governs the inquiry. All steps undertaken in terms of establishing a theoretical underpinning or conducting empirical research have to be justified in relation to the problem. Hence, phrasing the right problem is the most important *design decision* that students make. Students are supposed to make this design decision independently within the group but supported by their supervisor. Granting students the freedom to make their own decision regarding the problem formulation is in accordance with the learning goal of "responsibility for one's own learning" or "learning through design of inquiry," as Markauskaite and Goodyear phrase it. Only by leaving this design decision to the students can the goal of teaching students to see the link between the problem formulation, selected theories and methods, and the final result be achieved. "Learning through design of inquiry" is a difficult learning goal to achieve because it requires the teacher (as supervisor) to operate in a non-interventionist mode that may be interpreted as a lack of engagement or responsibility, especially by students who are unfamiliar with the PBL approach (Gram & Jæger 2013).

Despite the fact that students are given the freedom to phrase the problem themselves, students refer to this decision as being regulated by rules in the sense that there are "strict" principles when it comes to defining what constitutes a problem. Thus, understanding the nature of a real problem is something that is expected to distinguish old-timers from newcomers. Students who did their undergraduate studies at the PBL university are supposed to know what characterizes a PBL problem formulation. Students coming from other universities find it difficult to discuss and decide on the problem formulation:

> Student A [student with a bachelor's degree from a non-PBL university]: I think it was, it was a little bit annoying for a while, because I'm not used to it being so strict in a way, I don't know if that makes sense but, yeah, I'm not used to, I think we were trying to reword the problem formulation at one point, and I said, 'Let's just do this, it's fine and just keep moving', like, 'Let's move on', and [name of student B] pointed out that, 'No, because then it's not a problem anymore', and I was like, 'Okay, does that matter?' 'Yeah, because

> it's PBL'.
>
> Student C [international student]: Yeah, it was difficult to, like, find a problem, like, and then discuss, 'Is this a problem?' Like, the whole problem formulation, the first time was very difficult.

Student A, who was unfamiliar with the PBL approach, referred to working in a problem-based way as using a specific lens vis-à-vis academic content:

> I think that I will have to put on the PBL glasses again… yeah, because I'm still not totally used to it, I've just worked with one project, so next semester I will probably learn again in a new way.

These quotes demonstrate that students categorize themselves and others according to their mastery of the PBL game. Student A (the inexperienced student) still refers to herself as a beginner – "I'm still not totally used to it" – and she is also prepared for the possibility that the next project will require her to expand her PBL knowledge and skills through learning "in a new way". Despite the fact that students understand problem formulation as something that can be done in a right or wrong way, and as such as regulated by a combination of written and unwritten rules, students still experience that the rules and criteria are contestable to a point where the value of prior knowledge may be outright rejected. Students ask for guidance (for example, Student B asked a censor, "Is this a PBL problem formulation?"), but do not receive direct or unambiguous answers.

Another example illustrates how a group finally settled on a problem formulation after having worked on one for at least two weeks. The selected problem formulation was subsequently criticized by the examiners during the oral exam on the project. Apparently, the problem formulation used in the project had been accepted or at least not rejected by their supervisor. The process left the students in a state of confusion. In their work arriving at the proper problem formulation, they understood that a certain set of criteria or rules applied, which had resulted in the disapproval of numerous suggestions by their supervisor. However, when discussing the problem formulation in the exam, additional criteria emerged:

> Student D: Well, what I think was maybe, like, the obvious problem we were facing through the whole process was our problem formulation and I feel, because now that was another topic in the oral exam, which was fine, but it appeared that the problem formulation had some, yeah, some issues, not really error.
>
> Student E: There wasn't a clear link between what we meant about two terms.
>
> Student D: Exactly, yeah, but that was very strange I thought because we were intensively working with her and then it's a bit contradicting I think, because, I mean, she is also our supervisor, I don't say that she should do it for us or anything, that ask questions about it she should, but maybe then tell us already beforehand if it's really vague or so, which she did before with the other problem formulations, then why not now again?

Students are given the freedom to design their inquiry by phrasing the problem guiding their work. When doing this, they assume that they are playing a well-defined epistemic game in the sense that they expect certain rules to apply, certain forms to be preferred, and certain moves to be expected in the pursuit of the epistemic goal of accomplished problem-based learning. Newcomers assume that

supervisors and PBL old-timers know and understand the rules (e.g. in the form of explicit assessment criteria and in the form of explicit acceptability criteria regarding the problem formulation), moves (e.g. in relation to exam performance), and forms (e.g. the form of the problem formulation). However, the concrete experience is that knowledge of what a proper problem formulation is supposed to look like is contested and changing.

4.3 Which game are we playing? Insecurities regarding the epistemic game

As indicated above, new students expect to learn the epistemic game of PBL. They look for guidance from teachers and PBL-experienced students. Based on the statements made in the group interviews, students clearly search for something that would fulfil the criteria of an epistemic game. They look for rules in the form of clear assessment criteria. They look for recommendations and guidelines regarding formats for problem formulations, methodology chapters, and performance at oral exams. On the one hand, students expect the PBL game to be a well-defined epistemic game that they eventually will come to master. On the other hand, they also state that the correct way to play the PBL game is dependent on the supervisor and the censor.

> Student E: I think it's difficult to prepare for exams because they are all different from each other and depending on the supervisor and the censor and who you are as a student, so, I don't know.

> Student D: It's also based on what kind of supervisor and censor you have, but also the feedback, like now the feedback that we got about this one, feedback that - we already talked about it - for instance, color coding our transcriptions but that doesn't mean that the next time with a different supervisor or a censor, maybe the feedback will be, 'Why, I didn't want the color coding in there,' so there must be some kind of general consensus somewhere in order to avoid that, but I think there is none.

> Student K: Yeah, because it can go in so many ways, I mean, they can go in-depth, like, with the program, or the report, that's also, I mean, they could, you know, ask like, whatever they want.

Based on the students' statements on the confusion that feedback from supervisors and censors generates, students do not find a unified, consistent response on how to play the PBL game in their interactions with supervisors and censors. Instead, they find that each supervisor and censor seems to suggest a different game that the students need to learn in order to do well. However, across all interviews, certain elements seem to have been points of contention between supervisors and students (although the students all express satisfaction with their supervisors at a general level): the problem formulation, the methodology, the understanding of the philosophy of science, and the concept of PBL itself:

> Student D (international student): For me […] it has nothing to do with the multinational group, it's more the thing itself, like, working on PBL, maybe, because I have never heard like, or I just recently learned it, like, all about constructionism and hermeneutics and I'm still super confused about it and I don't feel like that I have the knowledge actually going into an exam with that or having the overall knowledge that I could say, 'My research fits into this perspective', because, yeah, I feel like I'm, like, only have like superficial knowledge about it and don't know the deeper sense of it, how to do research, but I feel like it's, here at least, that that thing must be super important, how to address it, and I

> would, I don't know, feel like I'm missing a whole study on that right now.
>
> Interviewer: Would you say that it was both the behavior of the censor and the supervisor that was confusing to you, or was it just the situation itself?
>
> Student J: I think the censor [...] when he started to ask about the ontology and epistemology.

The epistemic objects that frequently turn into points of contention indicate that supervisors and censors might be emphasizing students' ability to make responsible choices and expecting them to be able to design their own epistemic game. The problem formulation and the chosen methodological and epistemological approaches all represent "fork-in-the-road" points where students need to make decisions of crucial importance for their epistemic goal. Thus, if teachers expect students to play a second-order epistemic game, which Markauskaite and Goodyear (2017b) refer to as *learning by designing inquiry*, these are the points where teachers would require students to be able to decide for themselves which moves they need to make and which rules they need to follow.

4.4 Consequences for boundary-crossing students

The study took its point of departure in an interest in boundary-crossing students and their encounter with a PBL university – in other words, with PBL as an overarching epistemic game. Being newly enrolled in a university always generates a certain level of culture shock, and a large body of literature addresses international students' adaption to the study abroad context. At the PBL university, the PBL pedagogy figures prominently among the factors that students refer to when they describe what is unfamiliar and different at their new university. Students do not refer to national or cultural differences but state that things are done differently because of the PBL approach of the university. As Student D (an international student) clearly states, the confusion and alienation that she felt in relation to her project exam "has nothing to do with the multinational group" but rather with the PBL approach itself.

Boundary-crossing students often refer to themselves as novices in terms of PBL ("I am not totally used to it"; "the conversation [in the exam] was a new thing to me"). Experiences that deviate from previous academic experiences are interpreted as somehow being related to the PBL approach. PBL becomes a framework in which everything that is unfamiliar and difficult to understand, ranging from the strictness of problem formulations to contact with supervisors and the heightened emphasis on methodology and the philosophy of science, can be placed. The notion of a relatively consequential shift and emphasis on PBL as a distinct and different epistemic game is co-constructed by PBL-experienced students, supervisors, and censors. The interviewees did not at any point stress the similarity of the PBL university to their home universities. Instead, the differences were emphasized. For the organization as well as its members, the PBL approach seems to function as a marker of an identity boundary (Santos & Eisenhardt 2005). Following Santos and Eisenhardt, this suggests that PBL helps the organization communicate (and maintain) the difference between insiders and outsiders, and what distinguishes the organization from others.

There seems to be a connection between the recurrent invocation of PBL as an organizational identity marker and the incoming students' experience of being in unfamiliar territory. The data contains multiple examples of how new students encounter a breach between their prior knowledge and what they understand as PBL principles. Most dramatically perhaps is when a student is told to "forget" prior knowledge in favor of a specific PBL approach, but also when students articulate their surprise regarding supervisors' and censors' prioritization of the methodology, philosophy of science, and PBL approach over the project's actual theoretical and empirical content. One (international) student understands this to be a local/university-specific focus: "I feel like it's, here at least, that that

thing must be super important" (Student D). "I am more used to questions about the analysis, that's usually the most important part" (Student A, a bachelor from a Danish non-PBL university).

5. Discussion and concluding remarks

Universities play a key role among the institutions constituting macro-epistemic arrangements (Knorr-Cetina 2007), the institutional arrangements securing the production, monitoring and approval of true knowledge. Within macro-epistemic arrangements, myriads of local and global epistemic cultures "creating and warranting knowledge" exist. Knowledge is constantly produced, challenged, confirmed, and applied through inquiries or so-called epistemic games. If inquiries do not produce knowledge through the epistemic games accepted in specific epistemic cultures, the produced knowledge cannot be said to be "warranted" in the sense suggested by Knorr-Cetina. Mastering the epistemic games constitutive of specific epistemic cultures is a prerequisite for being considered a competent inquirer and member of the culture. Hence, prospective inquirers (e.g. students) strive to master the culture's epistemic rules and moves and the accepted forms of knowledge representation, and pursue goals that are considered valuable within that culture.

As argued above, at universities founded on PBL pedagogy, PBL is presented as an overarching epistemic game. Through the practice of PBL, students are expected to expand the knowledge base of their fields (propositional games), solve problems (problem-solving games), and even engage in self-directed learning while addressing authentic or wicked problems that require them to engage in learning through designing their own inquiry. The literature emphasizes that such conditions create a challenging learning environment for students. Students inevitably encounter periods where they feel "stuck in learning", as Savin-Baden puts it. She also warns, "PBL is a process, practice and pedagogy in which students experience disjunction" (Savin-Baden 2016: 5). Feeling stuck and experiencing disjunction are, from a PBL perspective, seen as valuable opportunities for learning. Thus, tutors and supervisors are not supposed to point to solutions in order to remedy students' discomforting feelings. Instead, students need to develop their own strategies to get past situations in which they feel stuck. Often, however, tutors will intervene in order to help students get past states of being stuck (Jacobsen 2004).

Being stuck in a learning process happens in most learning contexts. Meyer and Land were among the first to use the notion of "threshold" concepts to identify the concepts that typically cause students to be "stuck" in their learning within a given discipline. These are concepts that are difficult for students to understand and difficult for teachers to teach. However, once these concepts are understood, they open up new spaces of understanding and even change the understanding of previous knowledge. In other words, threshold concepts can be characterized as *transformative*, *irreversible*, *integrative*, and sometimes *troublesome* (Meyer & Land 2005: 373). Meyer and Land (2005) argue that such concepts can be defined within individual disciplines because the same concept is likely to have the same effect and importance for most students studying that discipline (e.g. the notion of opportunity cost in economics). PBL scholars have recognized the relevance of the notion of the threshold concept in explaining bumps in the road of student learning. However, in PBL, students work on interdisciplinarily defined problems, and their learning is assumed to be self-directed. What will appear as threshold concepts cannot be defined a priori or within a single discipline. This has led some scholars to coin the term "transdisciplinary threshold concepts" (Barrett 2013; Savin-Baden 2016). Barrett based her choice of transdisciplinary threshold concepts on empirical studies, and Savin-Baden's conceptualization rests on a literature study. What constitutes a meaningful threshold concept seems to depend to some extent on the context and the purpose of the study. In the present study, "problem formulation", "methodology", and "philosophy of science" emerged as threshold concepts that, at the time of the last round of the interviews, caused a state of being stuck and the uncomfortable feeling of being confused. The sense of being stuck does not concern the learning of the disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge presented in the projects. Instead, being stuck relates

to learning PBL. Thus, it is argued that problem formulation, methodology, and philosophy of science emerge as threshold concepts for the goal of learning PBL as an epistemic game, specifically the game of learning through the design of inquiry.

The study departed from a specific interest in students coming from non-PBL educational backgrounds. The study intended to investigate differences in the perception of PBL between PBL-experienced and inexperienced students in order to understand the challenges involved in crossing university boundaries. However, the study found that both PBL-experienced and inexperienced students could find themselves in a state of being stuck in their PBL learning. Students with a non-PBL background explain this experience with the fact that they are PBL novices, but none of the students feel confident that they have now mastered the PBL game. Feelings of confusion and insecurity and of being stuck are first and foremost related to the exam situation.

The notion of epistemic games is helpful in explaining the students' feeling of being stuck on their path to learning PBL. To put it more simply, students expect to play a different kind of game. They conceive of PBL as a well-defined, rule-based game involving certain preferred practices and presentation formats and pursuing specific goals. Based on the questions that the students ask (e.g. "Is this a PBL problem formulation?"), students expect to be integrated into a social practice in which masters of PBL as an epistemic game will introduce them to the rules of the game. In contrast to these expectations, they are confronted with institutional and pedagogic demands that they learn to devise their own game by crafting a productive problem formulation, choosing adequate methods, and understanding the affordances and limitations of theories, methods, and knowledge produced. These demands are likely to be different from prior experience, for example in high school or at non-PBL universities, and thus students clearly experience boundary-crossing as consequential.

Well-defined, rule-based epistemic games are played in most educational institutions both in the field of secondary education and in higher education. Without applying the vocabulary of epistemic games, Jacobsen (2004) illustrates how students and tutors in what is supposed to be a PBL setting become involved in this type of epistemic game. In accordance with PBL principles, the student group is presented with an openly defined situation in the form of a description of a set of medical symptoms. In the PBL tutorial, they are supposed to use their medical knowledge to provide a diagnosis of the patient's condition. Jacobsen's study illustrates how the tutor steers the deliberation process towards a specific solution, and the game for the students thus becomes one of interpreting the cues provided by the tutor and guessing the solution based on these cues and on cues provided in the text. Such games bear little resemblance to the complexity represented by real cases and illustrate the importance of encouraging students to go through the process of systematizing complex and perhaps even contradictory knowledge into a problem formulation of their own making. However, Jacobsen's case study reflects the same type of cue searching and interpretation game in which students seem to be involved in the present study.

Barrett (2013) argues that well-designed problems provoke students to go beyond what is already known and engage knowledge beyond the threshold. The literature drawing on the notion of threshold concepts conceives of the space beyond the genuine engagement of threshold concepts as a "liminal space" (Land & Meyer 2006; Savin-Baden 2016; Barrett 2013). It is understood as a space "betwixt and between spaces" because it is the space of transition from old to new understandings, identities, and modes of acting. In the liminal space, the learner may anticipate new understandings but could also "regress" to previously held ideas. However, former ideas are seen in a new perspective, and because passing the threshold is believed to be an irreversible act, learners are not able to return to the state they were in before entering the liminal space (Savin-Baden 2016). Based on the findings reported above, the interviewed students seem to find themselves in the borderland that is referred to as a state of liminality. They articulate a growing realization that they will not be taught well-defined PBL rules or unambiguous formats and standards. Instead, they are met with questions regarding their own choices. This realization is surely troublesome knowledge (Savin-

Baden 2016). The epistemic game approach suggests that beyond the relative safety of playing well-known epistemic games, players of epistemic games will be expected to design their own game – especially if they intend to engage authentic, socially relevant and therefore wicked problems. In PBL-organized students, this seems to be what waits beyond the space of liminality.

The findings of the study beg the question: should institutions and individual teachers do more to accommodate students' call for rigorous and unambiguous guidelines on how "to do PBL"? Would clear guidelines on how to write good problem formulations and make the right methodological choices remove students' experience of confusion and uncertainty? Such guidelines obviously exist (e.g. Bitsch Olsen & Pedersen 1999; Dahl 2010) and are often included in introductory classes on PBL. However, the parts of the PBL literature that recognize the often agonizing and frustrating phases of liminality in project work do not suggest that students should seek to avoid these phases. On the contrary, such phases are seen as integral to the PBL process itself. Thus, it is the job of the supervisor or tutor to challenge students to such an extent that the students are forced to go through the transition process referred to as liminality (Barrett 2013). Barrett (2013) depicts this transitional learning process as a triangle involving engagement of the field's threshold concepts, personal identity development, and finally, a changed capacity for professional action. As Barrett points out, the professional action dimension may take many forms depending on the educational context of the PBL learner. Still, the insight that active engagement and the internalization of the intellectually challenging parts of one's field or discipline and identity change go hand in hand applies to all higher education learning contexts. Thus, a desirable outcome of transitional PBL learning processes is that students develop confident identities as problem-oriented academics and professionals who are able to make well-founded and reflective choices that can be defended in today's complex and ambiguous working contexts. As Barrett points out:

> It is also about being able to define the kernel of a problem and being able to stand over this professional judgment. In professional practice other professionals may agree or disagree with their definition of the problem and clients/service users/students may also agree or disagree with that decision or may seek a second professional judgment elsewhere. For there are many and competing theories in each discipline. […] It is vital that students are able to ask themselves the following questions: Where do I situate myself? Why? How do I define the problem?" (Barrett 2013: 530).

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Researchers as boundary spanners

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Abstract: For universities to accomplish their 'third mission', researchers are supposed to engage themselves in problem solving processes with external actors, but to successfully cross organizational boundaries between the universities and the outside world is easier said than done. Rather than developing new collaborative approaches in dealing with practitioners, this paper applies action research as a dual process of participation that elaborates the knowledge exchange process of boundary spanning. Two comparative case studies have been selected because of their similarities in practice and their differences in outcome, making them suitable for studying a researcher performing boundary spanning activities. This study has shown that when contact, negotiation and knowledge exchange have been completed in an effort to advance the change process in the organization and certify preliminary findings in the research process, the researcher has succeeded as a boundary spanner. But to be involved in an organization's change process and concurrently involve practitioners in the research process calls upon a certain degree of chaos, uncertainty and messiness. This is why boundary spanning activities, such as establishing contact, upholding contact, re-establishing contact, negotiating collaborative terms, and satisfying practitioners' non-research related demands, take a great amount of time away from conducting research. Hence, this paper argues for the necessity of earmarking university resources to researchers that assume the role as boundary spanners.

Key words: entrepreneurial universities, action research, boundary spanner.

1. Introduction

The Stansted University-inspired concept 'the Entrepreneurial University' provides innovations and economic development as 'third mission' to universities' traditional roles of education and research (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 2000). With the aim of strengthening the knowledge-based economy through universities' collaborations with the surrounding society, the OECD, the EU and national governments have, since the beginning of the millennium, advocated for and stimulated an increasing inclusion of non-university stakeholders to ensure influx of knowledge and commercialization of research. For universities to support entrepreneurship and participate in innovation activities (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 2000), university departments expand and merge, focusing on setting up new administrative entities such as funding and matchmaking offices that operate to span boundaries between universities and outside organizations. However, serving a broader variety of purposes and stakeholders, these more omnipotent universities put pressures on researchers to partake in innovation processes outside the university and to generate knowledge believed to be of social and economic relevance to the surrounding society. Consequently, researchers who typically are measured, benchmarked and promoted according to performances on education and research are in need of methods capable of spanning the boundaries between university and organizations without jeopardizing their academic integrity and freedom. Here, researchers can look for inspiration within a long academic tradition of action research starting with the pioneering work of J.L. Moreno, who in 1913 coined an actionist view of research as action research. In the 1930s, this view was followed up on by Kurt Lewin, outlining action research as proceeding in a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of planning, action, observation and the evaluation of the result of the action (McTaggert 1994: 316). Although it seems that for many years, action research has been neglected, marginalized and perceived as an obscure field of academia that conflicts with academic norms, it has earned recognition as a method of generating empirical data, which is exemplified in SAGE's *Handbook of Action Research* (Reason and Bradbury 2001) published prior to Sage's other two handbooks dealing

with methods, namely quantitative research (Kaplan 2004) and qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). According to Helskog, "action research has such an innovative perspective, and is today a flourishing research tradition within fields such as health, education and organizational development" (Helskog 2014: 4). Based on the above reasoning and my own experiences with action research as a method capable of spanning organizational boundaries, this paper elaborates on the researcher as a boundary spanner and why it is difficult for the researcher to successfully cross organizational boundaries between the universities and the outside world despite the fact that universities expect researchers to do so.

The paper is structured as follows: (1) action research in practice is presented outlining two processes of participation; (2) the concept of a boundary spanner is operationalized according to action research; (3) the methodology including research design, case selection and presentation of empirical data is presented; (4) a comparative analysis of two cases in which the researcher performs boundary spanning activities is presented; (5) the paper concludes by discussing the researcher as a boundary spanner.

2. Action research

Huang characterizes research aiming at solving problems in the surrounding society as action research (2010: 97, 99). As such, action research begins with an imperfectly understood idea and a desire to confront a general problem in society or in organizations because some kind of improvement or change seems needed (McTaggart 1994: 316). Action research thus seeks to bring action and practice together with theory and reflection in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people and their communities (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003: 10).

Understood as action accompanied by research (McTaggart 1994: 318), the main characteristic of action research is that it involves participation of both the researchers and the practitioners, which delineates it from e.g. 'applied research', which has no expectations of participation (McTaggart 1994: 314) and from uncritical consultancy work that leads to the reification of power relations in organizations and neglects academic contributions to theory and practice (Huang 2010: 97). Accordingly, action research is the way for researchers and practitioners, joined by a thematic concern, to organize the conditions under which they can learn from their own experiences, and make these experiences accessible to others, making it not merely about learning, but also about knowledge production (McTaggart 1994: 317). In the following, participation as a concept embedded in action research is elaborated through the dual process of participation; namely, how the researcher participates in the change process and how the practitioner participates in the research process.

3. The dual process of action research

In contrast to being a member of a social community or belonging to a societal group exemplified through Dwyer & Buckle's three roles of membership; "peripheral member researchers", "active member researchers", and "complete member researchers" (Dwyer & Buckle 2009: 55), there is no in-between membership for researchers studying organizations. To own a membership of an organization, you are either paying a membership fee, putting in voluntary working hours, or getting imbursement for your time spent in terms of salary or compensation. Still, you are not considered to be an insider if you have not been an integral part of the organization for a longer period of time. As such, both the researcher's participation in the change process and the practitioner's participation in the research process vary according to whether the action researcher is an insider or the researcher needs an invitation to access the organization chosen as subject of research.

As an insider, the researcher negotiates with superiors, colleagues and partners in order to get access to documents, data, meetings, and people on lower, same and higher levels in the organization. Depending on the topic of research and ethical considerations, the researcher may operate covertly or semi-covertly to obtain empirical data on the change process as it evolves in the organization (inspired

by Brannick and Coghlan 2007: 70). Thus, the organizational membership enables rich insider accounts and valuable understanding of organizational practices, manager's role, and the internal dynamics of the organization (Brannick & Coghlan 2007: 65-66). However, these insights come with a cost because in "sustaining a full organizational membership role and the research perspective simultaneously, insiders are likely to encounter role conflicts and find themselves caught between loyalty tugs, behavioral claims, and identification dilemmas" (Brannick & Coghlan 2007: 70).

In the case of non-membership, the researcher needs to be invited inside an organization by proposing a value proposition to the organization in terms of contributing to solving a given problem, e.g. by playing an active role in a change process or providing knowledge for the organization to handle the complexity of a problem. This more restricted access to the organization increases the emphasis on the collaboration with the practitioners in order to harvest and generate empirical data and validate preliminary research. Although the research is conducted by the researcher, the dialogue with the practitioner prior to and during the research process provides the researcher with insights in the subject of research that contributes to outlining the research question and structuring the research project. With consideration to confidentiality, sensitivity to others, and organizational politics, the practitioner furthermore delivers access to the organization's documents, data, meetings, and people (Brannick & Coghlan 2007: 67-68). Finally, yet importantly, the researcher should avoid bias and fallacies by receiving feedback when disseminating the preliminary research results to the practitioner or preferably a cohort of practitioners (Huang 2010: 99).

Nonetheless, to engage a practitioner in a research process and concurrently secure the ability to have an impact on the organization's change process put severe demands on the researcher's abilities to live up to professional and cultural expectations of the 'local' community of practitioners and the 'cosmopolitan' community of scholars, respectively (Huang 2010: 99). In the action research literature, this dual process has been framed as crossing organizational boundaries, emphasizing the researcher's capability to shift between organizational settings (Liberati et al. 2016), which implicitly denotes action researchers as insiders of the organization they have chosen as subject of research. However, it is quite difficult for researchers to gain access to external organizations because organizations are not necessarily interested in letting researchers in, and they rarely have the resources to deal with research and the results of it. Hence, forms of collaboration where boundaries are kept intact are more realistic, thus making boundary spanning a kind of second-best option, when the possibility of transcending organizational boundaries is not possible due to lack of insider access.

4. The researcher as a boundary spanner

In literature, boundary spanners are defined as "human agents who cross and connect various organizations or units" (Vakkayil 2012: 210). The boundary spanner is considered to be an individual who has a dedicated job role or responsibility to work in a collaborative environment (Bordogna 2017: 4). The role may also be self-initiated and without self-interest (Schotter and Beamish 2011). Levina and Vaast distinguish between 'nominated boundary spanners' and 'boundary spanners-in-practice'; the difference lies in the fact that nominated boundary spanners neglect paving the way for collaboration because they are unable or unwilling to initiate genuine boundary spanning activities, whereas boundary spanners-in-practice engage in boundary spanning activities that lead to positive results for the organization (Levina and Vaast 2005: 340). For universities to be an integral part of the surrounding society and not least to attract external funding to maximise budgets, researchers are encouraged to engage themselves in problem solving processes with external actors. However, without organisational affiliation to the chosen subject of research, the researcher is unable to cross organizational boundaries. This situation leaves the researcher to facilitate the research process and the practitioner to be in charge of the change process, respectively, which demarcates boundary spanning as a continuous exchange between two entities separated by organizational boundaries. This

involves "relating practices in one field to practices in another by negotiating the meaning and terms of the relationship" (Levina & Vaast 2005: 339). However, in order to come as close to the ideals of action research as possible by assuming the role of a boundary spanner, the researcher - in addition to (A) establishing and upholding contact and (B) negotiating the rules of collaborating - has to apply the action research's dual process of participation as part of (C) exchanging knowledge with the practitioners, as depicted in Table 1 below:

Table 1: The Researcher as a boundary spanner

A)	Establishing and upholding contact
B)	Negotiating the rules of collaborating
C)	Exchanging knowledge a. Practitioner's participation in the research process b. Researcher's participation in the change process

(Authors own creation)

In the following, the methodology is presented, after which the two cases are analysed according to the conditions for the researcher as a boundary spanner, as outlined in Table 1 above.

5. Methodology

Two business development organizations, both governed by a board consisting of local and regional politicians, have been selected as cases; not because of their organizational similarities but because they in relation to the researcher's attempt at performing boundary spanning activities turned out quite similar in practice but different in outcome. In terms of practice, the researcher was granted access to both organizations but in terms of outcome, the researcher only succeeded in having an impact on the change process in one of the cases, which makes the two cases suitable for comparing aspects that constraint and enable the researcher in taking on the role as a boundary spanner. As such, this paper applies a comparative most-similar-but-with-different-outcome case study design, providing the researcher with real-life situations and information to understand the underlying aspects of an issue (Flyvbjerg 2016). In addition to the recollection of the researcher's own experience with taking on the role as a boundary spanner in the two cases, the empirical data consist of documents retrieved from each case: collaboration agreements, research group strategies, e-mails, notes and minutes from meetings, reports, power points, and development strategies on local and regional levels.

For reasons of privacy, the two business development organizations are kept anonymous because the involved practitioners work in politically driven organizations involving a plethora of public and non-public stakeholders. These privacy statements made in agreement with the organizations also concern the documents used in the analysis.

The involvement in the two research projects is motivated by the researcher being educated and employed at a self-styled 'entrepreneurial university' that, since its inception, has focused on a problem-oriented practice of involving practitioners to discuss and (re)shape research questions, in which the researcher has been accustomed to communicating with both the local community of practitioners and the international community of scholars.

6. Analysis - Case I

In May 2013, contact to the head of secretariat was made through an email proposing to arrange an employee seminar with the purpose of discussing and reflecting on the conditional growth underlying the practice of regional development. As proposed in the email, the researcher's analysis of enabling

growth in two or more regional development projects would be presented at the seminar to facilitate two rounds of workshops. The head of secretariat replied by promising to present the proposal for the members of the joint secretariat on an upcoming meeting, but did not do so. Instead, a meeting with the head of secretariat was arranged in the beginning of July 2013 where the researcher was given the opportunity to interview project leaders from three regional development projects particularly selected because of their successful impact on implementing the regional development strategy. With input from the head of secretariat on matters such as case selections, the researcher prepared the research design and a description of a three-hour long employee seminar to be held by the end of September. In the beginning of August 2013, this was emailed to the head of secretariat who emailed a letter of consent to the three project leaders, advising them of what was on the way.

Along with the development strategy, the researcher received from the head of secretariat statutory external evaluation reports performed by consultants on the three regional development projects, which according to theoretical considerations were analyzed and operationalized into three interview guides. Based on the interviews with the three project leaders conducted during the last week of August 2013, a ten-page report outlining the research design, theoretical framework, analysis and conclusion was made and sent to the head of secretariat for approval. Based on the head of secretariat's feedback, the report was finalized and sent to the employees a few days before the seminar.

At the seminar held during the last week of September 2013, the research was disseminated to the employees, including those affiliated to the three regional development projects chosen as research cases. This was followed up by workshop sessions in which the employees discussed the presented results and how to convert this new knowledge into change of practice in terms of framing and facilitating growth in regional development projects. Another impact was that the presented knowledge at the seminar came to play a central role in formulating the impending development strategy, which was exemplified by having the headline of a central theme presented at the seminar reproduced in the name and mission of the strategy.

During the entire research process, the head of secretariat played a dynamic role in contributing to outlining the research design and providing the researcher with inside information and feedback on the preliminary results. At the seminar, the employees engaged in fruitful discussions on the presented key concepts and results, which provided the researcher with case-specific insights that further highlighted differences and similarities between the various regional development projects. Overall, knowledge was transferred between the researcher and the practitioners, thus contributing to the academic knowledge production.

7. Analysis - Case II

In early spring 2015 at a strategy presentation held by a central municipality of the region, the researcher and the head of secretariat briefly met to discuss the idea of collaborating on producing knowledge on the newly established business development organization. Followed up by a formal meeting at the head of secretariat's office, the idea was sketched and a presentation hereof was put on the agenda for the upcoming joint secretariat meeting at the end of April 2015. The researcher's research group was briefed about the potential collaboration and they quickly formulated several topics that could be of both academic and practical interest, which were synthetized and presented to the joint secretariat who responded by appointing two members to explore this possibility of collaboration in terms of sharpening the topics and bringing in topics to be researched. In May 2015, the researcher met with the two appointed members of the joint secretariat to discuss these matters, and a first meeting with the research group was planned to take place in mid-September 2015, thus giving the research group time to narrow down the many potential research topics to common research questions. At the meeting between the two representatives from the joint secretariat and the research

group, the expectations to the collaboration were framed according to mutual learning, shared knowledge and knowledge production. A longitudinal research study involving two rounds of interviews was chosen and a cover letter and a list of respondents were produced and sent to the head of secretariat's office. The office promised to schedule interviews with political and administrative representatives of the organization that were to take place in November and December 2015. However, the interviewing request was delayed in being processed and granted by the executive body of the business development organization because the head of secretariat was on leave. Consequently, the first round of interviews was postponed until February and March 2016.

With the first interview round completed in March 2016, a thematic review of the 26 interviews was presented for the joint secretariat whose members displayed a keen interest in gaining information about political and geographical divides that could restrain the further development of the business development organization.

Meanwhile, the position as head of secretariat had become vacant, which derailed the initial plan of presenting the preliminary research to the joint secretariat in the beginning of August 2016 followed up by presentations to the executive body and the political board both to take place in November 2016. With the aim of resuming the collaboration process, a meeting took place in December 2016 with the newly appointed head of secretariat who invited the researcher to present the preliminary research on a joint secretariat meeting concerning the future of the organization to be held in January 2017. This presentation resulted in fruitful discussions among the practitioners who provided the researcher with feedback on the preliminary research. However, as a closing remark, the practitioners explicitly called for a written report outlining the overall themes of the interviews, indicating that they had expected such report from the researchers.

Consequently, a meeting between the head of secretariat, representatives from the joint secretariat and the research group was held in March 2017 to discuss future activities that could express the spirit of mutual learning, shared knowledge and knowledge production as explicated in the collaboration agreement. This discussion resulted in an afternoon workshop held in May 2017, where the research group and the head of secretariat's office shared knowledge in an attempt to come up with suggestions on how the administrative employees could further contribute to anchoring the business development organization on local level through communicational means and assisting the executive body and the board in succeeding in placing regional issues on top of the national government's agenda.

In September 2017, the thematic interview report requested by the joint secretariat was emailed to the head of secretariat's office, which once more had a vacant position as head of secretariat. However, in late October, a meeting between the research group and the then newly appointed head of secretariat was held, discussing the topics and recommendations of the report. On that meeting, it was decided that the researcher should attend the upcoming meetings of the joint secretariat, the executive body and the board, respectively, with the purpose of presenting topics and recommendations selected from the thematic interview report that could facilitate discussions of restructuring the organizational set-up of the organization.

In November 2017, the researcher presented the chosen topics and recommendations from the thematic interview report to the joint secretariat, resulting in discussions among the members about restructuring the organization. Due to political concerns, however, the head of secretariat had not in advance distributed the report to the members of the joint secretariat as the predecessor had promised at their January meeting. The head of secretariat, who was held accountable for this decision, indicated that the report was based on speculations and thus academically doubtful, which left the members and especially the researcher bewildered about the assisting role of the researcher in the occurring restructuring process. Consequently, the researcher's standing invitation to contribute with knowledge-based input to the further decision process in the executive body and the political board was withdrawn by the head of secretariat. Hence, the business development organization disregarded

the report and its recommendations by continuing more or less with status quo, indicating that the researcher had close to no impact on the restructuring process of the organization. Nonetheless, the researcher and the head of secretariat met at an externally held conference on regional development in the beginning of June 2018, and with reference to the collaboration agreement between the research group and the organization, the collaboration was resumed through the planning of a second interview round scheduled for the first half of 2019.

8. Comparative analysis

In terms of establishing and upholding contact (A), in Case 1, the head of secretariat was contacted to improve the framing and facilitation of growth in regional development projects, which made the value proposition quite clear from the beginning, as they wanted to maintain legitimacy as a growth enabler. In Case 2, the researcher's value proposition was multi-purposed to begin with, but became centered around improvements on the organizational setting. However, because the position as head of secretariat became vacant twice, resulting in two periods without an appointed head of secretariat, the researcher had to invest time away from research to uphold contact with the head of secretariat's office in an effort to secure ongoing support to the researcher's participation in the change process despite the changing heads of secretariat.

Regarding the negotiation of the rules of collaboration (B), in Case 1, the research topics were discussed and agreed upon with the head of secretariat, and, in Case 2, a cohort consisting of two representatives from the joint secretariat was appointed to discuss and qualify the research topics. The fact that Case 1, for more than 10 years, had experienced a steep learning curve of collaborating in terms of improving regional development downgraded the need to take into considerations any concerns of confidentiality, sensitivity to others, and organizational politics. This made it easier for the researcher to negotiate and get access to documents, project evaluations and people. In Case 2, which at the time was in a turbulent phase of constitution, any concerns over confidentiality, sensitivity to others, and organizational politics played a pivotal role in explaining why the researcher did not receive any undisclosed documents, but had to rely on documents found online. However, in both cases, the head of secretariat provided the researcher with a letter of consent that opened up doors to high level offices that would otherwise have been difficult to enter as a researcher not embedded in the change processes of these organizations.

In terms of the practitioner's participation in the research process (C-a), in Case 1, the provided documents were analyzed and three interviews with the project leaders were conducted. These laid the empirical foundations on which the research-based report was written. This preliminary research had been reported in advance to the head of secretariat, whose feedback was incorporated in the final report that the employees received prior to the seminar. At the seminar, which was run by the researcher, the practitioners provided feedback on the preliminary research, contributing to the further research process. In Case 2, the online documents were analyzed and 26 interviews conducted with political and executive decision makers, which laid the empirical foundation for the research. At the joint secretariat meeting concerning the future of the organization, the discussions of the practitioners provided the researcher with new insights and feedback on the presented preliminary research. In both cases, the practitioners involved were all academics who were able to discuss and scrutinize the researcher's presented preliminary research for flaws and thereby contribute to the research process.

As regards the researcher's participation in the change process (C-b), in Case 1, the practitioners gained knowledge on how to better frame and facilitate growth, and the presented report's framework of growth was later applied by the board in formulating an overall development strategy. In Case 2, the practitioners of the joint secretariat were presented to the researcher's preliminary research, but as a consequence of political controversial topics outlined in a later presented thematic interview report – specifically requested by the members of the joint secretariat and containing the various

research topics covered in the interviews - these research-based inputs and recommendations on organizational development were never presented as part of the executive body's and board's decision making process of improving the organizational setup. The researcher contributed to the change process in each of the two business development organizations in similar ways, but because former debatable topics had become politically controversial and thereby were threatening the political foundation of the Business Development Organization, the researcher's impact on the change process of Case 2 did not match the successful impact in Case 1. However, it could have been a more impactful outcome in Case 2 if the research process had been executed as initially planned. Instead, it was delayed several times due to the lack of continuity in the position as head of secretariat, and because all the organization's entities had to accept the researcher's access to the organization. Also, the research process could have been better facilitated by the researcher and the two representatives of the joint secretariat had they foreseen the practitioners' demand for a written report on topics uncovered during the interviews and incorporated this cultural-specific expectation in the then upcoming exchange process between the researcher and the practitioners.

The main difference between the two cases has been the fact that the researcher, in the first case, succeeded as a boundary spanner by contributing to the change process through the exchange of knowledge, which, in the second case, was hampered by political concerns.

9. Conclusion

For universities to accomplish their third mission, researchers are supposed to perform boundary spanning activities covering the three phases of contact (A), negotiating (B), and exchange (C-a)(C-b). By comparing two case studies of boundary spanning activities, this study has shown that the researcher as a boundary spanner first has to put together a value proposition that plays into the practitioners' raison d'être of their organization. When contact has been made and access to the organization has been granted, the researcher and the practitioners negotiate the rules of collaboration that frame the change process and the research process. Finally, the researcher and the practitioners exchange knowledge in an attempt to advance the change process in the organization and certify preliminary findings in the research process. However, to assume this role as a boundary spanner, the researcher must be able to handle a certain degree of chaos, uncertainty and messiness, which is difficult for those researchers who like to be in control of the research process.

This study has also shown that boundary spanning activities, such as establishing contact, upholding contact, re-establishing contact, negotiating collaborative terms, and fulfilling the practitioners' non-research related demands, take a great amount of time away from doing research. Hence, universities that, in their effort to accomplish their third mission, encourage researchers to engage with practitioners in solving the surrounding society's problems should organize competence development courses on boundary spanning while also earmarking additional hours for researchers who assume the role as a boundary spanner.

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Crossing hierarchies in organizations: Making sense of employee dissent and circumvention on internal social media

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Abstract: This paper explores how and why visibility and persistence factors affect employee communication on internal social media (ISM) and influence organizational dissent. This study presents findings from a single case study conducted at a Danish bank. Discussions initiated by employees on ISM were studied for four months, and 24 employees were interviewed about their communication behavior and their perception of communication on ISM. The study found that employees would deliberately use the visibility of communication in the ISM arena to bring up issues that had been ignored by middle managers or support staff. Senior managers were perceived to watch the arena, influencing middle managers or other employees to respond. The efficacy of dissent therefore seemed to increase with the presence of ISM, especially when a post was perceived as well-formulated and an act of prosocial behavior. A new, unwritten rule, therefore, seemed to have emerged that dissent and even circumvention on ISM was acceptable when framed in a constructive manner and aired for the benefit of the organization.

Keywords: internal social media, employee voice, organizational dissent, circumvention, employee communication, enterprise social media

1. Introduction

Organizations introduce internal social media (ISM) to increase knowledge sharing, engagement, and participatory communication (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfield 2013; Madsen 2018; Miller 2016; Sievert & Scholz 2017). Inherent in managers' desires to involve employees is also the need to address possible dissent that can occur once employees begin communicating on ISM. According to Kassing (1997), involvement and participation are closely linked to dissent. When organizations involve employees, they indirectly ask them to reflect upon organizational practices and issues, and this is likely to develop into employees pointing out shortcomings in organizational practices and decisions.

Organizational dissent research explores when and how employees are likely to express dissatisfaction, such as when they experience a gap between actual and desirable practices in an organization (Kassing 1997). Most research on dissent has presupposed face-to-face communication, and Garner (2017; 2018) urges scholars to consider the medium of dissent, and especially the implications of social media on dissent events. In a study on the different types of media in internal communication, Welch (2012) found that media has an 'affect' as it creates an emotional reaction. Employees perceive different types of media in different ways, and some types of internal communication are more suitable for one type of media than others. ISM provides employees with an opportunity to start, comment on, and like a discussion. Therefore, employees might expect a dynamic and dialog-based communication on ISM similar to the communication they have experienced on external social media. Especially if the design of ISM resembles, for example, Facebook. In a similar line of thought, scholars have found that the visibility and persistence aspects of communication on ISM afford a different kind of internal communication (Rice et al. 2017; Treem & Leonardi 2012) which "may alter socialization, knowledge sharing and power processes in organizations" (Treem & Leonardi 2012: 143). The affordance perspective comes from information technology and looks at the relationship between users and the technology, it can "provide a useful framework to understand organizational media use and implication" (Rice et al. 2017: 107).

Employees dissenting on ISM are at the same time communicating to lateral and upward audiences (Liu et al. 2010), and in this respect the media offers a different kind of communication than email, which has been found to be used to express dissent with other coworkers while keeping

managers out of the loop (Hastings & Payne 2013). Email and ISM are comparable since the communication is electronic, persistent, and editable. However, ISM is visible to the whole organization while email is only visible to a selected audience. Therefore, the visibility of communication on ISM makes the media different from other types of internal media, and several scholars have studied the consequences of this communication visibility (Baptista & Galliers 2012; Leonardi 2014; Madsen 2018; Madsen & Verhoeven 2016; Van Osch, & Steinfield 2018). Discussions on ISM can develop into discussions about organizational values and ethics (Fägersten 2015; Madsen 2016) and influence an organization's norms (Uysal 2016); in this respect, ISM becomes part of socialization. However, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, little is known about how the visibility of communication on ISM influences organizational dissent, and whether this has any consequences for power processes in the organization when frontline employees can address issues directly to top managers. The paper will be based on a single case study at a Danish bank, and seeks to answer the following question:

RQ: How and why do employees express dissent on internal social media, and does their dissent circumvent the hierarchy in organizations?

2. Theoretical framework

Organizational dissent and employee involvement take into consideration activities and communication that connect the bottom with the top of the organizational hierarchy to ensure that information, knowledge, ideas, and opinions flow from frontline employees to senior management. In other words, the intention of such communication becomes to flatten or cross the organizational hierarchy. Internal social media makes it relatively easy to connect frontline employees with top managers, and therefore, the media has been perceived as particularly suitable for democratizing organizations (Heide 2015). In order to understand organizational dissent on ISM, a theoretical framework has been developed based on organizational dissent and the affordances of ISM.

2.1. Organizational dissent

Organizational dissent has been defined as delivering a message that expresses "disagreement or contradictory opinions about organizational practices, policies, and operations" (Kassing 1998: 183). The field is often traced back to Hirschmann's (1970) model of options available to dissatisfied employees, namely *exit, voice,* or *loyalty*. Different aspects of organizational dissent have been explored since then, such as dissent trigger events, dissent audiences, dissent strategies and tactics and how dissent develops when managers and other coworkers react to and interact with dissent as well as how dissent events can be traced to earlier dissent events and how they affect future events. These aspects of organizational dissent are presented in the following paragraphs.

Sprague and Ruud (1988) developed a typology of nine different dissent trigger events, namely employee treatment, organizational change, decision making, inefficiency, role/responsibility conflict, resources, ethics, performance evaluation, and preventing harm to self, coworkers, or customers. Kassing and Armstrong (2002) further suggested distinguishing between three types of topic focuses: self-interest, the interest of other coworkers, or neutral interest if the dissent concerned the entire organization. Then, they combined the typology of nine dissent-trigger events (Sprague & Ruud 1988) with their topic focuses and explored what type of dissent employees directed to whom. They departed from Kassing's (1997) model of dissent, and they distinguished between three different dissent audiences: upward dissent to supervisors and managers, lateral dissent to other coworkers, and displaced dissent expressed to someone outside the organization. Based on a questionnaire that was filled out by 336 employees from different organizations, they concluded that employees expressed dissent to all three audiences, but that they were more likely to express dissent to someone

outside the organization if the issue involved something that could endanger employees, coworkers, or customers, or if they felt pressured to engage in unethical behavior. Their conclusions aligned with previous research suggesting that employees expressed the same or similar concerns to upward and lateral audiences, and that how their dissent was received had a bigger influence on whether they would dissent than the dissent-triggering event. In other words, the organizational culture and leadership was decisive to whether an employee would dissent or not. The issue or the seriousness of the issue was less important than how the employees expected their dissent to be received. Disturbingly, employees apparently did not express dissent inside the organization, even regarding ethical issues that could be of great importance to the organization.

The literature on organizational dissent has also explored the employee considerations prior to deciding to express dissent. In particular, employees contemplate three factors: the possibilities for retaliation in terms of whether the dissent will be perceived as adversarial or constructive, the seriousness of the issue, and whether the employee believes that dissent will solve the issue (Garner 2018). On internal social media, these deliberations have also been explored in terms of self-censorship. In their study, Madsen and Verhoeven (2016) found that employees heavily consider four risks before they contribute on ISM. The primary risks employees took into consideration were: (1) risk of providing low-quality posts and comments, (2) risk of harming personal reputation, (3) risk of violating unwritten rules and norms, and (4) risk of comments and reactions from other coworkers and managers. These risks can also be reflected in the three factors described by Garner (2018). However, the four risks discussed by Madsen and Verhoeven (2016) are all linked to how the messages could be perceived by managers and other coworkers. Thus, the visibility of ISM seems to affect how employees decide to express dissent, suggesting that ISM affords a different kind of dissent than other internal communication channels such as face-to-face communication or email.

Organizational dissent does imply a risk to the person who expresses it, especially if it involves upward dissent (Kassing 1997), and therefore employees are very careful about how they present their dissent. Kassing (2002) thus identified five potential strategies for upward dissent: solution presentation, direct-factual appeals (an argument based on logic and facts), circumvention (going above a supervisor), repetition, and threatening to resign (Kassing 2007, 2009). Garner (2009) also explored dissent and identified tactics employees used in a single conversation. These tactics included the strategies mentioned by Kassing (2002), but also included tactics such as venting, humor, invoking the values of the organization, ingratiation, and coalition building; furthermore, several tactics could be used in a single conversation to strengthen the argument.

The strategy of circumvention is particularly interesting in relation to ISM since ISM provides a direct link between frontline employees and top managers. The strategy of circumvention is a face-threatening act, as it involves going around one's immediate supervisor (Kassing 2007). The strategy is especially used in response to supervisor inaction, supervisor performance, and supervisor indiscretion (e.g. harassment, abuses of policies, or unethical behavior) (Kassing 2009). Circumvention, therefore, often indicates a criticism of the supervisor and his and her actions, and the dissent can expose and threaten the supervisor's reputation. In this respect, circumvention violates the superior-subordinate relationship, and a supervisor is likely to assess the motive of the dissenter to determine whether it is self-interest, other-interest, or neutral interest (Kassing & Armstrong 2002). If an employee is dissenting to benefit the organization or other coworkers, circumvention could be perceived as constructive and an act of prosocial behavior (Kassing 2007). However, the dissent might also result in a deterioration of the relationship between the employee and the superior, and the employee might be fired or assigned to a lower position as a consequence of the dissent (Kassing 2007). Despite the possible negative outcomes for the employee, Kassing (2007) concludes that, overall, circumvention can be effective, appropriate, and beneficial for the dissenter, the superior-subordinate relationship, and the organization (Kassing 2007: 70). A positive outcome is more likely if the dissent is perceived as prosocial and constructive behavior (Kassing 2009).

Garner (2013, 2017) explored the dynamics at play in dissent. If nobody responds to an employee's dissent message, then little happens, so dissent is a process that happens in the interactions between the dissenter, other coworkers, and managers (Garner 2013). In this respect, dissent is actually co-constructed in the interactions between these parties. Garner (2017) also found that previous dissent events can influence a current dissent event in two ways. First, the perception of the dissenter as either a troublemaker or a problem-solver influences the perception of the dissent message. Second, an organization's previous reactions to dissent influence whether the dissenter and other coworkers perceive the organization as being receptive to criticism or whether they consider that it is futile to dissent. Dissent is thus a dynamic process dependent on the organizational culture that the dissent is uttered in, as well as how other organizational members interact with the dissent. Garner (2013) thus altered Kassing's (1998) definition of dissent. He argues that dissent is "an interactive process that occurs as a result of one or more subordinates expressing disagreement with policies, practices, or imperatives" (Garner 2013: 376). This process perspective on organizational dissent is especially interesting when it comes to organizational dissent on ISM. With continual conversations taking place on ISM, the organization has a record of previous dissent that can be found any time, and recalled word by word, both in terms of how people have previously dissented and how managers have reacted to this dissent. This leads to the next section in the theoretical framework about the affordances of ISM, and how communication visibility and persistence on ISM can possibly influence organizational dissent.

2.2. Internal social media

Internal social media has been defined as "a user-friendly and visible web-based communication arena inside an organization in which coworkers and managers can communicate, interact, connect, and make sense of their work and organizational life" (Madsen 2017: 3). The definition focuses on communication visibility, interaction among organizational members, and sensemaking. In the following sections, theories of the affordances of ISM are discussed, in addition to how these affordances can influence organizational dissent on ISM.

The affordance perspective looks at the relationship between users and technology (Rice et al. 2017). The affordances of ISM are the same throughout organizations. However, the perceptions of the affordances, and how the media influences a specific organization is different from one organization to another as well as from one employee to another. The perception of ISM depends on many different factors, such as how ISM was introduced, the organizational context in terms of leadership and culture, and how other coworkers perceive and use the media (Madsen 2017). Based on a literature review, Treem and Leonardi (2012) found that ISM has four affordances: visibility, editability, persistence, and association. These affordances have since been tested empirically and altered to visibility, editability, self-presentation, awareness, pervasiveness, and searchability (Rice et al. 2017). However, the most important of these affordances is visibility (Leonardi 2014; Treem & Leonardi 2012; Van Osch & Steinfield 2018), and that the communication stays online, a fact which is included in the affordances of persistence (Treem & Leonardi 2012), awareness, pervasiveness, and searchability (Rice et al. 2017). Instead of mentioning all the affordances, this paper simply refers to the affordances of visibility and persistence.

The visibility of ISM makes *people, communication,* and *interactions* visible to all members of an organization. This visibility exposes everything the employees do on ISM, and this knowledge makes the employees behave strategically in terms of what they decide to share and communicate (Madsen & Verhoeven 2016; Van Osch & Steinfield 2018). Van Osch and Steinfield (2018) found that employees segregated their audiences and directed representation activities to everyone in the organization, while directing coordination and information search activities to smaller, carefully selected groups. The first type of activity was meant to impress management and, therefore, the biggest possible audience was selected, while the two other activities were more task-related and

therefore more goal-oriented in terms of reaching the people that could help. Madsen and Verhoeven (2016) found that the employees behaved strategically in terms of considering whether their communication would promote or harm themselves as well as whether their communication could benefit the organization.

When the theories about organizational dissent are combined with the visibility of people, communication, and interactions on ISM, it becomes apparent that ISM provides an organizational arena wherein it is possible to present organizational dissent to upward and lateral audiences at the same time. Both organizational dissent and employee communication on ISM depend on the organizational context, such as management style and organizational culture, employees' relationships with supervisors and colleagues, and personal qualities and abilities (Kassing 1997; Madsen 2017; Madsen & Verhoeven 2016). Therefore, it can be theorized that the development of organizational dissent on ISM is contingent to the organization. In addition, it can be argued that the affordances of ISM can alter organizational dissent since it provides a direct link from frontline employees to top managers. Garner (2017, 2018) urges scholars to consider the medium of dissent, especially the implications of social media on dissent events. This paper is an answer to this call. Based on a single case study in a Danish bank, the paper explores how and why ISM influences organizational dissent and thus contributes to the understanding of dissent and circumvention in organizations.

3. Methodology

Case studies are appropriate when little research exists within a field and when the aim is to understand a phenomenon (Flyvbjerg 2006; Yin 2014). Therefore, a case study of organizational dissent on ISM at one of the largest banks in Denmark was conducted. The bank has approximately 4,000 employees at over 110 different locations, and it was selected as a critical case (Flyvbjerg 2006; Yin 2014) to study communication on ISM. The bank is known for having an open communication culture. In 2003, it introduced a discussion forum called "The Word is Free" (*Ordet er frit*), where all coworkers can start, comment on, or like a discussion. When one does so, a picture of the employee appears next to the post, together with his or her name, job title, and department/location. In this respect, both the communication and the person communicating are visible to the whole organization. For the study of organizational dissent, two types of empirical material were used: screen shots of four months of discussions in the "The Word is Free" forum, and interviews with 24 employees. In the following sections, the collection and analysis of the two types of empirical material are described in more depth, as well as a short description of two additional discussions that were added to the empirical material.

3.1. The discussions

Discussions in the discussion forum "The Word is Free" were collected from September-November 2014 and in September 2015. Screen shots were made of 72 posts with a total of 522 comments and 3,443 likes during the two periods. These were downloaded and made into PDF files. A four-step netnographic approach (Bertilsson 2014; Kozinets 2010) was carried out to analyze the discussions. First, all 72 posts were read and divided into two groups. In the first group, there were 42 discussions that contained critical posts or comments that developed into further discussions with several comments and likes. In the second group, there were 30 discussions that were less relevant to the study of organizational dissent as they revolved around more social topics such as the price of beer at the Summer Party; these received few or no comments. In the second step, the 42 discussions in the first group were analyzed in more depth by looking at the issues that developed into discussions with many comments and/or likes. Four slightly overlapping types of critical posts and comments were found: (1) dissatisfaction with technology, (2) criticism of products, services, and workflows, (3) proposals for the organization, and (4) questions asked out of bewilderment or frustration. In the

third step, the job titles and departments/locations of the coworkers that initiated, commented on, or liked a post were studied. Employees from all levels of the hierarchy were found to initiate, comment on, or like the posts. However, not all employees were active. From the analysis of the employees' job titles, departments, and locations as well as their communication behavior, participants were selected for the 24 interviews (see the next section for further details). In the fourth step, the interactions between coworkers and between coworkers and managers were studied in a textual analysis of the 42 discussions.

3.2. The interviews

Employees were purposely selected based on the netnographic analysis of the discussions in order to represent different types of employees in terms of job title and organizational position as well as different types of communication behavior ranging from almost passive to very active. The job titles included cashier (1), bank adviser (11), currency adviser (1), lower branch manager (1), branch manager (1), bank officer (1), specialist (2), analyst (1), senior consultant (1), business consultant (1), business manager (1), HR consultant (1), and marketing consultant (1). The locations included eight different branches and the head office. The communication behavior covered many different types of behavior from employees. Some were very active contributors and discussion initiators. Others mainly commented while others had only used the like function. A few interviewees were not active at all. A total of 17 employees were interviewed in December 2014 and January 2015 after the first three months of screen shots were analyzed. The remaining seven interviews took place in October and November 2015, after the screen shots from September 2015 were analyzed.

The interviews were semi-structured, and they followed an interview protocol comprised of three major sections. First, there were questions about the person's job, age, job seniority, and general activity on social media. Second, there were questions about their communication behavior, and their motives for this behavior. Finally, there were questions about their perceptions of communication on ISM, and how they perceived that the communication influenced the organization. This last section also included two critical incident questions (Downs & Adrian 2004) about successful and less successful examples of communication on ISM. These questions were asked to identify discussion events that the employee perceived as memorable, and therefore potentially had turned into stories of organizational dissent.

The interviews lasted approximately 1-1.5 hours each. They were transcribed, read several times, and then coded in NVivo using thematic coding (King 2012). The aim was to identify and describe the coworkers' communication behavior on ISM, their perception of organizational dissent, and the outcome of organizational dissent (see Table 1 for examples of thematic codes).

Table 1: Examples of coding of communication behavior from the interviews

Thematic code	**Description of code**	**Examples of coded text from the interviews**
The first post	Employees' motivation for writing their first post or starting a discussion	"If I find it difficult to place a problem. Who knows something about this? Who can do something? Perhaps others have the same problem. Then it gets tested. You throw it up and find out if there is a problem" (Interview 3). "It is those situations where I feel I cannot get through the usual channels--that I am being pushed away at too low a level. Then by sharing it with a broader range of people… I find someone who is dealing with the same problem. That is where I think it becomes interesting. That is where things that are not working at [name of bank] come to the surface" (Interview 15).
Comments	Employees' motivation for commenting or not commenting	"If I am involved in something, which the bank is not really paying attention to, and we have to participate anyway. Then I do not think it is worth spending our time on it" (Interview 11).
Political behavior	Considerations about whether to communicate depending on one's position in the organization or, relationships with superiors and colleagues	"There are areas, which I am responsible for or my department, and in those situations you have to be careful. It could be a colleague's or one's area you express an opinion about. Then you are in a political situation where you might have an opinion, which is personal. However, because you have a specific job, then it is impractical or stupid to say something. Then I go to my manager or a colleague and tell them my opinion" (Interview 3). "It would be considered odd if I made a proposal. Due to my workplace, which is visible to people. I am not anonymous if I post, my job function is right there. So a lot of things I would have to ask permission, before I posted it" (Interview 10).
Strategic use	Employees deliberately use ISM to raise some issues in order to change them or to make the organization aware of one's talents	"If I have to be honest, then it is more about thinking if I dare to say my opinion and hoping that someone might notice that I have. Not that I want to become a manager or something, but more because I want to do my job as well as possible" (Interview 3).
Etiquette	The unwritten rules about content, tone of voice, and correct language	"You have to go for the ball and not the person. People are generally quite good at keeping a decent tone of voice" (Interview 11). "It is not the same language as on Facebook. It is not formal, where you do not say what you want, but you do have to consider your words a little. [The CEO] and our top manager can read it as well, so you do not just want to babble away about something you might regret later on because you got a little bit carried away" (Interview 12).

3.3. Memorable discussions

During the interviews, several memorable discussions were mentioned. In the interviews in 2014, one such discussion was called "When will I be a bank adviser again?" from 2013. In 2015, a memorable thread was a discussion called "Is the catfish dead?" from March 2015. In the first discussion, a bank adviser criticized all the paperwork he had to do to satisfy new financial regulations, which did not leave him much time to do the job he had been employed to do. In the second discussion, a bank adviser challenged the notion that the bank was different from other banks. In 1982, one of the leading newspapers in Denmark had given the bank the nickname "the catfish" due to its untraditional way of running its operations. Since then, the bank has used the catfish as an organizational symbol to

signalize it being different from other banks. These two discussions were found and included in the empirical material, and they were analyzed as examples of dissent events that employees interacted with and that influenced the employees' perception of and the organizations' receptiveness to dissent.

4. Findings

The analysis of the 42 discussions, the interviews with the 24 employees, and the two memorable threads revealed that the employees in the bank took advantage of the visibility and persistence of communication on ISM and the ability to dissent to lateral and upward audiences at the same time. In order to create a better understanding of how and why employees would use ISM to dissent, the findings from the analysis are presented in four sections: (1) dissent triggers; (2) coworkers' and managers' reactions to dissent; (3) employees' motivations for dissenting on ISM, and (4) employees' perception of organizational dissent on ISM. The first two sections draw on empirical material from the screenshots and the last two sections are based on the interviews with employees.

4.1. Dissent triggers

The analysis of the 42 screenshots from the discussion forum identified four types of dissent triggers that developed when other coworkers commented on and liked a post. The four types of dissent gained between 2 to 51 comments and from 3 to 244 likes.

The first type of dissent trigger criticized technology challenges. In these instances, employees addressed the problem on ISM and highlighted consequences for the organization, such as losing customers, making employees less efficient, or making employees appear less professional in their work when talking to customers. The following example illustrates this type of dissent: "It doesn't seem professional that in a 60-minute meeting with a customer I have to spend 10-15 minutes trying to get access [to the system]" (Bank Adviser, September 2014, excerpt from a comment to a post with 7 comments and 85 likes).

The second type of dissent trigger dealt with employees who perceived products, services, or workflows in the organization to be contradictory to the goals of the organization or not appropriate when attempting to attract and retain customers. These posts expressed fears that the bank would lose customers if it did not change or improve the products, services, or workflows addressed in their comments. As stated by one of the contributors: "A whole queue waiting behind me heard that a [Name of the bank] credit card did not work" (Branch Manager, September 2015, 17 comments and 4 likes).

The third type of dissent trigger concerned employees who thought that the organization should act and communicate in connection with topics such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), advertising, employee satisfaction surveys, or supporting a cancer cause. An example of this type of dissent was:

> [Name of the bank] operates using a value-based management system, and therefore, its focus has to be employee satisfaction. Therefore it puzzles me, that we do not undertake an employee satisfaction survey and ask about job satisfaction, interplay with management, motivation, roles and areas of responsibility, etc. (Bank Adviser, October 2014, 14 comments and 87 likes).

Finally, the last type of dissent trigger concerned employees who felt they needed an answer from the organization or people in charge in relation to the direction of the organization or the status of a specific issue, as illustrated in the following example: "Is it possible to get a statement from someone who is responsible for communicating what the plan is, and what is happening? One thing is having frustrations, another thing is not knowing what is happening internally [to solve the issue]" (Bank adviser, September, 2015, 10 comments, 91 likes). Another example was: "What are the thoughts

behind the decision that this is a strategic focus area? ….The best wishes from us in (name of the branch), hoping to get a little help to see the 'sun' – it usually has an effect on the result" (Bank adviser, 2 comments and 72 likes).

All four types of dissent triggers were generally presented to be in the interest of other coworkers or for the benefit of the organization. It may have been an issue that bothered the employee who expressed the dissent, but he or she formulated the dissent as if he or she spoke on behalf of a whole department or for the good of the organization. In this respect, self-interest or personal dissent seemed to be played down while the interests of other employees and more particularly the organization were emphasized. As such, personal dissent was only rarely shared on ISM.

4.2. Coworkers' and managers' reactions to dissent

When an employee expressed dissent in one of the 42 discussions or the two memorable events, the dissent developed in several ways. Either the dissent received few or no comments, or the dissent developed further through feedback (comments) from other employees. In the following paragraphs, four discussions are analyzed to explore the different ways organizational dissent was expressed and developed when other coworkers reacted to or interacted with the dissenting comments.

The first event to be analyzed is from September 2015. An employee was frustrated that the telephone system was not working as it should. The employee enumerated the consequences of this failure in his department. He explained how his unit had reported the mistake, but that new mistakes had appeared instead. He then asked for someone to clarify what was going to happen. The first coworker to respond suggested the employee give customers his cell phone number. The comment was supported by a smiley and a funny or ironic comment: "ultimate customer focus". Another coworker, a bank adviser, then moved the discussion back on track by saying: "I think this is an extremely important topic that you are addressing". Then, she moves on to give an in-depth explanation of how the issue also affects her department, and how it has not been solved despite good intentions from the IT-department. She then suggests that resources be allocated to quickly address the issue, and proposes using the previous telephone system and "rolling back" the new one until it is fixed. One of the senior managers then answers the thread by saying that he understands the frustrations, and that their full attention is on the problem. He then writes that even if he gets updates on the situation on a regular basis, he does not think that it is appropriate to provide separate status updates. He insists that they should ask their immediate supervisors. This answer then leads to seven other comments that support the initial dissent. Some comments simply report experiencing the same problems. A senior consultant from a branch then supplements their support with a comment that it is frustrating and unprofessional for this to keep happening, and a customer adviser then reports hearing rumors that changing to another system is being considered. This same adviser then asks, "will something be announced to us from someone who sits on the frontlines (IT-coordinators)?". This discussion illustrates that the employees circumvented their supervisors when they perceived inefficiency with systems and processes or inaction from the organization. It also shows that they took this route when they perceived that their supervisors did not adequately address the issue or when dissent to their immediate supervisors and support staff had not helped. In this respect, they tried to circumvent the hierarchy and get an answer from the responsible manager. However, the manager in this thread did not acknowledge this circumvention and, instead, he referred the employees to their supervisors for future updates. In other words, he emphasized the value of the hierarchy.

Another illustrative thread shows how an employee dissenting on ISM could also receive mixed reactions from other coworkers. The following post was initiated by a bank adviser in September 2015. It was titled "New browser configuration – NOW!!". First, the post was supported by three coworkers who shared similar frustrations with the browser system. Then, a middle manager commented that he was sure that the people in charge of upgrades were aware of the problems with

the present browser. Furthermore, he lent his support to the unit being criticized by saying that he understood why that team was not in a hurry to answer the post considering the post's title. He wrote, "To me this is not honest communication". This debate then develops into a discussion between the initiator of the post and the critic. The initiator argues that people should be able to see the humor inherent in the title and that employees have an obligation to speak up and give constructive feedback. The critic then claims that employees have an obligation to speak up in *a polite way* and to be prepared to receive pushback. He wrote, "The Word is Free, and we can use it freely, but that doesn't mean it won't have consequences or topics won't be debated…. (or good advice given)". Then, a few more employees lend their support to expressing frustration with the browser. Two discussions were inherent in the thread: the initial frustration about the browser and a discussion about how to express dissent on ISM. The latter discussion implies that dissent should be formulated in a polite and constructive manner in order to gain attention from senior managers and support staff.

In a third example, a bank adviser directly addressed a senior manager by name. The post was in response to an item in the news section authored by the senior manager. The bank adviser suggested that in terms of providing loans to customers, things were not as black and white as the senior manager depicted them. Five bank advisers from different branches commented, supported, and developed the argument by adding their experiences. The senior manager who was addressed then wrapped up the discussion by thanking those who contributed for the comments before arguing his point and concluding that the bank had to make a difference by providing qualified advice, not by competing on prices and loan terms. This example shows that ISM is perceived as media where it is possible to directly challenge and question senior managers on their strategic decisions, and that the media can be used to strengthen the argument by allowing other employees to support and contribute to the dissent. The dissenter apparently did not get anything out of the dissent in the short term other than getting the manager to confirm and clarify the strategy of the organization.

The fourth example is a memorable exchange from March 2015, known at the bank as the "catfish-discussion". The discussion was found after the interviews since most of the coworkers interviewed in 2015 referred to the discussion as one that had an impact in and on the organization. The discussion started with a long and well-formulated post by a bank adviser who argued that it was hard to see how the bank was living up to its advertisement of being a different bank from its competitors. He explained, in length and by giving examples, the ways in which he did not find that the bank was delivering a difference to its customers. After that, he also criticized the bank's communication regarding its poor result in 2014. He claimed that the bank was trying to paint a rosier picture instead of just being honest about what went wrong in 2014. This post received 43 comments and 900 likes. The first eight comments supported the bank adviser. Some just wrote "agree" or "agree – well written", while a lower-middle manager from a different branch supported the spirit in the post and commented: "I hope it is not an impossible fight". Then, a top manager entered the scene and wrote:

> Good and well-formulated post [name of initiator of the post]. This deserves a serious comment also here from the board of directors. 'We are working on the case' it says when you press a link here on the intranet. Actually, we are working on many initiatives and considerations in relation to your post, but the question is which one of them we will pursue. To find the answer to that is I guess called the 'strategy process' according to theory books. Management will return to the question in the near future, but until then, it would be nice to hear the opinions and viewpoints from the readers.

This encouragement worked. It sparked 30 comments that supported the initial post and added a bit more criticism by giving examples of other frustrations and suggestions for improvement. Then, another senior manager commented that while he did not agree with everything in the initial post, he

appreciated that the bank adviser wanted to act as a spokesperson on behalf of his coworkers. The post was then praised for being valuable and as inspiration to management: "I believe that your post is exactly what XX [two letters as an abbreviation for the CEOs name] has hoped for and will cherish". Then, three more employees commented, and then one of the journalists from the communication department reported that the next issue of the monthly internal TV-program would be completely dedicated to the issue. The example showed that a well-formulated post supported by many coworkers forced the senior managers to react and perhaps even take action. Furthermore, in the interviews, it became apparent that the discussion had turned into an organizational story of dissent known as "the catfish-discussion".

In all four discussions, the organizational dissent gained in importance or lost momentum when other employees interacted with the dissent and when dissent became recognized by top managers who reacted and responded to it. One of the posts directly addressed a senior manager, while three others did so indirectly. The communication on ISM was visible to all organizational members, and the support and interaction from other employees emphasized that the dissenter was not alone in his or her point of view. In the discussions on ISM, the employees mentioned the idea of power in numbers. For example: "At least my entire department [has that problem], and seemingly others too. But I think maybe the task [of solving the issue] will be rather extensive. Therefore, the thread here [was started] so that we can focus on how many people actually struggle with IE [an electronic registration] on a daily basis" (September, 2015). Other employees directly mentioned the affordance of visibility, as in the following example: "I choose to write here, as it is probably of a broader interest" (November, 2014). Thus, the affordances of ISM in terms of visibility and ability for everyone to interact with the original dissent became a co-construction of dissent, and it seemed that the idea of power in numbers and greater visibility of the topic seemed to persuade top managers to enter the scene. In this respect, it became a direct line of communication between frontline employees and top managers that cut across the hierarchies in the organization. This communication style was enhanced by the receptiveness of the managers. However, in one of the discussions where the tone of voice was less polite, there was no reaction from managers or responsible staff, which could indicate that in order to be taken seriously and have an effect, a dissent message should be formulated in a polite and constructive manner.

4.3. Employee motivations for dissenting on internal social media

In the interviews, the employees were asked about their motivations for dissenting on ISM, and it became clear that the affordances of visibility and persistence in terms of creating a digital record visible for everyone in the organization were strategically used when dissenting. Either because dissenters addressed the top managers directly or because other employees interacted with their dissent, the effectiveness of co-constructed dissent increased with notice. Top managers' attention and/or the visibility of their dissent was seen as a way to force specialists or middle managers to do something about an issue. As one employee explained:

> You might have tried to call IT security and the helpdesk, and nothing has happened for half a year. Then someone thinks: I will throw it up here, and then hopefully someone will react to it. Someone might reply that 'It is you who has got a problem. It [the system] is not slow' or you will find out that others experience the same problems, and then probably someone will pick it up. It is like a test balloon, someone can pick up (Interview 3).

This thought process was supported by another employee: "I think some people have a sense that more attention is given to an issue – also from the top— and there is no doubt

> that top managers keep an eye on what is being written in 'The Word is Free'" (Interview 2).

Circumvention of the hierarchy was also played out as a controlled circumvention. Several of the employees reported that they asked their supervisor what he or she thought of their post before they posted it (e.g. Interview 2). The reason for this could be twofold. First, it could be a way of ensuring that their dissent would not be perceived as disloyalty. As one employee said: "He gave me a green light" (Interview 2), meaning the dissent would not damage the relationship with the supervisor. Second, it could be a way of making the supervisor aware of one's critical and constructive proposals, and thus promote one's prosocial behavior of proposing something to be in the best interest of the organization. Posting on ISM as well as talking to a supervisor might also just be a way of getting noticed. A few of the people interviewed had been promoted after dissenting on ISM, and this dynamic was observed by employees in the interviews. For example, several interviewees mentioned that the employee who initiated a memorable discussion in 2013 was now the employee representative on the Board of the bank. In this respect, dissent on ISM could be perceived as a way of promoting oneself and taking a shortcut to a promotion. The employees' motivations for dissenting on ISM were thus found to fit into one of two categories. They would either deliberately use the visibility of ISM as an avenue of self-promotion by displaying prosocial and constructive behavior, or to circumvent the hierarchy and get something done about an issue that they felt was being ignored due to supervisor or specialist inaction.

An analysis of the screenshots of the discussions on ISM showed that frontline employees were more critical in their comments of dissent than middle managers and specialists. This was supported in the interviews, where middle managers expressed that they had to balance the roles of being frustrated employees while acting in line with the policies directed from the top. This position made them more careful about how and when they communicated on ISM. The bank advisers, however, had less to risk and more to win. That may also have been a motivating factor for why supervisors supported the dissent of their subordinates.

4.4. Employee perception of organizational dissent on internal social media

In three of the four discussions analyzed above, as well as many other posts, it was found that dissent did not lead to a change. Nonetheless, in the interviews, the employees gave the impression that they did not find that dissent on ISM was futile. They noted that when senior managers addressed their concerns, they felt heard. As one employee expressed: "You get an explanation. It might not be a really cool one. But you can relate to it" (Interview 1). Some issues were out of the hands of the senior managers since the economic crisis had led to restrictions and demands of extensive documentation and the bank could not object to doing the documentation. Other issues were possible to change: "If it [dissent] is about the customers, then as a rule there is support, and you will get constructive feedback" (Interview 3). Employees who did not contribute to discussions also felt that the discussions were valuable since they provided insight into what was happening in the organization. It helped them make sense of the organization and organizational practices. Furthermore, the whole concept of frontline employees being able to discuss issues with senior managers in an arena visible to the whole organization left an impression: "It makes us feel equal. We can talk together regardless of where we are placed in the organization" (Interview 1).

5. Discussion

The analysis found that ISM affected organizational dissent, and that coworkers deliberately used ISM to circumvent the hierarchy. In the following sections, how and why ISM changes organizational dissent is discussed by looking at dissent triggers, risks involved in dissent, and the outcome of circumvention.

5.1. Dissent triggers on internal social media

Some of the dissent triggers on ISM at the bank were similar to the dissent triggers suggested by Sprague and Ruud (1988). Complaints about technology, products, services, and workflows could be perceived as dissent about inefficiency, resources, and decision making, while suggestions and the desire for answers from the organization revolved around ethics and organizational change. However, issues about employee treatment, role/responsibility conflict, and performance evaluation were apparently less openly discussed. The main difference between the dissent triggers found by Sprague and Ruud (1988) and the ones found in this case study is a matter of a distinction Kassing and Armstrong (2002) have made between self-interest, the interest of other coworkers, or neutral interest if the dissent concerned the entire organization. The issues raised by employees on ISM seemed mainly to be in the interest of customers or the organization. Even if it was in the interest of one person, it was framed and phrased as being in the interest of other coworkers or the whole organization. In this respect, it could be argued that the visibility of communication on ISM afforded dissent in the interest of the organization rather than personal dissent.

5.2. Risks involved in dissent

Dissent on ISM addressed at the same time upward and lateral dissent audiences (Kassing 1997; Liu et al. 2010), and this affected the risks and outcomes involved in dissent. Fear of retaliation, seriousness of the issue, and the possible effectiveness of dissent have previously been found to be decisive in whether an employee decides to express dissent in an organization (Garner 2018). By uttering dissent on ISM, an employee could avoid retaliation from a supervisor since senior managers oversee ISM and therefore could recognize the dissent. On the other hand, employees exposed themselves to the criticism from other coworkers by placing their dissent on ISM. As shown in one of the discussions in the analysis, an employee was scorned for his way of phrasing his dissent, possibly affecting his personal reputation. On ISM, employees still feared retaliation, but perhaps more from other coworkers than their supervisors. Several of the employees interviewed had deliberately asked their supervisors for advice and approval before posting on ISM. However, the study did not get any insights into employees experiencing retaliation from their supervisors outside ISM. On the contrary, in the interviews, it seemed like well-formulated dissent was rewarded since something was done about the issue, the employees felt heard, or dissenters were promoted. However, this is something that is likely to be contingent on the organization, as senior managers' receptiveness to dissent is linked to organizational culture (Garner 2013). In this respect, ISM affords a different kind of organizational dissent that is likely to benefit an organization but will play out differently in every organizational setting.

5.3. The outcome of circumvention

Employees at the bank used dissent on ISM to directly or indirectly catch the attention of senior managers. The perception that ISM was being overseen by senior managers made dissent on ISM recognized, and it also helped drive the resolution of issues that had been otherwise neglected by support staff or supervisors. Even when nothing could or would be done about an issue, the employees felt heard when their challenges were acknowledged. Thus, employees perceived that circumvention on ISM was effective. Employees were aware that circumventing their supervisors could influence these relationships and, therefore, many times they asked them for advice or asked them for a "green light" before posting their dissent on ISM. Many employees believed that constructive dissenters were rewarded within the organization either by being acknowledged by their peers or by being promoted. This supports earlier findings that employees use ISM to impress management (Van Osch & Steinfield 2018). Employees were found to make an effort to formulate their dissent so that it was either framed as being in the interest of the customers or the organization. In this respect, the employees were strategic in their use of ISM, a finding supported by other researchers (Madsen &

Verhoeven 2016; Van Osch & Steinfield 2018). These findings are in line with Kassing (2007), who concludes that circumvention can be effective, appropriate, and beneficial for the dissenter, the superior-subordinate relationship, and the organization. From the perspective of senior managers, it could be argued that communication on ISM was a way of getting an understanding of how decisions made at the top trickled down to frontline employees. In this respect, ISM could help keep middle managers and supervisors in line with the policies of the organization. Thus, the greatest advantage of communication and dissent on ISM, therefore, was found to be creating a listening and dialog arena for senior managers. It was a way of keeping senior managers in the loop as opposed to excluding them, as was found to be the case in research on dissent in email communication (Hastings and Payne 2013). Employee dissent on ISM, therefore, was found to cross the hierarchies of the organization and challenge the power of middle managers. The middle managers were in some cases asked to approve a post by an employee and, in such cases, it can be argued that it only looks like the middle managers were circumvented. However, it would be difficult for middle managers to openly disapprove of an employee dissenting on ISM when top managers so obviously approved of employee communication on ISM. Thus, asking middle managers for advice can be seen as a way for employees to make sure that they are not deteriorating their relationship with their supervisors by indirectly informing them about their dissent. Asking for advice or directly dissenting on ISM forced middle managers to listen to them more since the middle managers would not want to be exposed on ISM for not listening or stopping their employees from voicing their opinions.

6. Conclusion

The visibility and persistence of communication on internal social media seems to have afforded a new kind of employee communication at the bank that facilitates dialog and awareness of concerns between frontline employees and senior managers. This direct link or circumvention of hierarchy helped employees create a perception of the organization as having a flat hierarchy with approachable top managers who were there to serve their employees' needs as well as the interests of the organization. In some cases, ISM helped spur resolution of an issue or helped employees gain an understanding of why things were being done the way they were. The case study's findings were in line with previous research on dissent, indicating that polite and constructive dissent was most likely to receive attention from other employees and senior managers. In fact, a new, unwritten rule seemed to have emerged that dissent and even circumvention on ISM was acceptable when framed in a polite and constructive manner and as benefitting the organization. Senior managers' receptiveness to employee dissent on ISM was found to be crucial to the perceived effectiveness of dissent. Future research could explore how organizational dissent, particularly concerning circumvention, develops on ISM in a less open communication climate as well as how dissent on ISM affects middle managers.

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Limits of language: Stylistic, linguistic and modal convergence in blue-collar communication

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Abstract: The present study examines how two Danish manufacturing companies communicate corporate information to blue-collar employees located in foreign production units. By drawing on interview and document data from the companies' communication departments, this study investigates whether staff at headquarters take any particular considerations into account when they communicate with blue-collar employees. The findings – which are discussed on the basis of communication accommodation theory (CAT) (Giles & Wiemann 1987) and the concept of foreigner talk (Ferguson 1975) – reveal that communication professionals at headquarters converge towards blue-collar employees in three distinct ways: in the form of stylistic, linguistic, and modal convergence. The findings also suggest that the need for convergence arises due to three sector-specific factors, namely the economic geography of manufacturing, the physical work environment of production units, and the educational level of blue-collar employees.

Keywords: blue-collar employees, manufacturing, vertical communication, multinational corporations, communication accommodation theory, foreigner talk

1. Introduction

Multinational corporations (MNCs) made up of geographically dispersed units must address a number of issues related to linguistic diversity. In these organisations, language can create a boundary between different organisational units, and company-internal communication is to a large degree dependent on successful communicative boundary spanning (Barner-Rasmussen et al. 2014). Within the international business and management literature, an increasing amount of interest has been directed towards language as a separate topic of enquiry in recent years, resulting in a string of research focusing on the role of language in MNCs (Brannen, Piekkari & Tietze 2014; Piekkari & Tietze 2011; Piekkari & Zander 2005). In line with this emerging field of research, commonly referred to as language-sensitive research in international business and management (Brannen et al. 2014; Tenzer, Pudelko & Harzing 2014), the present paper sets out to examine the role of language in a particular industry sector, namely manufacturing.

Due to the global nature of manufacturing, companies operating within this sector commonly coordinate activities across multiple geographical locations (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989: 51–53). This makes manufacturing a particularly interesting site to study cross-language interaction. The present study focuses on communication directed towards a specific group of employees – production workers, also known as blue-collar employees[1] (Toppinen-Tanner, Kalimo & Mutanen 2002). Blue-collar employees are defined by the physical labour they perform, usually in lower-ranked positions, in contrast to white-collar occupations, where employees typically focus on knowledge work, or other managerial or administrative tasks (Lucas & Buzzanell 2004: 274).

All manufacturing companies employ, by virtue of being manufacturers, a number of production workers, and wage premiums can be described as one of the primary cost concerns for manufacturers. In a quest for cost-saving measures, manufacturing companies will typically locate

[1] It is worth noting that the term 'blue-collar worker' is a broad term that encompasses people who perform different tasks and hold different positions in the workplace. The term has been criticized for not taking these factors into consideration, and for being disrespectful to people who perform manual work (see Gonçalves & Schlute 2017; Lønsmann & Kraft 2018). While acknowledging that this criticism has been raised, the designation 'blue-collar' is an established expression in academic and popular literature, and the present paper uses the term in line with existing research in international business and management.

their plants where the costs are the least (i.e. commonly known as 'the least cost theory'; Weber 1929, in Clark, Feldman & Gertler 2000). For this reason, European manufacturers tend to offshore their production to cheap labour economies, e.g. rural China and South-East Asian countries, where they can employ local blue-collar employees (Blinder 2006).

Several previous studies find that the educational backgrounds of employees often are limited at the lower level of the organisational hierarchy, which in turn has been linked to limited foreign language skills (Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio 2011; Björkman & Piekkari 2009; Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen & Piekkari 2006; Hagen 1999). Against this backdrop, one can expect that the characteristics of individual blue-collar employees, such as educational background and foreign language skills, will have an impact on language and communication practices in these organisations. Linguistic differences between employees at the corporate headquarters and employees in foreign production units can make it difficult to establish direct and effective lines of communication, which can impair company-internal collaboration and cohesion. The lack of a shared language between employees can also pose a challenge to the implementation of a company language. As discussed by Sanden and Kankaanranta (2018), a large number of MNCs headquartered in Scandinavia have adopted English as a common corporate language in an attempt to address issues of linguistic diversity in their workforce. However, if certain employees or groups of employees, such as blue-collar workers, are unable to communicate in the common corporate language, this language strategy may be less effective.

The present study aims to look further into blue-collar communication by investigating how communication professionals in two manufacturing companies headquartered in Denmark – a small and relatively linguistically homogeneous northern European country (Thompson 2014) – communicate corporate information to employees working in foreign factories and production units. This gives rise to the following research question: how is corporate information in Danish manufacturing companies communicated to blue-collar employees located in foreign production units? Building on qualitative data from two Danish case companies, Electronic[2] and Sport, the study investigates whether, to what extent and why communication professionals located in these companies' headquarters make particular choices in their blue-collar communication. After a brief review of existing research in this area, and an introduction to the case companies, the findings from the study are discussed in the light of communication accommodation theory (CAT) (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991; Giles & Wiemann 1987) and the concept of foreigner talk (Ferguson 1971, 1975). These theories are used as frameworks for analysing the various ways in which interlocutors tend to adjust to each other. By drawing on the concept of convergence, i.e. a strategy of adjusting one's communicative behaviour towards the other party's communicative behaviour, a theoretical model of convergence in headquarters (HQ) and blue-collar communication is put forward. This model distinguishes between three types of convergence tactics, namely stylistic convergence, linguistic convergence, and modal convergence.

2. Blue-collar communication: insights from previous research

Manufacturing "includes the physical or chemical transformation of materials, substances, or components into new products" (UN 2008). Companies operating within the manufacturing sector produce a tangible asset, a good, which they sell to customers in exchange for money. Thus, manufacturing is typically described as a labour-intensive economy, in which communication may be seen as a means of achieving maximum production effectiveness and generate economic value (Grin, Sfreddo & Vaillancourt 2010). However, as discussed by Duchêne and Heller (2012), the traditional view of production – the 'old economy' – characterised by "extreme labour discipline and supervision of work, aimed at minimising production time per unit of commodity" (Duchêne & Heller 2012: 326)

[2] All names, including people and companies, are pseudonyms.

is challenged by the demands of the emerging 'new economy'. As customers increasingly value individual customer service, target advertising and niche markets, companies in all industry sectors are forced to show flexibility in their communication in order to accommodate the demands of the customers.

Manufacturing is often described as a typical 'global' industry combining high degree of global integration with low degree of local responsiveness. The two dimensions of global integration and local responsiveness are commonly seen as determining criterion for a company's multinational strategy (Bartlett & Ghoshal 1989). Where global integration "refers to the centralized management of geographically dispersed activities on an ongoing basis" (Prahalad & Doz 1997: 14), i.e. the degree to which a company coordinates its activities across countries, local responsiveness, on the other hand, "refers to resource commitment decision taken autonomously by a subsidiary in response to primarily local competitive or customer demands" (Prahalad & Doz 1997: 15), i.e. the degree to which a company adapts to specific requirements within the various local markets. In a 'global company', increased cooperation and coordination of activities across borders may also result in increased cross-language interaction in internal work processes. In this way, manufacturing companies are truly multilingual organisations (Barner-Rasmussen & Björkman 2007: 106), where employees at all hierarchical levels may encounter linguistic diversity and heterogeneity in their everyday communicative situations (Andersen & Rasmussen 2004; Feely and Reeves 2001). Findings from existing research suggest that the composition of employees in manufacturing companies is likely to have an effect on language practices and corporate communication in these organisations due to the employees' individual-level characteristics. As noted by Feely (2004: 329), manufacturing may be particularly vulnerable to cross-language communication problems: "Manufacturing companies characterised by very large numbers of employees and generally modest educational levels, may suffer more than service organisations such as international banking or IT corporations where numbers [of employees] are lower but educational standards on the whole will be higher".

A related problem in blue collar-communication stems from the tendency of manufacturing companies to locate their production units in cheap labour economies. The linguistic distance – which is a measure of how different various languages are in relation to one another – may be large between the local language and the language commonly used at the corporate headquarters. In Chiswick and Miller's (2008) model, linguistic distance is measured on a scale ranging from 1.00 to 3.00, where the lower score (1) is given to languages with the highest linguistic distance to English, and the higher score (3) is given to languages with the shortest distance to English. The national language of Denmark, Danish, has a short distance to English (2.25), compared to for example many Asian languages, where e.g. Japanese and Korean are the two languages with the lowest score (1.00) and consequently the highest linguistic distance to English. As many Scandinavian manufacturing companies have located their production facilities in Asian countries, the linguistic distance between employees at the companies' various organisational units may further complicate inter-organisational communication (on the topic of measuring differences between languages, see also Dow & Karunaratna 2006; Reiche, Harzing & Pudelko 2015).

It is only in recent years that blue-collar communication has become a topic of academic inquiry. Yet, the growing literature on blue-collar workplaces has shown that there are certain characteristics of manual work that makes these workplaces particularly interesting sites to study communication practices. For example, Strömmer's (2016) study of an immigrant worker in Finland revealed very limited opportunities to interact and practise language learning with other workers, due to the isolated nature of the job. In a similar vein, Handford's (2014) study of construction communication found that high levels of noise on the construction site led to limited small talk and relationship-building, and that the most frequent patterns of interaction were related to problem solving. However, Goldstein's (1994, 1996) pivotal study of Portuguese immigrant workers in Canada demonstrated that these employees' language choice was highly dependent on social factors.

In this particular case, most Portuguese-speaking employees preferred to speak Portuguese over English to maintain social acceptance among their Portuguese colleagues, even though the use of English could have provided them with better working conditions and higher salaries. Other studies provide further insight into the management of multilingual blue-collar workplaces. In the two Scandinavian companies included in Lønsmann and Kraft's (2018) study, the authors found a tension between the language policies developed by the management and the linguistic practices of the companies' production workers. Contrary to the English language policy of one of the companies, warehouse workers rarely used English but were nevertheless expected to take part in English courses. Gonçalves and Schluter's (2017) case study of a multilingual cleaning company lead by a Brazilian-American owner shed light on how the management can use language as a tool to control the workforce. Here, the owner's ability to act as a language broker between her Portuguese-speaking staff and English-speaking clients intensified her control over the employees.

Several authors find that employees in blue-collar occupations tend to have lower foreign language competences than employees in 'typical' white-collar positions (Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio 2011; Björkman & Piekkari 2009; Fredriksson et al. 2006; Hagen 1999). In particular, Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio's (2011) study of language use in subsidiaries' communication with other MNC units found considerable variation in language fluency level across functions, where general managers displayed significantly higher language fluency levels than employees in the production units. On the background of these findings, Barner-Rasmussen and Aarnio (2011: 107) state that the variation in language skills "may have important implications in a situation where MNC units are increasingly expected to communicate laterally and learn from each other – yet these implications may be quite hidden from top managers, who are less likely to encounter language problems in their own jobs and among their own peers". Hagen (1999) found a similar distribution of foreign language skills in a survey of foreign language needs and competences in European countries. In the UK sample, comprising of 423 export companies, the majority of personnel who possessed language skills other than English were found in managerial positions (31 %), whereas only 8 % of 'technical' staff members reported that they had knowledge of one or more foreign language(s).

Similarly, in Fredriksson et al.'s (2006: 410) study of the German engineering company Siemens, the authors observe that "employees at lower hierarchical levels are more likely to speak only the local language". This study found that differences in language skills between employees at the operative level caused "a wide gulf between those who had the necessary language skills and those who did not" (Fredriksson et al. 2006: 417). Varying degrees of language competence of subsidiary staff has also been coupled with control mechanisms emanating from the corporate headquarters. This was one of the findings in Björkman and Piekkari's (2009) study of Western-owned subsidiaries in Finland and China, where subsidiaries with low language competence were found to be controlled by centralisation to a greater extent than subsidiaries where staff members displayed higher language competence levels. Also here, the authors note that the "language competence of subsidiary staff is likely to be associated with the level of education and thus be a factor calling for local differentiation" (Björkman & Piekkari 2009: 107).

Still, increased cooperation within the MNC may require blue-collar workers to find on-the-spot solutions to the linguistic and communicative needs they experience. In a study of communication between blue-collar employees in a Danish manufacturing firm with R&D facilities in India, Søderberg (2012: 247) for instance, observed how employees often had to find a way to communicate despite their different language backgrounds. One of Søderberg's informants explained that: "Sometimes, when tools that have been designed and developed in India are manufactured in Denmark, the Indian team members are required to collaborate with workers at the Danish factory, and the company does not always send a professional translator who can facilitate the dialogue". Malkamäki and Herberts (2014) found similar evidence in the Finnish manufacturer Wärtsilä. While acknowledging that employees usually preferred to speak their native language in the factories, the

management of Wärtsilä found it necessary to also 'force' them to read English as the company had adopted English as its common corporate language.

The use of English as a common corporate language, or a lingua franca, has in itself been related to a specific form of cross-language communication in international business. The concept of ELF, i.e. English as a Lingua Franca, and furthermore, BELF, i.e. Business English as a Lingua Franca, which refers to the use of English as a shared corporate language in business, has gained foothold in international business communication research (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta 2011). As BELF represents a shared language for conducting business, "the point of reference for competence must be the language of a 'business professional', not that of a 'native speaker'" (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta 2011: 248). Tietze (2008: 97) comments on the emergence of BELF in international business when stating that "this particular lingua franca is not tied to regional/national, cultural or social groups, but to a particular occupational-professional group, viz. business people and managers".

Even if native English language proficiency not necessarily is a goal in itself, MNCs may try to improve the English language skills of employees by e.g. offering language training. However, previous studies suggest that it can be difficult for blue-collar workers to find the time to attend language classes. As in the previously mentioned study by Lønsmann and Kraft (2018), the companies' mandatory English courses soon became a source of frustration for warehouse workers, who watched their work pile up whenever they were away for classes. Also Goldstein (1994) discusses how most employees were unable to attend English language training, in this case after working hours, as they found it physically and emotionally difficult to be away from their families at night. Other studies suggest that the lower educational level of blue-collar workers may limit the benefits of company-funded language training programmes for employees (Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio 2011; Björkman & Piekkari 2009; Fredriksson et al. 2006; Hagen 1999). In particular, Grin et al. (2010: 149) argue that "language skills are of greater value to some employees than others […] for example, employees in the financial sector (which tend to benefit more from language skills than other sectors do)" and furthermore (149): "Generally, it makes sense that language training beyond initial instruction be differently funded by sectors".

Consequently, previous studies show that a lack of foreign language skills among blue-collar workers: i) can create communicative problems in manufacturing companies, and ii) that the communicative problems of employees in manufacturing companies may be difficult to address through corporate-level initiatives such as language training. These observations indicate that efficient blue-collar communication may depend upon the sender of the information, and the sender's ability to accommodate the communicative needs of blue-collar employees.

The present study makes use of the analytical framework of CAT, originally developed by Giles and Wiemann (1987) (see also Giles & Coupland 1991) to explain "relational processes in communicative interaction" (Giles et al. 1991: 2). One of the key features of CAT is the differentiation between convergence and divergence, which refers to the extent to which people either adapt to or distinguish themselves from the communicative behaviour of others. Where convergence refers to "a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behaviors" (Giles et al. 1991: 7), divergence represents the opposite strategy, namely "the way in which speakers accentuate speech and nonverbal differences between themselves and others" (Giles et al. 1991: 8). As the present study sets out to examine whether communication professionals make any particular considerations in their blue-collar communication, this motivation resonates well with the concept of convergence, as defined by Giles and colleagues.

Ferguson's (1971, 1975) concept of 'foreigner talk' can offer additional insights into how employees at the corporate headquarters adjust their communication to employees at foreign subsidiaries. The term 'foreigner talk' refers to a form of simplified speech with "registers of a special kind for use with people who are regarded for one reason or another as unable to readily understand

the normal speech of the community" (Ferguson 1971: 117). In his study of foreigner talk in English, Ferguson (1975) demonstrated that the principal characteristics of simplified speech included grammatical omissions, expansions and rearrangement, as well as lexical substitutions. As in the case of convergence, it is worth noting that the speaker's simplified speech is based on his/her own language competence, and not the competence of the foreigner. Consequently, there is a risk that the speaker's accommodation through the use of convergence and foreigner talk can be based on false assumptions. The result may be that the accommodation in fact represents a divergence from the recipient's own speech, rather than convergence (Bell 1984). Another point of critique raised by Fedorova (2015) concerns the impact of social conditions on foreigner talk in particular. Based on the findings from her study of Russian native speakers, Fedorova argues that native-to-non-native communication is much more complex than portrayed by Ferguson, and that social roles and setting also will affect the speaker's choice of communication strategy. In line with this argument, one could assume that the corporate context is likely to have an effect on the type of communication that takes place between headquarters and subsidiaries, which the present study aims to examine further.

3. Methodology

3.1. Two Danish case companies

As the Scandinavian languages are spoken predominantly by inhabitants in the Nordic region, Piekkari, Welch and Welch (2014: 14–22) observe that Nordic-based firms will have to address language and communication at an early stage of their internationalisation processes. The present study examines how two Danish manufacturing companies – Electronic and Sport – address issues of language and communication in their internal modes of communication, i.e. company-internal communication (Sanden 2016). The study therefore gives emphasis to communication that takes place within these two corporations, such as information exchange between various units, departments, divisions or subsidiaries belonging to the same organisation (Bartlett & Ghoshal 2002), with a particular focus on communication patterns between the corporate headquarters and the various production units, commonly referred to as vertical communication (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari 2002).

Case studies offer the possibility to examine the phenomenon – here blue-collar communication – in its own context (Piekkari, Welch & Paavilainen 2009). Including data from two case companies allows for cross-case comparison within the same industry sector, which in line with Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2009) provides a strong basis for gathering compelling evidence. Inspired by a critical realist view on case study research, this study also emphasises the role of context when investigating blue-collar communication in the two case companies (Welch et al. 2011). A brief introduction to the case companies' background and characteristics is therefore in place.

Table 1: Overview of case companies

	Electronic	**Sport**
Description	Leading electrical engineering company	Major producer of wearing apparel
Year founded	1945	1963
Number of employees, 2013 (approximate number)	19,000	19,000
Employee composition, 2013	47 % blue-collar employees, 53 % white-collar employees, 4 % employees on special terms	88 % blue-collar employees, 12 % white-collar employees
Revenue in 2013, in million euros (approximate number)	3000	1000
Present in number of countries, 2013 (approximate number)	55	85

Electronic Holding A/S is one of the world's largest electrical engineering companies within their product segment. Today, it employs roughly 19,000 people in total[3], and consists of more than 80 companies in 55 countries worldwide. The company's matrix structure and high degree of international operations implies regular communication patterns between the headquarters located in Denmark and the various subsidiaries, i.e. vertical communication, as well as between various Electronic companies, i.e. horizontal communication (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari 2002). Electronic uses British English as its common corporate language, which is formalised in the company's official language policy dating from 2002. However, the language policy also states that communication within a subsidiary should be conducted in the local language. Electronic has a translation department that translates external material only.

Sport A/S is a major producer of apparel and sports equipment. From a small start-up in 1960, the company has increased its international outreach significantly, and Sport's products are now sold in more than 80 countries worldwide. The company has also grown dramatically in terms of number of employees in recent years. In 2003, Sport employed close to 10,000 employees, and this number rose to 19,000 by the end of 2013, mostly due to increased recruitment of production workers in the company's largest factories located in Thailand, Indonesia, China, Portugal and Slovakia. Sport does not have an explicitly formulated language policy, but the use of English is widespread for internal communication purposes, according to key informants. The company has recently established a new communication department at the corporate headquarters in Denmark.

In Electronic, production workers make up approximately 47 % of the company's total number of employees, whereas in Sport, production workers account for almost 88 % of the total workforce.

[3] All numbers are from annual reports and other publicly available sources.

The lower percentage of production workers in Electronic is due to their highly technical product line which requires the use of specialised machinery rather than manual work processes, as in Sport. The remaining percentage of employees can be described as white-collar employees, which includes all personnel in administrative and managerial positions as well sales in both companies. In addition, a small group of employees in Electronic (4 %) are employed on special terms and "for whom Electronic installs facilities aimed at the employees' physical, psychological or social problems" (Electronic's sustainability progress report 2015).

Despite their different lines of products, the production of goods represents the core of both Electronic's and Sports' business activities. Both companies distribute corporate mass communication from their centralised communication departments located at the corporate headquarters. Electronic's and Sport's communication departments are thus located in Denmark, but the communication professionals at headquarters may draw on local assistance from the companies' regional or local administrative departments when needed, and in some cases also external resources, such as local translators and interpreters.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The data material included in this study consists of semi-structured interviews, visits to the companies' headquarters, and document data. As is evident from the overview of informants presented in Tables 2 and 3, 24 interviews were conducted with managers and employees working with language or communication related issues in the period August 2012–February 2015.

Table 2: Overview of informants Electronic

Informant ID	**Job title**	**Interview language**	**First language (L1)**	**Duration**
Electronic_1	Communication professional	Danish	Danish	45 min
Electronic_2	Communication professional	Danish	Danish	70 min
Electronic_3	Communication professional	Danish	Danish	55 min
Electronic_4	Communication professional	Danish	Danish	60 min
Electronic_5	Translator	Danish	Danish	50 min (phone)
Electronic_6	Personal assistant	Danish	Danish	40 min (phone)
Electronic_7	HR manager	Danish	Danish	55 min
Electronic_8	Senior vice president	English	Swedish	35 min (phone)
Electronic_9	Project consultant	Danish	Danish	60 min
Electronic_10	Project manager	English	Hungarian	60 min
Electronic_11	Student assistant	Danish	Danish	45 min
Electronic_12	Consultant	English	Spanish	55 min
				Total interview time: 10 hours and 30 min

Table 3: Overview of informants Sport

Informant ID	**Job title**	**Interview language**	**First language (L1)**	**Duration**
Sport_1	Communication professional	Danish	Danish	90 min (w. Sport_2)
Sport_2	Communication professional	Danish	Danish	90 min (w. Sport_1)
				60 min
Sport_3	Communication professional	English	English	270 min
				80 min
				25 min (phone)
Sport_4	Personal assistant	Danish	Danish	70 min
Sport_5	Personal assistant	English	Danish	40 min
Sport_6	Consultant	English	Chinese	60 min
Sport_7	Consultant	Danish	Danish	30 min
Sport_8	Project manager	English	Russian	30 min
Sport_9	Product manager	Danish	Danish	50 min
Sport_10	Trainee	Danish	Danish	70 min
Total interview time: 14 hours and 35 min				

The interviewees were identified by a snowballing/chain sampling strategy (cf. Patton 2002: 237), where contact persons in Electronic and Sport were asked to reach out to colleagues in particular business areas, for example in the company's communication department, HR department, etc. It should be emphasised that this is a one-sided study of blue-collar communication as the interview data only consists of responses collected from white-collar employees at the companies' headquarters. Thus, the present study is focusing on the management of blue-collar communication, i.e. how employees at the corporate headquarters manage their communication directed towards blue-collar employees at foreign subsidiaries, rather than blue-collar communication as a two-way process between the corporate headquarters and the foreign subsidiaries. The perspectives of blue-collar employees and employees at foreign subsidiaries in general have not been accounted for in the analysis. This can be seen as a limitation in the sense that subsidiary staff members could have provided additional insight into the companies' language management and communication practices. Unfortunately, it was not possible to travel and conduct interviews at the companies' production facilities due to time and resource constraints. Instead, this limitation has been addressed by triangulating interview data from different informants, in particular the responses from informants who have worked in foreign production units, and company documentation.

At the same time, there is also a potential problem associated with interviewing a small number of informants, as the risk of response bias is higher (Yin 2009: 102). This limitation can be reduced by asking follow-up questions during the interview, which gives the interviewees a chance to amend, amplify or critique their own statements. Follow-up questions are particularly useful when interviewing informants about their reported practice, i.e. when informants are asked to give their own account of how they communicate with blue-collar-employees. As discussed by Björkman, Barner-Rasmussen and Li (2004: 453), reported language practices can constitute a method bias if they are not consistent with actual language practices, i.e. how informants actually communicate with blue-collar employees. Although it is difficult to eliminate the response bias altogether, the risk can be managed by being aware of this limitation during the interview situation and when analysing and reporting on interview data.

The majority of interviews were conducted at the companies' headquarters, or over telephone

when physical meetings could not be arranged. The informants were asked some background questions at the beginning of the interview, including questions about their first language. Almost all Scandinavian speakers were interviewed in their first language by the native Norwegian-speaking interviewer who is also fluent in Danish, except one native Swedish-speaker who preferred to be interviewed in English. All non-native Scandinavians were interviewed in English. The interviews were recorded and transcribed in the original interview language, as shown in Tables 2 and 3, and the interview data was subsequently analysed in the original interview language in the qualitative data analysis programme NVivo, version 10 for Windows. Scandinavian language quotes were translated into English as part of the reporting process. Some examples of how the Scandinavian interview data was translated is presented in the Appendix.

In addition to interview data, different types of relevant documentation, such as language policies, communication policies, strategy documents etc., were also carefully analysed in NVivo. A wide variety of documents were collected, both internal material which was provided by informants in the case companies, and publicly available material, which could be obtained from the companies' websites.

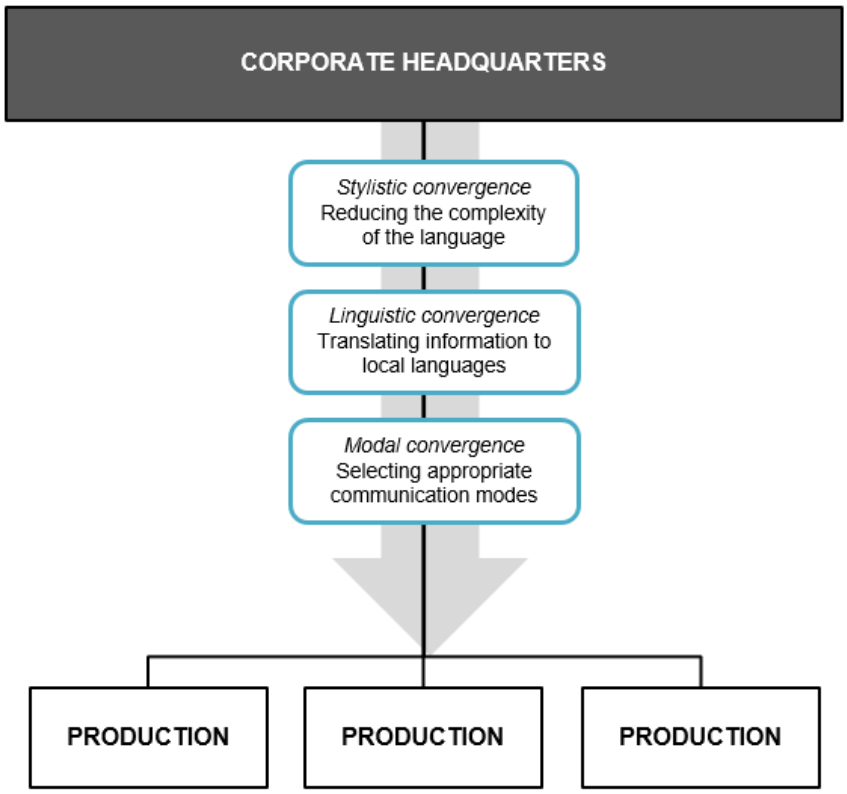
The NVivo coding system was largely inspired by Corbin and Strauss' (1990, 2008) framework distinguishing between different hierarchical levels of codes. The data analysis was based on three coding levels; company-specific codes (level 1); category codes (level 2), and major themes (level 3). An overview of the coding scheme is presented in the Appendix. The distinction between level 1 and 2 codes was made primarily for practical reasons, in order to organise the codes according to the two Danish case companies. The level 2 codes, which are the thematic codes, may therefore be described as aggregated level 1 codes, as they combine the company-specific data from the two groups of level 1 codes. The level 2 codes emerged from three different sources. The first level 2 codes were developed on the basis of insights from the existing literature, for instance in relation to the foreign language skills of blue-collar workers. Moreover, a number of codes were developed based on the semi-structured interview guides which had been prepared prior to the interviews and respondents' replies to the interview questions. Finally, the data itself gave rise to the last level 2 codes.

After having completed the thematic coding, all level 2 codes were carefully reviewed and clustered together according to common topics. The search for these common topics was part of a process that Corbin and Strauss (1990: 14) refer to as 'selective coding', in which codes that are thematically close are unified under a common category to form the next level of codes (Corbin & Strauss 1990; Corley & Gioia 2004). These level 3 codes consequently formed the basis for the presentation of findings and the following discussion.

4. Findings

The data analysis resulted in a theoretical model of vertical communication flows from the corporate headquarters located in Denmark and the two companies' production units, as illustrated in Figure 1. By drawing on the concepts of convergence from CAT (Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991; Giles & Wiemann 1987), and foreigner talk (Ferguson 1971, 1975), Figure 1 depicts how employees at the corporate headquarters may alter or change communication towards blue-collar employees through accommodation tactics and simplifications. The following discussion will focus on three types of convergence, as they were identified in the data material obtained from Electronic and Sport, which will be referred to as *stylistic convergence*, *linguistic convergence*, and *modal convergence*.

Figure 1: Vertical communication flow with increasing degree of convergence



The terms stylistic, linguistic and modal convergence convey the type of convergence that employees at the corporate headquarters make use of in their blue-collar communication. However, they also reveal some assumptions that employees at the corporate headquarters base their convergence on, namely assumptions about blue-collar employees. As mentioned in relation to the theory on CAT and foreigner talk, the convergence or speech adjustments made by the sender of information will be based on his/her own evaluation, which may or may not correspond to the actual language competences of the receivers of the information. Although the interview data did not include any examples of overt divergence from headquarters employees, it cannot be ruled out that blue-collar employees experience divergence at their end, if the convergence made by headquarters employees is based on inaccurate assumptions. For this reason, Figure 1 shows a one-way relationship of convergence practices between the corporate headquarters and the companies' production units.

4.1. Stylistic convergence

Given the highly multilingual environment of the two case companies, it is not surprising that informants indicate that successful language-boundary crossing may require interlocutors to make certain stylistic alterations in order to get the message through. Variances within the common corporate language, English, may be referred to as differences in communication style, which according to Williams and Spiro (1985: 434) can be defined as "the synthesis of content, code, and communication rules into unique and infinite combinations". Adjusting one's communication style, register of language or degree of formality can be considered a mild, yet often necessary, form of convergence, according to the following informant:

If you talk to a person that is not that proficient in English, then don't use too many excess

> words, or extra words, because then they will just wonder "what does that mean?". Instead, say "have you received this? Yes or no?", but avoid long explanations [say] "you have to do so and so", but not "if you would like to, it would be appropriate if you would do so and so".
>
> -Electronic_7, HR manager

It is clear from this quote that the HR manager's stylistic convergence towards an imagined interlocutor bears close resemblance to the simplified speech variety described by Ferguson (1971, 1975) as foreigner talk. The interviewee's choice of style suggests that the adjustment of speech is an example of foreign accommodation, where the use of a simplified register is regarded appropriate for non-native speakers of English.

Another respondent from Electronic, who is in frequent contact with colleagues in foreign subsidiaries, notes that the high degree of international collaboration in the project she is working on affects the material she and her colleagues develop in her department. This informant has explained that project material may be translated into as many as 28 languages when information is targeted and distributed to all Electronic's employees. The need to communicate corporate information in local languages (as will be discussed in the following section) makes this informant reflect upon her communication style also before the material is subjected to translation:

> That is something we have to think about of course, and that is also something we think about when we make brochures and roll-ups and posters, that it is possible to translate the formulations we use – they need to be translatable, and they also need to function in different cultures.
>
> -Electronic_11, Student assistant

Even if English is said to be the corporate language of both Electronic and Sport, it is evident from interview and document data that the companies employ individuals with different levels of English skills. One of the younger informants in Sport, who is a native Dane and has learned English as part of her compulsory school education, says that she initially felt nervous about her own English skills when she first started working in Sport. However, after having worked closely with several of Sport's foreign production units, in particular the ones located in Asia, she now feels differently about the situation. The interviewee reports that she often simplifies her English when communicating with colleagues in the factories:

> In Indonesia, their English is very basic, and you learn to talk slowly, and find a different way to communicate. You wouldn't use the same phrases as you do when you talk to other colleagues.
>
> -Sport_10, Trainee

Avoiding difficult words and complex sentences is clearly one way of adjusting one's communication style, as expressed in the previous quote. In line with the concept of foreigner talk (Ferguson 1971, 1975), this interviewee makes use of lexical substitutions by replacing her normal phrases with simplified variants when communicating with Indonesian employees. It is clear from her statement that this is a deliberate strategy on her end, which reveals that the stylistic adjustments are made in response to the interviewee's assumptions about the communicative competences of blue-collar

employees.

These examples provided by respondents in Electronic and Sport show that informants may turn to stylistic convergence and simplifications in their blue-collar communication, which affects how certain messages are communicated in terms of communication style. However, if altering one's communication style in the common corporate language is not enough, the next step may be linguistic convergence.

4.2. Linguistic convergence

Both Electronic and Sport have adopted English as a common corporate language for internal communication purposes. Out of the two companies, Electronic is the only one with a formal language policy document, stating that British English is the company's corporate language. The decision to use British English in Electronic is based on two reasons, according to the company's language policy guidelines; firstly, because British English is the English standard taught in the Danish education system, and secondly, because Britain is "geographically, culturally and historically" close to Denmark. However, the language policy also states that local country-specific communication within one of Electronic's subsidiaries can be conducted in the local language of the country. This is expressed as follows in the company's language policy:

> Being an international group of companies Electronic needs a shared corporate language, and this shared language is British English. […] Corporate language does not mean that everybody employed by Electronic all over the world must speak and write English in all communication. […] [C]ommunication within a local Electronic company will – and should – be in the local language.

This distinction between group level communication and local country-specific communication can be seen as somewhat contradictory. One informant in Electronic, who took part in developing the company's language policy, explains why the policy encourages the use of local languages in local communication:

> It would be artificial if a company that employs Danes only, for example, if they [Danish employees] had to speak English to each other, because it has been decided by somebody higher up in the organisation, that would be artificial and wrong, and it would also prevent us from achieving the best results.
>
> -Electronic_5, Translator

Evidently, Electronic's language policy should not be seen as a strict regulation, but rather a guideline for how to communicate internally in the organisation. Another informant in Electronic's communication department elaborates on how the language policy should be read in terms of language choice:

> The policy was adopted when I started at Electronic, and in principle it is correct that we want to use corporate English for all employees, but those who work in the factories don't speak English. They may understand English but they can't speak English and they can't write English, so if we want to reach all employees, both in the production and in the administration, we have to use the language of the target group. That's the thing with our corporate English – our mass communication to the entire organisation is in English but if we want to reach segmented target groups, for example blue-collar workers or

> blacksmiths in the production, we have to approach them in the language they speak.
>
> -Electronic_1, Communication professional

This informant provides a strong case for linguistic convergence in blue-collar communication, with the result being that Electronic's communication department frequently translates corporate communication that goes out to all employees.

In Sport, the use of English as a common corporate language is described by informants in the communication department as a default choice, and a pragmatic choice prompted by having a highly international and linguistically diverse workforce. In a multilingual organisation, the choice of English was seen as a way of establishing a common communicative ground. Yet, respondents in Sport also report that the English language skills of blue-collar employees may challenge the notion of English as a common corporate language in the company. Two headquarters employees who worked in Sport's production facilities in Indonesia for a period of time say the following about the English proficiency level of locally-employed factory workers:

> There are 5000 employees, and the majority of those are locals, and all the bosses speak English because they need to communicate with HQ, but the rest are probably only fluent in Indonesian.
>
> -Sport_9, Product manager

> At the operative level it is all in Indonesian, because they are all Indonesians, and the people in the sewing line are also Indonesians, and it is only the people relatively high up [in the hierarchy] that are actually able to speak English, and they are the ones who communicate with the management down there.
>
> -Sport_10, Trainee

As stated in these quotes, the interviewees report that English skills tend to be scarce among employees at the operative level, and usually a skill possessed only by the local managers. This has implications for the communication department, which wants to establish tighter communicative lines with the production units. One of Sport's communication professionals elaborates:

> They [blue-collar employees] feel very disconnected from the company because they sit and make shoes every day and actually don't make the whole shoe but just a part of the shoe […] they never see the result of their work. […] we became aware of the last couple of years that they don't even know what happens to these shoes, where they are sold, how they are sold, how we sell them, what happens to the shoes they make.
>
> -Sport_3, Communication professional

The scenario described by this informant can be seen as a form of organisational isolation. The absence of a direct communication channel between the corporate headquarters and the company's blue-collar employees leads to a disconnection from the rest of the corporation (Logemann & Piekkari 2015). Interview data suggest that the risk of organisational isolation increases due to the linguistic distance between employees at the corporate headquarters and employees in foreign production units

(Chiswick & Miller 2008).

Also in Electronic, as stated in the following excerpt, the large number of blue-collar employees affects the choice of language, both in Denmark and at foreign production sites. Thus, communicating corporate-level information in the local language of the production workers is often a requirement:

> Wherever there is production, there will always be – I mean, there will be unskilled workers who do not have an English language background, or the corporate language you have [if you have a foreign language as the corporate language], there you will always have this problem that you have a large group of employees with whom it is important to communicate, and especially if you have production in several countries.
>
> -Electronic_7, HR manager

In this excerpt, the informant describes how Electronic, being a manufacturing company, employs a large number of production workers who tend to have limited English language skills. For this reason, the use of the local language is deemed necessary. Consequently, the composition of employees and their language competences can be seen as a criterion for language use internally in the company.

4.3. Modal convergence

The term 'communication mode' refers to the 'mode' one chooses as the format of communication (Altheide 1994; Fjermestad 2004). A distinction is often made between written, oral, and visual communication modes, which also serves as a useful distinction here (Lehtonen 2011; see also Mondada 2006, 2009 on the topic of multimodal resources). A common finding in both Electronic and Sport is the widespread use of visual and oral communication directed towards blue-collar employees. An informant in Sport's communication department explains why written communication often is unsuitable:

> It's not just the language, but the fact that a lot of them don't read at all, that's a consideration that we take into account in the communication department, how we can make some visual material, printed material, that shows different things, how we can convey things to them. But in the end word of mouth is probably going to be a good way to do most things that are important anyway.
>
> -Sport_3, Communication professional

Communication professionals in Electronic report that they make similar considerations in their blue-collar communication. One informant explains that her department commonly relies on visual communication, in particular videos, to accommodate different target groups internally in Electronic, also those who may be less proficient in English:

> We use as much visual and as little verbal communication as possible. There is of course speech in the videos, but everything that is not said by the speaker is subtitled, and I'm considering whether we should also subtitle what the speaker is saying, because not everybody understands English well enough. The speaker has to talk clearly and pronounce words properly when a local person or a group is being interviewed [in a foreign language], so that people can understand it, or if it is difficult to understand, we can subtitle it, but we try to be as visual as possible and use as few words as possible.

-Electronic_9, Project consultant

In the existing language-sensitive research in international business and management, the adjustment of communication mode has been discussed to some extent as a way of addressing emergent language needs at the front-line level, i.e. for employees who are directly involved in producing the company's product, or employees who are in direct contact with the company's customers (McGregor & Doshi 2018). Previous research has primarily focused on how written medium communication holds certain benefits over oral medium communication. Charles and Marschan-Piekkari (2002), and Harzing, Köster and Magner (2011) discuss how different speech varieties, such as accents, may cause comprehension problems, and Shachaf (2008: 136) found in her study of global virtual teams (GVT) that "non-native English speakers were able to express themselves better through email than by talking". Sanden and Lønsmann's (2018) study shows that among engineers and technicians, the use of the visual mode, e.g. in the form of sketches, can be useful to overcome communication problems resulting from the language barrier. The findings from the present study adds further insight into the use of modal convergence by bringing attention to how visual modality also can be seen as a form of convergence. Interviewees in Electronic and Sport explain that oral communication is believed to be more efficient than written communication when directed towards blue-collar employees. As is evident from the interview data presented above, the interviewees find that there is a limit of language in their multilingual organisations, as written communication, regardless of what language it is written in, often is an inadequate mode to reach blue-collar employees due to limited literacy skills. Therefore, employees in the two companies' communication departments strongly suggest that there is a need for visual material and oral messages in corporate mass communication.

It appears that the use of oral and visual communication primarily stems from headquarters employees' understanding and assumptions about the preferences of blue-collar employees. While neither of the companies have established formal routines for eliciting information about the communicative needs of employees at the foreign subsidiaries, informants explain that they occasionally ask middle managers for feedback regarding the material that communication professionals at the corporate headquarters produce for all employees in the entire company. Besides this direct feedback from managers at the foreign subsidiaries, informants report on little direct contact between the corporate headquarters and subsidiary employees. This can partly be ascribed to the physical working environment of the production units, which makes two-way communication difficult. Informants in both case companies reflect upon this in the following quotes:

> Another consideration is the way they work, you can set up a kiosk or a little stand with a computer with local information or a bulletin board, but when you have 2500 people working on one shift, how much access is there to that one computer, you also have to think about the way they work as well, how you can reach them.

-Sport_3, Communication professional

> We have the challenge with our production workers that they cannot just run to a computer. I sit in front of my computer almost the entire day, but they don't do that, they do of course have some computer stations, but it is difficult to reach them because they do not work with a computer.

-Electronic_4, Communication professional

Here, the two communication professionals explain that they may refrain from using certain communication mediums, such as computer-based communication, when communicating information to blue-collar employees. In this way, opting out of a communication mode may also be seen as a form of convergence.

At this point, the original message may have undergone three stages of convergence; firstly, stylistic convergence, in an attempt to reduce the complexity of the language (usually in the common corporate language, English), secondly, linguistic convergence, where the information is translated from the original language (usually from the common corporate language, English, or Danish into the local language(s)), and thirdly, modal convergence, which involves selecting the appropriate communication mode. The following discussion will examine the implications of these findings.

5. Discussion

Electronic and Sport are two manufacturing companies faced with many of the same challenges in relation to the management of blue-collar communication. The findings presented above show how communication professionals located at the corporate headquarters report to accommodate blue-collar employees through increasing degree of convergence in their communication. The findings also bring attention to the outcomes and implications of the different convergence practices, which will be further addressed in the following discussion. After considering the implications of stylistic, linguistic and modal convergence, the discussion will turn to explore the reasons why employees at the corporate headquarters find it necessary to accommodate blue-collar employees in their communication practices.

First, as discussed by Ferguson (1971: 117) all speech communities have simplified speech registers which are used to communicate with people who are regarded unable to understand normal speech. In line with the concept of foreigner talk, the multinational corporation can be seen as a speech community of its own. Stylistic convergence per se appears to be a common phenomenon in multilingual organisations made up of speakers with a multitude of different language backgrounds. As previously mentioned, BELF is seen as a neutral language in the sense that its users are expected to avoid local terminology and culturally-bound idioms (Jenkins 2015; Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta 2011). However, findings from the present study have shown that stylistic convergence often represents an insufficient form of convergence in order to reach out to blue-collar employees with limited English language skills.

Despite the choice of English as a common corporate language, informants from both Electronic and Sport highlight the importance of communicating corporate information in the local language of blue-collar employees. This can be related to the value that blue-collar employees create for the two manufacturing companies. Manufacturers are by definition companies whose raison d'être is to produce a physical product, which necessarily requires personnel in the production of their business operations. This may seem like an obvious observation, but it nevertheless raises some interesting questions as to what constitutes a corporate language. If we acknowledge that blue-collar workers are vital for producing the goods that lay the foundation for these companies to exist, and we furthermore acknowledge that the professional competence of blue-collar workers is more important than their foreign language competence which, based on what this and previous studies have shown (Charles & Marschan-Piekkari 2002; Fredriksson et al. 2006) often necessitates the use of the local language in company-internal communication, we need to reconsider the meaning of the terms ‘English lingua franca’ and ‘English as a common corporate language’ within the manufacturing sector. In the case of Sport for example, the use of English may exclude the majority of the company’s workforce, which clearly challenges the notion of a ‘common language’. Instead, English as a common corporate language is in fact to be interpreted as the ‘cross-border language’, or the language one should use when communicating with others across national and linguistic borders. In this way, ‘corporate language’ refers to the language used by corporate-level functions, i.e. specific divisions

that coordinate activities across national and linguistic borders company-wide (Feely & Harzing 2003; Guadalupe, Li & Wulf 2014), as opposed to the operating functions of the firms – the production units. Hence, it may make more sense to talk about the use of English as a divisional language for personnel who collaborate and maintain regular contact with international colleagues in corporate level functions, such as marketing or finance.

Findings from Electronic and Sport have also pointed to the role of communication modes in vertical communication. Whereas some attention has been given to the preference of written over oral communication in international business (e.g. Charles & Marschan-Piekkari 2002; Harzing et al. 2011; Shachaf 2008), successful blue-collar communication appears to be based primarily on visual and oral communication. This observation calls attention to how contextual factors influence the management of different communication modes, and that no communication mode is superior in all communicative situations. Rather, the appropriateness of the different communication modes appears to reshuffle on the basis of the communicative needs of the target group.

Thus, it is fair to conclude that communication professionals indeed do converge when communicating to blue-collar employees and the previous discussion has demonstrated the various ways in which they attempt to do so. Data from Electronic and Sport also reveal some of the reasons why it is necessary to accommodate for the needs of blue-collar workers in corporate communication. First of all, the two manufacturers are present in a large number of international locations; Electronic is present in approximately 55 countries worldwide and Sport in more than 80. Several of these countries score low on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) scores (ETS 2014), such as China where both companies have large production facilities. Furthermore, as two very geographically dispersed manufacturers with large shares of foreign production, many of Electronic's and Sport's employees will be speakers of languages with a high linguistic distance to English. Cantonese and Mandarin are for example two languages with high distance to English according to Chiswick and Miller (2008), with scores of 1.25 and 1.50 respectively. The language competences and practices of the companies' workforce are clearly important factors to account for in corporate communication, as high linguistic distance can create feelings of organisational isolation and disconnection from the company's ongoing activities (Logemann & Piekkari 2015). These observations therefore echo Welch, Welch and Piekkari's (2005: 12) statement that managers need to acknowledge that "language skills are people skills" and that "language consequences are tied up with the management of people".

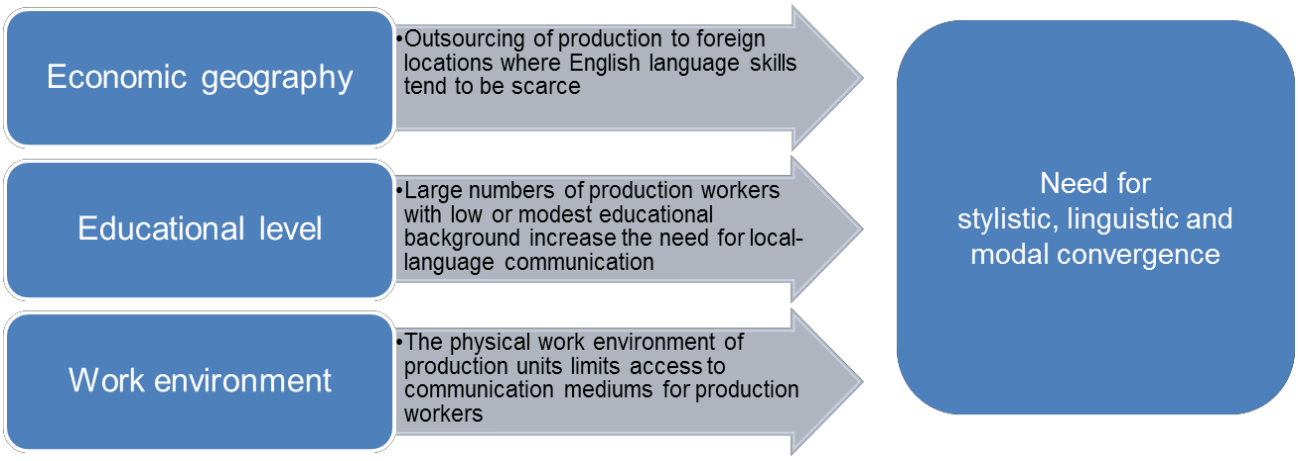
In line with what previous studies have found (in particular Barner-Ramussen & Aarnio 2011), the presented interview data demonstrate that the educational level of blue-collar employees is of particular interest. Manufacturing companies are likely to employ production workers with modest to low educational levels, which has been found to increase the need for local-language communication in production facilities, due to limited English language proficiency among staff members (Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio 2011; Malkamäki & Herberts 2014). In comparison, the majority of employees in Denmark have had English language training as part of their compulsory school education, which is far less common in cheap-labour countries, e.g. in rural China and South-East Asia (Chaganti 2004: 2221–2222; Phillipson 2012: 6). Thus, the educational background of employees in the manufacturing industry is likely to affect the way in which manufacturers handle linguistic diversity (cf. Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999a; Piekkari & Tietze 2012; Welch et al. 2005), which is reflected in the findings from Electronic and Sport.

Finally, the particular work environment of production workers, referring to the physical working conditions of blue-collar employees (Nordlöf, Wijk & Lindberg 2011), also appears to have an impact on blue-collar communication in the two case companies. Informants in both companies explicitly state that access to communication channels is a significant challenge in vertical communication due to the physical work environment of the production units, especially in foreign subsidiaries. Manufacturers are what Chandler (1962: 8) calls "industrial enterprises", meaning

"large, private, profit-oriented business firms[s] involved in the handling of goods in some or all of the successive industrial processes from the procurement of the raw material to the sale to the ultimate customer". Compared to a white-collar office environment, the industrial work environment is by nature a more difficult communicative setting when it comes to cross-language interactions and language barriers.

In sum, data from the present study demonstrate that three sector-specific characteristics of manufacturing trigger the need for convergence towards blue-collar employees, as depicted in Figure 2. We can refer to these factors as firstly, economic geography (Clark, Feldman & Gertler 2000), which captures the international expansion strategies of the two manufacturing companies; secondly, the educational level of the workforce (Barner-Rasmussen & Aarnio 2011), which has been related to limited English language skills; and finally, the industrial work environment of blue-collar employees (Chandler 1962), which also has been found to have an effect on blue-collar communication.

Figure 2: Triggers for convergence in blue-collar communication



The findings presented in this study and the discussion above call for a more nuanced approach to the development of corporate language strategies, and corporate communication in general. It is evident that blue-collar employees have different communicative needs than headquarters employees, and these needs are further accentuated by the linguistic-communicative environments in which blue-collar employees operate. The three triggers for convergence in blue-collar communication – economic geography, educational level, and work environment – do not only imply that employees located in the corporate headquarters need to adjust their communication towards blue-collar employees. It also means that company-wide language strategies that aim to address the language practices of all employees are likely to be successful only if the companies' leadership takes the communicative reality of blue-collar employees into consideration. This could be achieved by adopting more diversified language strategies at the company-level. Instead of opting for monolingual English-only policies, a diversified language strategy could open up for the use of multiple languages and alternative communication channels when needed.

6. Conclusion

In the international business and management literature, the need for global integration in manufacturing is largely explained by relatively standardised consumer needs, investment intensity in research and development, and pressure for cost reduction (Harzing 2000; Prahalad & Doz 1987;

Yip 1989). These are factors that result in what Prahalad and Doz (1987: 25) refer to as 'product emphasis', expressed through "integrated product strategy and worldwide business management". However, a string of language-sensitive research in international business and management (see e.g. Brannen et al. 2014; Piekkari & Tietze 2011; Piekkari & Zander 2005) has shown that managing large, geographically dispersed organisations usually leads to a series of language and communication related questions. As transnational models of management contribute to push foreign language contact down in the organisational hierarchy (Feely & Reeves 2001), global strategies and increased international collaboration is likely to also affect front-line employees at foreign production sites – the ones who produce the products manufacturing companies sell to their customers. The most important practical implication of this study is therefore that it draws attention to the role of language and communication in the production of goods, the foundation upon which manufacturing companies exist.

In terms of theoretical implications, the present study contributes to international business and management research by focusing on a group of employees who have received limited attention in the existing literature. This is a level of analysis that gives emphasis to individuals and their needs in multinational organisations, which tend to get downplayed in large-scale studies focusing on the strategic needs of the firm as the unit of analysis (Björkman, Barner-Rasmussen & Vaara 2010). Findings from Electronic and Sport on the topic of blue-collar communication have shown that micro-level analyses also contribute directly to some of the most pressing issues in multinational management. Within a broader picture of managing large, multinational corporations, the present study of blue-collar employees has also touched upon issues of inclusion, integration and a sense of belonging to a global family (Ferner, Edwards & Sisson 1995; Marschan-Piekkari et al. 1999b), as well as organisational isolation prompted by geographical distance and separation from daily activities at the corporate headquarters (Logemann & Piekkari 2015: 42; Young & Tavares 2004).

By drawing on CAT and the concept of convergence (Giles, et al. 1991; Giles & Wiemann 1987), as well as foreigner talk (Ferguson 1971, 1975) the present study has also contributed to the sociolinguistic literature by offering an international business perspective on theories that traditionally have been more concerned with the socio-historical context in which communication takes place, such as cultural norms and values (Gallois, Ogay & Giles 2005). Whereas previous studies of CAT often have focused on interpersonal elements of convergence, such as voice pitch (Gregory & Webster 1996), speech rate (Street 1983), and verbal and non-verbal psycholinguistic features of communication (Ryan, Hummert & Boich 1995), this study has demonstrated that convergence may also occur in more institutionalised forms, and that convergence may be extended to also encompass the choice of communication mode (see also Sanden & Lønsmann 2018).

The findings from the present study only show one side of the picture. By solely focusing on white-collar employees at the corporate headquarters, the perspectives of blue-collar employees have not been accounted for in this case. Yet, employees working in different parts of large multinational corporations are likely to experience different realities in terms of language and communication. It would be a fruitful avenue for further research to consider the subsidiary perspective and especially the perspectives of blue-collar employees with regard to corporate language management in manufacturing companies. Data presented in this study have demonstrated that the language and communication needs of these groups of employees have profound consequences on the management of blue-collar communication.

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Appendix: Overview of codes

Level 3	Level 2	Description	Examples of quotes
Company background, organisation and practices			
	Communication department	Statements about how the communication department works, areas of responsibility, etc.	We have an editorial meeting every day, where we talk about the stories we have, what is happening, what we have heard, what is coming up, what we have to do and why. *Hver dag da har vi et redaktionsmøde, hvor vi snakker om hvilke historier er der, hvad sker der, hvad har vi hørt, hvad er der på vej, hvad skal laves, og hvorfor.*
	Company history	Information about the company's historical background	It was a small company founded 50 years ago with only 35 employees locally in Denmark, and it has grown into this huge, multinational corporation.
	Company organisational structure and operations	Information about the company's organisational structure and operational processes	We are a corporate department, but we are not globally based, we do not have any branches locally.
	Company ownership	Statements about the ownership structure of the company	The company isn't listed, this has a lot of influence on the communication because they feel that the annual report doesn't have to be traditional, because it's not a listed company.
	Headquarters language use	General statements about how interviewees experience language use and communication in the company's headquarters	You won't get far with Danish in these big companies. Maybe in this building, at headquarters maybe to an extent, even though we have many foreigners [here]. *Man kommer ikke så langt med dansk i sådan store virksomheder. Jo her i huset, i headquarters gør man*

			måske til dels, ja, selv om vi har mange udlændinge.
	Headquarters-subsidiary communication	General statements about language use and communication between headquarters and subsidiaries/factories (i.e. vertical communication)	We haven't been communicating with them at all. The closest we come to that is through the portal, the intranet page, but that's very limited, and a very limited number of people have access to a computer or to the internet.
	Internationalisation of firm	Statements which describe increased internationalisation/globalisation of the administrative and operational processes	As Sport becomes more and more international, why should an education like this be for Danes only? *I takt med at Sport bliver mere og mere internationale, jamen, hvorfor skulle en uddannelse som det her være kun til danskere?*
	Subsidiary language use	General statements about language use and communication in the company's subsidiaries/factories	At the operative level it is all in Indonesian, because they are all Indonesians, and the people in the sewing line are also Indonesians. *På operationsniveau er det alt sammen på indonesisk, fordi de er alle sammen indonesere, og i folkene i sylinien er også indonesere.*
Stylistic convergence			
	Accents	Language and communication difficulties due to different accents, at a communicative level	I remember during the first two days of the introduction, I simply could not understand what they were saying, because the workers have an extremely strong Chinese accent when they speak English. *Jeg kan huske jeg sad i de første to dage i introduktionen og kunne simpelthen ikke forstå hvad de sagde, fordi arbejderne har ekstrem kinesisk accent på deres engelsk.*

	Communication style	Statements about different styles of communication, cf. Williams and Spiro (1985): 'Style is the synthesis of content, code, and communication rules into unique and infinite combinations.'	I think there's a sort of circus English in the business world [laughter], which doesn't belong anywhere [laughter], but which nevertheless enables us to talk to each other. *Jeg tror det er sådan et cirkus-engelsk i forretningsverdenen [latter], som ikke hører til [latter] nogle steder, men som dog gør at man kan tale sammen.*
	Sector-specific language	The use of sector-specific terminology or jargon (cf. Welch, Welch and Piekkari 2005)	There are a lot of technical terms in our world, and we should of course be better at avoiding such technical terms when we write [to customers]. *Der er jo mange fagudtryk indenfor vores verden, og vi skal selvfølgelig være bedre til at skrive [til kunder] så det ikke er fagudtryk.*
Linguistic convergence			
	Language use employee level English	The use of English at the front-line level, irrespective of the company's official language policy	I mean very few Danes, Norwegian and Swedes know Finnish for instance, so if it is a meeting with a Finn, then it is, well, I would say 99 % of the meeting will be in English, if the Finn doesn't know Swedish, but normally it is done in English.
	Language use employee level multiple	The use of languages other than English at the front-line level irrespective of the company's official language policy	I can't be bothered to write in English with my Danish colleague when we are corresponding, if we need to write 15 emails during one day, I really can't see why we should write in English when we're both Danish. *Jeg gider jo heller ikke for eksempel, at sidde og skrive på engelsk med min danske kollega, når vi skal sidde og skrive sammen, hvis vi skal skrive 15 mails i løbet af en dag, så kan jeg ikke se hvorfor skulle vi skrive på engelsk sammen når vi begge to er danskere, altså.*

	Linguistic diversity problems	Severe problems related to language and communication issues, i.e. problems beyond the communicative level	English may be the corporate language, but that will make us inefficient. People are not going to work as effortlessly as they did before, and people are going to get annoyed in their everyday lives about something that is not really necessary. *Det kan godt være at engelsk er koncernsproget, men så bliver vi ineffektive. Folk kommer ikke til at arbejde lige så let som de har gjort før, og folk bliver irriteret i deres hverdag over noget som egentlig ikke er nødvendigt.*
Modal convergence			
	Communication channels	The use of various channels for communication between employees	Hong Kong has a fantastic telephone reception, and the one in India is terrible. It really makes such a difference. *I Hong Kong har de fantastisk telefonforbindelse, og i Indien har de forfærdelig. Altså, det gør så meget forskel.*
	Communication mode	Statements about oral, written or visual communication.	Passwords and things like that, send it as a text message, because if you have a password with 12 characters with lower and upper case letters, there is a 99 % chance that you won't be able to communicate it over the phone to somebody who doesn't speak English very well. *Passwords og sådan noget, send dem på en sms, fordi hvis man har et password på 12 karakterer med store og små bogstaver, er det 99 % chance for at man aldrig kan give det over en telefon til en der ikke kan engelsk særlig godt.*

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Boundary-spanning in practice: The emergence and development of a business region in Denmark

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Abstract: This paper examines boundary-spanning practices in a regional development partnership in North Denmark, Business Region North Denmark. While boundary-spanning activities have been researched predominantly within the private sector, less research exists on the public sector. Within the existing body of research, only very little is known about how boundary-spanning activities unfold in practice and how they are influenced by local and national contexts. Based on interviews, secondary data, and minutes taken during meetings with the Business Region North Denmark[1] (BRN), I try to illuminate the evolutionary performance of partnership working. Thus, in contrast to existing literature, this paper does not aim to present yet another well-ordered lifecycle model, but rather it tries to capture the fluid and situated nature of boundary-spanning practices in multi-sectional environments. This research finds that boundary-spanning actors have to tackle multidimensional dilemmas by re-constructing and re-interpreting identities, differences and boundaries. In particular, BRN members are found to hold various influential positions simultaneously which clearly influence their sense-making, practices, and feelings of belonging to the various groups they identify with, including BRN. While these members are found to establish a new political field of practices (BRN), this study shows that the positions available in the new joint field are taken by the same powerful actors holding positions in other fields of local politics. In addition, the strategies, practices and modes of boundary-spanning, which BRN's leaders engage in, are found to be highly situational and do not follow a certain order as suggested in previous studies on boundary-spanning practices.

Keywords: regional development partnership, boundary-spanning practices, boundary-spanning leadership, multi-sectional environments, qualitative study

1. Introduction

Studies on boundary-spanning are abundant. While boundary-spanning activities have been researched predominantly within the private sector, less research exists on the public sector (Williams 2012, 2013). Additionally, only few studies addressed public boundary-spanning across different layers of government, i.e. between municipal, regional and national levels (Guarneros-Meza & Martin 2016). Within the existing body of research, only very little is known about how boundary-spanning activities unfold in practice (Levina & Vaast 2005, 2008, 2013), even though Levina & Vaast (2008: 308) found that some research (Cramton & Hinds 2007; Walsham 2002; referred to in Levina & Vaast 2008) suggests that "the most salient boundaries are often situated in the practices of collaborating parties". Hence, boundaries are experienced as differences in practices; however, if, for example, practices can be altered through the co-creation of joint practices, boundaries may be resolved and a common field of practice is created (Bourdieu 1977). In other words, only little is known about *how multiple levels and types of boundaries emerge and how they are spanned in practice*. How do individuals, such as the members of a cross-sector multilevel partnership, negotiate (talk about, co-create and challenge) perceived differences, identities and boundaries, and how are these boundaries and differences renegotiated in order to ensure effective collaboration? Drawing on Levina & Vaast's (2005, 2008, 2013) Bourdieusian inspired conceptualization of boundary-spanning, I employ a qualitative case study of BRN in order to further our understanding of boundaries and boundary-spanning as *emergent practices across diverse public and private actors*.

The following section presents background information. Next, I introduce the theoretical

[1] Henceforth abbreviated with BRN.

framework which is followed by the methodological account of this case study. Then the finding section identifies which differences, identities and boundaries emerged in the context of BRN, and discusses how these were talked about, worked on and diminished by certain practices that municipal and regional leaders engaged in. On the basis of this study's findings, I will subsequently expand on the theoretical ideas of boundary-spanning in practice. Finally, I present a conclusion in which I outline the theoretical and practical implications of this study on boundary-spanning practices in and across public and private fields.

2. Background

As with many nation states, Denmark's various regions face different challenges. Businesses, investments, as well as cultural and leisure activities and functions are often far more prominent in bigger cities and their surroundings than in more rural and/or peripheral areas. As a result, and/or as a cause for these differences, regions vary in their growth and development, and peripheral and rural areas across the EU even face depopulation. The same phenomenon is evident in Denmark, where, in comparison to national average, peripheral areas suffer from, for instance, limited employment, lower income, and ageing populations as well as populations of poor health (Madsen et al. 2010).

Since the early 1990s, regional growth and development has been characterized by centralization and metropolization (Nørgaard 2011: 83). In the case of Denmark and most western European countries, economic growth and regional development is thus concentrated in and around bigger cities whereas the more peripheral parts of Denmark face stagnation or decline of inhabitants, functions, and economic growth. These overlapping complex societal issues, EU regional policy tried to tackle through subsidized "Structural funds" and "Cohesion policies" in the years 2000 - 2016 (Nørgaard 2011: 83). Despite the existence of EU funding for regional development, Denmark did however lack national legislation and strategies for successfully addressing regional development and growth (Halkier 2010; Illeris 2010). Yet, even though no coherent national strategies existed, the Danish government appointed the five regional growth forums (Vækstforum[2]) as being responsible for the development of their respective regions. Although each regional growth forum was to focus on the development of the region's peripheral areas, Nørgaard (2011: 90) finds that the forums' development policies seemed rather "uncoordinated with the overall development of rural areas". Hence, the future development of rural and peripheral areas in Denmark remained quite uncertain. Perhaps as a consequence of these inabilities, on 1 January 2015, a new political actor emerged on the local political scene in Denmark: Business Region North Denmark (BRN), a collaboration of the eleven municipalities and the Region of North Jutland. According to BRN's website (BRN 2019a), its main goal is the facilitation and enactment of regional growth and development in order to handle the aforementioned challenges of North Denmark.

The challenges BRN attempts to tackle are often referred to as wicked problems (Head 2008) since they are complex, multifaceted and not easily solved as they cross administrative, professional and structural boundaries. As such, they are best addressed by partnership working and collaborations which, according to Skelcher & Sullivan (2008) and Lundberg (2013), has become the most prominent tool for implementing public policy programs. While partnerships and collaborations clearly have the potential to develop and implement solutions to tackle 'wicked problems' (Gasson 2013; Goldsmith & Eggers 2004), collaboration across multiple and diverse agencies is, however, often highly problematic. Existing research even suggests that public sector partnerships and collaborations often lead to "frustration, conflict and an ineffective use of public resources" (Williams 2012: 1). This means that collective actions across diverse actors with different interests, practices

[2] On 31 December 2018, all Danish regional growth forums were abolished. Since 1 January 2019, the Danish Business Authority, located in Copenhagen, aims to "contribute to a responsible and sustainable economic development" (https://danishbusinessauthority.dk/mission-and-vision).

and understandings have to be maintained and supported. In other words, partnership working and/or collaboration needs facilitation in order to span boundaries, bridge differences and nurture mutual understanding and trust (Kroeger & Bachmann 2013; McGuire 2006; Williams 2012). Hence, boundary-spanning practices, including leadership practices, are crucial to the smooth and successful establishment of collaborations which are able to face and tackle the aforementioned wicked problems.

3. Theory

The framework for my analysis is informed by the body of literature on boundary-spanning and boundary-spanning leadership taking a practice perspective. As indicated in the introduction, social scientists and organizational scholars have been addressing the notion and importance of boundary-spanning for several decades (Merleau-Ponty & Eddie 1964; Tajfel 1978; Tushman & Scanlan 1981). Yet, boundary-spanning has become more complex as "increased globalization of organizations and markets has created a need for simultaneously spanning multiple cultural, institutional, temporal, and spatial boundaries" (Levina & Vaast 2013: 285).

These boundaries are, however, not a given; they are constructed by social actors. Drawing on practice theories, Levina & Vaast (2008) point out that "[t]hrough their practices, agents are constantly engaged in shaping *fields of practices* as well as the *boundaries* that separate these fields. Boundaries delimit fields and arise from differences in practices that are differentially recognized and rewarded across fields" (Levina & Vaast 2008: 309 [emphasis in original]). At the same time, *fields of practices* emerge when social agents engage in sharing unique practices and interests, and in this process produce forms of capital unique for the newly emerged field.

In the context of this study, the concept of *field* is understood in a less restrictive way as outlined by Bourdieu but nevertheless inspired by his conceptualization of it. In this paper, *fields* are understood as social arenas which operate according to what Thomsen calls "the logic of the field" (Thomsen 2012: 76), i.e. certain (unwritten) rules guiding the social actors' struggles (which present the main practices in any given field) over certain forms of capital in a particular field. Social actors move across and within various fields of practice on a daily basis and thus, they are confronted with various logics and values depending on the field they find themselves in at a given moment. Each field holds a variety of forces which Bourdieu (1985: 724) describes as "a set of objective power relations that impose themselves on all who enter the field". Hence, within each field, social actors are faced with a variety of positions taken by social actors (persons or institutions) whose habitus (lived and embodied experiences), in form of e.g. their skills, education, or social upbringing, fits the fields' 'logic and power structure'. Thus, the way the field's game is played (the practices used to struggle for valued forms of capital) is not arbitrary, but follows certain rules and power structures as these impose themselves on the actors and hence, enable but also limit their actions. In turn, this means that social actors are the 'result' of the fields they partake in. Thus, the field's power structures and its logics become an embodied part of the social agents' habitus, which they then tacitly draw on while manoeuvring in the field. In so doing, social actors create 'shared meaning' of how to act in a specific field, what kind of capital they should invest into the field, and to which extent it is worth struggling for. In other words, a shared understanding is created in terms of which forms of capital are valued in a certain field and which actions are legitimate in the struggle over these forms of capital.

The main struggle social agents are engaged in is, according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), the struggle over a given field's boundaries. But how is one to determine a given field's boundaries? Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 100) suggest that:

> We may think of a field as a space within which an effect of field is exercised, so that what happens to any object that traverses this space cannot be explained solely by the intrinsic properties of the object in question. The limits of the field are situated at the

point where the effects of the field cease.

Therefore, fields can be distinguished from each other by their different rules and logics of practice, which affect social actors in their interactions and their struggles to accumulate field-specific capital. This being said, the notion of *practice* itself ought to be understood as being embedded in a certain field and thus, in a certain power structure of positions and their distinctive valued forms of capital. In other words, *practice* is here understood as a result of a dialectic relationship between habitus, fields, and capitals which Bourdieu illustrates in the following equation: (Habitus x Capital) + Field = Practice (Bourdieu 1984: 101). Thus, the notion of practice employed in this paper differs from e.g., Schatzki's conceptualization of practice. While Schatzki (1996) understands practice to construct the social order and thus, focusses primarily on the social actors' agency in social interactions, Bourdieu's conceptualization does also acknowledge the *interplay of (power)structure and agency* as influencing practices since, for Bourdieu, practices cannot exist outside a given field and its particular logics and legitimized approaches to the struggle over valued capital.

Even though social agents of a given field may engage in a set of shared practices, they differ in relation to their 'capital portfolio', i.e. the amount and composition of relevant capital (resources). Bourdieu (1986: 82 [emphasis in original]) outlines three forms of capital:

> Capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as **economic capital**, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as **cultural capital**, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as **social capital**, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility.

These three types of capital can be transformed to symbolic capital by those actors capable of doing so, i.e. the powerful actors. Symbolic capital is thus the ability (power) of transforming economic, cultural and social capital into some other value such as honour, prestige, status or recognition. Hence, practices, boundaries and fields are mutually constructing each other. Consequently, fields and their boundaries can be changed and re-constructed through practices and new fields can emerge on the basis of newly shared practices and identification. A certain amount of joint interest, common understanding, and shared practices are prerequisites for effective collaboration (Levina & Vaast 2005).

Whereas Levina & Vaast see boundaries mainly as obstacles for collaboration, Palus et al. (2013: 206) understand boundaries also as a phenomenon which could foster collaboration.

> Boundaries in the workplace are experienced in two different ways. They may be experienced as conflict-ridden barriers that limit human potential, restrict innovation, and stifle organizational and societal change. Or, boundaries may also be experienced as new frontiers at the intersection of ideas and cultures, where breakthrough possibilities reside.

Practice theory can thus help to understand why collaborations between actors from diverse fields can be problematic and how these problems could be lessened. As fields, boundaries and practices co-create each other, social agents differ in their capital portfolio, interests, practices and identities when being members of different fields. For example, mayors engage in different practices and have other interests than regional chief executives or CEOs of local businesses. In order to establish collaboration between these actors and fields, the lack of shared forms of capital, interests, practices

and identities has to be minimized, i.e. common ground has to be created and boundaries have to be crossed, transformed or even abolished via boundary-spanning practices enacted by boundary spanners.

Levina & Vaast (2005: 324) distinguish between nominated boundary spanners and boundary spanners-in-practice.

> Nominated boundary spanners refers to agents who were assigned by the empowered agents in a field to perform certain roles in spanning boundaries of diverse fields", and "Boundary Spanners-in-Practice refers to agents who, with or without nomination, engage in spanning (navigating and negotiation) boundaries separating fields.

In addition, they suggest two modes of boundary-spanning production: transactive and transformative boundary-spanning. The main differences between these modes are visualized in table 1.

Table 1: Modes of boundary-spanning production (Levina & Vaast 2013: 296).

Transactive mode	Transformative mode
Boundary-spanners act as translators	**Boundary-spanners** act as translators and negotiators, transforming existing and/or building new joint practices
Objects of exchange are used to transfer information or translate from one context to the other	**Boundary objects** are used to represent differences among groups and shared identities across groups
Transactional production of work: Reflecting on and adding to the work of others	**Collaborative production of work:** Reflecting on and challenging the work of others
Relational Implications: Existing relations among agents are reproduced	**Relational Implications:** Novel relations among agents are produced

According to Levina & Vaast (2013: 296), *transactive* boundary-spanning aims at providing translation between actors of diverse fields and enabling information transfer. Thus, boundary-spanning and exchange of information is deemed to reflect on and add to the work of others. The outcome of transactive boundary-spanning is the reproduction of existing relations among actors. In the *transformative* mode, boundary spanners take on several practices as they not only translate but also negotiate and transform existing and/or build new joint practices. In this case, boundary spanners use boundary objects[3] to "represent differences among groups and shared identities across groups" (Levina & Vaast 2013: 296). In so doing, transformative boundary spanners are found to challenge the work of others, which in turn alters the ways social agents cooperate and thus, transforms the shared field of practices, and unique relations between agents are created.

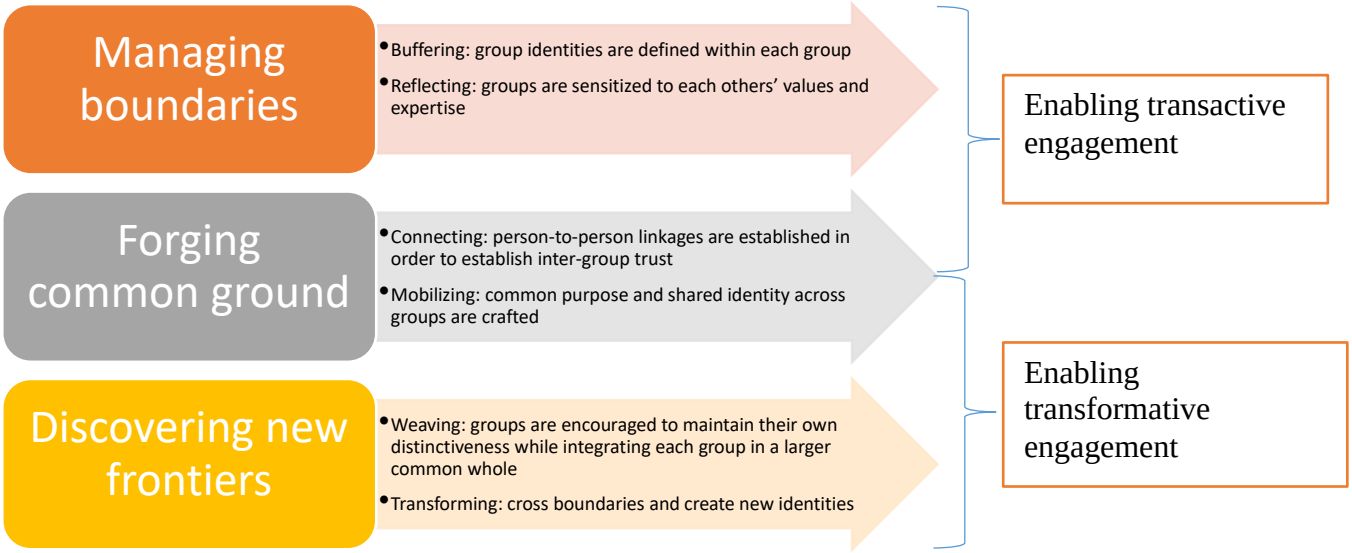
Levina & Vaast's separation of boundary-spanning practices into transactional and transformative modes bears resemblance with leadership styles and seems to align very well with

[3] Boundary objects are conceptualized by Bowker & Star (2000: 393; cited in Vakkayil 2013: 30) as "objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" and they further explain that boundary objects "are weakly structured in common use and become strongly structured in individual-site use. These objects may be abstract or concrete […]. Such objects have different meanings in different social worlds but their structure is common enough to more than one world to make them recognizable, a means of translation" (Bowker & Star 2000: 297, cited in Vakkayil 2013: 30).

Palus et al.'s (2013) 'Boundary-spanning Leadership Model'. In this model, Palus et al. suggest a variety of boundary-spanning activities which can culminate in a *nexus effect* where "ideas connect in new ways at the intersection of group boundaries, creating something new, facilitating a significant change, or solving a problem that can only be realized when groups work together" (Palus et al. 2013: 211). Palus et al. (2013) identified six different boundary-spanning practices: buffering, reflecting, connecting, mobilizing, weaving and transforming. These practices are organized in the following way: three "successive strategies for boundary-spanning organize the practices: The initial strategy of managing boundaries (featuring the practices of buffering and reflecting) leads to the strategy of forging common ground (featuring the practices of connecting and mobilizing), and finally the strategy of discovering new frontiers (featuring the practices of weaving and transforming)" (Palus et al. 2013: 211).

When combining Levina & Vaast's model on boundary-spanning modes with Palus et al.'s model on boundary-spanning leadership, the following model can be created which visualizes the relationships between strategies, practices, goal categories and modes of boundary-spanning production.

Figure 1: The relationships between strategies, practices, goal categories and modes of boundary-spanning production (Author's own figure).



The distinction between the three strategies, six practices and two modes of boundary-spanning production depicted in Figure 1 enables us to see the interconnections between leadership practices and boundary-spanning practices. Also, it helps to distinguish between transactional and transformative boundary-spanning practices. In addition, this model aids us to understand how a new *joint* field of practices emerges and which leadership practices facilitate this process.

4. Method

The aim of this empirical study was to employ practice theory to investigate qualitative data from a single case study to further our understanding of boundary-spanning practices and boundary-spanning leadership practices in the context of a cross-sector collaboration. Earlier work (Levina & Vaast 2005, 2008, 2013; Palus et al. 2013; Søderberg & Romani 2017) on boundary-spanning has demonstrated the feasibility of practice theory in qualitative data analysis. As I aimed to study social agents'

communicative construction of boundaries and the thereto associated identities and differences, this case study employed interviews with key actors within the studied field alongside observations of meetings and document analysis of websites. Inspired by Bourdieu's model of field analysis (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), the interviews were primarily considered to gain some insight into the communicative *agency* of boundary construction, while observations and document analysis were predominantly meant to provide insight into the fields' *structures*.

This paper is based on a single case study, which, according to Yin (2009), presents a very suitable approach when the investigated phenomenon is expected to be highly influenced by its contextual settings. Drawing on practice theory, the contexts can be interpreted as particular *fields of practice* (Bourdieu 1977) and thus, as a 'naturalistic context' of the empirical world (Piekkari & Welch 2011) in light of which existing theory can be discussed and challenged and new theoretical contributions can be developed (Silverman 2010). My case is a cross-sector, multi-level political collaboration of eleven mayors and their chief municipal executives, and the regional chairman and the regional chief executive in their function as representatives of the eleven municipalities and the Region. In addition, a variety of employees from the municipalities and the Region are represented in the joint secretariat.

4.1. The case of a cross-sector, multilevel collaboration: BRN

This article focusses on boundary-spanning practices within Business Region North Denmark (BRN), a political collaboration of the eleven municipalities (represented by their mayors) and the Region of North Jutland (represented by the regional chairman). According to its website, BRN's main "purpose is to create and pursue a common agenda for growth and development, and collectively master the challenges of North Denmark" (BRN 2019a). In order for BRN to work effectively, but also to be built in the first place, it constantly focusses on "finding common ground between the municipalities, businesses, and the region" (BRN 2019a); thus, BRN's main activities could be said to be constant boundary-spanning between diverse political and private fields.

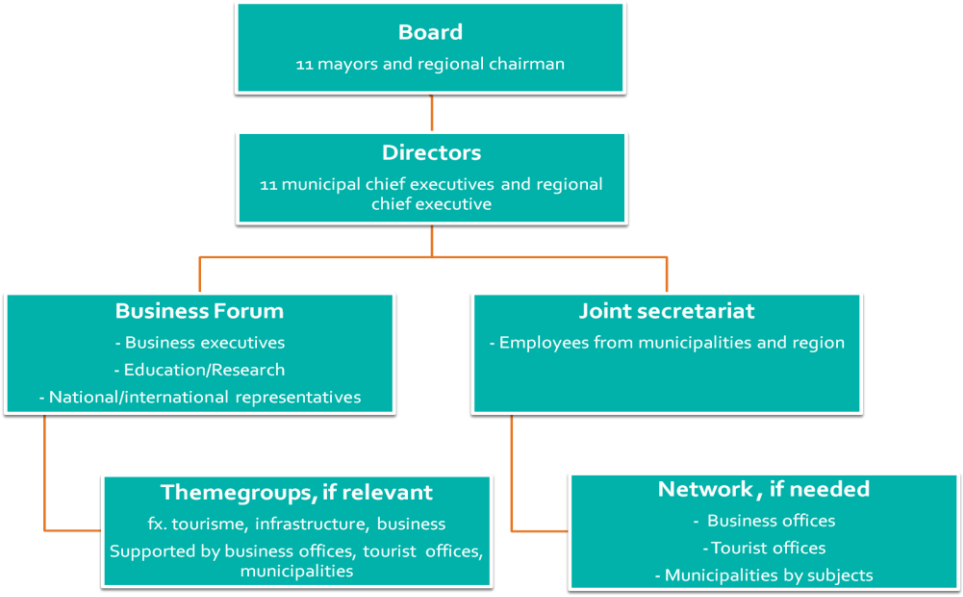
BRN officially came into being on 1 January 2015. Prior to BRN's existence, each municipality in North Jutland had more or less been tackling the challenges of local economic growth and development on their own. Before the municipal reform (Kommunalreform) on 1 January 2007, the most powerful actor was Aalborg municipality which due to its size (number of citizens, businesses and educational institutions) played the most central role in the then North-Jutland County (Nordjyllands Amt). Thus, Aalborg municipality was able to secure more funding and projects for its further growth and development than any other of North Jutland County's 26 municipalities. This was also still the case after the so-called "Municipal Reform" when North Jutland County seized to exist and North Jutland Region was established (North Jutland Region 2016). Mayors of those municipalities geographically distant to Aalborg municipality pointed out that their region often had been identified as "Peripheral Denmark" (udkantsdanmark) which arguably signified that they were less developed, knowledgeable, attractive, and powerful than for instance Aalborg municipality or, let alone, the Greater Copenhagen Area. The most important political actor to counteract this rather negative identification of North Jutland was the Growth Forum; yet, as mentioned earlier, they seemed unable to foster sufficient growth and development in Denmark's most northern municipalities. Except for Aalborg municipality, North Jutland's remaining 10 municipalities were facing economic and developmental decline, albeit each municipality in different ways. After a rather unsuccessful meeting with the Danish EU office in Brussels in May 2014 (see analysis), a handful of North Jutland's mayors decided to work and act together; this resulted in the creation of a new political collaboration platform, BRN.

4.2. The organization of BRN

Officially, when BRN came into force on 1 January 2015, it was set up as a "networked cooperation"

which yet was meant to develop further. Thus, it was expected that BRN's organizational structure would change through time. During the time of data collection[4], BRN organized itself as illustrated in Figure 2.

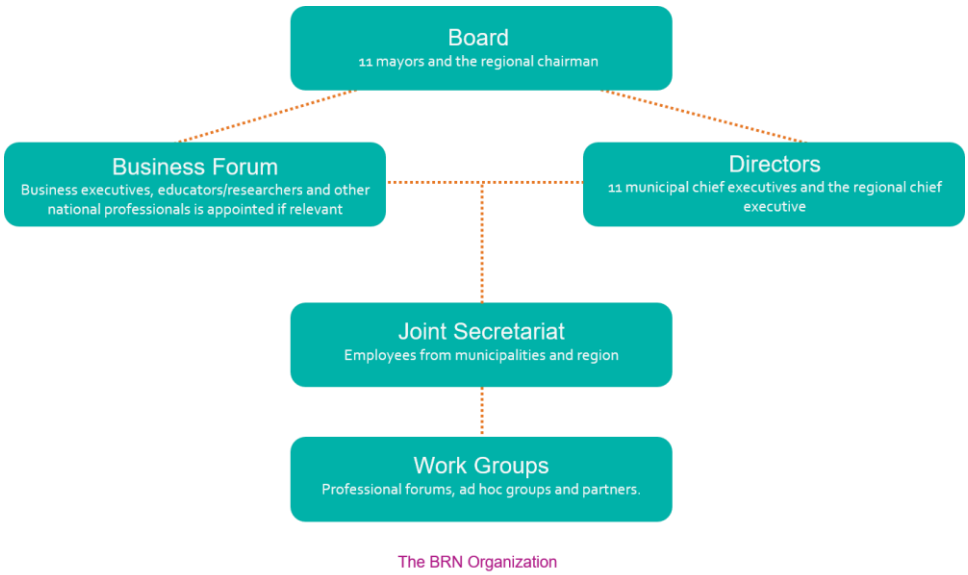
Figure 2: The organization of BRN (BRN 2018).



In order to address North Jutland's challenges in a flexible and inclusive way (see analysis), this set-up was slightly adjusted or at least it was visualized in a different way, where the stipulated lines may indicate the 'flexible' set-up as illustrated in Figure 3.

[4] See section 4.

Figure 3: Adjusted organization of BRN (BRN 2019a)



The 'new' organization chart seems to show that the Management Board perceives the representatives of the business sectors (Business Forum) to have the same importance as the Directors; this is also communicated on BRN's website when pointing out that, "We propose launching notable actions for the individual parts of Region North as well as the entire North Denmark. We do this through a *close collaboration between the private and the public sector* of North Jutland" (BRN 2019b [italics added]). These 'notable actions' are taken within five different and jointly agreed upon focus areas: Tourism, infrastructure, international collaboration, industrial development and job creation, and qualified labour. While these areas are portrayed as well defined and separate spaces (see Figure 4 below[5]), they rather have to be understood as influencing and overlapping each other.

[5] This figure is presented on BRN's Danish website. Instead of this model, the English version presents these areas in writing only.

Figure 4: The five focus areas (BRN 2019b).

RN identifies its role as being an 'initiator of notable actions', while other private and public actors are the 'implementers'. The following screen-shot (Figure 5) from BRN's English website (BRN 2019a) summarizes BRN's mission and vision.

Figure 5: North Denmark unified (BRN 2019a).

To address development and growth within and across municipalities and the Region, BRN's Board, its directors, the Business Forum, and the joint secretariat would discuss and create feasible agendas or "general conditions for growth" ["rammebetingelser for vækst"] in form of, for example, projects. As mentioned on BRN's website, these projects are then to be carried out by local actors outside BRN such as the municipalities, local businesses and educational institutions. However, which of these actors then see themselves fit to turn these joint agendas into practice, depends on the

focus area and the competences and will of these actors to seize the newly created opportunities for growth and development. Thus, the *realization* of the "common agenda for growth and development" rests with actors *outside* BRN, while BRN conceptualizes itself as a "penetrative force" and "the gateway to a united North Denmark" (BRN 2019a).

4.3. Data collection

This paper employed data triangulation (Yin 2009) as it drew on observations, document analysis, and interviews. First, I gathered observational data at BRN's kick-off meeting where I also participated actively in the role of 'an interested municipal citizen' in order to understand BRN's vision and anticipated strategies and organizational structure. In addition, I conducted a document study (organizational charts, information material, websites, meeting minutes, etc.) to further my understanding of BRN's organizational structure, its role, and its political influence vis-à-vis other regional political actors in North Jutland. Additionally, together with my fellow colleagues of our former research group, we developed a comprehensive interview guide which addressed 7 information-oriented and theory-based key themes (see Appendix A). The interviews were then conducted by two of my colleagues from our joint research group due to two reasons: Firstly, both were native speakers of Danish and, secondly, one of them was very familiar with North Jutland's local politics and its key actors due to his empirical studies on local politics in his PhD research. According to Chapman et al. (2008), such alignment of 'culture' facilitates trust and enhances the probability of getting relevant and authentic information; yet, I am aware that research interviews may tell us more about the power relations between the researcher and the interviewee, the context of the interview and global discourses than about the research phenomenon at hand (Alvesson 2003). All interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviewees were asked about the reason for establishing BRN, the collaboration across BRN's members as well as BRN's role in relation to other local political actors, lessons learnt and knowledge sharing, BRN's strategies and structure, communication issues, involvement, sustainability, and internationalization (see Appendix A).

While interviewing is perceived as a suitable method for collecting in-depths qualitative data, it is not without its challenges (Alvesson 2003). Taking an interpretivist and reflexive approach to qualitative studies and especially qualitative interviewing, I acknowledge that interviews are "generate[d] situated accountings and possible ways of talking about research topics" (Roulston 2010: 60) and thus, are an outcome of 'co-created meaning making' (Holstein & Gubrium 2004). This means that answers given by interviewees are communicatively co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee. Secondly, the analysis of interview data (and actually any data) is also heavily influenced by the researcher's preunderstandings or particular "meaning fields" which, according to Alvesson & Sködberg (2009: 120), hold "preconceptions inherited from the past" and which best can be addressed in

> a constant alternation between merging into another world and linking back into our own reference system. By means of this movement back and forth, we can successively come to an understanding of the unfamiliar reference system, something which also leads to the gradual revising and/or enriching of our own: there is a 'fusion of horizons'.

Hence by moving back and forth between the worlds of this study's informants and my own reference system, I continuously develop my understanding of the influence of *habitus, capital, field and leadership practices* on the process of boundary-spanning. In turn, taking a reflexive approach to this study's data entails that the knowledge presented in this article is neither relative nor objective but rather a "provisory rational knowledge […] which is wavering, evasive yet at the same time at least temporarily valid" (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009: 121).

4.4. Data analysis

The data was analysed via interpretative content analysis (Miles et al. 2014) following a reflexive abductive approach which is neither purely inductive nor deductive (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009); this entails that the coding and analysis followed an iterative approach in which I constantly compared the informants' narratives and findings of the document analysis with what previous research has found on boundary-spanning practices and boundary-spanning leadership. For this paper, eight interviews (four mayors; one municipal chief executive; the regional chairman; head of joint BRN secretariat; and head of the Growth Forum) were analysed. During the "First-Cycle Coding" (Miles at al. 2014: 71-86), codes were created and revised in a rather inductive approach to identify the key understandings of identity, differences, practices, roles, and boundaries within and beyond BRN. Thus, the First-Cycle Coding was primarily data-driven. During the "Second-Cycle Coding" (Miles et al. 2014: 86-93), the communicated and observed practices of boundary-spanning were categorized by using the combined theoretical framework of Levina & Vaast (2013) and Palus et al. (2013) presented in Figure 1. Thus, the findings from the First-Cycle coding were scrutinized for patterns in relation to the suggested theoretical framework, which in turn would be "analytically memoed" (Miles et al. 2014: 95-99) in order to explain emergent consistencies and discrepancies of this case study's boundary-spanning practices with those presented in earlier empirical studies.

Following a reflexive abductive methodology, I found contextual as well as person-related aspects to heavily influencing successful boundary-spanning in this cross-sector, multilevel collaboration. These are: (1) a-priori joint negative identification from actors outside the newly established collaboration; (2) pre-established joint identity and trust; (3) struggles, flexibility and accountability; and (4) personal relationships and knowledge-sharing.

5. Findings: boundary-spanning-in-practice

Emergent from the steps of First-Cycle coding and Second-Cycle coding during which I framed the emergent categories inspired by Levina & Vaast (2013) as well as Palus et al.'s (2013) framework of boundary-spanning (leadership) practices, I identified several contextual as well as some idiosyncratic aspects which highly influenced the evolution of BRN. In the following, the first two main sections (Becoming BRN and Readjusting and optimizing BRN), present the findings of the first round of data analysis. It presents the data without drawing directly on existing theories of boundary-spanning. In the second part of the analysis (Political leaders shaping a new collaboration platform), I present the findings in light of the suggested theoretical framework consisting of Levina & Vaast's (2013) conceptualization of boundary-spanning practices and Palus et al.'s (2013) model of boundary-spanning leadership practices which thus presents the analytical summary. As mentioned in the method section, interview data has to be understood as a result of situated communicative co-constructions of meaning. Thus, the construction and analysis of the interview data could present itself very differently from my reading and interpretation when done be another researcher. This being said, even though I am aware of my influence on the following analysis, I deem the presented data and its analysis to portray a "provisory rational knowledge […] which is wavering, evasive yet at the same time at least temporarily valid" (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009: 121). I argue this to be the case as many informants portray BRN's 'becoming' in similar ways, pointing to similar practices of boundary-spanning leadership, and, perhaps most importantly, acknowledge and speak about the perceived struggles and challenges they encountered between BRN's members during this process.

5.1. Becoming BRN: Forging common ground

5.1.1. "Fighting on your own, who wants to do that?"

In general, the mayors, the municipal chief executive and the head of secretariat perceive BRN as "network" or "collaboration" which enables all its various members (municipalities and the Region) to jointly enhance North Denmark's competitiveness instead of competing against each other. One of

the mayors said that if the municipalities work together as "one big infrastructure", then North Denmark would become an interesting partner for other more powerful players such as the business region of Hamburg, Germany; Gothenburg, Sweden; or Stavanger, Norway for example - or even "be part of the global adventure", as yet another mayor pronounced. "Plainly put; together we are much stronger than being on our own", another mayor said, pointing out that there are several synergies which could be brought into play when cooperating across municipalities. The head of the secretariat of the Growth Forum[6] (Vækstforum) highlights that BRN "is a political colossus" which "monopolizes all municipal inputs" and therefore, "has much more power to influence and implement strategical decisions". Another mayor said, "The alternative to BRN would have been to continue fighting on your own. And who wants to do that?". All of this study's interviewees expressed the need for BRN, seeing that it established a relevant joint political power based on an overall consensus across all municipalities; a consensus which perhaps might have been triggered by the fear of being economically left behind as pointed out in the background section. But also a consensus, which BRN has to work on at all times as suggested by the head of the Growth Forum when highlighting that "there are peripheral municipalities, there are municipalities whose membership of BRN is not as advantageous as that of others, and BRN simply must appreciate that and has to keep to initiatives that generate some spin-off for all its municipalities". Thus, all interviewees explicitly acknowledge the value of BRN even though its creation and maintenance at times is challenging due to its diverse actors; thus, BRN's leaders always have to leverage a multitude of internal and external interests and establish consensus before being able to compete against or collaborate with other political and economic players.

5.1.2. Born out of need: "And suddenly everyone was on board"

Even though all interviewees see the necessity for BRN, many also expressed their wondering about how "very fast" and "astonishingly conflict free" BRN was established which many of BRN's actors claimed to be "not at all possible in other Danish regions" and thus, something to "be proud of". BRN's head of secretariat said, BRN was established "between May and September 2014". One mayor explained that "historically speaking there had always been collaborations across municipalities in order to get certain projects realized", but this collaboration seemed to be something different. During a visit to Denmark's EU office, which for whatever reasons had not planned any activities or networking for the visiting mayors from North Jutland, these mayors started discussing how to foster municipal and regional development *in practice*. Upon their return to North Jutland, they realized that "in a blink of an eye, other mayors said 'what are you doing, why didn't you ask us? We also want to join'. And suddenly, everyone was on board and BRN was born." The speedy and seemingly smooth establishment of BRN seemed to be possible not only due to common developmental pressures, but most importantly perhaps because of a rather common history; all members, except for Aalborg municipality, belong to what the capital region called 'peripheral Denmark', most of the municipalities had a "tradition" for collaborating across municipal boundaries, and the most powerful municipality in Northern Denmark, Aalborg municipality, realized that they too "were under pressure and needed others to develop further", as the head of the Growth Forum put it. In addition, even though the municipalities differed from each other, they also had a lot in common which the regional chairman explained as "actually having common interests, common visions, and some joint strategies. […] We don't have to compete on the best ideas; we find them together".

Thus, despite their differences, almost all municipalities do also show similarities in their overall visions and how they have been identified from the outside, namely as a rather unimportant part of Denmark; but they also agree on how they would like to be identified, namely as a political power and interesting partner for other actors within and beyond Denmark. Quite a few mayors

[6] All Growth Forums were abolished on 31 December 2018.

stressed that the smooth and speedy beginning of BRN is based on a shared history and mutual trust, which the head of the Growth Forum summarized as "because one believes in each other, and one understands each other as partners. It's our history which all this is based upon; we trust that we need and want each other ("man vil hinanden")".

5.1.3. Being proud of coming from North Jutland

In general, the interviewees explained the speedy and rather smooth establishment of BRN as being a result of their North Jutlandic identity. This identity, the regional chairman explained in the following way: "We develop things from the resources available to us. And we know that we are good at it and that we can do it. This might mean that it's frugal once in a while, but we know we can, and we are stronger and we are good collaborators, and we need to, because no one is coming to help us." Several mayors indicated that they are "proud of coming from North Jutland". According to one mayor, there were several reasons for being proud: BRN was the only political platform which was established within a few months. The eleven mayors and the regional head easily agreed on having to build BRN in order to pool resources and thus, becoming an interesting partner for other business regions outside of Denmark. BRN even out-trumped Copenhagen Business Region which according to one mayor is "stuck talking but is not able to gather the resources needed to establish a business region". Turning talk and strategies into concrete *practice* is also understood as being a special North Jutlandic value. One mayor stated, "We need something North Jutlandic; we need something concrete so we establish a basis on which we can approach others and where we can say: 'we are able to do this (initiative), we got this (initiative) put into practice; so, what is it you can offer?'".

Arguably, the common North Jutlandic identity seems to enable smooth collaboration across municipalities and political standpoints which a number of interviewees found kind of surprising. For example, one of the eleven municipal chief executives found it "still rather astonishing that we are all playing with open cards". He added that successful collaboration "means daring to show each other one's weaknesses and doubts". Being honest with each other and also showing one's problems is seen by many interviewees to represent trust, which in turn is interpreted as an important aspect of North Jutlandic identity. When asked how this kind of trust was developed, a number of interviewees referred to the Region's history and former structure (North Jutland County). They mentioned that trust had had time to grow since all municipalities had been working together – but also had been competitors – for a long time, because all of them - besides two - belonged to the former 'North Jutland County' and now belong to Region North Jutland. This region is understood as a "region of opportunity where one is close to the citizens" but where one also has to "live with unpredictability" as one of the municipal chief executives explained.

5.1.4. Strong interpersonal relationships

Manoeuvring through the aforementioned "unpredictability" seems to be facilitated by a common regional identity and trust across most of BRN's members; a kind of trust and identity, which many of this study's interviewees expressed as an outcome of long-lasting and strong interpersonal relationships across BRN's members. These relationships were established while meeting each other during collaborations on diverse projects, and attending meetings at some of the several political bodies driving local politics and development in North Jutland. Seeing that many of BRN's members hold several political positions simultaneously, they met each other regularly, albeit in different roles with different decision making power. Over the course of these meetings, they share not only information and knowledge about each other's municipal challenges and strengths, but also social networks and legitimacy from their municipal contexts. Moreover, they develop political initiatives and solutions together. In line with other mayors, the regional chairman, and the head of Growth Forum, one of the municipal chief executives pointed out that due to former partnerships and collaborations on various political platforms, "we know each other well and even dare addressing our

[municipal] problems". In addition to these personal relationships, the regional chairman explained that the different actors' personal characteristics, and here especially their age, played a vital role for BRN's rather smooth establishment: "BRN happened because of its personal make-up: If the mayors in Aalborg, Hjørring and Frederikshavn hadn't changed, BRN wouldn't exist. The shift of generations enabled new forms of collaboration where one would look beyond one's own municipality".

5.2. Re-adjusting and optimizing roles and practices within BRN

5.2.1. Standing together in flexibility

In order to handle "unpredictability" and to "turn talk and strategies into concrete initiatives", several interviewees indicated that they lack a clear understanding of their individual roles and BRN's overall role vis-à-vis other political bodies within the municipal landscape. "There are quite a few, for example Business Development Services (Erhvervshuse), waiting for a definition of their roles", one of the mayors said, "and that is understandable, because we too are waiting for a more precise role definition." The head of the secretariat of the Growth Forum mentioned that his organization and BRN in general (the secretariat and leadership) would know their roles; he was, however, in doubt how well the other political representatives of BRN's members knew their own and the others' roles. However, one municipal chief executive seemed to understand the roles within BRN quite differently; he pointed out: "The good thing with BRN is that we so to say don't have any formal roles; we've only those roles we allocate to each other, and then we hope that these roles are accepted by the others; but this isn't something we can demand". This notion seemed to resonate with Growth Forum's understanding of BRN's structure, which the head of Growth Forum's secretariat explained as being rather organic and 'flexible', as BRN constantly "needs to adjust and build new partnerships."

This flexibility in terms of structures and roles could however be challenging as each of BRN's actors held multiple political positions because they were represented on several municipal and local platforms. The municipal chief executive stressed that having multiple roles and being active on diverse platforms would be an advantage because it would make one "think and act across political bodies and levels". In order to do so, one would need to be "rather reflexive", one of the mayors said, because "you need to be aware of where [which political platform] you are and which formal role you are holding there [on said particular platform]". Yet, in line with several other mayors, he did also stress that "we can, however, not neglect our own turf [their municipality]". A similar notion was made by one of the other mayors who pointed out that their role as a mayor has not changed that much. He added: "We just have to remember that all the initiatives in relation to business development and growth have been bundled and are now facilitated by BRN". None of the interviewees indicated that BRN would influence decision making in other municipal tasks than those related to economic growth and development. "BRN does not deal with those issues that each municipality is capable of dealing with on its own. BRN is meant to act when we deal with issues or ideas which are best addressed collectively, and where the output is higher if you work together compared to working on your own", clarified the head of BRN's secretariat.

5.2.2. A need for action and concrete joint initiatives

Every member municipality of BRN has to invest money and time into this partnership. This means that BRN's economic power is based on the citizens' tax money and that its actions need to be legitimate. Consequently, all interviewees pointed out that in comparison to other political bodies, BRN's main objective is to *act* by demonstrating that the initiatives taking by BRN turn the citizens' tax money into meaningful, joint, effective and concrete initiatives. The head of BRN secretariat mentioned that it had been important for all mayors to use the citizens' tax money in a legitimate way; therefore, it was of utmost importance that all initiatives taken by BRN would "mirror its vigour" by working strategically with the pointing out of relevant initiatives. The head of the secretariat of the Growth Forum pointed out that BRN's role "is to operationalize the strategic work done by the

Growth Forum in order to initiate concrete projects." One of the majors put it like this: "It's been extremely important to me to show our politicians *concrete examples* so they can see that we're not only sitting around and having a good time". The mayor further explained that when they use the citizens' tax money, they also need to show that their municipality profits from these initiatives. Another mayor pointed out that even though the money should be used for concrete development and growth projects, this does not mean that they always would finance ideas coming from businesses (Business Forum / Erhvervsforum). "Businesses could say, 'just put all these 100 million into this project', and then economic growth is fostered. This could, however, mean that the municipalities go bankrupt", the mayor explained. In other words, if, for whatever reason, not all of BRN's members profit from its initiatives in one way or the other, BRN could be accused of acting illegitimately and thus, could stand to lose its justification or at least lose some of its members. Somewhat in relation to this issue, the regional chairman explained that not all municipalities are able to invest additional resources into BRN. "There is quite a big difference in relation to how much they [the different municipalities] have been involving themselves actively", the regional chairman said.

5.2.3. What's in it for me? – What's good for all of us?

As mentioned earlier, BRN's members, i.e. the eleven municipalities of North Jutland and the Region of North Jutland, are rather diverse in terms of size, economic power, geography, etc. In addition, their representatives – the mayors, municipal chief executives and regional chief executive - hold multiple political roles simultaneously. Thus, unsurprisingly, BRN's actions have to accommodate and cut across these differences in such a way that *no* member feels disadvantaged and *all* members see a purpose in belonging to BRN. According to the head of Growth Forum's secretariat, this is "a balancing act on a knife's edge." He said: "BRN is restricted to certain types of initiatives because all of them have to appeal to all municipalities", which he found to be very challenging to put into practice. "In practice, you will compete on investments, employment, size and extension of educational institutions and so on. It's difficult to propose a detailed and concrete common agenda for development, especially because the municipalities are very different and many are not as well integrated into BRN as the city regions [probably referring to Aalborg and Hjørring municipalities]."In line with the head of Growth Forum's secretariat, all other interviewees indicated that the initiatives taken by BRN had to make sense for *all* municipalities as well as BRN, albeit some initiatives launched by BRN may not be implemented by all municipalities in equal measure but, nevertheless, almost all municipalities would profit from them as mentioned by one of the mayors and the regional chairman.

Yet, although most of the mayors were aware of this issue as indicated in former paragraphs (see for instance section 5.2.2.), they did not find this balancing act impossible. Rather, as one mayor explained, conflicts ought to be seen as possibilities for learning from each other. He saw conflicts and communication about them as a means to foster a clear positioning of BRN rather than an obstacle to its establishment and its functioning. In addition, many mayors pointed out that BRN was not meant to fully erase competition between its municipalities. One of the mayors explained: "We need competition; take for example our harbours; they compete with each other in their daily operations. But they do also cooperate. "Offshore base Scandinavia" is an example of that. So, in some instances we look at each other and say: "In this case, it would be advantageous to collaborate, and in these cases, we seem to compete with each other. Shouldn't we just leave it like that?" When we are not big enough to attract an order on our own, then it makes sense to collaborate."

Nevertheless, all mayors pointed out that BRN's primary role was to identify relevant issues more or less common to all of its members. The head of the BRN secretariat stated: "If all members believe that agendas made in BRN are important to all, then it shouldn't be necessary or important to account precisely for what and for whom this money was spent, or where the project was realized. On the other hand, there is also a real political need; it's just like the EU, only in a small edition. We

need to tell our fellow municipal politicians, citizens, and businesses that, for instance, many businesses are part of a certain initiative and some of them are also located in our municipality. This is also something we are going to communicate in our annual reports from now on." Thus, in order to tackle possible conflicts between BRN's members and to establish initiatives which are deemed useful for all its members, BRN had to foster a sense of common identity across its diverse members. Hence, discussions and communication in general were deemed to be of utmost importance in order to strike a balance between common and particular interests.

As discussed earlier, all of BRN's members felt the need for a new political network or platform that would 'walk the talk', which would foster economic growth and development across those municipalities that regions such as Copenhagen would pejoratively call 'peripheral Denmark'. Thus, BRN was seemingly built on the mutual perceived *need and will to act* and thus, to change North Jutland's position, influence, and future in and beyond Denmark. BRN could thus be perceived as an action-oriented political platform crossing both municipal and regional boundaries as both levels of local politics are represented in BRN. Hence, BRN seemed to be competing for political power with the Growth Forum, which was abolished in December 2018. Throughout the interview with the head of the Growth Forum's secretariat, he did, however, indicate that they (the Growth Forum) were the more powerful actor in terms of setting political agendas and allocating money. He indicated that BRN would only be able to turn ideas into practice when these could be aligned to the Growth Forum's overall agenda, a structure which he called "the regime of the Growth Forum which means that everything needs to be in order ["på plads"] before it can be realized". Hence, they seemed to use BRN as a tool for turning their own ideas into practice. It seems fair to suggest that he understood BRN as a welcome communication and power tool or object as it is comprised by those in local power (representatives from the Region and the municipalities) whom the Growth Forum would have to deal with anyway. Thus, BRN seemed to be a practical object and, if in line with the Growth Forum's own strategies, a strategic tool as well with which diverse levels of governance could be addressed simultaneously.

5.3. Shaping a new collaboration platform and joint practice(s)

In this section, I discuss more closely which and how boundary-spanning practices and leadership practices facilitated the emergence of BRN as a new joint *field of practices* to better understand how field-specific practices were simultaneously influenced by the actors' *agency* as well as the *contextual aspects* of the given fields.

The analysis suggests that despite the differences in size, geography, power, and political standpoints and influence, BRN's members successfully facilitated joint cooperation across a variety of discussed identities, differences, and boundaries. Within a rather short period of time, BRN emerges as a new *political platform or collaboration* after a number of disappointed mayors chose to become boundary spanners-in-practice which entails that they – without having been nominated to do so - engaged in spanning boundaries separating fields (municipalities; region; business regions; political, business and educational fields). By drawing on their political knowledge (cultural capital), their political status as mayors (symbolic capital), and existing networks (social capital) as well as experiences of earlier collaborations (familiarity and trust), these mayors co-created, together with the Region of North Jutland, a unique political network or partnership (BRN) which launched *concrete, joint initiatives* to further growth and development in industry, infrastructure, tourism, and international relations within and across the municipalities and the Region belonging to BRN. In order to realize BRN as a new political, or rather cross-sectorial, field, the mayors engaged in a variety of boundary-spanning leadership practices presented by Palus et al. (2013) as well as modes of boundary-spanning as conceptualized by Levina & Vaast (2013).

5.3.1. Boundary-spanning leadership at BRN

According to Palus et al. (2013), boundary-spanning leaders engage in different strategies and practices which seemingly follow after each other as visualized in figure 2. The data analysis revealed that all of these practices are also found in this case study, albeit at different times and not necessarily following a certain order.

When engaged in *managing boundaries*, social actors practice buffering and reflecting. In this case study, buffering takes place in different ways and at different times. On the one hand, prior to the creation of BRN, all municipalities and the Region competed for the allocation of resources such as investments, employment, size and extension of educational and health institutions and so on. Thus, allocation of resources was protected and clear boundaries were set. This is to some extent still the case since BRN has been established. Yet, allocation of resources is now profoundly facilitated by BRN and thus, according to BRN's members, is meant to profit all of its members in some way or other, even though some initiatives are pursued without all members actively participating in it (see also section 5.2.3.). For example, when new initiatives are discussed, mayors can protect their municipalities' economic capital by actively withdrawing from that particular initiative; yet, each municipality invests a certain per capita amount in BRN. Withdrawing from certain initiatives could, for instance, be necessary for municipalities with only a small number of inhabitants as they have to allocate their economic capital to local rather than trans-municipal initiatives.

Reflecting is another practice of boundary management which in the case of BRN took place prior to but also during the establishment of BRN. Seeing that all of BRN's members have been collaborating and competing with each other for many decades, they already had a general, and probably also specific knowledge about each other's strengths, values and problems. In addition, seeing that many of BRN's individual actors (mayors and regional chairman, chief executives, business representatives, etc.) had created personal relationships prior to the creation of BRN, they could base their new collaborations on trust gained from former collaborations. In addition, an assumed joint identity ("Being proud of coming from North Jutland") created the feeling of familiarity and shared trust, which was further enhanced during and after the creation of BRN when social actors engaged in practices of reflecting. This is, for instance, expressed when mayors "play with open cards" and show each other their vulnerabilities, i.e. the most pressing issues in regard to growth and development in their respective municipality.

Another strategy of boundary-spanning found in this case study is that of *forging common ground*, which can be accomplished through the leadership practices of connecting and mobilizing. Connecting can be seen in regular interactions between the different members of BRN. Since BRN's members had been collaborating on diverse projects prior to the creation of BRN, they had been interacting with each other which in turn enriched their interpersonal relationships. During the first stages of establishing BRN, interactions in form of 'informal kick-off meetings' were meant to establish a structure and develop some routines which would facilitate bridging the actors' diverse locations, histories/backgrounds, values, capital portfolio, and political assumptions. Since the emergence of BRN, the representatives of the municipalities, businesses, and the Region did, however, interact in a more institutionalized and regular way in form of, for instance, quarterly meetings facilitated by and informed about by BRN's secretariat via BRN's homepage. Hence, via connecting, structures and routines of practices were built and rebuilt which, for example, is visualized by the changes in the organization chart (see section 2. and section 4.2. Figure 3).

Closely related to and influenced by the practice of connecting is the practice of mobilizing by, for instance, including partners to build a common platform and thus, further develop a sense of community and discuss shared goals. For example, the official 'kick-off meeting' of BRN in Aalborg invited all guests to discuss the first draft of BRN's mission, vision and focus areas (see also background information). In so doing, the boundary spanners-in-practice (the mayors of some of the municipalities represented in today's BRN), not only presented their vision but also invited others,

such as interested citizens, the educational sector and representatives from other political platforms, to become involved with BRN.

A third strategy of boundary-spanning is that of *discovering new frontiers*. The practices of weaving and transforming are meant to facilitate this strategy. Weaving is practised when representatives of the municipalities, the Region, and the Business Forum (see section 4.2.) begin to work jointly and strategically together. In so doing, each member reveals relevant information to the others, including "one's weaknesses and doubts" in regard to realizing proposed initiatives. In so doing, BRN's members disclose parts of their capital portfolio and thus, indirectly, show their relative strength and power vis-à-vis the other political and private actors. However, the interviewed mayors and chief executives described how they in their role as boundary spanners quite often have to remind some of the peripheral and smaller municipalities of the fact that BRN's political strength and success of proposed initiatives, which they all are a part of, depend on all members' investment of relevant knowledge, convenient network ties, and economic capital. Yet, while some municipalities are rather engaged in BRN, others seem to be rather 'inactive members' which assist in financing BRN but only occasionally propose strategic initiatives. Holding on to one's own group identity while also becoming part of a larger unity is a practice mentioned by all interviewed members of BRN when they point out that they somehow have to strike a balance between cooperation and competition between BRN's members (see also section 5.2.1.).

Practices of transforming become prevalent when new identities are created which in case of BRN is achieved when all of its members co-develop initiatives, which further growth and development across all of BRN's members. In order to create said initiatives, all members are required to assist with their specific resources and competencies. In addition, new practices and structures have been developed to facilitate joint decision making and implementation of co-developed initiatives. These changes of practices, structures and identities are addressed by all interviewees as necessary for tackling North Jutland's challenges and, furthermore, enable North Jutland to become a "strong actor on the international stage as a result of the municipalities' combined efforts" (BRN 2019c).

5.3.2. Modes of boundary-spanning at BRN

According to Levina & Vaast (2005, 2013), boundary-spanning practices can resemble *transactional* and *transformative* modes of collaboration as depicted in Table 1. In addition, Levina & Vaast (2013) distinguish between nominated boundary spanners and boundary spanners-in-practice, the latter referring to social agents who engage in boundary-spanning without necessarily having been chosen to do so.

The interviewed members of BRN present the creation of BRN as a reaction to political disappointment and negative identification as inferior and irrelevant political players in the national context of politics (see section 5.1.2.). The idea and the first negotiations and initiatives of creating a new political platform are taken in a somewhat 'ad-hoc' manner by some mayors who coincidentally found themselves engaged in the same practice, namely intended knowledge sharing with the North Denmark EU office in Brussels[7] which, however, turned out to be less satisfactory than anticipated. At that moment in time, these mayors decided that they needed to pool their resources and collaborate even more than they already did in order to be considered a serious political power within Denmark and at EU level. The first steps of this collaboration were facilitated by these mayors who, without having been nominated to do so, co-developed practices to span existing boundaries between the municipalities of North Jutland. Thus, these mayors took on the role of boundary spanner-in-practice. They represented different municipalities and were, therefore, familiar with the political practices preferred in their municipalities as well as being able to draw on different municipality-specific *and* individual forms of capital, such as economic strengths, political knowledge, status as politician,

[7] See the following link for more information on this association: https://eu-norddanmark.dk/about-us/

social bonds, existing structures and political networks, etc. Despite these differences, they also had important features in common; all were used to practise within and manoeuver across political fields and they knew each other personally from earlier and current collaborations across municipalities. Thus, they were rather familiar with each other's strengths and values - both in relation to the personal and the municipal level - which in turn influenced their chosen practices of boundary-spanning. Seeing that some sort of collaboration between the municipalities had been a usual practice in local politics within North Jutland prior to the establishment of BRN, buffering, reflecting and connecting presented relatively familiar practices of enabling transactive engagement across North Jutland's political units.

With the kick-off meeting of BRN, however, the repertoire of boundary-spanning practices was enlarged by incorporating activities of mobilizing which can be considered a transformative practice. During the kick-off meeting, local politicians from diverse municipalities shared knowledge on ongoing initiatives within the five focus areas, but they also invited all guests to contribute with their ideas on how collaboration across the diverse political bodies could be enhanced to address pressing issues within and across the five focus areas. This included ideas on possible partnerships for BRN to engage with or even suggestions as to which political and private units could be valuable as part of BRN. Follow-up meetings and negotiations with possible partners and important private and political units led to the formulation of a joint vision and common goals (see sections 2 and 4.2.). During this phase of mobilizing (but also the subsequent phases of weaving and transforming), documents, such as minutes of meetings, the meetings themselves, and the continuous refinement of BRN's homepage presented jointly produced work and thus, "boundary objects-in-practice" (Levina & Vaast 2013: 296-297). These boundary objects assist in defining the new field's identity and its boundaries as well as presenting its capital portfolio and help drawing other actors into the new field (Levina & Vaast 2013: 299).

Once a sense of community and shared goals had been co-created, and relevant political as well as private units had become part of BRN, its members engaged in discussions about a suitable structure and feasible practices to fulfil the goals they had jointly agreed upon. As indicated earlier, through the practices of weaving and finally transforming, BRN's members renegotiated old relationships and co-created new practices of joint problem solving and thus, established a new field (BRN) within the already existing field of local politics. This new field is comprised by diverse agents representing political, private and public actors, and these members engage in distinct practices by drawing on and allocating particular forms of capital while pursuing the field's distinct jointly co-created interests. In conjunction with BRN's structural refinement, the official distribution of power across BRN's members/units is changed over time as indicated in the altered organization chart (see section 4.2, Figure 3). When conceptualizing BRN's homepage, and the information communicated on it, as a boundary object, any alteration of the website and its contents can be understood as renegotiation of the shared identity and meaning of this particular boundary object. Additionally, renegotiations visualize struggles over influence and power within a given field, which in the case of BRN resulted in the Business Forum being as important and/or powerful as the Directors[8]. However, as mentioned in the interviews, in practice, BRN's members seem to negotiate amongst each other which role each of the members should take on in order to tackle a certain issue (see section 5.2.1.). This practice of informal power allocation seems to resonate with the notion of being a proactive boundary spanner-in-practice. Furthermore, it indicates a change in political practices as it can be assumed that in other political fields, members prefer to act according to nominated roles and institutionalized practices as also hinted at in the analysis on BRN's flexible structure.

In sum, the analysis suggests that BRN emerged as a joint field which was co-created by

[8] During the course of writing this article, the organization chart was changed back to the first chart ever presented on BRN's website (see section 4.2.).

political, public and private actors through a variety of boundary-spanning practices. In the beginning, these practices were mainly pursued by political actors, namely mayors. Through time, boundary-spanning activities were also practised by BRN's other members, for example business executives, employees from the joint secretariat, and representatives of the educational field. In order to engage in boundary-spanning activities, these actors took on roles which they had not been nominated for; for instance, as nominated municipal political leaders they were to secure growth and development *within* their political and geographical boundaries, namely their municipality. As social actors within BRN, they were to think and act *across* these boundaries, negotiate new relationships, craft common purpose and new identities. These changes of collaboration modes resulted in the emergence of a new field within the existing fields of political practice. This new field (BRN) can be understood as a challenge to the existing institutionalized practices and structures which relied on clear-cut roles and thereto related practices, power structures and assumptions. With the emergence of BRN, the allocation of resources has changed and a new balance between competition and collaboration on issues of development and growth was found. It could be argued that BRN emerged as a new field because actors of the political fields (mayors, municipal and regional chief executives), private fields (business executives) and the educational field (researchers and educational representatives) could no longer fit their main concern for economic development and growth into the existing political frames, where especially the Growth Forum was perceived as being too inactive. Therefore, BRN emerged as a new 'cross-sector field' which challenged the established institutionalized practices related to fostering development and growth in North Jutland.

Throughout the analysis it was clear that the then existing historical, geographical and political contexts, including strong interpersonal relationships, influenced boundary-spanning and leadership practices of BRN's diverse social actors. The literature on boundary-spanning and boundary-spanning leadership describes the importance of structures, activities, competencies, and, more recently, of modes of boundary-spanning practices (Levina & Vaast 2013) and leadership practices (Palus et al. 2013), but rarely discusses the importance of interpersonal relationships (Barmeyer & Davoine 2018), nor the influence of broader fields on situated boundary-spanning practices. In the following section, these findings are discussed in light of related conceptual literature by focusing on boundary-spanning practices and boundary-spanning leadership practices.

6. Discussion

Drawing on the framework of Palus et al. (2013), numerous boundary-spanning strategies and practices could be identified in this case study of BRN. The analysis shows that mayors try to protect or at least withdraw their own municipal resources (buffering), but also that they communicate and are open about their municipal challenges, strengths and most pressing issues (reflecting). It becomes apparent that many of BRN's actors knew each other from former collaborations on diverse projects and how they use this knowledge and established trust to set up further meetings across locations and political values (connecting), and thereby foster a sense of community, shared identity and goals which attract other actors to BRN (mobilizing). In the end, the analysis shows that BRN's members create new joint boundary objects, structures and practices (weaving) and jointly agreed upon initiatives which are meant to strengthen BRN's visibility, attractiveness and power in the Danish and international fields of politics and business (transforming). When focusing primarily on the narratives of the mayors and head of the joint secretariat, the collaboration between BRN's members seems to be highly transformative. In fact, transactional modes of collaboration are mainly situated in the past and are portrayed as prerequisites or points of departure for transformative collaboration, which changes the field of local politics in North Jutland. Nevertheless, during the interviews, many incidents of buffering (see section 5.2.3.), reflecting (see section 5.2.1.) and connecting (see section 5.2.2.) are mentioned, all of which represent transactional rather than transformational modes of collaboration. In addition, practices of reflecting are also addressed as a way to tackle intrapersonal

role ambiguities, and the practices of weaving and transforming seem not to challenge the power structures within BRN to such a degree as could be anticipated in light of a practice theoretical perspective on boundary-spanning (Levina & Vaast, 2013) and as communicated by the interviewed actors of BRN.

When mayors buffer between their own and other municipalities and the Region, it seems that they try to protect their interests and resources for their own strategic use instead of providing said resources for the collaboration they are a part of, i.e. BRN (Williams 2012). These practices of withdrawal may indicate that not all of BRN's members (municipalities) either have the ability (essential resources) or see the necessity to fully identify with BRN. Therefore, it is questionable as to whether municipalities not actively partaking in BRN's work, can be perceived as belonging to the newly established field. From a practice perspective, it can be argued that not all actors in a given field have the ability to 'play the field's game' successfully; it takes a certain alignment of the actors' capital portfolio and the capital appreciated by the powerful actors in the field in order to succeed in the game. Thus, the practice of buffering seems to indicate that some municipalities may never become as fully engaged with BRN as other more powerful municipalities. Following this line of thought, some of these rather 'inactive' members may either be 'encouraged' to invest some more of their resources into BRN or they may lose their interest in BRN entirely. Either way, there seems to be a lack of 'alignment' which in the very least suggests that BRN's members are at different stages in relation to their engagement with the new field; hence, boundary-spanning practices and boundary-spanning leadership practices differ through time and in relation to the particular actor and situation, which makes it difficult to distinguish between the different modes (transformative and transactional) and stages of boundary-spanning practices. For instance, when do we consider withdrawing one's interest and resources as 'buffering', which arguably portrays a transactional mode, and when as 'weaving' which is considered to be a practice of the transformational mode?

In addition, when mayors point out that all of BRN's members 'play with open cards' and expose their doubts and weaknesses, these members engage in reflecting which fosters intergroup knowledge and understanding. However, one could ask if there is a real need to "reflect" because many members know each other from prior interactions and collaborations and they also commonly seem to identify with "being from North Jutland". At the same time, however, as also mentioned earlier, several members withdrew from proactive participation and instead settled with investing economic capital but restricted their investments of other types of capital. Hence, while the practice of "reflecting" seems partly to lie in the past, partly in the present and simultaneously is overly taken for granted as 'all identify with North Jutland', the strategy of "forging common ground" (connecting and mobilizing) seems also partly taken for granted. Connections between relevant actors have been established through former collaborations through which the participating municipalities were "sensitized to each others' values and expertise" (Palus et al. 2013: 211). On the grounds of past knowledge and perceived shared regional identity across the diverse groups belonging to BRN as well as the rather negative identification of North Jutland from those actors external to this region, the common purpose and shared identity ("mobilizing") of BRN could be crafted within a very short time-span. The question remains as to how sensitized and knowledgeable BRN's actors are about each other ("reflecting") in order to successfully engage in practices of "weaving" and lastly, "transforming" during which group distinctiveness and integration has to be balanced and new identities are created.

Furthermore, when focusing on power issues, this case shows that those mayors who initiated the creation of BRN seem to play the most important and influential roles within BRN; they represent those boundary spanners-in-practice, who are endowed with a certain level of symbolic capital which enables them to act and make decisions on behalf of others. Thus, they actively negotiate relationships between actors and practices and thereby draw on, but also create, objects that are understood as symbolically valuable across actors and contexts (Bourdieu 1998). For instance, BRN's members –

or rather those who actively engage in the creation of BRN and not only 'join it'- established this new political field and with it new joint practices and objects; a new website and a variety of new documents were created, which signified all municipalities as equal in power and as architects of "joint initiatives". In addition, practices of collaboration based on co-financing and joint return on investment became symbolically more valuable than the former method of ad-hoc collaboration and hard competition (see section 5.1.1.). In order to establish newly joint practices and meaningful objects of symbolic capital, those mayors who functioned as boundary spanners-in-practice drew on various forms of capital which they had accumulated during former practices in various other political fields. The BRN initiating mayors used primarily their symbolic capital as political leaders to communicate the relevance for BRN and to obtain economic capital from the municipalities to finance BRN's creation and its first symbolic objects (website, documents, secretariat), and joint initiatives (kick-off meeting and following meetings and concrete initiatives). They also draw on their social capital (already established networks and contacts via their multiple roles in various political bodies), and their cultural capital in various forms (knowing the language and practices of local politics; thinking and acting across political bodies and levels; knowing and having embodied political work practices; knowing the strengths and weaknesses as well as the image of one's own municipality and the Region of North Jutland in general). By drawing on these various forms of capital embodied in what one could call the 'political habitus', the mayors demonstrate the need and value of BRN and motivate boundary-spanning practices such as "connecting", "mobilizing", and "weaving" (Palus et al. 2013). During this process, joint boundary objects such as BRN's structure and website were created, re-negotiated, and used in practice to further indicate their position within the newly established field. They do, however, also use these joint boundary-spanning objects to position the new field (BRN) in relation to other fields (for example the Growth Forum or other Business Regions in and outside Denmark).

Despite the mayors' accounts of being flexible in taking on different roles within BRN and the notion of BRN having a rather 'flexible structure', this case study shows that BRN's members re-produce the existing power structures of the political fields that they also interact in. In other words, the collaborative partnership in which the Region and the municipalities are engaged may not have changed the "internal differences in status and power" very much: Aalborg municipality is still the strongest actor even though its mayor has "understood how to restrict his political influence in relation to BRN" as several mayors and the regional chairman pointed out. In addition, the smaller and more peripheral municipalities are still marginalized as they withdraw themselves from active participation, most probably because they lack the resources to be present in all fields of local politics. In other words, as suggested by Levina & Vaast (2013: 288) actors "who have accumulated more capital than others are able to influence others and maintain their own privileged positions". On the other hand, in line with Bourdieu's' theory of practice, Levina & Vaast (2013) claim that power structures are changing when new fields emerge which is the case when boundary spanners engage in practices of transforming. This case study, however, shows that it is questionable if these changes occur within a new field when this field is situated within existing fields of practices (here the field of local politics) which actually facilitate the emergence of said new field in the first place. While there obviously are changes in the power structure of the field of local politics, because the Growth Forum ceased to exist and BRN emerged as new player in the field, it is questionable as to how far the power structures amongst the municipalities and their representatives have changed. Even though differences in resources and thus, power, between BRN's members are acknowledged, they are not erased; instead, BRN's members co-constructed and added new political practices to the existing practices of local politics which are perceived as more valuable and legitimate. For instance, collaboration seems to be higher in symbolic value than competition. This is clearly articulated by all members. But this adjusted approach also restricts the possible range of feasible actions: not all actions which potentially would enhance growth and development are perceived as legitimate, but only those that are profitable

for *all* of BRN's members. Thus, the new joint identity (belonging to BRN) and the 'new rules of the game', which encourage and value joint collaboration over competition by acting *as-if* power differences between BRN's members have been resolved, seem to further strengthen the social capital across BRN's members. Yet, the newly accrued forms of social capital come with a cost; they restrict agency and political power since all members are meant to consider each other in their political actions and thus, have to fulfil each other's legitimate expectations and obligations.

As theorized by Levina & Vaast (2005), boundary-spanning practices and the re-negotiation of new joint practices in an emergent field are not free of tensions. In relation to the study of BRN, I would like to highlight one of the four tensions pointed out by Levina & Vaast (2005), namely the tension between social actors investing in achieving legitimized capital in their local fields (municipality) versus achieving legitimized capital in the new joint field (BRN). As already mentioned, BRN is financed via a per capita pay contribution of each of its twelve members (the eleven municipalities and the Region) which amounts to about fourteen million DKK per year. Thus, each member invests economic capital proportional to their number of inhabitants through their engagement in BRN; and the proactively engaged mayors and municipal chief executives furthermore invest aforementioned forms of social, cultural, and symbolic capital in order to build constructive partnerships and realize BRN's initiatives and overall goal. Firstly, when engaging fully in the joint field, BRN's members (municipal and regional representatives) need to draw on and invest some of their capital, which could, however, have been more usefully invested in their local fields. Secondly, investing one's capital in the new joint field (BRN) can be useful and legitimate if such an investment can be converted into legitimate and valued forms of capital associated with one's local field. In the case of BRN, this tension seems to be portrayed when some municipalities/mayors withdraw from actively partaking in BRN. On the other hand, BRN's members need not be fully engaged in BRN in order to be an accepted member in the joint field. BRN as a political field is comprised by a rather flexible structure (see section 5.2.1.) and legitimized practices which are co-created during regular meetings. While BRN's members need to invest some capital in encouraging others to engage in the co-creation of practices and objects, they do not invest all their time and capital to do so, and, therefore, do not risk losing their symbolic capital as local politicians in their local fields. Moreover, BRN's initiatives are meant to provide a greater return of investment for *all* its members. Hence, being engaged in the joint field of BRN seems to assist its members in advancing in their local fields as well. This way, investments in BRN and in the mayor's local fields are not in conflict with each other. In fact, being active on diverse political platforms throughout and beyond North Jutland seems to be part of the local politicians' daily routines and legitimized practices, which in turn foster their interpersonal relationships, legitimacy, status and expertise as boundary spanners in the field of local politics.

In sum, the analysis of boundary-spanning practices in this cross-sector field of BRN suggests that boundary-spanning practices and leadership seem to be non-linear situated practices and processes which are highly influenced by, on the one hand, wider contextual and historical dimensions, and individual characteristics of the boundary-spanning leaders, on the other hand. This has not been addressed as such in the existent literature on boundary-spanning practices. In this case study, boundaries are not only managed within each group through buffering and reflecting as mentioned by Palus et al. (2013), but rather from politicians and other actors *not identifying* with any of BRN's members (see section 5.1.2.). Furthermore, inter-group trust is not established during the strategy of forging common ground by which a common identity is created (as claimed by Kroeger & Bachmann 2013 and Palus et al. 2013), but instead is based on a pre-existing joint regional identity from which BRN's identity emerged. Moreover, somewhat in line with Søderberg & Romani (2017), this case suggests that differences in status and power are not diminished through transformative engagement (as suggested by Levina & Vaast 2008), but rather they seem to be 'pushed into the background' and considered to be not legitimate to articulate, as shown by restricting legitimate

practices for growth and development to those which profit *all* members while giving space to less economic powerful municipalities to withdraw from BRN's more resource-demanding initiatives. In addition, while these practices of withdrawal seem to be legitimate, they also present practices of buffering and thus, the leadership strategy of managing boundaries which according to Levina & Vaast (2013) represents transactive engagement. In other words, this cross-sector collaboration in which eleven rather different municipalities and the Region are engaged in shows features of a new political field (somewhat new practices and new positions/roles and overall new logic/rules of the game) while, at the same time, upholding and reconstructing existing power structures.

7. Contributions and conclusions

This case study of boundary-spanning in BRN contributes to research on boundary-spanning practices and boundary-spanning leadership practices in numerous ways. Firstly, this study adds to the few empirical studies which foster our understanding of transformative boundary-spanning practices (Levina & Vaast 2008; Barmeyer & Davoine 2018) in the under-researched context of cross-sector, multiple-level collaborations (Williams 2012; Guarneros-Meza & Martin 2016). Secondly, this study adds to our understanding of how new fields of practices emerge in practice (Levina & Vaast 2005, 2008; see also Søderberg & Romani, 2017). The key contribution of this article, however, is in exploring how the *situativeness* of practices (Frederiksen 2014; see also Levina & Vaast 2013; Swidler 1986) influences the boundary spanners concrete intergovernmental leadership practices on the local level. Previous studies taking a practice perspective on boundary-spanning (Levina & Vaast 2005, 2008, 2013) seem to assume that once the transformational mode of engagement has been reached, a common identity and joint field has been created in which boundary-spanning activities have lessened power differences (Levina & Vaast 2005), and boundary-spanning practices culminate in a "Nexus Effect" (Palus et al., 2013: 215) in which boundary-spanning no longer seems necessary.

In this case study, BRN constitutes a new political field with new positions and thereto associated roles. Facilitated by an assumed a-priori common identity as well as long lasting interpersonal relationships characterized by mutual trust, this field, and thus its positions, have been co-created by municipal leaders which are also the actors taking on these positions. Hence, it is the powerful actors that secure their powers but relate them to other positions and practices. Whereas the creation of BRN as a whole may change the political power play on the municipal and regional level, it is still the former powerful actors/positions which re-constructed the already existing power structures on the individual level. Therefore, in this case, power differences are not lessened but rather subdued and addressed by a seemingly all-member-embracing practice and logic of the field which 'allows' members to withdraw from active participation in BRN. Consequently, this case suggests that boundary-spanning is a continuous process during which political leaders draw on a repertoire of boundary-spanning practices (see also Swidler 1986) to address the member and situation at hand. Hence, boundary spanners have to engage in a variety of boundary-spanning strategies and practices, depending on the time and context they find themselves and the other in. Thus, I suggest that neither modes nor practices of boundary-spanning and boundary-spanning leadership follow a certain pattern as claimed in the literature (see for instance Palus et al. 2013). Instead, the case of BRN suggests that these forms and modes coexist as boundary spanners have to judge which forms of capital and practices to draw on while facing the present situation and making sense of it in light of their past experiences and their anticipations of the future. Hence, this case study advocates for understanding boundary-spanning practices not only as *situated* but also as *relational* (Frederiksen 2014). Thus, one could ask if boundary-spanning leadership may show resemblances with other forms of leadership taking a practice perspective, such as "Leadership by muddling through" (Styhre 2012) or "Managerial leadership" (Sveningsson et al. 2012).

To conclude, this case study of a cross-sector and multilevel collaboration from the political field focused on boundary-spanning and boundary-spanning leadership as emergent practices

between municipal and regional political leaders. Instead of focussing on certain lifecycle models of boundary-spanning (Palus et al., 2013) or qualities (Langan-Fox & Cooper 2013) or pre-defined roles of boundary spanners (Zaheer & Bell, 2005; Wenger, 1998), this study employed a practice theoretical approach to study the *situated emergence of boundary-spanning practices* (Levina & Vaast, 2005, 2008, 2013). In this study, I analysed the processes of boundary-spanning practices via the medium of communication and thus, highlighted the influence of time and contextual dimensions on the political leaders' choice of practices. In particular, this study points to the importance of conceptualizing boundary-spanning leadership as *situated relational practices* which combine the past and the future in actual behaviour in the present (see also Tsoukas 2017) and thus, shed some light on the fluid and situated nature of boundary-spanning practices in political multi-level environments.

This research finds that boundary-spanning actors have to tackle multidimensional dilemmas by re-constructing and re-interpreting concepts such as difference, identity, boundary, and cooperation. In so doing, the social actors of BRN co-construct a new *field* (and thus, new boundaries) with new *social positions* which lastly also modify and enlarge their *political roles and symbolic capital* as well as the pre-existing *power structures* between diverse political institutions and platforms of local governance in North Jutland. The Growth Forum and other political bodies, for instance, are abolished while BRN allocates political power. These changes in North Jutland's political landscape do however not change the broader political field's distribution of power on the individual level. In the newly emerged field (BRN), the power structures of the overall political field (distribution of power), which are taken for granted, are seemingly reconstructed. Hence, when engaging in boundary-spanning, this research infers that boundary spanners have to understand and take the broader context and history of each group into account in order to lessen power differences between these actors and provide them with more resources to actively engage them in the co-creation of a 'third joint field'.

Further research could focus on how boundary spanners make sense (Weick et al. 2005) of the current situation and their choice of a certain boundary-spanning practice. In addition, a longitudinal comparative case study with ethnographic methods of BRN and other business regions in Denmark could provide more insight into the role of time and context on the emergence of boundaries and the approaches taken by local actors engaged in these cross-sector collaborations.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. BRN's etablering	
1.1 Hvorfor blev BRN oprettet? (hvilke mål/ hvilke løsninger på hvilke problemer?) 1.2 Hvorfor var det vigtigt, at BRN skulle dække hele Nordjylland (og ikke kun 'city-region Aalborg')? 1.3 Har din organisations rolle ændret sig i kølvandet på BRN? Hvis ja, hvordan? Hvilke nye roller har BRN afstedkommet? (fx Vækstforums rolle forandret)	
2. Samarbejde mellem aktører inden for og uden for BRN	
2.1 Hvilke overvejelser har I gjort jer om samarbejde og koordinering i forhold til BRN's institutionelle set-up? 2.2 Hvorfor og hvordan samarbejder BRN med andre Business Regioner (herunder city regioner)?	
3. Organisationens læreproces	
3.1 Nu har BRN eksisteret et års tid og I har formuleret en strategi – hvad har du lært indtil videre i BRN, med udgangspunkt i din egen organisation? (kan du give et eksempel) – skabe, fastholde og dele viden.	
4. Strategi og koordinering	
4.1 Hvad skal der til for at sikre BRN's handlekraft/ at BRN bliver en succes? (administrative, finansielle, politiske, legitime ressourcer) 4.2 Hvordan skaber I ejerskab til BRN's strategi blandt alle aktørerne, uden at gå på kompromis med jeres mål? 4.3 Hvordan passer jeres strategi og planer med BRN's strategi og planer?	
5. Dialog og involvering	
5.1 I hvilket omfang bliver borgere involveret i BRN's	

beslutninger og aktiviteter? Kan du give et eksempel på, hvordan en sådan involvering foregår?	
6. Bæredygtig udvikling	
6.1 Hvordan forstår du bæredygtighed og hvilken rolle spiller bæredygtighed (klima) i BRN? 6.2 Kender du til konflikter i forbindelse med bærdygtighed? 6.3 Når der fx opstår en interessekonflikt om placering af vindmøller eller biogasanlæg - kan BRN så være med til at håndtere sådanne konflikter? Hvis ja, hvordan?	
7. Rekruttering af uddannet arbejdskraft	
7.1 Regional udvikling er også afhængig af evnen til at tiltrække en uddannet arbejdsstyrke. Hvis du var en slags 'recruitment manager' for BRN med ansvar for at fremme tiltrænings- og fastholdelsestiltag i regionen, hvad ville du så gøre og hvor ser du muligheder og problemer? 7.2 Til slut vil vi bede dig reflektere lidt over lokal og regional identitet: – kan du sige lidt om, hvad der er unikt/specielt ved din kommune? // Er der noget, der adskiller din kommune fra andre (nordjyske?) (nabo-?)kommuner, og hvis ja, hvordan vil du beskrive det? Mener du, der eksisterer en fælles identitet for regionen, en nordjysk identitet? Hvis ja, hvordan ligner den (ikke) 1) din kommunes identiet /særkender 2) Danmarks identitet som helhed?	

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Adaptive grading systems, or pros and cons of different ways of grading grammar exams

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Abstract: This paper investigates several alternatives to the grading system used currently when examining students' knowledge of theoretical grammar in the Department of English Business Communication at Aalborg University, Denmark. The proposed alternatives differ from the current system in two parameters, namely by differentiating between exam questions according to their levels of difficulty and by evening out biases which are due to the differences in the weights of the various topics of the exam. It is found that the proposed methods would yield results significantly different from the current grading method even though it would only be in the favor of few students in terms of better grades to adapt any of them. Nevertheless, the study reveals prevalent traits of the current way of examining, such as built-in bias and the scalability of the questions, which are important considerations to anyone conducting exams, not just in grammar. Furthermore, the paper uncovers unexpected features of clause constituents that may have serious implications for their teaching.

Keywords: language acquisition, learning of grammar, evaluating and grading, statistics.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the grading of an exam can be fine-tuned. The investigation is based on the exam in theoretical grammar of freshmen in the Department of English Business Communication at Aalborg University, Denmark. However, the methods tested can be adapted to any exam or test which is graded quantitatively; that is, the students are given a certain number of points for each exam question answered, and the grade is then dependent on the sum of the points so collected.

The idea for this study came from a project planned previously to correlate students' vocabulary as manifested in their written assignments with their grammatical knowledge as measured by the grammar exams. During the planning of said project, it was realized that the scores of the grammar exams would not be able to differentiate the students sufficiently. In the current exam scheme, each of the 100 questions answered correctly is awarded one point. Thus, the exam scores can differentiate at most 101 students (0 thru 100 points); in practice even fewer students because not all possible scores are actually attained (very few students score above 95, and virtually no one has ever scored under 40). This would have made the correlation analysis less useable.

Therefore, a method was sought that could retroactively increase the granularity of the grammar exams which had already been administered. Even though the vocabulary-correlated-with-grammar project has not been pursued further yet, it was thought that methods to increase the granularity of the exam scores would nonetheless be worth investigating in their own right with a view to refining the way of examining the students in grammar without having to change the examination fundamentally. A good reason for possibly changing the evaluation process is that there is currently no differentiation between the exam questions reward-wise even though it is likely that they represent different levels of difficulty. Thus, it is possible that a student who is able to answer only less difficult questions scores more points and consequently a higher grade than a student who is able to answer fewer but more difficult questions. This is a potentially unfair or undesirable situation.

This paper draws up several ways of differentiating between the exam questions and investigates the consequences of these methods by comparing them to the current manner of examining. It does not address general issues surrounding grading, such as the reasons for or the goals

with grading (Brookhart 2011; Aitken 2016). It restricts itself to fine-tuning the current way of examining. As an extension to devising new scoring methods, this study also tests whether there might be unwanted biases in the current method of examining in theoretical grammar. An early draft of the paper was presented at a departmental seminar in 2017.

2. Theory

This study focuses on how it is possible to take the difficulty level of the exam questions into consideration in order to fine-tune the grading process. The methods that are examined here are based on assigning to each question a different number of points in accordance with the level of difficulty of the questions. Hence, determining the level of difficulty of each question is of crucial importance. The grading system itself is not modified; that is, the relative distances between the grades are not changed (Ministry of Education 2019). The grading system is kept intact so that it is easier to determine the consequences of the fine-tuning methods investigated.

There are in principle two ways in which the level of difficulty can be set, a priori and a posteriori. In the a priori approach, the level of difficulty – in the form of different number of points that can be scored by answering the questions correctly – is assigned to each question before the exam is attempted. In the a posteriori approach, the level of difficulty of the questions is calculated after the exam has been attempted by the students. This paper follows the a posteriori approach. In the remainder of this section, it is explained why not the a priori method is favored, and the section on methods elaborates which a posteriori methods are investigated and how they are implemented.

There are two reasons why the a priori approach is not used in this paper. One reason is simply that this paper compares different ways of grading on the basis of an exam that has been taken and whose questions had not been differentiated with respect to their difficulty. The other reason is that it is in fact non-trivial to assess the level of difficulty of questions beforehand even if – intuitively – it should be the preferred method. There are basically two ways of doing it.

One way is the intuition of the examiner. All teachers/examiners develop a feeling of what tends to be more and what tends to be less difficult for the students, and this intuition is likely drawn upon when selecting the questions for an exam. However, the problem is that it is only an intuition. There ought to be another, more scientific way of performing the selection of exam questions, especially when the examiner is the same person as the teacher, and when this person is almost alone in this process (Lehmann 2018). This is certainly the case in our Department of English Business Communication, as there is no tradition in Denmark to have centrally standardized exams at universities, and there are currently only two teachers who teach grammar. Thus, great responsibility rests upon the examiner in order to avoid bias and keep the level of the exam as constant as possible across the years.

Another, more objective, way of assessing the difficulty of the questions is to analyze the responses of students at previous exams and assign points to the questions of future exams based on this statistical study. Unfortunately, there are two problems with this approach.

One of the challenges is that the questions – of course – have to be different from exam to exam, or else the students of later years would have a great advantage compared to the students of the first year. Hence, the assignment of points to the individual questions of a future exam would be dependent on the extent of analogy between the new questions and the questions that have been assessed in the above-mentioned statistical analysis. However, the extent of analogy itself could only be assessed by either the examiner's intuition or by an even more extensive statistical analysis that takes many different types of questions across the years into account.

However, the major challenge to this approach is that such statistical analyses simply do not yet exist, at least not for the types of questions posed at the grammar exams in our department. Madsen (2017) is a fairly large scale statistical study of our students' performance at the grammar exams; however, it focuses on the question to what extent the different topics of grammar challenge the

students. It does not assess the level of difficulty of individual grammar-exam questions. Another study (Madsen ms) does examine the questions individually. However, its focus lies elsewhere and therefore also considers questions in the exercises which the students do during the grammar course as part of their preparation for the exam.

Based on the above considerations, it seems that the most promising approach – at least for the time being – is the a posteriori methodology, which is elaborated in the section on the methods. Since there are no specific expectations to the outcome of this study, no hypotheses are postulated. Hence, the study is predominantly inductive. Therefore, the data are presented in the next section before the methods are discussed.

Of course, the methods investigated here do not guarantee that the exams in different years have the same overall level of difficulty, reliability and validity, nor do they it ascertain that the differences between the levels of difficulty of questions found reflect a tendency in the population, i.e. outside the sample of students. However, it is not the purpose of these methods, either. Their purpose is to make the assessment of the exam scores fairer. On the other hand, this study does serve as a step in investigating whether the difficulty of exam questions is implicational or not.

There is an intuitive expectation that if someone can manage a task considered more difficult (on whatever basis), they can also manage less difficult tasks, but not vice versa (Vygotsky 1978; Hatch & Farhady 1982; Donato 1994). This is an implicational relation. The ability of doing something more difficult implies the ability of doing something less difficult, but not the other way around. However, it need not be the case. For instance, vocational educations are considered to be at a lower level than university educations, suggesting that they are easier (Ministry of Education 2018). Nevertheless, it does not guarantee that say a person with a PhD could take on a plumber's job. By evaluating the methods which are proposed here for a more differentiated grading, the implicationality of the exam questions is analyzed as well.

3. Data

The data that are manipulated according to different methods are the students' scores from the grammar exam in 2014. It is a written exam in theoretical grammar; that is, the students' practical command of English is not tested apart from 5 questions concerning the use of comma in certain sentences. The exam consists of 100 questions on 13 topics. The students are given 120 minutes to answer the 100 questions and are not allowed to use any means of aid. Consequently, they have to memorize all the relevant technical terms and their applicability. Table 1 gives an overview of the topics of grammar in the exam.

Table 1: Overview of the grammar topics examined

Topics	Number of questions
Parts of speech	10
Semantic relations	5
Clause constituents	18
Phrase vs. subordinate clause	8
Phrase types	10
Phrase constituents	9
Pronoun types	10

Topics	Number of questions
Subordinate clause types	7
Clause finiteness	7
Number of matrix clauses in a paragraph	5
Function of a morpheme	3
Dictionary form of a word's root	3
Comma	5

The numbers of questions per topic, which might seem ad hoc, are the result of a compromise between four factors. The period of two hours allotted to the exam is decided externally and sets the limit for how many questions overall it is reasonable to pose. On the other hand, as many topics as possible are probed for the sake of the validity of the exam. Then, reliability requires that as many questions as possible are asked per topic (DeVellis 2011; Dörnyei 2014), and preferably, about the same number of questions per topic so that there is as little bias as possible towards select topic(s). Finally, tradition also plays a role, as for instance, clause constituents used to be highly represented whereas morphology did not use to be represented at all in previous exams. Table 2 provides some examples of the questions posed within the different topics.

Table 2: Examples of exam questions

Determine which part of speech the underlined words belong to.

- The name Intel is a portmanteau of **Int**egrated **El**ectronics.

Determine the semantic relation between the expressions below.

- *-er* as in *happier* vs *-er* as in *Londoner*

Determine what clause constituents the underlined sequences of words are.

- True cider is made from fermented apple juice.

Decide whether the underlined sequences of words are phrases or clauses.

- Founded in 1968, Intel mostly produced RAM in the beginning.

Determine what phrase constituent the underlined sequences of words are.

- the transistor count of modern processors

Determine what kind of pronoun the underlined words are.

- Not even Intel itself has anticipated its success.

Determine the type and finiteness of the underlined subclauses.

- It seems that some drinks marketed as cider are not true ciders.

Specify the dictionary form of the roots of the words below.

- Unhealthily

With the exception of the questions in which the students have to provide the dictionary forms of the roots of words type, the students have to select the correct answer from finite sets of valid answers. For instance, in the case of clause constituents, the set of valid answers is the set of clause constituents, containing nine elements in this grammar course, such as subject, verb, direct object, indirect object, subject complement, object complement, adverbial constituent, preliminary subject and preliminary direct object (Hjulmand & Schwarz 2008). Should a student give a true but invalid response, say calling *from fermented apple juice* a preposition phrase instead of an adverbial constituent, the response counts as incorrect. The sets of valid responses are not listed in the exam; the students are expected to remember them. Hence, the exam is not a classic multiple-choice exam. In questions concerning the roots, there is no fixed set of valid responses, and the students are not given any hints as to what the root might be.

Each correct and valid response yields one point for the student. Incorrect and non-existent responses yield zero points. The students have to collect 60 points (60% of the maximum number of points) in order to pass the exam. The boundaries for the grades can be seen in Table 3 (Ministry of Education 2017). There is no provision for partially answered questions. Hence, fractions of points are not given. In any case, only the questions concerning semantic relations, the roots of words and the use of comma could conceivably be answered partially in a meaningful way, for instance if a student inserts only one comma into a sentence that requires two commas.

Table 3: Grade boundaries

Grade	Boundaries
-3	0 – 17
00	18 – 59
02	60 – 63
4	64 – 73
7	74 – 85
10	86 – 95
12	96 – 100

4. Method

This section explains both the new methods of grading and the method used for measuring the implicationality in the perceived difficulty of the exam questions.

4.1. Proposed grading methods

An important consideration for the grading methods to be investigated is that they can be integrated seamlessly into the process in which the exams are conducted currently. Thus, the examiner should not have to do anything else than deciding whether a question has been answered correctly or not. The methods have been implemented in a MS Excel spreadsheet and require nothing else than entering 1 for a correct answer and 0 for an incorrect answer (Bovey et al. 2009; Carlberg 2014). It was contemplated whether non-existent replies and/or invalid responses should be treated in a special manner. However, since there is no tradition for penalizing the students for such responses, they are treated simply as incorrect answers and are thus to be assigned 0.

Generally, an a posteriori assessment of the level of difficulty can be performed by calculating the ratio of how many students have answered the questions correctly (Hatch & Farhady 1982: 177). If the sample size is large enough, in the present case 68 students, this figure can be expected to reliably indicate the level of difficulty of the questions relative to each other. The higher the ratio of correct answers, the easier the question. The questions are only compared to other questions within the same topic. A cross-topic comparison of individual questions would not make much sense as oranges would be compared to apples, especially since it has been established that some topics are generally more difficult than others (Madsen 2017).

A consequence of a posteriori assessments is that the students cannot be informed beforehand which questions are considered more difficult and hence yield more points. Another consequence is that the calculation is specific for the group of students who take the exam together, and once their grades have been fixed, the group cannot be expanded because the grades of the students depend on each other. However, this is not likely to ever be an issue in practice.

Two methods have been devised to differentiate between the questions regarding their relative levels of difficulty. They differ with respect to how the differentiation is done. Assuming that n equals the number of questions within a given exam topic, the one method assigns an integer ranking value from 1 thru n to each question depending on the detected level of difficulty. 1 indicates the lowest level of difficulty, i.e. the highest number of informants having answered that question correctly. If two questions appear to have the same level of difficulty, i.e. they have been answered correctly by the same number of informants, they are assigned the same value. N indicates the highest level of difficulty.

The score of a given student is computed by first adding the number of correctly answered questions to the sum of the ranking values of the correctly answered questions and then divided by a divisor specific to the given topic. Suppose a student answers the questions in a topic with the ranks 1, 3, 6 and 7 correctly out of 10 questions. Then their raw score is (4 + 1 + 3 + 6 + 7) / 65 = 0.323. The raw score is always a value between 0 and 1, both inclusive. The divisor, in this case 65, represents the maximum granularity of the score for the given topic and derives from the number of questions (n) and equals n + n * (n+1) / 2. Granularity represents the maximum number of distinct values that can be distinguished within the given topic; that is, the maximum number of students that can be differentiated from one another based on their responses. Without this kind of question differentiation, 10 questions can only differentiate between 11 students as there are only 11 possible, numerically different outcomes (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 points). The increase in granularity is especially useful in the case of topics with few questions. For instance, in the case of 5 questions, the maximum granularity thus achieved is 20, which is much higher than 6 in the case of the undifferentiated score (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 points). However, if there are questions with the same level of difficulty, granularity decreases, but only in the worst case scenario – all the questions having the same level of difficulty, which is highly unlikely – does it fall to the level of granularity of the undifferentiated scores.

By adding the number of correctly answered questions (4 in the example above), it is possible to distinguish between situations that would otherwise yield the same score. Suppose one student answers the question with rank 3 correctly, and another student answers the questions with ranks 1 and 2 correctly. Without including the number of correctly answered questions, they would both gain 3 / 55 = 0.0545 raw points[1]. However, by using the above formula, the first student gains 4 / 65 = 0.0615 raw points, and the second one 5 / 65 = 0.0769 raw points.

The logic behind assigning a higher score to the second student is twofold. At a philosophical level, broader knowledge is purposefully valued higher even if it only manifests itself in the ability

[1] The reason why the divisor is 55 here is that if the number of questions is not taken into account, the divisor is only 55, not 65, in the case of 10 questions.

of answering easier questions correctly. At a statistical level, it is more likely that one answers one (or generally fewer) question correctly by pure chance than two (or generally more) questions. Hence, this way of calculating the score purposefully favors those who answer more questions correctly because it is less likely to happen by pure luck. Moreover, also taking the number of questions answered correctly into account has the intended effect that only those informants who answer questions with the exact same levels of difficulty correctly gain the same score.

The other method of differentiating between the questions works in the same way as the one just described except the fact that the level of difficulty is not expressed by integer, but by rational numbers. This has the effect that the calculation takes into account not only the rank order of the questions on the scale of difficulty, but also the proportion of how difficult they are compared to one another within the same topic. The reason is that the difficulty of the questions need not be equally distributed. For instance, the second easiest question may be five times more difficult than the easiest question, and the third easiest question only slightly more difficult than the second easiest one – as measured in terms of the number of informants having answered them correctly.

This distributional difference is disregarded in the first type of differentiation, explained above. In the method of proportional differentiation, the calculation is done in the following manner. The easiest question is assigned the value of 1, and the most difficult question is assigned the value of the number of questions in the given topic, say 10. All the other questions are assigned values between 1 and the highest value (say 10) proportionally to their measured difficulty. One concrete example, pertaining to the topic of parts of speech, indicating how uneven the distribution of difficulty may be: 1, 1.6, 1.75, 1.9, 2.8, 2.8, 4, 4.9, 7.9, 10.

In this method, the divisor (that is, the maximum number of points that can be achieved in a given topic) cannot be calculated by a formula on the basis of only the number of questions as in the method of ordinal differentiation above, but only by adding the actual ranks together, in the example 48.65 = 1 + 1.6 + 1.75 + 1.9 + 2.8 + 2.8 + 4 + 4.9 + 7.9 + 10 + 10 (number of questions). This means that even topics with the same number of questions can have different divisors. However, it does not influence granularity, which is always n + n * (n+1) / 2, only the weighting of the individual questions varies. In all other respects, the two methods of differentiating between the questions work in the same way.

The divisors in the proportional method mostly happen to be lower (as in the example above) than the corresponding ones in the ordinal method, but are sometimes higher. It depends on the actual distribution of the difficulty levels. The fact that the divisors in the proportional method tend to be lower than the corresponding divisors in the ordinal method suggests that the distribution of difficulty within the topics is biased towards the lower end. I.e. most of the questions tend to be relatively easy while one or two questions are exceptionally difficult compared to the other ones.

Since the raw scores gained from the differentiation methods are not directly comparable to the scores gained by simply counting the questions answered correctly, they must be scaled up. In this paper, two methods of scaling have been tried. In one of the methods, the raw scores are scaled up to be in the same range as the scores gained from just counting the correct answers. In the example above, it is from 0 thru 10. This is achieved by multiplying the raw score by 10, or generally by the number of questions (n). Hence, if a student answers the questions in a topic with the ranks 1, 3, 6 and 7 correctly out of 10 questions, his score is 3.23. This score happens to be lower than what the student is given under the traditional scheme (4 points); however, it is precisely the idea of the differentiation between questions that students gain different scores depending on which questions they answer. This method of scaling up makes it possible to calculate the grades in the exact same manner as usual since the range of the aggregate score (the sum of the scores in the individual topics) remains the same, namely 0 thru 100 in our grammar exam.

The other method of scaling up transforms the raw scores into percentages, which is achieved by multiplying the raw scores uniformly by 100 instead of the number of questions concerning the

given topic. This method has the advantage that it makes it possible to compare the students' performance regarding the individual topics. It also evens out the built-in bias between the topics, which derives from their being probed by different numbers of questions. On the other hand, it has the slight disadvantage that the calculation of the grades has to be modified because the range of the aggregate scores changes. It will be 0 thru 1300% in the case of 13 topics in the exam. However, this modification of the grading is rather simple since the boundaries of the grades are defined in terms of percentages of the maximum attainable score. Thus, 1300(%) simply has to be set as the maximum score, and the grade boundaries have to be recalculated from it according to the values in Table 3. Alternatively, the percent points have to be divided by 13 (there being 13 topics in the exam) to bring the scores in percent points into the same range as the scores according to the original grading method.

To sum it up, 6 ways of evaluating the grammar exam will be compared as shown in Table 4.

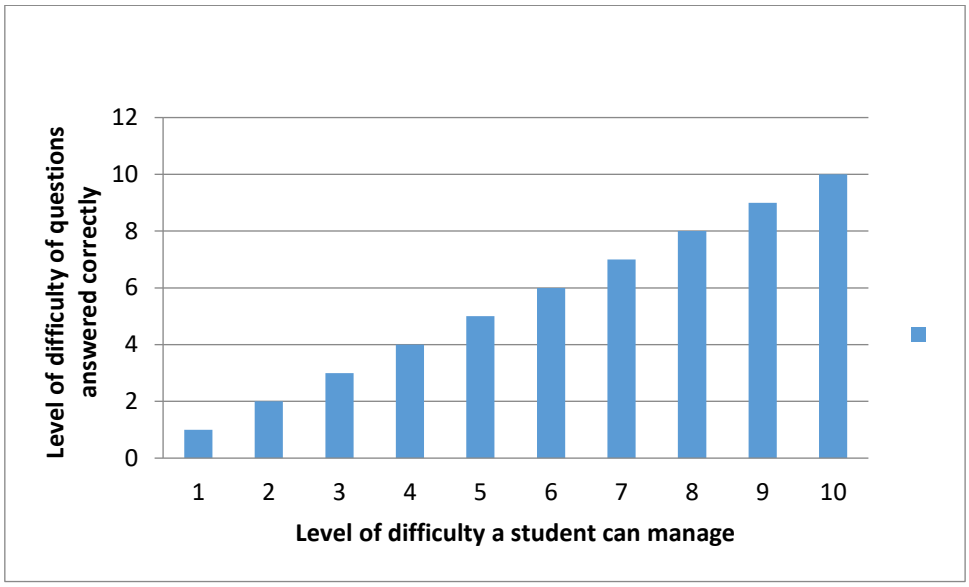
Table 4: Overview of grading methods

	Description	Name henceforth
1	Counting the questions answered correctly for the exam question set as a whole (the original method)	Original
2	Counting the questions answered correctly separately for each topic and transforming these subscores into percentages, which are summed (evening out the representational bias between the topics)	%
3	Differentiating between the questions within each topic ordinally and then adding up these subscores	ordinal
4	Differentiating between the questions within each topic ordinally and then transforming these subscores into percentages, which are summed (evening out the representational bias between the topics)	ordinal%
5	Differentiating between the questions within each topic proportionally and then adding up these subscores	prop
6	Differentiating between the questions within each topic proportionally and then transforming these subscores into percentages, which are summed (evening out the representational bias between the topics)	prop%

4.2. Measuring implicationality

Assuming that the difficulty of the questions is implicational, perfect implicationality or scalability (Hatch & Farhady 1982; Bettoni & Di Biase 2015) can be depicted as in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Perfect implicationality of difficulty



The diagram indicates that students must be able to answer all the questions which are below the highest level of difficulty they can manage, but none of the questions which are above it. For instance, if a student is able to manage say difficulty level 6, he or she must be able to answer all the questions of difficulty levels 1 thru 5, but none of difficulty levels 7 thru 10. The method used to calculate implicationality orders the questions in the individual topics according to their level of difficulty as indicated by the number of students able to answer them correctly. Then, in descending order of level of difficulty, it counts how many other questions, i.e. questions below the maximum level of difficulty managed by them, the students have answered. Since it is only possible to measure the students' level of knowledge from their answers to the exam questions, there is no way of knowing whether a student who say only answered questions 1 thru 5 correctly might have been able to answer say question 7 correctly, too, but "just" missed it at the exam. This is why the method takes the question with the highest level of difficulty answered correctly as the starting point and only counts downwards. No attempt is made to distinguish between the lower-level questions. That is, if the starting point is say level 7, then the two sequences of questions answered correctly 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 are treated as equal. Both sequences count as having missed one lower-level question. Finally, the averages of these counts for each starting level of difficulty are computed. If there is substantial linear implicationality in the difficulty levels, the resulting averages should plot a diagram similar to the one in Figure 1.

5. Analysis

Table 5 shows the distribution of grades gained from the different methods. The averages of the % methods have been brought into the same range as that of non-% methods for the sake of comparability.

Table 5: Overview of grades from the various grading methods

Grades	Original	Ordinal	Prop	%	Ordinal%	Prop%
12	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	3	0	0	1	0	0
7	26	15	14	21	12	11
4	23	17	16	23	19	16
02	5	9	11	8	6	9
00	11	27	27	15	31	32
-3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Avg. grade	4.62	2.81	2.71	3.90	2.53	2.34
Avg. points	69.7	63.0	62.0	67.6	61.2	60.1

As can be seen, none of the new methods are in the students' favor generally. Only one single student would have gained a higher grade, namely 4 instead of 02 had the exams been graded according to the % method, which is the method closest to the original one. In all other cases, the students would receive the same or lower grades compared to the original method.

Interestingly, all the methods that attempt to even out the bias in the contribution of the individual topics to the final grade (the % methods) yield lower grades than the corresponding biased methods. This fact suggests that those topics which are probed by the most questions and thus have the strongest weights happen to be the ones that contribute positively to the students' grades, i.e. the students tend to be somewhat better-versed in them than in the topics which are tested by fewer questions. This is especially true of the morphological topics, in which most students do not do well, which, however, gain weight in the % method compared to the original method. Table 6 shows the difference between the original grading method and its % counterpart with respect to the weights of the topics.

Table 6: The weights of the individual topics

Topics	Avg. scores	Weight in original method	Avg. contribution to the total number of points in the original method	Weight in % method	Avg. contribution to the total number of points in the % method
Parts of speech	0.646	10	6.46	7.69	4.97
Semantic relations	0.694	5	3.47	7.69	5.34
Clause constituents	0.641	18	11.53	7.69	4.93

Topics	Avg. scores	Weight in original method	Avg. contribution to the total number of points in the original method	Weight in % method	Avg. contribution to the total number of points in the % method
Phrase vs. subordinate clause	0.739	8	5.91	7.69	5.68
Phrase types	0.846	10	8.46	7.69	6.50
Phrase constituents	0.683	9	6.15	7.69	5.25
Pronoun types	0.860	10	8.60	7.69	6.62
Subordinate clause types	0.588	7	4.12	7.69	4.52
Clause finiteness	0.742	7	5.19	7.69	5.71
Number of matrix clauses in a paragraph	0.741	5	3.71	7.69	5.71
Function of a morpheme	0.485	3	1.46	7.69	3.73
Dictionary form of a word's root	0.456	3	1.37	7.69	3.51
Comma	0.665	5	3.32	7.69	5.11
Overall averages			69.7	$p=6.5*10^{-10}$	67.6

Green colors indicate topics in which the students perform better than the overall average, and red colors highlight topics in which the students perform below the overall average according to the original grading method. The average contributions are the products of the average scores and the corresponding weight factors. The average scores of the topics have been computed by dividing the total number of correct answers within the given topic by the number of students (68) and the number of questions within the given topic.

The very low p value indicates that the difference between the two methods is statistically significant even if not large. 13 students would receive more points according to the % method than according to the original grading method; however, only 1 would be given a higher grade – as mentioned above. The % method is clearly better suited for students who do roughly equally well in

all topics. Those who are good at clause constituents would be especially penalized unless they could compensate in the other topics. However, as can be seen from the distribution of points among the topics in Table 6, it is relatively seldom the case since the topic of clause constituents is below the overall average.

Another interesting result is that not one single student would gain more points from the methods that differentiate between questions according to their level of difficulty. In fact, everybody would gain fewer points from all the differentiating methods. This suggests that the students tend to answer the questions which are easier even when they are able to manage a difficult question. Nevertheless, it has been shown by simulations that it would be possible for a student to score up to grade 7 according to all the differentiating methods while still failing according to the original grading method provided they answer the more difficult questions instead of the less difficult ones. However, this opportunity would not have been exploited by any member of the sampled students.

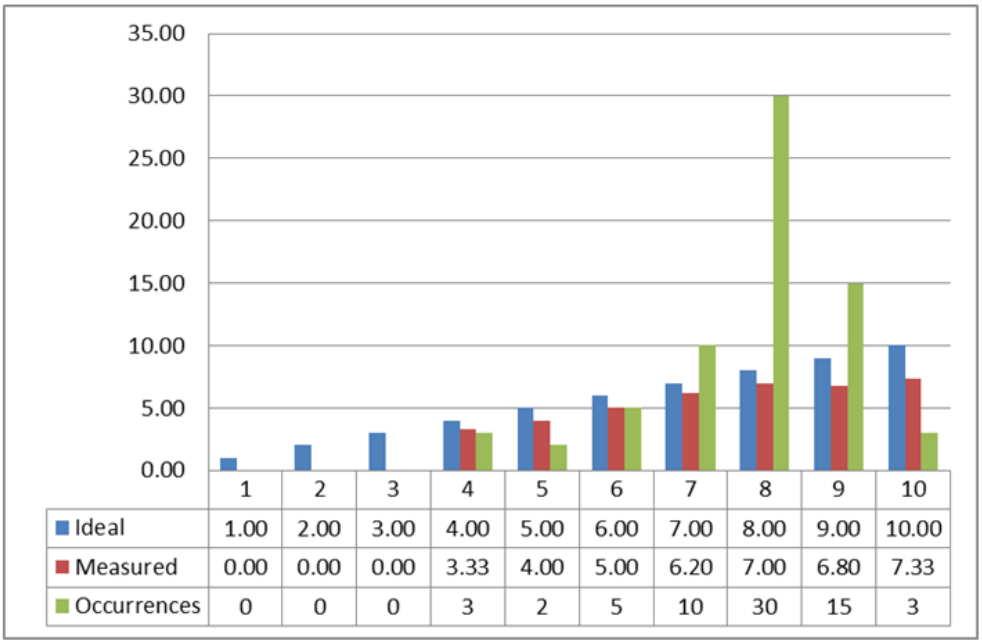
As for the differences between the differentiating methods, 9 students would receive more points – only marginally, though – according to the prop method than according to the ordinal method. The others (59) would receive fewer points as is reflected in the lower average. 16 students would receive more points according to the ordinal% and prop% methods than according to the ordinal and prop methods, respectively, but not the same 16 students.

In order to validate the differentiating methods, i.e. to ascertain that it is indeed reasonable to assign different levels of difficulty and therefore different numbers of points to the exam questions, the implicationality of the proposed difficulty levels has been assessed as well. The following figures show the implicational scales found for each topic.

'Ideal', repeated in each figure to ease the visual assessment of the scales, shows the ideal case of implicationality. 'Measured' shows the measured values for each question in the topics. 'Occurrences' shows the number of students who are at a particular level of difficulty. If the sum of occurrences is lower than the number of informants (68), it indicates that some students were not able to answer any of the questions in the particular topic correctly. There is no expectation as to the distribution of the occurrences. Therefore, it is not considered unusual, unexpected or undesirable if, for instance, a large number of students manage the question with the highest level of difficulty. It simply suggests that that question is not particularly difficult even though it is the most difficult one within its grammar topic.

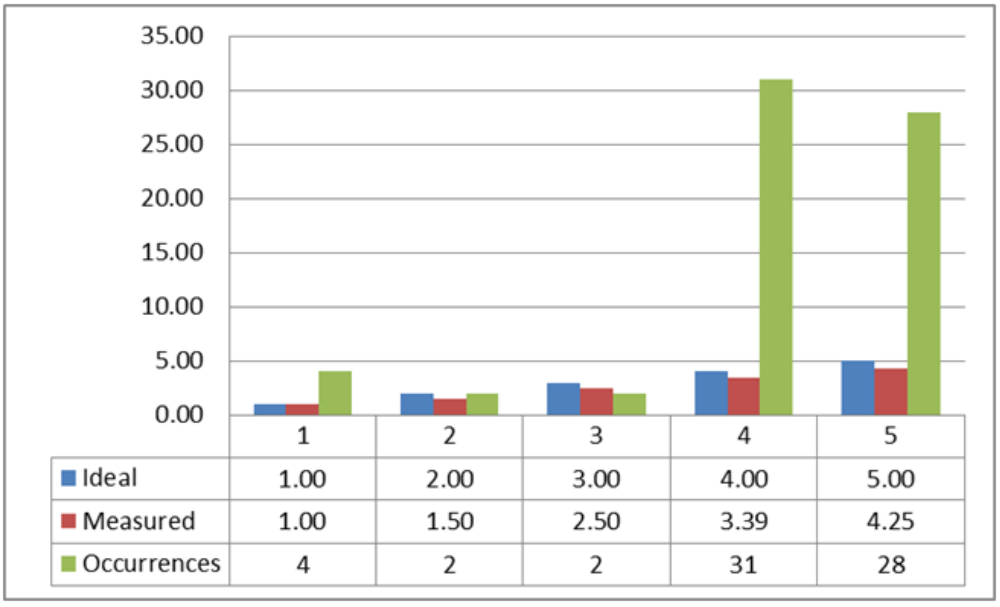
It must be noted that for the purpose of this paper, implicationality does not require that all the levels of difficulty be represented by at least one student. The scale is considered implicational if the measured values show a monotonously increasing tendency from any possible starting point, ignoring unattested levels of difficulty. The degree of implicationality of the scale, then, depends on how close the measured values come to the ideal values.

Figure 2: Parts of speech



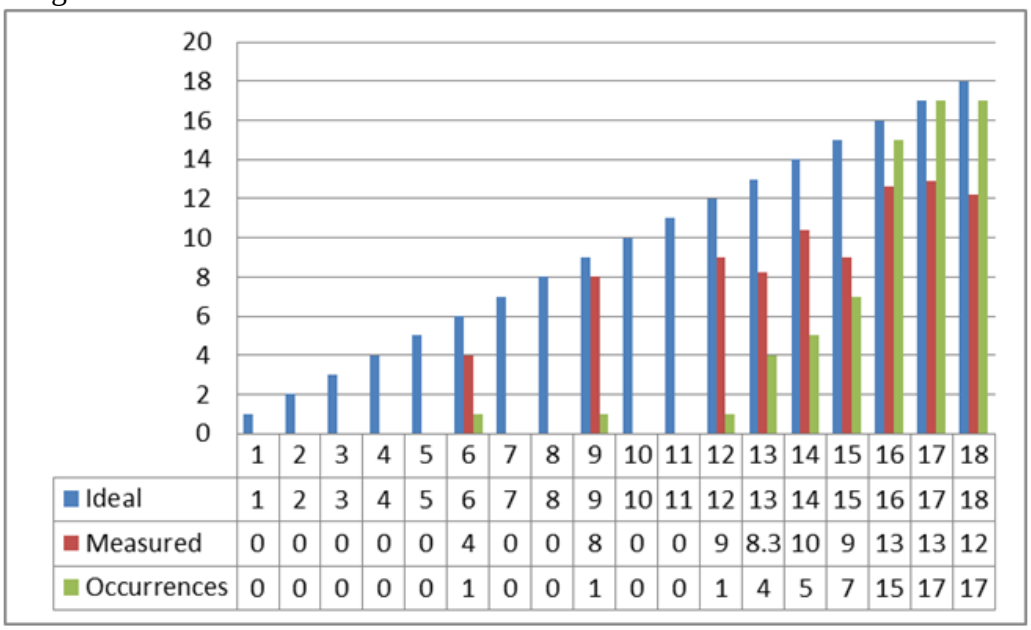
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00
Measured	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.33	4.00	5.00	6.20	7.00	6.80	7.33
Occurrences	0	0	0	3	2	5	10	30	15	3

Figure 3: Semantic relations



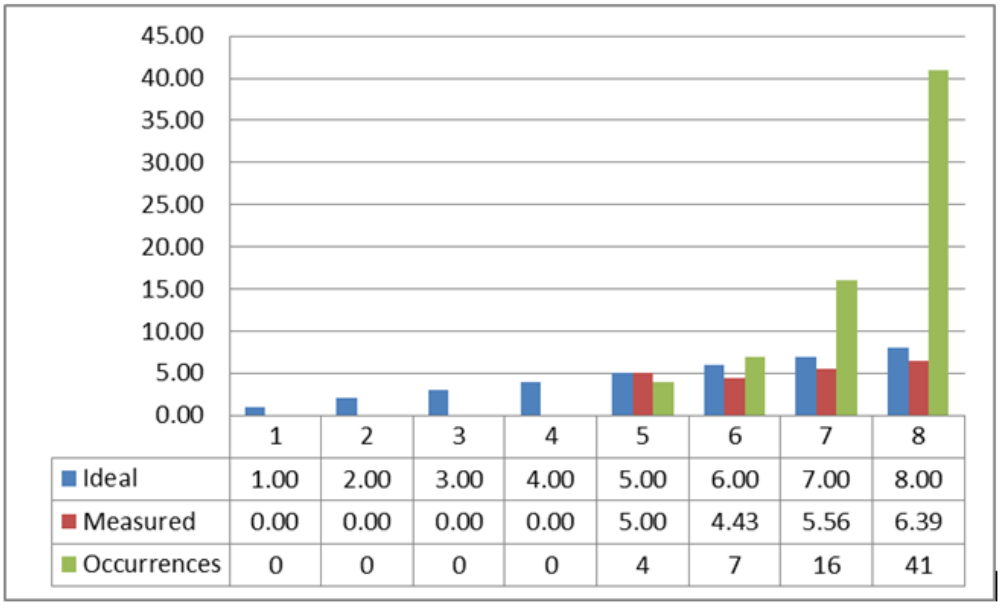
	1	2	3	4	5
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
Measured	1.00	1.50	2.50	3.39	4.25
Occurrences	4	2	2	31	28

Figure 4: Clause constituents



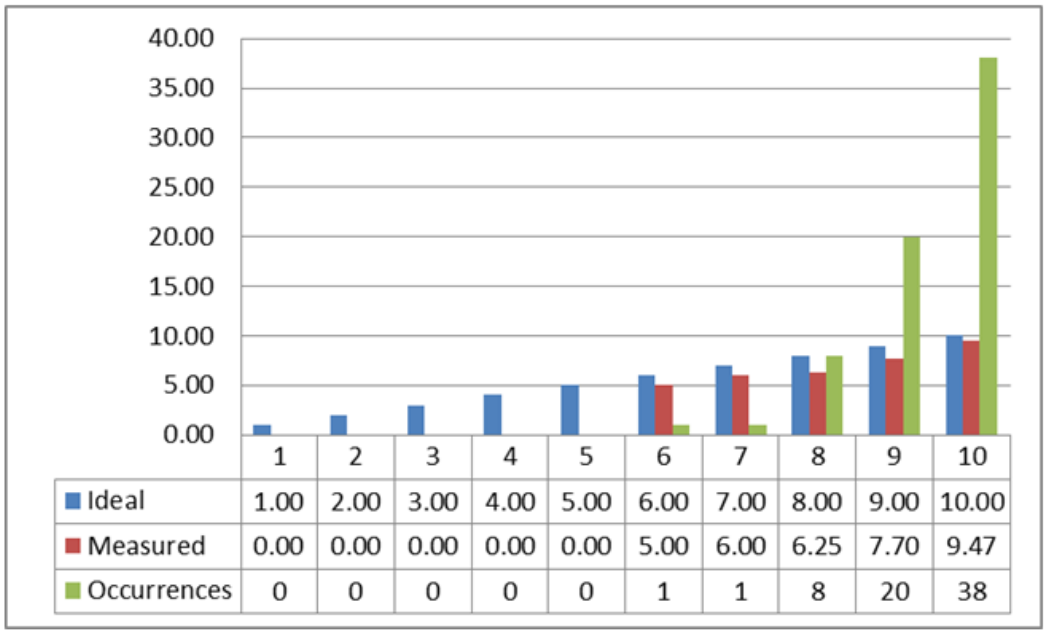
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Ideal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Measured	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	8	0	0	9	8.3	10	9	13	13	12
Occurrences	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	5	7	15	17	17

Figure 5: Phrases vs subclauses



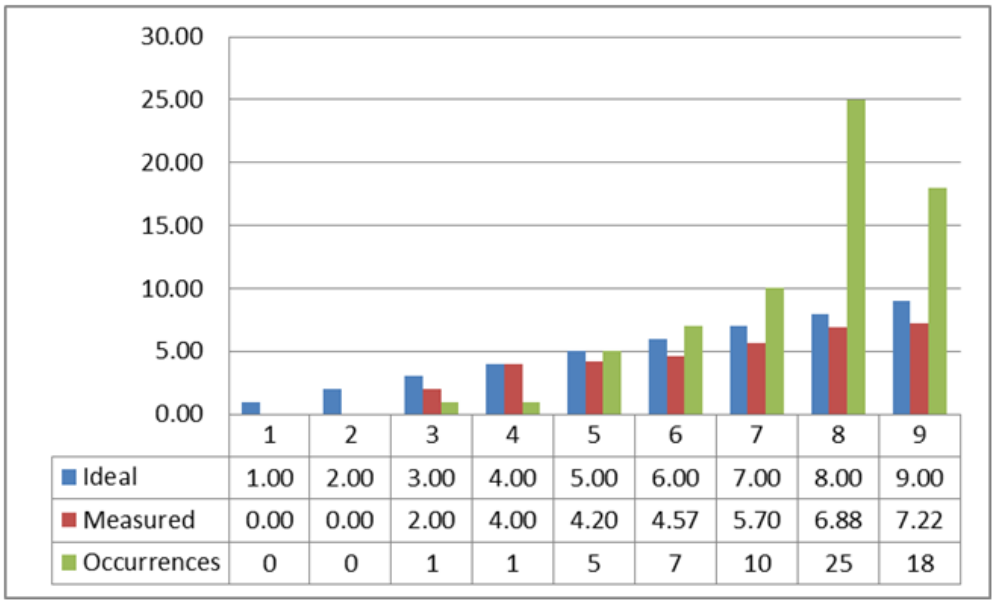
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00
Measured	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	4.43	5.56	6.39
Occurrences	0	0	0	0	4	7	16	41

Figure 6: Phrase types



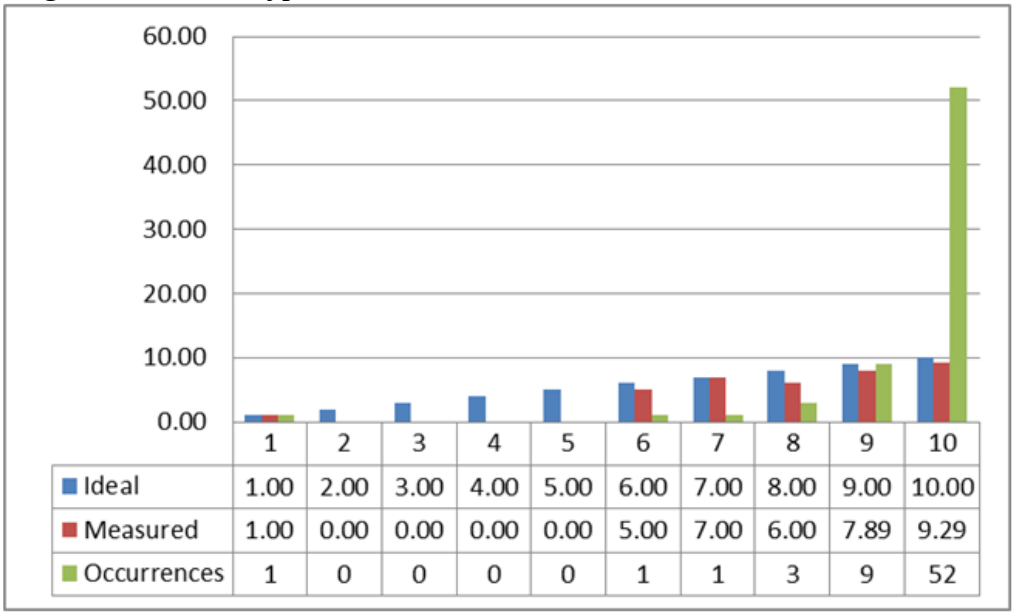
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00
Measured	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	6.00	6.25	7.70	9.47
Occurrences	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	8	20	38

Figure 7: Phrase constituents



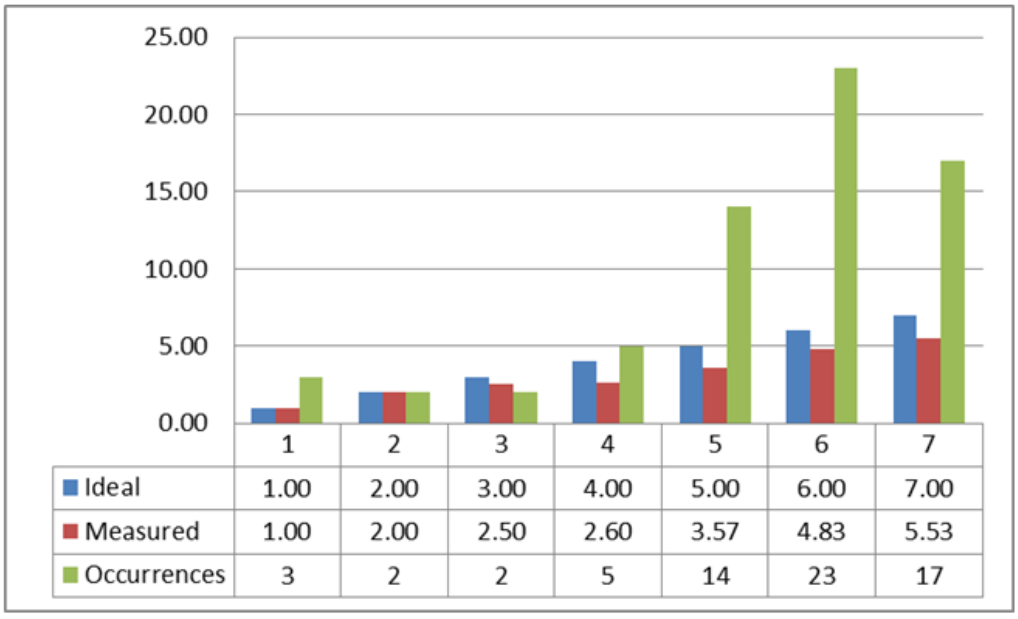
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00
Measured	0.00	0.00	2.00	4.00	4.20	4.57	5.70	6.88	7.22
Occurrences	0	0	1	1	5	7	10	25	18

Figure 8: Pronoun types



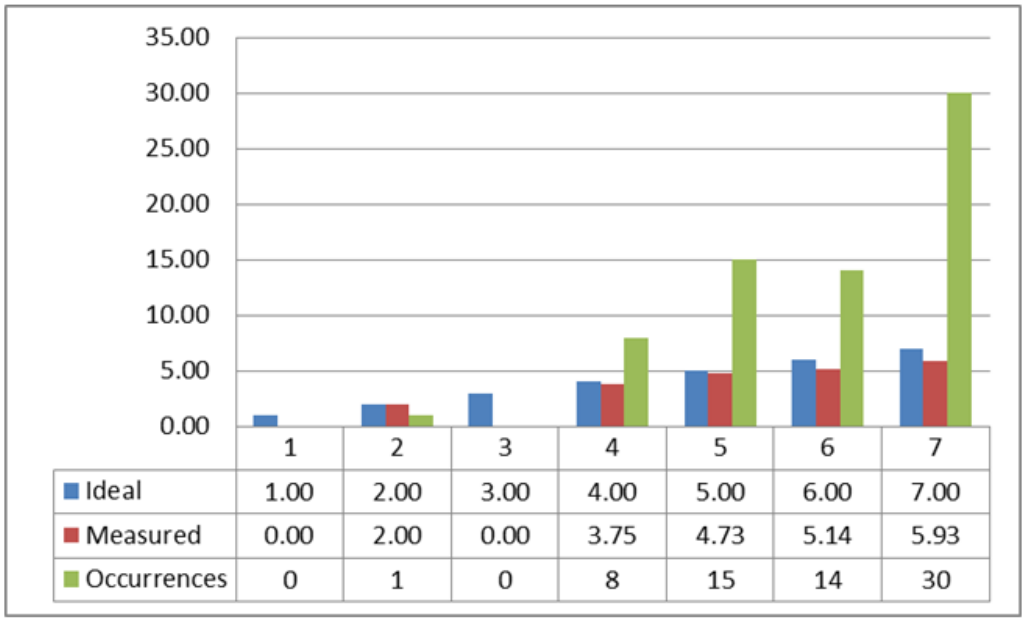
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00	8.00	9.00	10.00
Measured	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5.00	7.00	6.00	7.89	9.29
Occurrences	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	9	52

Figure 9: Subclause types



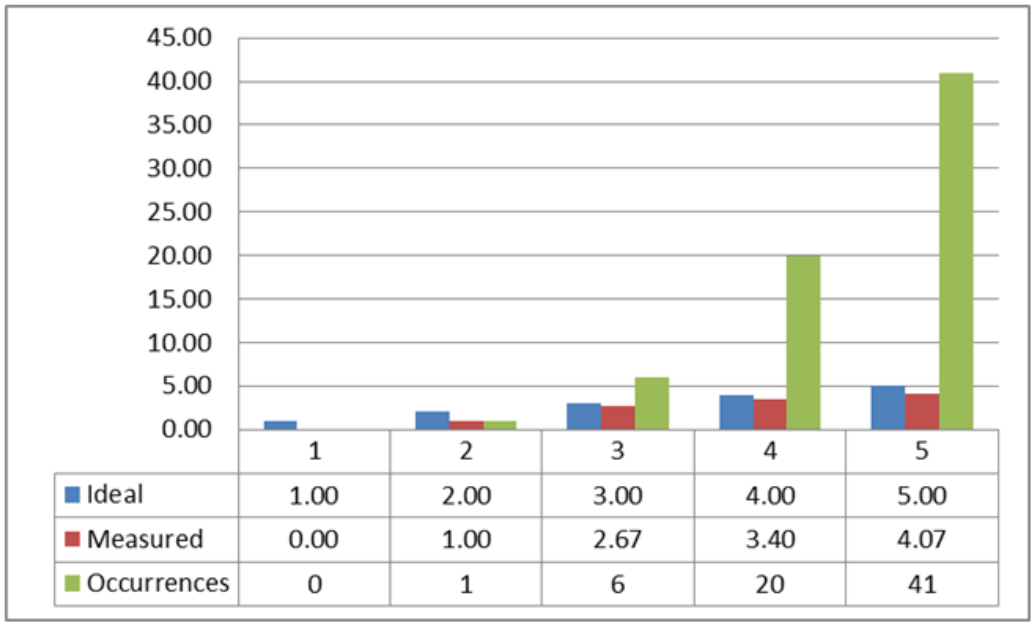
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00
Measured	1.00	2.00	2.50	2.60	3.57	4.83	5.53
Occurrences	3	2	2	5	14	23	17

Figure 10: Subclause finiteness



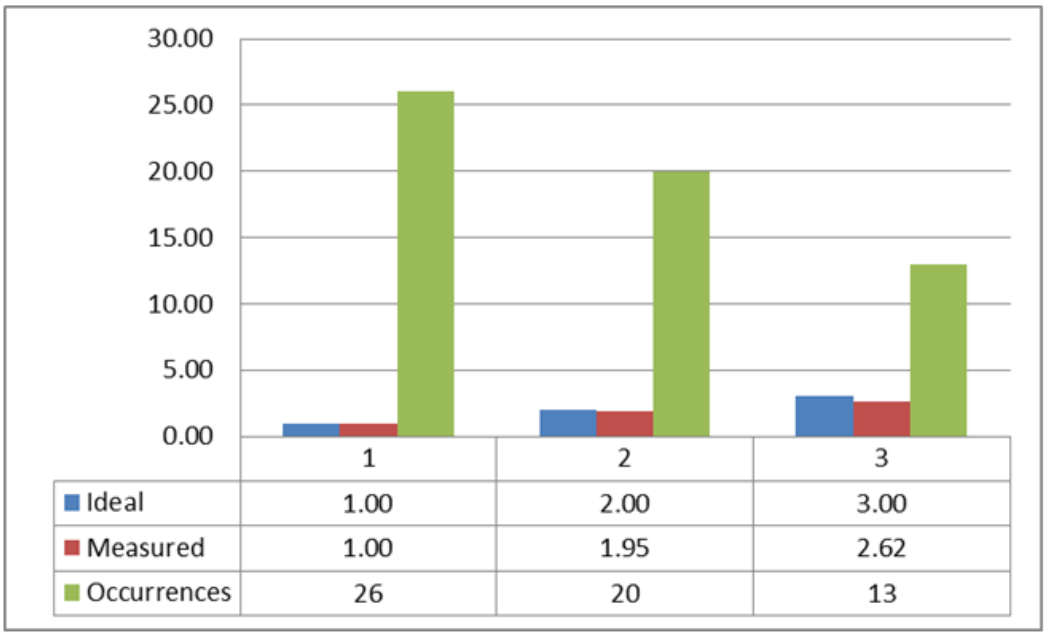
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00	6.00	7.00
Measured	0.00	2.00	0.00	3.75	4.73	5.14	5.93
Occurrences	0	1	0	8	15	14	30

Figure 11: Number of matrix clauses



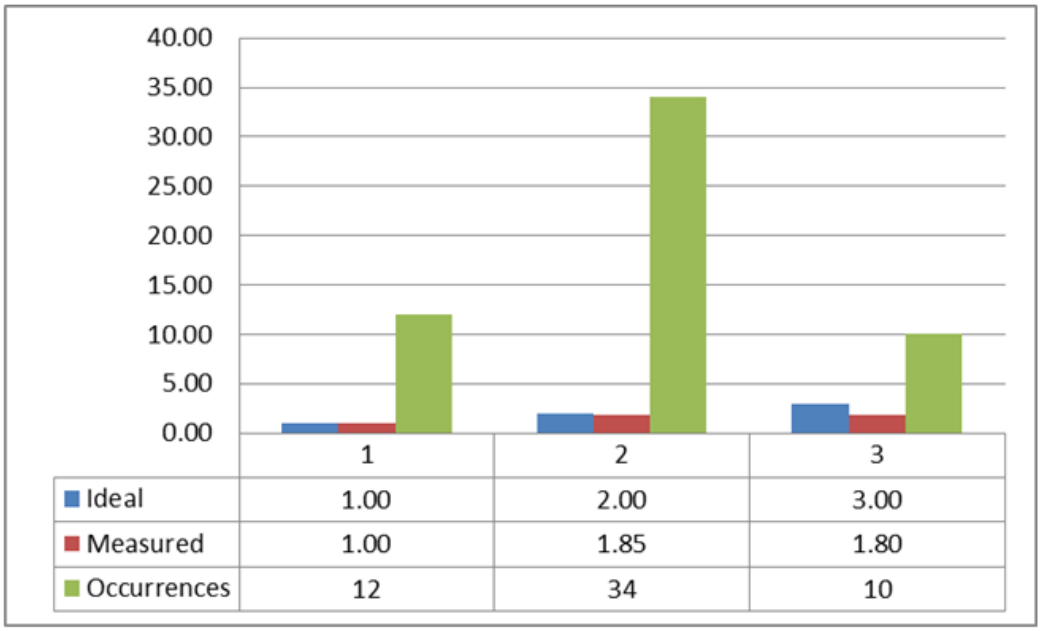
	1	2	3	4	5
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
Measured	0.00	1.00	2.67	3.40	4.07
Occurrences	0	1	6	20	41

Figure 12: Morpheme function



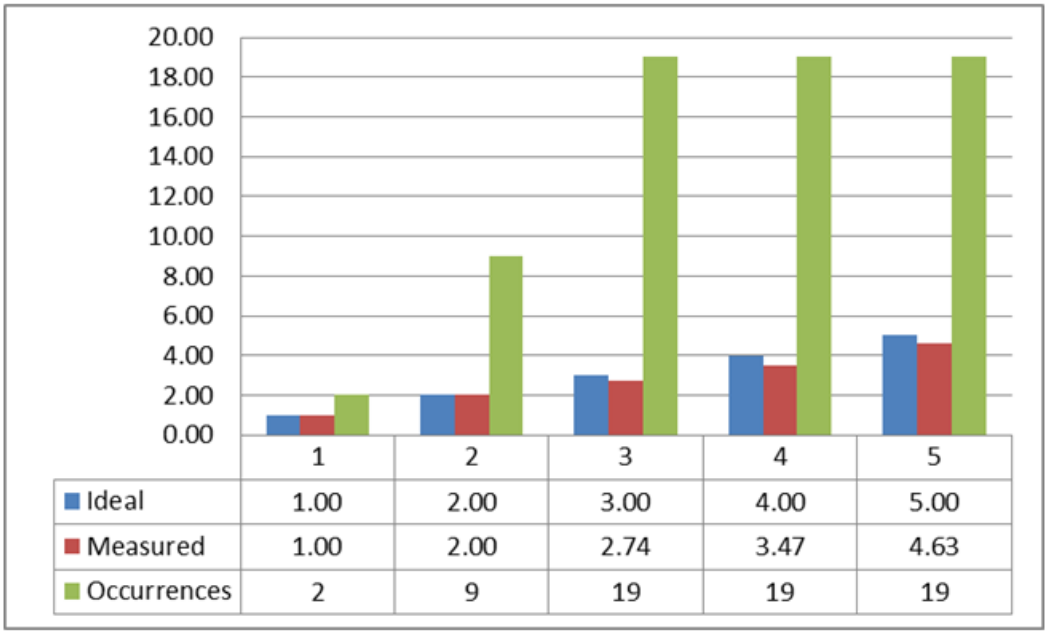
	1	2	3
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00
Measured	1.00	1.95	2.62
Occurrences	26	20	13

Figure 13: Word roots



	1	2	3
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00
Measured	1.00	1.85	1.80
Occurrences	12	34	10

Figure 14: Comma



	1	2	3	4	5
Ideal	1.00	2.00	3.00	4.00	5.00
Measured	1.00	2.00	2.74	3.47	4.63
Occurrences	2	9	19	19	19

As can be seen in the figures above and Table 7 below, which summarizes some parameters of the measured scales, the difficulty of most topics is approximately implicational. It justifies the attempt to differentiate between the exam questions based on the relative difficulty of the questions which is indicated by the numbers of students who answered the questions correctly.

'P_{err}', for proportion of errors, in Table 7 counts the number of incorrect answers to questions that should have been answered correctly by the students based on the highest level of difficulty they managed. This count is, then, divided by the number of questions in the given topic and by the total number of students. This value is essentially the aggregate difference between the ideal scale and the observed scale disregarding the gaps in the observed scale. Lower values are better, i.e. the observed scale is closer to the ideal one. Since these scales are not meant to be Guttman scales, this value is used instead of the coefficients of reproducibility and scalability (McIver & Carmines 1981).

'Avg. dist.' is the average of the differences between the blue and red bars in the figures, i.e. the average distance between the ideal pattern of responses and the observed pattern of responses to the individual questions, again disregarding the gaps in the observed scales. Lower values are better. 'St. dev.' is the standard population deviation of the aforementioned distances. Lower values are better because they indicate a more linear and uniform distribution of the observed responses. 'Inflx.' are the number of inflection points, where the linearity of the observed scale is broken, i.e. where a value on the ordinate is lower than the value immediately to its left (McMullen 2018). It should ideally be zero.

Table 7: Summary of scales of difficulty

Topics	P_{err}	Avg. dist.	St. dev.	Inflx.
Parts of speech	12.9%	1.33	0.716	1
Semantic relations	12.4%	0.591	0.103	0
Clause constituents	24.9%	3.74	1.56	3

Topics	P_{err}	Avg. dist.	St. dev.	Inflx.
Phrase vs. subordinate clause	18.4%	1.15	0.670	1
Phrase types	9.12%	1.12	0.403	0
Phrase constituents	14.4%	1.06	0.522	0
Pronoun types	7.94%	0.965	0.646	1
Subordinate clause types	16.8%	1.00	0.555	0
Clause finiteness	10.5%	0.489	0.404	0
Number of matrix clauses in a paragraph	15.6%	0.715	0.267	0
Function of a morpheme	2.90%	0.217	0.167	0
Dictionary form of a word's root	8.33%	0.674	0.526	1
Comma	6.47%	0.289	0.192	0

The topic of clause constituents is rather messy. It has several inflection points, and the distances between the measured and ideal values are also large, much larger than the corresponding values of the other topics. Whether this extraordinary behavior of clause constituents is an artefact of the particular questions asked in the exam investigated here, of the sample group of informants, or is intrinsic to this grammatical category (having perhaps a multidimensional nature) cannot be ascertained without calculating the implicationality of other questions on clause constituents and testing other informant groups.

However, some signs suggest that there is something "fishy" about clause constituents. Madsen (2017) has found that clause constituents are consistently among the topics that students find most challenging despite the fact that it is among the few grammar topics that are already taught in primary school. Most of the grammar topics examined are new to the students when they enter the university, yet these behave fairly "normally". Furthermore, mastering clause constituents seems to be one of the major factors in learning theoretical grammar (Madsen 2015). Looking at clause constituents more closely will therefore make a good theme for a follow-up paper.

6. Conclusion

It has emerged that none of the proposed grading methods would be in favor of the students in terms of grades, as all the new methods would yield the same or lower grades than the method used thus far, with one single exception. The reason for this is that the students have a strong tendency to answer the easier questions instead of the more difficult ones. It is, of course, not surprising as a general tendency, especially in view of the relatively low average score of 69.7. However, it was unanticipated that so few would benefit from the alternative methods. Whether this fact speaks for or against implementing one of the alternative grading methods is a political question, and the methods should also be tested on further samples.

In any case, the paper revealed both positive and negative aspects of the exam investigated, which are worth considering both for further research and teaching/examining of grammar. On the positive side, most topics are probed by questions which form an implicational scale of difficulty even though it has never been intentional. It justifies the use of a grading system, such as the ones tested in this paper, which differentiates between questions based on their degree of difficulty. Furthermore, it is a good starting point for refining future exams if it is desired that the exam questions be (more) implicational with regard to difficulty. On the negative side, there is a discernible bias in

the exam towards certain topics, and it ought to be a source for reflection whether this situation should be upheld on some principled ground or abolished in future exams.

On the surprising side, the topic of clause constituents has been found rather fuzzy. It begs for further investigation not only for the sake of the development of exams and their grading, but also for the research in grammar acquisition and the teaching of grammar. As for the exams, the fuzziness of clause constituents is problematic since this topic is the one that is weighted most in the current way of examining grammar. This can create unwanted and uncontrollable bias. As for the learning and teaching of grammar, clause constituents may pose yet unrealized challenges, which may not only be pertinent to this part of grammar.

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The Hunger Games' grammatik: Integreret grammatikundervisning i praksis

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Abstract: This article examines the potential for integrated grammar teaching (IGT) based on stylistic analysis of the novel, The Hunger Games, in the Danish upper secondary educational system (HF). Since the 1990s, the importance of combining communication and grammar teaching has been emphasized; however, the Danish upper secondary schools have not embraced the scientific findings. This article exemplifies how to close the gap between research and reality with IGT through the following two perspectives: with an eye to developing teaching materials and through a stylistic analysis of chapter 11 of The Hunger Games, we firstly analyze how modality characterizes the narrator of The Hunger Games, Katniss. The stylistic analysis reveals that the homodiegetic narrator's assessments of the hypothetical risks relating to the people and the world around her are expressed through epistemic modality in the form of modal verbs. Secondly, based on the stylistic analysis, we develop, test and discuss teaching materials for IGT for the English b-level2 at HF. Our results demonstrate that IGT is challenging, motivating and educational: the pupils acquire the basic characteristics of modality to some degree and manage to use their linguistic findings to characterize the narrator. The evaluation shows that the learners could benefit from less concentrated IGT and more variation; this could possibly be achieved by mixing IGT with other aspects of the curriculum. The study also shows that, while it is possible to develop teaching material for IGT based on stylistic analysis, an in-depth stylistic analysis (like the one reported here) is not necessary for teaching at this level, an important factor which could reduce the teacher's preparation time.

Keywords: integrated grammar teaching; modality; The Hunger Games; narratology, pedagogical stylistics

1. Introduktion

Hvordan og hvorvidt grammatikundervisning sikrer højere udbytte og sproglig præcision blandt fremmedsprogslørnere (L2[3]-lørnere[4]) har længe været til debat. Fremmes indlæring bedst ved eksplicit fokus på grammatiske strukturer, gennem rent kommunikativt arbejde eller noget helt tredje, og hvordan implementeres den optimale undervisningsform i et klasserum for L2-lørnere?

Det slås i læreplanerne for engelsk på stx og hf fast, at det overordnede mål med fagets grammatikundervisning er kommunikativ kompetence. Det vil ifølge læreplanernes vejledninger sige, at man i undervisningen sigter mod at styrke elevernes evne til at "gennemføre en vellykket kommunikation i situationer, hvor man ønsker og har behov for at kommunikere" (Undervisningsministeriet 2018b: 5). Læreplanernes mål om kommunikativ kompetence tager afsæt i en længerevarende diskussion blandt forskere i fremmedsprogsundervisning om, hvordan grammatiske strukturer tillæres bedst. Ifølge Nassaji & Fotos er der i dag bred enighed om, at eksplicit grammatikundervisning er nødvendig for at udvikle L2-lørnernes sprog (2004: 127-128), men dette

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[2] English b unofficially corresponds to B2 (Undervisningsministeriet 2018a) at the CEFR, The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, put together by the Council of Europe (Exam English 2014).

[3] Ortega anvender termen *L2 acquisition* i betydningen "the process of learning additional languages, that is, the object of disciplinary inquiry itself" (2009: 5). Nygaard, der bygger på Ortega, tilføjer: "In research on additional language learning, the term L2 is often applied to both second and foreign language. L2 learning could then in practice mean the learning of for example language number 10 for a given person" (2011: 2). I denne artikel bruges denne definition, og L2 dækker altså over alle sprog, der tillæres efter modersmålet, dvs. L2 dækker også over den rolle, som engelsk tilskrives på hf.

[4] "*Lørner* er den lærende; en person, der er ved at lære et fremmedsprog" (Hedevang 2003: 13).

bør kombineres med en kommunikativ tilgang; herigennem anvendes fremmedsproget i en situationel og gerne autentisk kontekst, og fokus er derfor grundlæggende på at skabe "meaningful tasks and [on] using language that is meaningful to the learner" (Nunan & Lamb 2000: 31). Grammatikundervisning bør således fungere som et sammenhængskabende element i L2-undervisningen. Det har dog ifølge Larsen-Freeman (2015) og Nygaard (2011) vist sig, at forskningens resultater kun i ringe grad implementeres i den daglige grammatikundervisning, og både Larsen-Freeman og Nygaard problematiserer dette i en hhv. international og dansk kontekst. Larsen-Freeman italesætter "a chasm" (2015: 274) – en kløft – mellem forskning og undervisning, og ifølge Nygaard foregår grammatikundervisningen på danske gymnasier oftest parallelt og således ikke i en kommunikativ kontekst (2011: 156-57).

Målet om kommunikativ kompetence bunder i, at engelskfagets læreplaner rummer et funktionelt sprogsyn; et sprogsyn der sigter mod, at lørnerne skal kunne anvende deres sproglige viden i praksis (Undervisningsministeriet 2018b: 15-16). Hvor man tidligere i læreplanerne talte om "anvendelsesorientering" (Undervisningsministeriet 2010: 13), er det således med gymnasiereformen 2017 ekspliciteret, at grammatikundervisning med fordel kan kombineres med arbejdet med tekstlæsning:

> Undervisningen i sprog og grammatik kan med fordel planlægges, så sproglige elementer integreres i undervisningen i tekst og kultur. Teksten bliver dermed central i undervisningen, fordi den udgør en reel kontekst, som man på den ene side kan belyse sproglige aspekter ud fra, og som man på den anden side kan kvalificere forståelsen af ved også at anlægge et sprogligt fokus. Således fremmer denne tilgang både elevernes sproglige bevidsthed og deres tekstlæsningsevner… [Grammatikundervisningen] kan således ikke udelukkende baseres på gennemgang af en klassisk struktureret grammatikbog og arbejde med øvelser hertil (Undervisningsministeriet 2018b: 15-16).

Integreret grammatikundervisning defineres altså ved, at undervisningen i grammatiske strukturer og fagets øvrige arbejde med tekster kombineres, så de to elementer understøtter hinanden. At denne type grammatikundervisning ifølge Nygaard kun i ringe grad finder sted er problematisk, og det er således nødvendigt at forholde sig til, hvordan man forener forskningens og deraf læreplanernes fokus på integreret grammatikundervisning og den undervisning, der finder sted på gymnasierne i Danmark.

Formålet med denne artikel, der tager udgangspunkt i Haugaards speciale (2017), er derfor at illustrere, hvordan integreret grammatikundervisning på hf med fokus på modalverber kan implementeres i en narratologisk analyse af fortælleren, Katniss, i romanen *The Hunger Games* (Collins 2008), og hvordan eleverne responderer på denne type undervisning. Undersøgelsen er baseret på både kvalitative og kvantitative evalueringer i form af bl.a. spørgeskemaer, mundtlig evaluering og refleksioner, og resultaterne afslører, at det har en positiv effekt på elevernes forståelse for de grammatiske strukturer, og at det er meningsskabende for eleverne, når grammatikundervisningen integreres i arbejdet med tekster. Derudover vil vi præsentere forslag til, hvordan integreret grammatikundervisning kan implementeres i arbejdet med det øvrige kernestof på stx og hf. Afslutningsvist perspektiverer vi til forskning indenfor feltet *pedagogical stylistics* (pædagogisk stilistik), som netop omhandler brugen af stilistiske metoder i såvel L1- som L2-undervisningen – vores fokus ligger på L2.

2. Integreret grammatikundervisning og det kommunikative sprogsyn

Som tidligere beskrevet ekspliciterer læreplanen for engelsk b på hf, at det funktionelle sprogsyn, som sigter mod at lørnerne skal kunne anvende fremmedsproget i praksis, må ligge til grund for den grammatikundervisning, der praktiseres. Med et funktionelt fokus og den også tidligere nævnte vægtning af kommunikativ kompetence tilskriver læreplanen sig delvist et sociokulturelt læringssyn:

eleverne skal samarbejde og interagere, idet "læring primært sker i det sociale og kommunikative samspil mellem mennesker via den sproglige interaktion samt den hjælp og støtte, som eleven kan få fra læreren og de mere kompetente klassekammerater" (Henriksen 2014: 29-30). Samspil eleverne imellem anses med andre ord som værende fundamentalt for elevernes sprogtilegnelse. Derudover besidder læreplanen også delvist et kognitivt-konstruktivistisk læringssyn med fokus på input, output og særligt udvikling af elevernes intersprog. At udvikle elevernes intersprog vil grundlæggende sige at opnå et overlap mellem elevernes viden om og forståelse for deres modersmål og fremmedsproget (Hedevang 2003: 13). Denne viden kan være hhv. eksplicit og implicit; den kan bestå af formel viden *om* fremmedsproget eller af viden, som eleven automatisk kan anvende i praksis. Stærk kommunikativ kompetence fordrer således et veludviklet intersprog, der består af en stor del implicit viden om fremmedsproget. Intersproget og dermed det kognitivt-konstruktivistiske læringssyn spiller en central rolle i læreplanen for engelsk b på hf:

> Ved at rette elevernes opmærksomhed mod bestemte sproglige strukturer og former igangsættes en kognitiv proces, hvor eleverne via noticing, hypotesedannelse og hypoteseafprøvning forholder sig til disse sproglige elementer og over tid integrerer dem i deres sproglige beredskab. Centralt for denne proces er, at eleverne ad forskellige veje får input, (der igangsætter processen); får mulighed for selv at producere output (for at afprøve hypoteserne); og at dette typisk sker i interaktion (fordi den meningsfulde, autentiske sproganvendelse udgør en væsentlig motivationsfaktor) (Undervisningsministeriet 2018b: 15).

Læreplanen tillægger dermed såvel kognitive som sociale aspekter en central rolle, og det bør afspejle sig i måden, hvorpå der undervises i grammatik. Men hvordan sikrer man dette?

En af Nygaards centrale pointer er, at konteksten er en overset og helt central faktor for, hvor meget en elev lærer, og at denne vigtige kontekst udebliver fra grammatikundervisningen, når denne praktiseres parallelt (2011: 293). Konteksten, som Nygaard nævner, kan ifølge Ellis (2009) implementeres i arbejdet med integreret grammatikundervisning gennem forskellige typer *tasks*: Opgaver, der er indholds- og betydningsorienterede, og de defineres ud fra følgende fire kriterier:

1) Opgaven skal have primært fokus på semantisk og pragmatisk betydning af de ytringer, der indgår i tasken
2) Opgaven skal rumme en informationskløft, som skaber et behov for at give eller få information, udtrykke en holdning eller gætte betydningen
3) Eleverne skal primært anvende deres egne ressourcer i opgaveløsningen
4) Opgaven skal have et klart defineret mål, hvor sproget skal anvendes til at nå et resultat (223).

En grammatisk task handler således om mere end blot at tale engelsk for sprogtræningens skyld og om mere end blot sproglig korrekthed. Fokus *skal* først og fremmest være på betydningen af målstrukturen, og eleverne *skal* interagere med hinanden for at nå frem til et resultat. Taskarbejdet er dermed forankret i både det kognitivt-konstruktivistiske og det sociokulturelle læringssyn: interaktion er vejen til fremmedsproglig læring. Ydermere skelner Fotos (2002: 144-150) mellem implicitte og eksplicitte grammatiske tasks: i en implicit grammatisk task vil den grammatiske målstruktur være et middel til at kommunikere om indholdet i den givne task, mens den grammatiske målstruktur i en eksplicit grammatisk task vil være centrum for samtalen.

Hvor tasks repræsenterer én måde at ændre praksis for grammatikundervisning, repræsenterer induktivt arbejde med grammatiske strukturer en anden. En deduktiv tilgang i grammatikundervisningen er kendetegnet ved, at lørneren præsenteres for en grammatisk strukturs

karakteristika og dernæst selv afprøver og træner brugen af strukturen. Denne tilgang har rod i behaviorismen. Ifølge behaviorismen skal undervisningen "give eleven mulighed for at træne sproget gennem bundne øvelser med masser af imitation og gentagelse for derved at opnå sproglig korrekthed" (Henriksen 2014: 26). Behaviorisme tænker således isoleret repetition som vejen til læring. Ved induktiv læring præsenteres lørneren derimod *ikke* for den grammatiske strukturs karakteristika, men må i stedet selv undersøge, hvad der kendetegner strukturen. I tilknytning hertil angiver Ellis (2002: 164-165) flere fordele:

- Det er motiverende selv at skulle finde en regel
- Den induktive tilgang fordrer hypotesedannelse
- At opdage regler selv kan skabe forståelse for et sprogs grammatik, som ikke kan udledes af grammatikbøger
- Den induktive tilgang træner lørnerens evne til at lære.

I undersøgelsen i denne artikel er der gjort brug af tasks og i mindre grad den induktive tilgang. Den induktive tilgang ville sandsynligvis have styrket lørnernes eksplicitte (og måske også implicitte) viden om de grammatiske strukturer, hvis den havde haft en mere fremtrædende rolle. Det vender vi tilbage til i afsnit 6.2.

2.1. Hvorfor The Hunger Games*?*

Når forskning viser, at L2-lørnere får størst udbytte af integreret grammatikundervisning, og Undervisningsministeriet samtidigt lægger op til, at undervisningen skal foregå integreret, må man forholde sig til, hvordan denne integration kan finde sted. Denne artikel undersøger derfor, hvordan integreret grammatikundervisning kan finde sted med udgangspunkt i romanen *The Hunger Games.*

The Hunger Games er valgt af flere årsager: romanen har vundet udpræget popularitet blandt både voksne og unge læsere, den er solgt til over 40 lande (Scholastic (n.d.)), har toppet bestsellerlister hos bl.a. *New York Times* og *USA Today* og har bl.a. ligget på *The New York Times*' bestsellerliste i 100 uger i træk. Derudover har romanen vundet et utal af priser som 'Publishers Weekly's Best Books of 2008: Children's Fiction' og 'New York Times Notable Children's Book of 2008' ("The Hunger Games"). De tre romaner i trilogien er siden blevet adapteret til fire populære spillefilm, hvoraf den sidste havde premiere i Danmark i slutningen af 2015, og i 2020 udkommer en ny roman i serien i form af en forløber til de tre oprindelige romaner (Alter 2019). *The Hunger Games*-universet er således fortsat aktuelt i Danmark.

The Hunger Games har været centrum for løbende litterær kritik med fokus på bl.a. romanens genrekarakteristika. Romanen lader sig ikke nemt definere, idet den rummer karakteristika fra en stribe af forskellige genrer: den handler om både krig og kærlighed; den har en ung hovedkarakter, men henvender sig med temaer som fattigdom, sult og overvågning også til voksne; den rummer elementer af science fiction gennem fremtidsforestillinger og for læseren ukendt teknologi, men teknologien er aldrig centrum for handlingen; den er dystopisk med kontrol og en brutal, totalitær leder, men selvom den ender i følelsesmæssigt kaos for Katniss, rummer slutningen også i det store billede håb for landet, hvori romanen udspiller sig, det fiktive *Panem*. I dette spænd af forskellige genremarkører ligger en af romanens store kvaliteter: "Collins's work, it seems, draws from a number of genres without confining itself to any of them. As a result, her work rarely comes across as generic or formulaic" (Henthorne 2012: 30). Fordi romanen trækker på forskellige genrer, fremstår romanen unik og er således relevant at arbejde med i en undervisningskontekst.

De mange genreelementer og temaer kvalificerer romanen til at indgå i forskellige undervisningsforløb i engelsk hf-b, hvor undervisningen skal bestå af min. seks emner (Undervisningsministeriet 2018b: 17), og samtidigt vil den være oplagt til genrediskussioner i samspil

med gode eksempler på forskellige genrer. Derudover har romanen skabt diskussioner med udgangspunkt i historie, identitet, overvågning og meget andet (Montz 2012, Clemente 2012, Risko 2012, m.fl.), men diskussioner om romanens sprog er få. Green (2008) konstaterer i den forbindelse, at sproget anonymiseres til fordel for forholdet mellem fortælleren og læseren.

Derudover betyder romanens mange cliffhangers ifølge Henthorne, at "the trilogy has a quick rhythm, drawing the reader through the novels rapidly and keeping attention focused on the plot rather than characterization, setting, detail or style, at least on the first read" (2012: 29). Grundet det høje fortælletempo bliver plottet altså det centrale element i romanen, mens bl.a. stilen rykker i baggrunden.

Denne tendens ses ikke kun hos akademiske kritikere, men afspejles også i undervisningsmateriale relateret til *The Hunger Games.* Aracich (2016) præsenterer i sin udgivelse forskellige opgaver forbundet med ordforråd, nærlæsning og en orientering mod læseren m.m., men han lægger ikke vægt på romanens stil eller grammatik. Hvorvidt de danske gymnasielærere inddrager romanen i deres undervisning og i den forbindelse integrerer grammatikundervisning med tekstanalyse er mere vanskeligt at svare entydigt på. Selvom alle undervisningsbeskrivelser skal ligge offentligt tilgængelige, når eksamen finder sted (Undervisningsministeriet 2018c), betyder det ikke, at de *forbliver* offentligt tilgængelige, og det er derfor ikke muligt at danne sig et overblik over, hvordan evt. undervisning på baggrund af romanen foregår. Det står dog klart, at Simmons i sin undervisning har anvendt romanen og i den forbindelse integreret grammatikundervisningen i tekstarbejdet, og hun konstaterer: "Engaging in this activity with my students showed me that integrated grammar instruction… is even more effective when paired with student-valued, popular fiction" (2016: 16). Ifølge Simmons' erfaringer øger det således elevernes grammatiske udbytte, når grammatikundervisningen integreres i arbejdet med tekster, som de finder interessante at beskæftige sig med. Simmons' betragtning underbygges af Gardner (2001) og Ryan & Deci (2000a, 2000b) gennem begreberne integrativ motivation og indre motivation. Ifølge Gardner betyder det at være integrativt motiveret i forbindelse med L2-læring bl.a., at man besidder et ønske om at identificere sig med såvel målsprog som -kultur (Gardner 2001: 6). I tillæg hertil vil det at være indre motiveret ifølge Ryan & Deci sige, at man har en lystbetonet tilgang til et emne, og at arbejdet med dette emne – i dette tilfælde sprogundervisning – dermed skaber værdi og glæde for individet (2000a: 55). Disse to typer af motivation skaber ifølge Ryan & Deci tilsammen en motivation, der forbindes med høj kvalitet og kreativitet (2000b), og denne kombination betragtes derfor som det optimale motivationsgrundlag for fremmedsprogsindlæring. Simmons' egne erfaringer fra undervisningen stemmer dermed overens med forskningen på området.

Romanens sproglige potentiale er altså kun udnyttet i begrænset omfang til trods for, at romanen er populær blandt unge. Det er derfor her denne artikel placerer sig.

3. Stilistik og integreret grammatikundervisning

Som det fremgår af indledningen, er fundamentet for udvikling af materiale til integreret grammatikundervisning i denne undersøgelse en stilistisk analyse af et udvalgt kapitel af *The Hunger Games*. Dette afsnit rummer en præsentation af den teori, som analysen baserer sig på.

Når en tekst analyseres stilistisk, søger man at skabe mening ud fra tekstens sproglige stil. Short definerer stilistisk analyse som "an approach to the analysis of (literary) texts using linguistic descriptions" (1996: 1). Det betyder, at stilistikken placerer sig på grænsen mellem litteraturvidenskaben og sprogvidenskaben (Burke 2014: 2), hvilket giver mening at udnytte i en kontekst, hvor litteratur, sprog og samspillet mellem de to vægtes højt (Undervisningsministeriet 2017). Den gode stilistiske analyse er gennemskuelig og baserer sig på tydelige eksempler fra teksten, og det betyder, at det på den ene side skal være muligt for andre analytikere at gennemføre samme analyse og nå frem til samme resultater (Carter 2010: 68), men på den anden side også, at en stilistisk analyse kan ligge tæt op ad den traditionelle, litterære tekstanalyse. De to tilgange betragtes som

værende lige valide (Burke 2014: 2). En måde at forbinde det sprogvidenskabelige og det litteraturvidenskabelige felt er gennem analyse af fortællerforhold. Ifølge Neary (2014: 175) har studiet af fortællerforhold altid været centralt for romaner, men det er ikke alene centralt i litteraturvidenskaben. Simpson pointerer, at fortællerforhold udgør "an important stylistic dimension not only in prose fiction but in many types of narrative text" (2014:28). Fortællerforhold overlapper således de to videnskaber og kan dermed fungere som bindeled.

Til analyse af en romans fortællerforhold anbefaler Genette at skelne mellem den *homodiegetiske* og *heterodiegetiske* fortæller, hvoraf den første er en karakter i fortællingen og den anden betragter fortællingens begivenheder udefra (1980: 244-245; begreb på dansk: Reitan 2008: 11). Han benytter desuden begrebet *indre fokalisering*, hvoraf den underordnede *fikserede* fokalisering er central for denne artikel; her er fortællerens alvidenhed begrænset til én karakter (Genette 1972 i Iversen & Nielsen 2004: 81). At supplere sin analyse af en fortæller med analyse af fortællingens modalitet kan dermed skabe øget indsigt i en teksts fortællerforhold. I gymnasiet, hvor tekstanalysens niveau er et andet, hvad angår analyse af en fortæller, arbejder man i engelskundervisningen med et simplere begrebsapparat, hvor begreberne *point of view*, *first-person narrator*, *third-person narrator* og hvorvidt denne tredjepersonsfortæller er *alvidende (omniscient)* ellers *begrænset (limited)* er dækkende. I en gymnasial kontekst er Genettes begreber med andre ord ikke centrale (Engberg-Pedersen et al. 2012: 320). Derfor er det også de simplere begreber, der er anvendt i undersøgelsen. Uanset begrebsapparatets kompleksitet skaber analyse af en fortællings fortællerforhold med inddragelse af modalitet ifølge Fowler grobund for at kombinere litteratur- og sprogvidenskaben: "[the] presence of a participating narrator may be highlighted by foregrounded *modality* stressing his judgements and opinions" (1996: 171). Fowler fremhæver med ordene 'judgements and opinion' den type modalitet, der kaldes epistemisk modalitet. Netop den epistemiske modalitet er ifølge Simpson yderst relevant i arbejdet med fortællerforhold, idet den udtrykker "the speaker's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of a proposition expressed" (1993: 48). Ved at analysere modaliteten i en fortælling vil man med andre ord opnå indsigt i fortællerens tiltro til det, som vedkommende selv udtrykker eller oplever omkring sig. Modalitet kan bl.a. udtrykkes gennem modale hjælpeverber, modale fuldverber, modale adjektiver og modale adverbier (Giovanelli et al. 2015: 130). I denne artikel er fokus på modale hjælpeverber – mere specifikt verberne *can, could, will, would, must* og *might* – idet disse ønskes som omdrejningspunkt i den integrerede grammatikundervisning.

3.1. Metodiske overvejelser for stilistisk analyse af modalitet i The Hunger Games

Den stilistiske analyse af *The Hunger Games* forholdte sig til, hvordan kapitlernes modalverber karakteriserer fortælleren. Denne analyse rummede et kvantitativt islæt, idet alle forekomster af modalverber i de tre kapitler blev udsøgt gennem Adobe Acrobat Reader version 2015.023.20070. Med hjælp fra søgefunktionen blev alle forekomster af følgende modalverber identificeret: *can, could, may, might, will, d* (for sammentrækning med *would, could* eller *should*), *ll* (for sammentrækning med *will* eller *shall*), *would, won't* (sammentrækning ved negation af *will*), *must, shall og should*. Dernæst blev forekomsterne i romanen markeret for at skabe et samlet overblik over, hvor koncentrationen af modalverber er stor; passager med høj koncentration af modalverber blev herefter anvendt i analysen. Citater, der blev anvendt i analysen og senere i det afledte undervisningsmateriale, inddrages kronologisk igennem analysen, men det betyder ikke, at alle forekomster i afsnit med høj koncentration af modalverber er inddraget. Til analysen blev der udvalgt citater, som 1) rummede en høj koncentration af modalverber, 2) rummede forskellige modalverber og 3) karakteriserede fortælleren. Det var et bevidst valg at prioritere få citater og forskellige modalverber for at komprimere og skabe overskuelighed i analysen, og det er derfor muligt, at eksempler på modalverber, der ikke indgår i uddrag med høj koncentration af modalverber, kunne have skabt andre resultater i den stilistiske analyse. Til fortolkning af modalverberne anvendes teori

af Simpson (1993) og Neary (2014), og derudover spiller hhv. Hjulmand & Schwarz' (2012) og Greenbaum & Quirks (1990) beskrivelser af modalverbernes semantik en central rolle.

Den stilistiske analyse, der danner baggrund for det afledte undervisningsmateriale, forholder sig kun til ét kapitel af *The Hunger Games*, og metoden sikrer derfor ikke, at analysen er repræsentativ for romanen som helhed. Det skyldes, at målet med denne artikel ikke er udtømmende stilistisk analyse, men derimod en analyse, som kan danne grundlag for undervisningsmateriale til integreret grammatikundervisning.

3.2. Stilistisk undersøgelse af kapitel 11 i The Hunger Games

Indledningsvist kan romanens hovedperson og fortæller, Katniss, med Genettes begreber karakteriseres som en homodiegetisk fortæller – det man i gymnasieskolen kalder en førstepersonsfortæller. Der interessante ligger dernæst i, hvordan modalverberne er med til at karakterisere Katniss.

For at forstå hvordan modaliteten i romanen kan anvendes i denne karakteristik, er det nødvendigt med en kort indføring i det udvalgte kapitels handlingsforløb samt nogle enkelte romanspecifikke termer. Omdrejningspunktet for romanen er hovedpersonen, den 16-årige Katniss. Hun udvælges af landets totalitære styre til at skulle deltage i the Hunger Games; en årlig begivenhed, hvor 24 unge *tributes* – to unge mennesker fra hvert af de 12 distrikter i landet Panem – skal kæmpe i en arena indtil kun én overlevende står tilbage. De tributes, der historisk set har størst chance for at vinde, kaldes *careers*. I kapitel 11 begynder the Hunger Games, og Katniss befinder sig ved kapitlets start på en platform i arenaen. Da hun træder ned fra platformen, får hun fat i nogle få hjælpemidler til sin tid i arenaen, hun overlever sit første møde med modstanderne, og hun flygter derefter langt ind i skoven. Her søger hun ly for natten i et træ, men vækkes af at en anden tribute har tændt bål. Denne tribute bliver hurtigt dræbt af nogle careers, der nu arbejder sammen som en gruppe. Med denne korte indføring i *The Hunger Games* bør det være muligt at følge nedenstående analyse af modaliteten i kapitel 11.

Modaliteten i kapitel 11 er præget af Katniss' forsøg på at forudsige, hvad andre tributes ved og har i sinde eller vil være i stand til at gøre. Dette viser sig, da hun venter på at træde ind i arenaen: "I'm betting many of the other tributes *would* pass up a smaller girl, even one who scored an eleven in training" (Collins 2008: 174 [kursiv tilføjet]). *Would* refererer her til noget, der rent hypotetisk kunne ske i fremtiden, når kampen for livet begynder (jf. Hjulmand & Schwarz 2012: 231). Anskuelserne afspejler gennem epistemisk modalitet Katniss' egen opfattelse af situationen, og det er tydeligt, at hun er rædselsslagen for, hvad de andre tributes vil være i stand til, og at bekymringer som denne fylder i hendes bevidsthed.

Samtidigt har Katniss svært ved at beslutte, hvordan hun skal agere, når hun træder ned fra platformen, og tiden presser hende: "I know the minute *must* be almost up" (Collins 2008: 174 [kursiv tilføjet]). Hendes urolige sind har ikke rokket ved hendes tidsfornemmelse, og hun ved med sikkerhed – *a (logical) necessity* (Greenbaun & Quirk 1990: 61) – at tiden snart er gået, men hun ved ikke, hvad hun skal gøre. Da ser hun Peeta: "I can tell he's looking at me, and I think he *might* be shaking his head" (Collins 2008: 174 [kursiv tilføjet]). Læseren kan her følge Katniss' forsøg på at forstå, hvad Peeta gør, ud fra brugen af *might*, som er udtryk for Katniss' beskrivelse af en lille sandsynlighed og dermed også epistemisk modalitet (Hjulmand & Schwarz 2012: 225). Usikkerheden omkring hvad Peeta prøver at kommunikere, er tydelig, og den får Katniss til at tabe fokus fra den opgave, hun har stillet sig i udsigt: at få fat i en bue, som er hendes foretrukne våben. Som resultat af kommunikationen mellem de to og Katniss' besværede forsøg på at forstå ham misser hun signalet, der skyder the Hunger Games i gang, og hun bliver rasende på Peeta. Katniss viser sig således som en karakter, der ikke forventer, at andre vil have en holdning til, hvordan hun skal agere – og da slet ikke en karakter, som hun ifølge spillets regler bør forsøge at slå ihjel, og for hvem det derfor ville være en taktisk fordel, hvis Katniss blev dræbt ved spillets start. Peetas opførsel matcher ikke Katniss' forståelse for,

hvordan tributes bør agere, og hendes manglende evne til at abstrahere fra dette og i stedet fokusere på sin egen primære opgave gør hende frustreret; en frustration, der tager form af afsky overfor Peeta.

Det er dog ikke kun Peetas opførsel, Katniss ikke forstår. Hun ytrer sig som fortæller også gerne, når andre tributes ifølge hende opfører sig hovedløst: "What are they thinking? A fire lit just at nightfall *would* have been one thing. Those who battled at the Cornucopia, with their superior strength and surplus of supplies, they *could*n't possibly have been near enough to spot the flames then. But now… You *might* as well be waving a flag" (Collins 2008: 184 [kursiv tilføjet]). Modalverberne i citatet her udtrykker Katniss' forestillinger om hypotetiske scenarier: 1) *Would* indicerer noget, der potentielt ville have været slemt, men hypotetisk set dog bedre end det at tænde bål midt om natten (jf. Hjulmand & Schwarz 2012: 230, Greenbaum & Quirk 1990: 63); 2) *Could* forholder sig ligeså til muligheder (jf. Greenbaum & Quirk 1990: 60) – i dette tilfælde i forhold til Katniss' forestilling om, hvad de andre tributes er eller ikke er i stand til; 3) *Might* indicerer ligesom *could* en hypotetisk mulighed (jf. Hjulmand & Schwarz 2012: 223) for, hvad en tribute ligeså vel ifølge Katniss kunne have gjort for at opnå samme effekt: at blotte sig overfor sine fjender.

Gennem en stilistisk analyse af kapitel 11 af *The Hunger Games* viser det sig således, at den homodiegetiske fortæller Katniss forholder sig til og evaluerer verden omkring sig på forskellig vis, og hendes vurderinger kommer til udtryk gennem modalverber. Katniss fortolker situationer og forholder sig gennem modalverber til, hvilke hypotetiske risici hun står overfor ift. både Peeta og de andre tributes. Gennem disse udsagn udtrykker Katniss, hvad hun betragter som fornuftig tribute-opførsel, og yderligere forsøger hun at forholde sig til den fare, hun er udsat for i the Hunger Games. Alle eksempler rummer epistemisk modalitet, eftersom eksemplerne udelukkende og ukritisk forholder sig til Katniss' egne opfattelser af risici og forskellige situationer.

4. *The Hunger Games* og modalverber som integreret grammatikundervisning

I de foregående afsnit er den teoretiske og analytiske baggrund for den integrerede grammatikundervisning i modalverber i forbindelse med *The Hunger Games* præsenteret. I dette afsnit følger en præsentation af det undervisningsmateriale, som er baseret på ovenstående stilistiske analyse, og løbende også den teori, der er anvendt som baggrund for udvikling af materialet.

Undervisningen i modalverber integreret i arbejdet med fortælleren i *The Hunger Games* fandt sted i 1.r – en førsteårs hf-klasse – indenfor et modul på 90 minutter, og dette modul udgjorde desuden en tredjedel af et miniforløb, hvor tre forskellige grammatiske strukturer tilsammen skulle skabe en overordnet forståelse for romanens fortæller. Målet med undersøgelsen var at teste den hypotese, at stilistisk analyse kan danne baggrund for integreret grammatikundervisning på hf. Mere konkret skulle undervisningen give eleverne en forståelse for modalverbernes semantiske forskelle og en forståelse for, hvordan modalverber kan anvendes i en karakteristik af en fortæller, eftersom det netop er den semantiske og pragmatiske betydning af ytringer, der er central i arbejdet med tasks i undervisningen (se afsnit 2). Fokus var i mindre omfang på, i hvilken grad eleverne selv ville være i stand til at omdanne deres eksplicitte viden om modalverberne til implicit viden og dermed integrere strukturen i deres intersprog og anvende den korrekt. Udfordringer ved dette fokus vender vi tilbage til i afsnit 6, hvor undersøgelsens resultater diskuteres.

Modulets undervisning i modalverber bestod primært af forskellige eksplicitte grammatiske tasks; det vil sige, at eleverne var bevidste om, at de grammatiske strukturer var centrum for undervisningen, sådan som Nassaji & Fotos (2004) foreskriver (se afsnit 1). Formålet med den første task var at skabe overblik over Katniss' overvejelser på platformen lige inden begyndelsen på the Hunger Games. I den første task arbejdede eleverne induktivt med modalverberne, idet de skulle udarbejde en oversigt over Katniss' tanker og dernæst opstille disse i en mindmapstruktur. Alle tankerne skulle rumme minimum ét modalverbum. Eleverne skulle i deres mindmap citere direkte for

at fremme *noticing*[5] (Ellis 2002: 166-167) af, hvordan modalverberne anvendes korrekt. Eleverne skulle dernæst forholde sig til, hvordan vi ved, at vi i disse citater har med overvejelser at gøre og forhåbentligt nå frem til, at det ved vi takket være modalverberne. Opgaven levede dermed op til Ellis' fire kriterier for tasks (se afsnit 2): 1) Opgaven havde primært fokus på den pragmatiske betydning af Katniss' ytringer; 2) den besad en iboende informationskløft, idet eleverne måtte diskutere sig frem til, hvordan vi ved, at vi har at gøre med overvejelser, 3) takket være den induktive tilgang måtte eleverne primært anvende egne ressourcer til opgaveløsningen, og 4) som nævnt ovenfor var der et klart defineret mål med tasken: at skabe overblik over Katniss' overvejelser på platformen lige inden begyndelsen på the Hunger Games.

Eftersom opgaveløsningen nødvendigvis som minimum delvist måtte foregå på engelsk, når de engelske modalverber var centrum for samtalen, sikrede opgaven, at eleverne producerede både mundtligt og skriftligt engelsk output. Desuden ville det induktive arbejde forhåbentligt fremme elevernes hypotesedannelse om verbernes betydning, jf. Ellis (se afsnit 2). I praksis skrev eleverne altså sætninger fra kapitel 11 ned og overvejede, hvilken betydning et modalverbum som *might* har, når der fx står "and he *might* be shaking his head" (Collins 2008: 174 [kursiv tilføjet]). Efter eleverne selv var nået frem til, at modalverber kan kædes sammen med en førstepersonsfortællers overvejelser i en roman, blev de vigtigste karakteristika for modalverberne gennemgået deduktivt på klassen, og klassen fik desuden at vide, at de kunne finde beskrivelser af de enkelte modalverber i deres elektroniske grammatiksystem ENGGRAM[6]. Baggrunden for den deduktive gennemgang var, at modalverber vurderedes at være komplicerede strukturer, der ifølge Fotos kræver en formel instruktion og altså ikke kan tilegnes induktivt alene (2002: 151)[7].

Efter denne indledende eksplicitte grammatiske task gennemførte eleverne en implicit grammatisk task, hvor centrum for samtalen ikke var de grammatiske strukturer i sig selv. I grupper skulle eleverne i stedet forholde sig til *effekten* af forskellige modalverber i udvalgte citater fra *The Hunger Games*, og hvordan disse modalverber dermed karakteriserer fortælleren. Eksempelvis skulle eleverne forholde sig til, hvad det siger om Katniss, at hun hårdt presset alligevel er i stand til med en stor grad af sikkerhed at holde styr på tiden, når der i romanen står: "I know the minute *must* be almost up" (Collins 2008: 174 [kursiv tilføjet]). Undervejs blev denne opgave stilladseret[8] i forskellig grad afhængigt af elevens niveau. De svageste elever havde brug for en konkret demonstration af, hvor man finder et modalverbums betydning i ENGGRAM, en omformulering af denne betydning, og dernæst hvordan man kæder denne semantik sammen med Katniss i en fortolkning. De stærkeste elever krævede ikke yderligere stilladsering end en anerkendelse af deres frustration over at møde en hidtil ukendt type opgave[9].

[5] Noticing omhandler lørnerens evne til udvikle sit sprog ved gentagne gange at bemærke hidtil ukendte strukturer. Dette kan implementeres i undervisningen på flere måder; underviseren kan fx bede lørnerne finde alle forekomster af en specifik struktur i en tekst eller på forhånd selv markere strukturen i en tekst, som lørnerne skal læse igennem. På den måde bevidstgøres lørnerne om den ønskede struktur (Ellis 2002: 166-167).

[6] ENGGRAM rummer "komplet grammatisk materiale til undervisning på gymnasialt niveau" (Minlæring). Det kræver login at tilgå ENGGRAM, der er en del af den digitale læringsplatform www.minlaering.dk.

[7] Ifølge Fotos opfylder den optimale grammatikundervisning tre kriterier, hvoraf kriterium nr. to er særligt relevant, når der er tale om komplekse strukturer: "(1) explicit grammar instruction… at the beginning of the lesson; (2) communicative activities containing many usages of the instructed form; and (3) summary activities to focus learners' attention on the grammar form they were instructed on and then encountered communicatively" (2002: 138, 151).

[8] Stilladseringen foregik ud fra Beed et al.'s beskrivelser af stilladseringens niveauer (1991: 650).

[9] Når man arbejder induktivt, er det ifølge Ellis essentielt, at der kun undervises i én ting ad gangen (2002: 170). Selvom selve opgaven med modalverber i dette tilfælde kun havde ét fokus, kan elevernes oplevelse muligvis have været, at fokus reelt var todelt: 1) modalverbers betydning for karakteristik af Katniss, og 2) integreret grammatikundervisning som metode. Dette todelte fokus er ikke optimalt, men ved gentagne erfaringer med hhv. integreret grammatikundervisning og induktivt arbejde vil eleverne forhåbentligt med tiden udelukkende kunne lægge fokus på det intenderede fokusområde og ikke metoden i sig selv. Det er derfor i denne undersøgelse værd at tage forbehold for, at opgaven med et nu todelt fokus muligvis har været for vanskelig for nogle elever.

Herefter skulle eleverne udskifte modalverberne med andre modalverber for igennem kontrasterne at blive bekendt med verbernes semantiske forskelle. Til dette anvendte de ENGGRAM. De skulle dernæst fortolke, hvordan både de oprindelige og de nye modalverber karakteriserer Katniss. På samme vis som ovenstående task blev også denne opgave stilladseret på baggrund af elevens niveau.

Taskarbejdet blev suppleret af en walk'n'talk med inddragelse af filmadaptionen af romanen for at illustrere, hvordan modalverber fungerer, og hvilke filmiske virkemidler der må tages i brug for via dette medie at afspejle modalverbernes effekt. Inddragelsen af filmadaptionen tjente primært to formål: 1) At tydeliggøre, hvordan fortællerens usikkerheder udtrykt gennem modalverber i romanen i filmen kommer til udtryk gennem nærbilleder af hovedpersonens mimik, panorering og billeder fra fortællerens hjem, District 12, og 2) at inddrage materiale, som eleverne i forvejen synes er interessant, jf. Simmons (2016), Gardner (2001) og Ryan & Deci (2000a, 2000b) (se afsnit 2.1).

5. Metodiske overvejelser for undersøgelsen

I afsnittene ovenfor er først den stilistiske analyse med fokus på modalverber i kapitel 11 af *The Hunger Games* og dernæst det afledte undervisningsmateriale præsenteret. Dette afsnit rummer herefter en præsentation af, hvilke metodiske overvejelser der ligger til grund for evalueringen af materialet. Målet med undersøgelsen var via afprøvning af integreret grammatikundervisning med udgangspunkt i *The Hunger Games* at danne baggrund for en vurdering og diskussion af, hvorvidt det er muligt at integrere grammatikundervisning i arbejdet med stilistisk analyse. Til det formål gennemførtes ovennævnte miniforløb og dernæst en evaluering med udgangspunkt i, hvordan eleverne i den udvalgte 1.hf-klasse responderede på undervisningen. Denne artikel forholder sig udelukkende til ét modul omhandlende modalverber, som udgjorde en tredjedel af miniforløbet. Eftersom forløbet fandt sted i en enkelt klasse, rummer undersøgelsen kun 17 respondenter og ikke alle 17 respondenter deltog i alle tre moduler af forløbet. Undersøgelsen kan derfor ikke siges at være repræsentativ for hf generelt, men resultaterne kan forhåbentligt fungere som inspiration for fremmedsprogsundervisere på de gymnasiale uddannelser.

Som første led i evalueringen og som afrunding på undervisningsforløbet skulle eleverne i par diskutere deres forhold til integreret grammatikundervisning, og hvordan modalverber kan anvendes til karakteristik af Katniss. Eleverne ville herigennem blive sporet ind på den evaluering af forløbet, der herefter fulgte i form af et spørgeskema.

Den kvantitative tilgang til evaluering via en spørgeskemaundersøgelse blev valgt af flere årsager: for det første ville det styrke undersøgelsen at have både vores egne, elevernes og klassens daglige undervisers evaluering af, hvordan undervisningsmaterialet har fungeret. Eleverne selv var lørnere i dette forløb, og derfor var deres oplevelse af materialet essentiel. For det andet måtte evalueringen ikke tage unødig tid fra selve undervisningen; med kun tre x 90 minutter til rådighed skulle den være hurtig at afvikle. For det tredje var det vigtigt, at alle elever havde mulighed for at ytre sig, hvad enten de foretrak mundtligt i plenum eller anonymt på skrift, for at øge sandsynligheden for inputs fra alle elever. Dette blev søgt sikret gennem indledende diskussion af centrale elementer i par, dernæst ved at lade eleverne udfylde et spørgeskema og afsluttende ved at runde forløbet af i plenum, hvor eleverne fik mulighed for at komme med sidste inputs; det kunne fx være vedr. emner, der ikke var inddraget i spørgeskemaet. Endelig fik de mulighed for efterfølgende at sende opfølgende evaluering via mail, hvilket ingen dog benyttede sig af.

5.1. Målgruppe

I denne undersøgelse var målgruppen for spørgeskemaet eleverne selv. Hvorvidt det ville være muligt at nå en svarprocent på 70, som Marckmann & Hansen definerer som minimumsgrænsen i en valid spørgeskemaundersøgelse (2008:21), afhang af elevernes fremmøde. Der var ifølge klassens daglige underviser generelt højt fravær på hf, og derfor var det ikke sikkert, at det ville være muligt. Dernæst

var det ikke givet, at de fremmødte til det sidste modul havde deltaget i de to foregående; det var med andre ord ikke sikkert, at de fremmødte til det modul, hvor evalueringen foregik, havde deltaget i forløbet om modalverber. Dette var vilkårene for en undersøgelse af denne størrelse hos en enkelt hf-klasse. Det betyder, at undersøgelsen udelukkende sigtede mod at afdække, hvordan integreret grammatikundervisning i modalverber i forbindelse med *The Hunger Games* fungerede i 1.r ud fra det fremmøde, som 1.r praktiserede, og det er dermed ikke muligt at udlede af undersøgelsen, hvordan materialet ville fungere i andre hf-klasser. Marckmann & Hansen pointerer, at sandsynligheden for at nå de 70% øges, hvis spørgeskemaet appellerer til respondenternes – dvs. elevernes – egeninteresse (2008: 21). Respondenterne måtte i denne undersøgelses tilfælde formodes at have et ønske om undervisning, der er spændende og udbytterig, og hvis deres besvarelser af dette spørgeskema potentielt kunne præge deres fremtidige undervisning, havde de en egeninteresse i at besvare det. Om det nødvendigvis i praksis er tilfældet, at elever altid tilstræber at påvirke deres undervisning i en specifik retning, er usikkert. Desuden besvarede de i dette tilfælde skemaerne, fordi det blev dem pålagt som en del af undervisningen, hvilket i sig selv heller ikke automatisk fordrer de mest reelle svar.

Eleverne blev på forhånd gjort opmærksomme på, at alle besvarelser var anonyme. Anonymiteten pointeredes, fordi klassens daglige underviser med tiden ville skulle eksaminere dem, og det var væsentligt, at eleverne ikke frygtede, at resultaterne af undersøgelsen ville kunne påvirke forholdet mellem dem og deres underviser negativt. Ifølge Jeppesen & Rosenmeier (2008b: 68) er det vigtigt at lade respondenterne vide, hvordan de kan tilgå resultaterne efterfølgende – både som en anerkendelse af, at de har brugt tid på at svare og for at engagere dem til at koncentrere sig mere om at give gode svar. Eleverne blev derfor oplyst om, at de vil kunne tilgå resultatet af undersøgelsen via Aalborg Universitets hjemmeside.

5.2. Spørgsmålstyper

Spørgeskemaet blev indledt med en afdækning af, hvor mange respondenter undersøgelsen rummede, og hvor mange der havde deltaget i de forskellige moduler. Jeppesen & Rosenmeier pointerer, at et spørgeskema ”skal vække interesse, have sammenhørende spørgsmål placeret nogenlunde tæt på hinanden og have de vigtigste spørgsmål først” (2008b: 64) for tidligt at fange respondenternes interesse og dermed styrke deres motivation for at besvare resten af skemaet. Dette var indtænkt i konstruktionen: i spørgsmål 2-4 skulle eleverne reflektere over, hvad forløbet havde bestået af, og hvordan det havde fungeret for dem. Derefter fulgte seks vidensspørgsmål, hvor de skulle forholde sig til deres eget udbytte ift. de tre grammatiske strukturer, som var fokus igennem miniforløbet. De sidste tre spørgsmål var – som spørgsmål 2-4 – holdningsspørgsmål, og her skulle eleverne reflektere over samspillet mellem form og indhold i undervisningen.

Spørgsmål 2 i spørgeskemaet var med formuleringen: ”Hvad synes du om undervisningsforløbet generelt?” af meget bred karakter. Dette var et bevidst valg, idet vi netop indledningsvist ønskede ”en bred eller overordnet indsigt i en problematik” (Jeppesen & Rosenmeier 2008a: 78-79) - problematik forstås i dette tilfælde som elevernes oplevelse af forløbet. Vi var dog bevidste om, at respondenterne her ville have tendens til at udtrykke større tilfredshed end ved mere specifikke spørgsmål (jf. Rosenmeier & Jeppesen 2008a: 79). Alligevel skulle eleverne besvare det brede spørgsmål, fordi lørneres egen motivation er vigtig for indlæringen (Vinther 2014: 83), og det var derfor vigtigt for materialets anvendelighed, at eleverne fandt materialet interessant.

Disse introduktionsspørgsmål blev fulgt op af tre vidensspørgsmål, idet det var væsentligt, om eleverne havde forstået essensen af det, vi arbejdede med. Undersøgelsen tog ikke højde for, hvilken viden eleverne havde inden forløbet begyndte, da rammen for denne undersøgelse ikke gjorde det muligt at udføre præ- og posttests. Kun elevernes forståelse af de mest centrale aspekter af forløbet blev kontrolleret, og her skulle eleverne selv formulere deres læringsudbytte. Den efterfølgende

vurdering af materialets brugbarhed vil bl.a. basere sig på resultaterne heraf.

Spørgsmålene i spørgeskemaet var formuleret kort og præcist for at minimere risikoen for, at eleverne ikke ville forstå dem og som resultat deraf kunne blive demotiverede ift. at svare. Samtidigt blev der kun spurgt om én ting ad gangen for igen at fremme spørgeskemaets gennemskuelighed. Spørgsmålene blev præsenteret samlet på den elektroniske platform Surveyplanet.com, idet denne tillod, at eleverne kunne gå tilbage og uddybe deres svar, hvis de skulle have tid til overs, når de var igennem de ni spørgsmål. Dernæst rummede spørgeskemaet primært åbne spørgsmål. Der var altså tale om en kvantitativ undersøgelse, men samtidigt blev elevernes mulighed for at udtrykke sig begrænset mindst muligt ved, at åbne spørgsmål prioriteredes over lukkede, som ville rumme på forhånd definerede svarmuligheder. På den måde fik respondenterne størst muligt rum til at give udtryk for individuelle, kvalitative forskelle indenfor den kvantitative ramme. Enkelte spørgsmål var dog med fuldt overlæg lukkede – spg.1: "Marker de moduler du deltog i" og spg. 3 "Hvad synes du om det faglige niveau? For lavt, lavt, passende, højt, for højt" – idet det her var muligt at opstille dækkende svarmuligheder. De lukkede spørgsmål blev valgt, idet det var hurtigere for eleverne at besvare og hurtigere for os at bearbejde efterfølgende. Ved primært at anvende åbne spørgsmål fik eleverne mulighed for at reflektere over deres indlæring og at sætte ord på til fordel for både dem selv og undersøgelsen.

Spørgsmålene i spørgeskemaet var objektive, men objektivitet "skal her ikke forstås i absolut forstand – det findes ikke – så man må indstille sig på en mere blød forståelse af objektivitet, hvor målet er den videst mulige eliminering af åbenlyst farvede spørgsmål" (Hansen & Aas 2008: 96). Der optrådte således ingen 'åbenlyst farvede spørgsmål' i undersøgelsens spørgeskema. Målet med objektivitet er at optimere spørgsmålenes gyldighed: "At spørgsmålene måler det [vi] ønsker at måle og ikke noget andet" (Jeppesen & Rosenmeier 2008a: 92). På baggrund af formuleringen af spørgsmålene tilstræbtes altså objektivitet. Men samtidigt var det umuligt som underviser den ene dag at fremme elevernes motivation ved at udtrykke begejstring for integreret grammatikundervisning for så den næste dag at forholde sig komplet objektivt til denne type undervisning.

5.3. Tilgængelighed

Eleverne skulle som nævnt udfylde spørgeskemaerne digitalt via Surveyplanet.com. Spørgeskemaet blev gjort tilgængeligt umiddelbart inden respondenterne skulle udfylde det og lukkedes kort derefter igen. Eleverne ville således ikke kunne tilgå spørgeskemaet igen. Eleverne fik 15 minutter til at besvare spørgsmålene, men eftersom der i højere grad var tale om en evaluering af materialet end en reel test af elevernes viden om de grammatiske strukturer, var målet her ikke at presse dem på tid.

Den digitale løsning blev valgt, idet skemaet da faldt naturligt ind i undervisningen, som i forvejen gjorde brug af IT til fx ENGGRAM. Samtidigt lettede de digitale spørgeskemaer efterfølgende arbejdsbyrden ift. at transskribere de udfyldte skemaer og dernæst analysere resultaterne. Endvidere var målet at øge elevernes tryghed ved at udfylde skemaerne på denne måde (Nørregaard-Nielsen & Slot 2008: 160), da det øgede anonymiteten. Med valget af digitale spørgeskemaer var der en risiko for, at eleverne ville besøge andre hjemmesider end den planlagte, mens de burde udfylde spørgeskemaerne. Det vurderedes dog, at fordelene vægtede højere end ulemperne i dette tilfælde.

5.4. Behandling af resultater

Surveyplanet.com anonymiserede elevernes besvarelser af spørgeskemaerne automatisk. Derudover genererede softwaren diagrammer over spørgeskemaets to lukkede spørgsmål, spørgsmål 1 og 3, mens softwaren for de øvrige syv spørgsmål opstillede lister med besvarelser. Hver respondent blev af softwaren tildelt et nummer (R1-R17), og det blev således muligt at krydstjekke respondenternes

svar på tværs af spørgsmålene. Ved behandling af respondenternes besvarelser af de åbne spørgsmål blev der overordnet set søgt generelle mønstre og refleksion over, hvordan svarene bidrog til be- eller afkræftelse af undersøgelsens hypotese: at stilistisk analyse kan danne baggrund for integreret grammatikundervisning. Denne hypotese kan hverken be- eller afkræftes alene på baggrund af elevernes vurdering af materialet, men som nævnt tidligere udgjorde elevernes besvarelser også kun en del af evalueringen, mens vores egen evaluering samt klassens daglige undervisers evaluering bidrog til en mere nuanceret og kritisk vurdering af materialet.

Ud over de generelle mønstre i elevernes evaluering forholdte vi os til besvarelser, der eventuelt faldt udenfor det generelle billede – såkaldte *outliers* (Agresti & Finlay 2009: 40) – og kontrollerede, om der var konsensus i respondenternes besvarelser af spørgsmål, der var gensidigt afhængige af hinanden. Hvis respondenterne fx i spørgsmål 7 – "Hvad er det vigtigste du lærte af forløbet?" – svarede, at det vigtigste, de havde lært, var, hvordan modalverber kan karakterisere en fortæller, men i spørgsmål 6 – "Hvordan kan analyse af mådesudsagnsord anvendes til karakteristik af en fortæller?" – demonstrerede, at de reelt ikke havde tilegnet sig viden herom, var det selvsagt problematisk. Ud fra ovenstående kan metoden til diskussion af elevernes evaluering af forløbet karakteriseres ved en 'bunden op'-tilgang. Elevernes svar har været afgørende for, hvordan det efterfølgende har været muligt at gruppere og behandle dem, og alle grupperinger er således kvalitative og bunder i elevernes besvarelser.

For nogle spørgsmål har det været muligt at male med en bred, kvalitativ pensel og tale ud fra gennemgående punkter i elevernes svar. Det er til dels tilfældet ved spørgsmål 6 (præsenteret ovenfor) og spørgsmål 9: "Hvad kunne have været bedre ved undervisningsforløbet?". For andre spørgsmål har det ikke været muligt. Besvarelserne af spørgsmål 7 (også nævnt ovenfor) er fx i stedet inddelt i tre kvalitative grupperinger, der dækker størstedelen af de 17 besvarelser: 1) Grammatisk udbytte, 2) betydningen af ordvalg og 3) integreret grammatikundervisning. Spørgsmål 8 – "Hvad var det bedste ved undervisningsforløbet?" – forsøges også inddelt i en række kategorier, og det diskuteres også, hvorfor besvarelserne er så forskelligartede. Kategorierne er her inddelt efter fokus på 1) *The Hunger Games*, 2) integreret grammatikundervisning, 3) ENGGRAM, 4) variation og 5) underviserens rolle. Besvarelser, der falder udenfor kategorierne behandles efterfølgende. Spørgsmål 2, der forholdt sig til elevernes generelle opfattelse af forløbet, diskuteres sammen med spørgsmål 3, som forholdt sig til elevernes oplevelse af forløbets faglige niveau. Det skyldes, at eleverne i spørgsmål 2 valgte at kommentere forløbets faglige niveau, og det har derfor været oplagt at diskutere de to spørgsmål samlet. Det har her som ved vidensspørgsmålene været muligt at udlede generelle tendenser blandt respondenternes svar – et generelt ønske om mere tid til opgaver m.m. – og afsluttende at forholde sig til afvigende respondenter.

6. Diskussion af undersøgelsens resultater

Med afsæt i de metodiske overvejelser præsenteret overfor vil følgende afsnit diskutere undersøgelsens resultater. Diskussionen af forløbet tager udgangspunkt i elevernes skriftlige evaluering gennem spørgeskemaundersøgelsen, men inddrager også elevernes mundtlige evaluering, klassens daglige undervisers refleksioner over forløbet og vores egne refleksioner over forløbet. Desuden kobles besvarelserne med det teoretiske grundlag for integreret grammatikundervisning præsenteret i afsnit 2 og 3.

Spørgeskemaundersøgelsen bygger på besvarelser fra 17 respondenter, der ikke alle var til stede til alle moduler; 15 af de 17 deltog i første modul, og 14 af de 17 deltog i andet modul. Som det fremgik af afsnit 5.1., kræver en valid spørgeskemaundersøgelse en svarprocent på 70, men grundet højt fravær var det ikke muligt i dette tilfælde. Alle fremmødte elever til tredje modul udfyldte dog spørgeskemaet. En høj fraværsprocent er ifølge klassens daglige underviser en naturlig del af hverdagen på hf, og det vurderes derfor, at fraværet afspejler virkeligheden i 1.r. I de følgende afsnit citeres respondenterne løbende, og de mange stavefejl er i alle tilfælde respondenternes egne.

6.1. Elevernes generelle oplevelse af forløbet og det faglige niveau
Eleverne var generelt begejstrede for forløbet. De skrev bl.a.:

- "det var super spændene at prøve at lære tingene på en anden måde" (respondent nr. 2, herfra R2)
- "Jeg synes det var meget fint... man kunne godt se en Samhæng med tingene når der kom en tekst med i det, i stedet for man bare lavede nogen opgaver" (R11)
- "Det er en noget sjovere måde at lære på, og derfor føler jeg at det også er nemmere at huske" (R12)
- "Det var sjovt og man lærte en del. Normalt er grammatik kedeligt, men når det blev flettet ind i en tekstanalyse, var det nemmere at forstå" (R13).

Eleverne reagerede positivt på at arbejde simultant med tekstanalyse og grammatik og pointerede, at undervisningen heraf blev sjovere, nemmere at huske og forstå og mere sammenhængende. Elevernes oplevelse af undervisningen flugter dermed med Nunan & Lambs pointe om, at en mere funktionel tilgang til grammatikundervisning kan gøre den mere meningsfuld for lørneren (2000: 31). Samtidigt gav eleverne dog også udtryk for, at forløbet var udfordrende:

- "Det var lidt svært, men havde man haft nogle flere moduler til hvert emne, ville det helt sikkert være noget man kunne lærer meget af" (R5)
- "det var lidt svært at følge med… Tror også at det var pga. grammatikken det var lidt svært" (R14)
- "Jeg vil gerne have haft mere tid til at arbejde med det, for at fremme en bedre forståelse" (R15).

Eleverne foreslog, at mere tid ville have fremmet forståelsen. Dette forslag bakker både vi og klassens daglige underviser op om. Eleverne blev under dette forløb introduceret for tre forskellige, komplekse strukturer og havde i to af modulerne kun omkring 60 minutter til selve arbejdet inkl. opsamling og perspektivering. Det skabte yderst koncentreret, integreret grammatikundervisning, som med fordel kunne være spredt ud over flere moduler. I et længere forløb kunne man fx have udvalgt én af disse komplekse strukturer – fx modalverberne – og suppleret med integreret grammatikundervisning i mere simple strukturer eller blot traditionel tekstanalyse, idet det ville have skabt mere luft og variation. Mere tid til de enkelte strukturer ville også have skabt mulighed for yderligere stilladsering af de svagere elever samt flere typer tasks til videre arbejde med den samme struktur, hvilket iflg. Nygaard vil kunne øge kontekstualiseringen af strukturen yderligere.

Til trods for at flere af eleverne gav udtryk for, at forløbet var udfordrende, angav hele 70,6 % af respondenterne, svarende til 12 elever, at niveauet var passende, mens 23,5%, svarende til fire elever, angav, at niveauet var højt. Størstedelen vurderede altså, at selvom de fandt forløbet udfordrende, var niveauet fortsat passende. Det viser, at eleverne gerne vil udfordres i L2-undervisningen, og at de ikke afskrækkes af undervisning i emner, der måske ligger lidt udenfor deres zone for nærmeste udvikling (ZPD)[10]. Dette understøttes af Ellis' forklaring af, at lørnere ikke tilegner sig målstrukturer på samme tidspunkter, og det vil derfor ikke være muligt at matche alle lørneres ZPD (2002: 162). Som underviser må man derfor i stedet give lørnerne mulighed for at tilegne sig

[10] Vygotsky definerer zone for nærmeste udvikling (oprindeligt *zone of proximal development*) som: "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky 1978: 86). Læring opstår således i samspillet mellem lørnere, og først derefter kan den enkelte anvende de tilegnede kompetencer. Vygotskys teori kan derfor ifølge Ortega overføres til sproglæring (Ortega 2009: 219).

eksplicit viden, som de senere kan omdanne til implicit viden og integrere i deres intersprog. Det bør derfor ikke afskrække andre at anvende stilistisk analyse til integreret grammatikundervisning til trods for, at de valgte strukturer vurderes at være over lørnernes generelle niveau.

5,9 % svarende til én respondent svarede, at niveauet var for lavt. Det formodes, at her er tale om R17, som adspurgt om, hvad det vigtigste vedkommende lærte af forløbet, svarede, at vedkommende ikke lærte noget af forløbet, fordi vedkommende allerede kendte strukturerne. R17s svar kan klassificeres som outliers og dermed svar, der var generelt afvigende fra resten af klassens. R17 gav udtryk for, at niveauet var 'alt for lavt', men respondentens besvarelser af vidensspørgsmålene indikerer, at vedkommende ikke mestrer de valgte strukturer: i forhold til modalverber besvarer respondenten således ikke spørgsmålet. Kombineret med klassens daglige undervisers iagttagelser, vores egne oplevelser og de øvrige respondenters svar, er R17's svar ikke sigende for klassens generelle opfattelse af forløbet.

6.2. Modalitet i integreret grammatikundervisning

Som resultat af lav deltagelse i klassediskussionerne i første modul blev klassediskussioner i plenum nedprioriteret i modulet omhandlende modalverber til fordel for mere gruppearbejde og en walk'n'talk. Til trods for den manglende klasseopsamling demonstrerede evalueringen af elevernes forståelse for, hvordan modalverber kan anvendes til karakteristik af en fortæller, relativt strømlinede resultater. Et fællestræk i evalueringen af arbejdet med modalverber var et fokus på Katniss' tanker (R1, R5, R6, R10, R13, R14). Yderligere karakteriseredes Katniss gennemgående som værende usikker (R3, R4, R6, R7, R12, R14, R15), og R5 berørte også sandsynlighed (dvs. epistemisk modalitet). Det betyder, at størstedelen af eleverne demonstrerede, at de har tilegnet sig viden om emnet. Svarene demonstrerede yderligere, at de tilegnede kompetencer er relativt nuancerede:

- "Hun siger sjældent at det er sådan her det er, hun bruger meget sandsynlighed, hvilket får læseren til at få et indblik i hendes tanker" (R5)
- "viser lidt af hvordan Katniss hun er. Hun tøver måske lidt i sine handlinger ved at bruge mådeudsangsord" (R7)
- "Hun tænker meget over de forskellige valgmuligheder hun har, men når hun skal så handler hun instinktivt. Det giver et indblik i selve de muligheder hun tænker over" (R10)
- "Hun er analytisk og strategisk... Katniss ved godt at hun er på udebane i Arenaen, men tænker sig frem til logiske løsninger" (R13).

Til trods for, at størstedelen af eleverne formåede at koble modalverberne med Katniss' tanker og en form for usikkerhed, var det forskelligt, hvordan de fortolkede disse resultater. Hun karakteriseredes både som handlekraftig (R1) og tøvende (R7), og begge dele kan være korrekt. Desværre underbyggede eleverne ikke deres svar, og det er derfor svært at vurdere, som de har analytisk belæg for deres respektive fortolkninger. Svarene afspejler muligvis, at vi diskuterede forskellige fortolkninger i grupperne alt efter, hvad eleverne selv var nået frem til. Katniss er handlekraftig, ja, men inden hun handler, er hun også ofte tøvende og analytisk, som det fremgår af den stilistiske analyse i afsnit 3.2. Samtidigt viste det sig også, at fire elever ikke havde tilegnet sig kompetencer, der gør det muligt for dem at besvare vidensspørgsmålet. Det vil derfor være nødvendigt at arbejde videre med modalverberne for at sikre en bredere forståelse.

Samlet vurderes det, at eleverne ift. modalverber har opnået et generelt godt udbytte af den integrerede grammatikundervisning, når vi forholder os til effekten af modalverber. Selvom enkelte elever efterspurgte mere opsamling på klassen, vidner resultaterne om, at langt de fleste har en god fornemmelse for, hvilken effekt modalverber har.

I det videre arbejde med modalverber kunne man med fordel arbejde med elevernes færdigheder

i at anvende citater i deres analyse til at underbygge deres fortolkning. Ifølge klassens daglige underviser havde eleverne endnu ikke påbegyndt arbejdet med at skrive litterære analyser, og de var derfor endnu ikke skolede i at underbygge påstande med citater; kompetencer, som eleverne ville tilegne sig gennem naturlig progression i løbet af 2.hf. Samtidigt er det værd at bemærke, at det manglende fokus på elevernes eksplicitte grammatiske viden om modalverber givetvis er problematisk i en undervisningskontekst, hvor eleverne til eksamen forventes at kunne både anvende modalverber korrekt og derudover også eksplicit redegøre for, hvad der karakteriserer dem. For at imødegå denne problematik ville man kunne arbejde videre med undervisningens indledende opgave, hvor eleverne selv skulle identificere Katniss' tanker indeholdende modalverber. Som tillæg dertil kunne man baseret på Ellis' tilgang til induktiv grammatikundervisning bede eleverne undersøge, hvad der kendetegner denne struktur, inden strukturen gennemgås af læreren. Således vil elevernes såvel eksplicitte som implicitte viden om strukturens karakteristika forhåbentligt blive styrket.

6.3. Det bedste ved undervisningsforløbet

På samme måde som ved spørgsmål 7, "Hvad er det vigtigste du lærte af undervisningsforløbet?", angav eleverne ved besvarelse af spørgsmål 8, "Hvad er det bedste ved undervisningsforløbet?", mange forskellige elementer, som de mener udmærkede sig ved forløbet.

Fem elever var begejstrede for valget af *The Hunger Games* som ramme i forløbet (R3, R6, R7, R11, R13), og de bekræfter dermed det, diverse bestsellerlister viser, som beskrevet i afsnit 2.1: *The Hunger Games*-universet er populært og genkendeligt blandt unge, og dermed sikres en indre motivation overfor emnet, da eleverne har lyst til at beskæftige sig med det. Fire elever (R9, R10, R15, R16) fremhævede den integrerede grammatikundervisning som det bedste – i R15's tilfælde med ordene "nye måder at arbejde på". Disse respondenter overlapper ikke dem, der fremhæver denne metode som det vigtigste, de har lært, i spørgsmål 7, hvilket betyder, at seks elever tilsammen i de to spørgsmål fremhæver den integrerede grammatikundervisning. R7 og R16 betonede yderligere positivt, at deres kendte, elektroniske grammatikbog, ENGGRAM, også blev integreret i arbejdet. R7 er dermed den syvende elev, der omtaler arbejdet med grammatik.

De mange forskelligartede svar vidner om, at den brogede gruppe af elever er tiltrukket af forskellige typer undervisning, og flere nævner da også variation som det bedste ved forløbet (R2, R12, R13). Endelig viste det sig, at undervisningens form er afhængig af underviseren: R8 omtaler betydningen af kontrol i undervisningen, og R17 anvender termerne "attitude" og "passion". Der tegner sig altså ikke et ensartet billede af undervisningens største appel, og variation vil derfor formentligt være altafgørende i andre lignende forløb med integreret grammatikundervisning.

6.4. Forslag til forbedring af undervisningsforløb

Elevernes forslag til forbedringer af undervisningsforløbet drejede sig primært om tid, hvilket stemmer overens med både vores egne og klassens daglige undervisers refleksioner. Eleverne ville gerne have haft tid til og mulighed for at gå mere i dybden med materialet (R2, R3, R5, R9, R12, R16): nogle ville gerne have haft mere forklaring, andre mere tid til opgaverne, mere tid i grupper, mere tid til opsamling eller mere tid til at se filmen eller læse hele bogen. To elever (R14, R17) efterspørger desuden mere kreativitet i opgaverne. Alle disse elementer peger i retning af, at man som underviser i arbejdet med integreret grammatikundervisning skal indtænke mere luft i sit program, end tilfældet var i dette undervisningsforløb, som allerede diskuteret i afsnit 6.1. Derudover vil der kunne skabes mere variation ved ikke at lade den integrerede grammatikundervisning fylde så meget i undervisningen, som den gjorde i dette korte forløb, men derimod give mere plads til traditionel tekstanalyse, som også er en af de kernekompetencer, læreplanen vægter (Undervisningsministeriet 2017: 2). Flere forslag til forbedring af forløbet vil blive diskuteret i afsnit 7. Ved at give den integrerede grammatikundervisning mindre plads i undervisningen vil der opstå plads til mere variation i undervisningen, og det vil dermed tilgodese de store forskelle, der er på eleverne. Der var

dog i dette forløb indtænkt mange forskellige arbejdsformer, herunder individuel hurtigskrivning og bearbejdning af skrivning i forhold til både romanen og elevernes egen virkelighed, pararbejde i form af bl.a. mindmapping og walk'n'talk, gruppearbejde med bl.a. en enkelt præsentation på klassen pr. gruppe og arbejde med filmklip og diskussioner på klassen. Mere variation vil kræve mere tid til hver enkelt struktur, hvilket igen taler for ikke at praktisere integreret grammatikundervisning i så koncentreret form, som tilfældet var her.

En enkelt elev (R15) efterspørger mere undervisning på dansk. I modulet omhandlende modalverber foregik dele af undervisningen på dansk for at sikre, at eleverne forstod især grammatikken. Det sikrede ifølge klassens daglige underviser et mere passende niveau, end hvis undervisningen udelukkende var foregået på engelsk. Men eftersom L2 bl.a. tillæres gennem input og output og deraf udvikling af intersprog (Hedevang 2003: 13) på netop L2, vil det ikke være fordelagtigt at inddrage mere dansk i undervisningen. Det er muligt, at det ville have været *nemmere* for eleverne, hvis mere foregik på dansk, men det havde ikke øget deres læringsudbytte ift. det engelske sprog. Som det fremgår af læreplanen, skal det primære arbejdssprog i undervisningen være engelsk (Undervisningsministeriet 2017: 2); hvis eleverne generelt ikke kan følge med i den engelsksprogede undervisning, er niveauet i undervisningen for højt! Der var dog kun én elev, der nævner det i evalueringen, og derfor vurderes det, at det ikke var
et generelt problem.

Baseret på undersøgelsens resultater står det klart, at stilistisk analyse har stort potentiale som baggrund for integreret grammatikundervisning i 1.r. Den integrerede grammatikundervisning bør dog spredes udover et længere undervisningsforløb for at tilgodese flest mulige elever i den brede elevgruppe, der kendetegner 1.r. Forløbet hos 1.r. illustrerer, at en stilistisk analyse som præsenteret i afsnit 3.2 ikke er nødvendig som baggrund for et undervisningsforløb for, at elever kan opnå et udbytte af den integrerede grammatikundervisning; ved komplekse strukturer kan der med fordel arbejdes med udvalgte citater, der optimerer elevernes mulighed for noticing, og det er dermed ikke nødvendigt, at underviseren har analyseret større dele af den tekst, der danner baggrund for den integrerede grammatikundervisning. Samtidigt responderer eleverne positivt på stor variation, og dette må derfor indtænkes som et bærende element i undervisningen for at imødekomme elevernes behov. Behovet for variation bekræftes af Rasmussen & Fernández (2014), som understreger, "at vi mennesker er forskellige i vores måde at lære ikke mindst fremmedsprog på" (70), og variation må derfor indtænkes i tilrettelæggelsen af undervisningen. Endeligt må man som underviser være bevidst om, at enkelte elever under dette forløb ikke opnåede et minimum af færdigheder ift. de tre valgte grammatiske strukturer. Det vil derfor være nødvendigt at vende tilbage til strukturerne senere i et forsøg på at ramme eleverne på et tidspunkt, hvor disse strukturer kan betegnes som værende inden for deres nærmeste udviklingszone, hvilket igen taler for variation som et centralt element i den integrerede grammatikundervisning.

7. Integreret grammatikundervisning i den øvrige undervisning

Som beskrevet kombinerede undersøgelsens undervisningsforløb arbejdet med grammatikkens modalverber og narratologiens fortællerbegreb med udgangspunkt i *The Hunger Games*. Denne roman blev valgt, idet den rummer karakteristika af forskellige genrer og temaer som science fiction, dystopi, kærlighed, overvågning, håb mv. De mange genreelementer og temaer kvalificerer romanen til at indgå i forskellige undervisningsforløb i engelskundervisningen på tværs af stx og hf. Kernestoffet for engelsk hf-b, der i udstrakt grad overlapper kernestoffet for engelsk stx-a og b, består jf. uddrag af læreplanen af følgende:

1. "det engelske sprogs grammatik, ortografi og tegnsætning
2. udtale, ordforråd og idiomer […]

3. et genremæssigt varieret udvalg af primært nyere fiktive og ikke-fiktive tekster, herunder et skrevet værk
4. tekstanalytiske begreber og grundlæggende metoder til analyse af fiktive og ikke-fiktive tekster
5. væsentlige historiske, kulturelle og samfundsmæssige forhold i Storbritannien og USA" (Undervisningsministeriet 2017: 1-2 [egen nummerering]).

Af disse er pkt. 1, 4 og 5 centrale for denne undersøgelses undervisningsforløb med fokus på samspillet mellem grammatiske strukturer og fortælleren. Det vil være oplagt også at inddrage pkt. 5, eftersom *The Hunger Games* udspiller sig i fremtidens Nordamerika. Det samme gælder pkt. 2: især ordforrådstræning vil være oplagt i arbejdet med en roman, der rummer for eleverne nye ord, og dette arbejde vil komplementere arbejdet med tekstens grammatik godt (se Andersen & Henriksen (2014: 157-167) for forslag til ordforrådsøvelser).

Hvor denne undersøgelse primært inddrager *The Hunger Games* som en litterær tekst, vil det i et længere forløb være oplagt i højere grad også at beskæftige sig med filmatiseringen og inddrage ikke-litterære tekster ved fx at sammenligne styret i Panems kommunikationsformer med ikke-litterære tekster fra fx internationalt fremtrædende politikere i form af taler eller artikler. Samtidigt vil teksten også fungere godt i samspil med klassiske, dystopiske, amerikanske værker som Orwells *1984* (1949) og Bradburys *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), og romanen vil desuden også kunne indgå i tværfaglige forløb om fx overvågning. Netop tværfaglighed er et generelt krav til fagene på hf (Undervisningsministeriet 2018b: 3). Det vil med andre ord være muligt at anvende *The Hunger Games* i forskellige forløb, ligesom det også vil være muligt at arbejde med integreret grammatikundervisning på baggrund af andre tekster.

Med gymnasiereformen fra 2017 er værklæsning igen blevet obligatorisk for engelsk b på hf (Undervisningsministeriet 2018b: 11). Til trods for at *The Hunger Games* er 436 sider lang, kunne den være et oplagt bud i den forbindelse. Det ville skabe mulighed for at veksle mellem at bearbejde kapitlerne med en litterær, fx nykritisk, tilgang og en sproglig tilgang med fokus på stilistiske såvel som grammatiske strukturer. Arbejdet med den integrerede grammatikundervisning vil dermed blive en del af en helhed og med mulighed for differentiering i grammatikundervisningen, fx med fokus på hhv. sætningsfragmenter for de dygtige og kongruens for de svage elever.

Suzanne Collins, romanens forfatter, har en M.F.A. i "dramatic writing" og erfaring med at skrive tekster til brug i tv-produktioner; hun er med andre ord uddannet og erfaren i at fastholde tv-seeren, præcis som eleverne kender det fra tv-serier på diverse streamingtjenester. Denne dramatik er overført til romanen gennem cliffhangers, og som tidligere nævnt besidder romanen samtidigt et højt fortællertempo, der fastholder læserens fokus på plottet (Henthorne 2012: 29). Disse elementer vil sandsynligvis hjælpe til at fastholde romanens læsere.

Når grammatikundervisningen integreres i arbejdet med undervisningens øvrige tekster, er det værd at overveje, hvorvidt det som ved dette undervisningsforløb giver mening eller er nødvendigt at fortolke grammatikkens rolle i en tekst. I denne undersøgelses undervisningsforløb er fortolkning inddraget, idet eleverne skulle udlede en specifik strukturs betydning for karakteriseringen af tekstens fortæller. Ved at inddrage litterær tolkning sikres det, at taskarbejdet handler om betydning, og kommunikationen bliver dermed meningsfuld. Men fortolkning er ikke en nødvendighed for at integrere grammatikundervisningen i tekstarbejdet. En mere simpel – og mindre forberedelsestung – tilgang ville være at basere grammatikundervisningen på de grammatiske strukturer, en given tekst præsenterer, uden at inddrage disse i den litterære tolkning af teksten. Det vil ikke skabe samme kommunikationsbehov blandt eleverne, men det vil imødegå den traditionelle grammatikundervisnings centrale problem: at undervisningen fremstår fragmenteret og usammenhængende. I praksis vil fortolkningen evt. kunne inddrages ved senere brug af samme tekst, idet underviseren i så fald allerede kender tekstens karakterer og temaer fra sidst og dermed ikke har

en ligeså forberedelsestung opgave for sig, som hvis fortolkning inddrages ved første brug af teksten.

En sidste central pointe fra undersøgelsen er vigtigheden af variation. Eleverne præsenterede i undersøgelsen et bredt spektrum af forslag til forbedring af undervisningsforløbet – mere tid, flere forklaringer, mere opsamling, mere læsning, mere film, mere kreativitet, flere arbejdsformer etc., og samtidigt fremhævede de forskellige aspekter som de mest positive ved forløbet: *The Hunger Games*-rammen, den integrerede grammatikundervisning, implementeringen af ENGGRAM, undervisningens struktur, underviserens attitude og passion etc. Undersøgelsen bekræfter, at integreret grammatikundervisning kan kombineres med narratologisk tekstanalyse, men det må aldrig blive en sovepude; integreret grammatikundervisning må i stedet betragtes som et brugbart værktøj blandt engelskfagets samlede tilgange og metoder og som en tilgang, der er stort potentiale i at inddrage i den daglige undervisning i langt højere grad end tilfældet er i dag.

8. Integreret grammatikundervisning i et forskningsperspektiv

Vores undersøgelse demonstrerer, at stilistisk analyse kan danne baggrund for integreret grammatikundervisning og sandsynliggør, at integreret grammatikundervisning hos 1.r vil have en positiv effekt på elevernes L2-tilegnelse. Samme pointe slås fast i flere andre studier. I sin forskningssyntese konstaterer Fogal (2015), at *pedagogical stylistics*, hvilket omfatter brugen af stilistik i L2-undervisningen, kan have flere gavnlige formål. Blandt disse finder vi, at arbejdet med stilistik kan styrke elevernes forståelse for udvalgte strukturer på det pågældende fremmedsprog, og at implementering af stilistik i undervisningen kan gøre eleverne mere bevidste om deres egen L2-tilegnelse (2015: 54). Også Hall (2016: 240) argumenterer for, at stilistik i en pædagogisk praksis bl.a. kan påvirke en lørners L2-tilegnelse:

> Stylistics is of value for foreign language or second language learning programmes, where attention to language use should facilitate language acquisition… Stylistics can [also] be used to teach linguistics, an inductive way into a sometimes demanding subject area (involving 'bottom up' rather than 'top down' investigation) that teaches as much (or prompts as many questions) about 'language' as it does about 'literature'.

Stilistik har altså ifølge Hall potentiale til at styrke lørnerens L2-forståelse gennem specifikt fokus på sprog i arbejdet med tekster, idet stilistik fordrer undersøgelse af både sprog og litteratur. Samme pointe slås fast i afsnit 3 af denne artikel af Burke (2014), som anser stilistik som værende et bindeled mellem sprogvidenskab og litteraturvidenskab. Både Fogal (2015: 67) og Hall (2016: 249) pointerer dog også, at det kræver yderligere forskning i pædagogisk stilistik at fastslå dets fulde potentiale indenfor L2-læring og undervisning, og dette potentiale bør ifølge Hall undersøges i et samspil mellem forskere og undervisere.

Selvom undersøgelsen i indeværende artikel er smal, og dens resultater af samme grund ikke kan siges at være gældende for andre klasser end 1.r, underbygges potentialet i at inddrage stilistik i sprogundervisningen, herunder også grammatikundervisningen, af både Fogal og Hall. Integreret grammatikundervisning på baggrund af stilistisk analyse må derfor anses for et validt værktøj under fortsat udvikling, som har potentiale til at styrke L2-undervisningen i de danske gymnasier.

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The question of rhetorical agency in scientific communication: A case study

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Abstract: Though rhetorical scholars have argued that scientific inquiry does not lack human agency, our knowledge of how agency is enacted in scientific texts is blurred. Using abstracts from the *American Journal of Bioethics*, this paper argues and demonstrates how our understanding of rhetorical agency can be enhanced through the neglected theory of tagmemics. Intended as a heuristic, the paper argues that contributors to the *American Journal of Bioethics* are capable of constructing individual responsible agency that is in tandem with rhetorical choices they make within their community of consensus.

Keywords: rhetoric, agency, scientific communication, bioethics, tagmemics

1. Introduction

In a recent issue of *College Composition and Communication*, Cooper (2011) readdressed the problem of human agency in the culture of science. She explained agency as the process that enables human actors, such as scientists, to create meanings through acting into the world and changing their structure in response to the perceived consequences of their actions[1]. She urged human subjects to be responsible in their choices despite the challenges confronting us in a modernist/postmodernist society. Scholars of rhetoric of science will agree with Cooper (2011) that scientific texts, for instance, express the agency of their writers despite their denial of it. However, there has been little investigation of this issue from an empirical standpoint (see Reyman 2013). Drawing on bioethics, this paper explores how rhetorical agency is enacted in research abstracts of the *American Journal of Bioethics*. The paper is inspired by an earlier study examining dominant rhetorical strategies in medical informed consent forms approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (Coker 2013). Broadly construed, bioethics is the study of ethical dilemmas confronting medical practice and biomedical research (see Emanuel et al. 2008). Concerned with "physical and mental but not necessarily with social well-being" (Levine 2008: 213), biomedical research is premised on *informed consent*, the purpose of which is to ensure that research participants are properly informed of the risks involved in the study. A guarantee of minimal risk means that the biomedical research community seeks to erase personal biases and human agency in order to maintain the highest possible standards (see Emanuel et al. 2008). As I will demonstrate, this cultural practice of neutrality is, as has been argued, problematic because the abstracts I analyzed show a high proclivity to rhetorical agency.

There are six distinct parts to the remainder of this paper. In the first section, I start by situating the scholarship specifically within conversations about genre and rhetorical agency in the rhetoric of science. Next, I turn the spotlight on the theory of tagmemics, focusing on its potential significance to work in the rhetoric of science. The third section discusses the methodology employed in gathering data. In the fourth strand, I respond to Turnbull's (2004) call to "the rhetorical turn" by showing how tagmemics can offer a means to empirically study rhetorical agency in ways that can enhance the understanding of the relationship between genre and agency. The final part of the paper attempts to

[1] She argued that responsible rhetorical agency entails being open to and responsive to the meanings of concrete others, and thus seeing persuasion as an invitation to listeners as also always agents in persuasion. Drawing on neurophenomenology, she strongly insists that agency enables writers to recognize their rhetorical acts, whether conscious or non-conscious, as acts that make them who they are, that affect others, and that can contribute to the common good.

provide useful implications for future work and a heuristic in relation to the writing process.

2. Scientific genre and the notion of agency

Scientific genres foreground the relationship between disciplinary settings and individuals' rhetorical acts. Rhetorical acts shape what the scientific community believes to be true, and are constitutive of its authoritative knowledge. The effect is, nonetheless, dialectic as scientific knowledge equally shapes its rhetorical acts. Construed as such, genres perform a unique gatekeeping role in the sense that one cannot be a member of the community without an active display of the knowledge privileged in the field (for a more comprehensive discussion on scientific genre from a linguistic perspective, see Salager-Meyer 1994, 2000; Eggins 2004). Genres confer membership status on human agents (cf. Banks 2005), and they institutionalize and enable distribution of knowledge and power, often in ways that limit access to knowledge and power to a select group (Jack 2009). To put it crudely, scientific genres "help to reinforce and reproduce 'discourse regulations' which determine what *can* and *cannot* be discussed, as well as what *might* and *must* be discussed" (8 [emphasis mine]). For Jack (2009), genres, and for that matter the genres privileged in science, support institutional power and silence alternative perspectives. She draws attention to the ethnographic works of how women such as Tsuchiyama and Hankey were not considered "scientific" because their works lacked temporal distancing, indirect reporting, and a strict adherence to structure/chronology.

According to Jack (2009), these rhetorical choices effaced the agency of the women, and took away their identities. Their voices were not heard in the stories they themselves had created. In Jack's opinion, these women were virtually non-existent as they wrote away their own stories from the privileged positivist perspective of reality. Writing against a backdrop of the marginalization of women, Jack (2009) notes that even though there had been a shift in the role women played in the war, their position and participation in science, nonetheless, were relegated to the backstage. The language and culture of science in respect of the active engagement of female scientists was thus bellicose. But the real danger had to do with the fact that many female scientists had to adopt metistic strategies which, from where we stand, may not have appeared too self-gratifying because "those who succeeded during this period did so largely by internalizing dominant scientific values and discourses, not by challenging them" (Jack 2009: 3).

Jack (2009) argues that scientific genres are mainly constructed around four main themes: objectivity, technical rationality, gender neutrality, and expertise. For Jack (2009), it does not suffice to clean up micro-linguistic breaches of scientific texts by doing away with grammar, terminology, sexist, and metaphorical language insensitive to women. She adds that the real stakes lie in the way scientific genres are rhetorically presented especially in research articles, and indisputably form part of what Latour and Woolgar (1979) term "the cycle of credit" (Jack 2009: 8). She places much emphasis on the genre of scientific texts because they are a site of ideological contestation and power struggle. As she notes, "The concept of genre is useful because it helps us to understand how typified rhetorical actions reproduce ideologies and power relations in scientific culture" (Jack 2009: 6).

Scientific discourse is also kairotic. Much of the field's progress, scholars have observed, is marked by the recognition and articulation of exigencies to solve human and material problems. For example, drawing on a number of real-life cases especially the 1981 Japanese Fifth Generation Computer System Project program, Miller (1984) makes a strong case for the role of kairos in science and technology. According to her, the panic that greeted the West over China's industrial revolution and progress needs to be situated within the context of a certain kairos. She means to say that the Japanese chanced upon the opportune moment in the discourse of computing and information technology to launch the fifth generation of computers they themselves could not manage to bring to fruition. An important lesson to be drawn from her discussion is that kairos is the enabling force for determining what she calls "technological forecasting". It appears, according to Miller (1984), that those who have foresight of the place of kairos in the rhetoric of science may not be taken by events,

as they could properly interpret the ebb and flow of events in that discourse. She also notes that it is knowledge of kairos that enables us to see quite clearly the difference between the rhetoric of science and the rhetoric of technology. For her the rhetoric of science is devoted to understanding the knowledge-making claims of science while rhetoric of technology explains how this knowledge is put into practice. Rhetoric of technology, she continues, should be seen as distinct from the former because it accounts for how "the direct use of the universal knowledge created by science to solve specific practical problems" (Miller 1984: 92). Thus, she argues that rhetoric of science 'constrains', whereas rhetoric of technology 'enables.'

This is exactly the point that Kolodziejski (2014) makes. In this study of harms of hedging in scientific discourse, she argues that the very practices of scientific publishing help to create a scientifically acceptable text but also leave discursive gaps. The gaps, according to her, allow for what she calls "alternate interpretations" as scientific texts pass from technical to public contexts (Kolodziejski 2014: 165). This translation of the genre, she claims, results in insufficiently supported claims of scientific knowledge among public consumers of science. Her account, however, runs counter to Fahnestock's (1999) work. Using articles from two publications of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Fahnestock (1999) reveals the changes that inevitably occur in "information" as it passes from the scientific community to the public. She argues that accommodation of scientific texts also implies a recognition of change in audience and genre because "science accommodations are primarily epideictic", and that "celebrations of science, and shifts in wording between comparable statements in matched articles reveal changes made to conform to … popularized science" (Fahnestock 1999: 275). Unlike Kolodziesjki (2014), Fahenstock's (1999) view of accommodated scientific genres is positive because it emphasizes the uniqueness, rarity, originality of observations, and removes hedging, thus conferring a high ethos on the reported facts.

In all these discussions, one concern rhetoricians have expressed about science is that its genres place little emphasis on rhetorical agency. Although the notion of 'agency' is polysemous, and can refer to invention, strategies, authorship, institutional power, identity, subjectivity, practices, and subject positions, among others (e.g. Campbell 2005), it is often invoked to mean the capacity of individuals to assert their autonomy and make rational choices (Geisler 2004). In her 2004 report, Geisler (2014) called on fellow rhetoricians to move beyond discourses of who has access to agency in order to consider how agency is obtained. She argues that agency is a complex process by which a communicative act materializes out of a combination of individual will and social circumstances. Flynn et al. (2012) make a similar point, arguing that agency is capable of enacting resilience, in that "resilience resonates with concerns about feminist agency and rhetorical action in the face of material and social forces" (Flynn et al. 2012: 2). They conceive of resilience (and agency, for that matter) as action-oriented, and as a phenomenon that ought to be theorized as rhetorical, relational, and contextual. For one, agency is neither given nor static but is fluid and contingent on context.

Interestingly, two opposing traditions seem to have materialized on the subject. The first relates to the classical rhetorical approach which focuses on the rhetor's capacity to act, while the second takes a post-modernist perspective that claims that individual agency is socially constructed, illusory, and rhizomatic to the core. Work of the sort is a testament to the crisis of representation. But within the circumference of rhetoric, agency is often theorized as being constructed in texts and being able to result in action. According to Koerber (2006), we must account for rhetorical agency without reducing such agency either to the occupation of preexisting subject positions or to strategic, subject-centered language use that enables transcendence of such predefined positions. She explains:

Although we might feel compelled to choose between privileging individual agency or ideological force, my analysis reinforces the idea that the two are inextricably linked and adds to our understanding by taking a close look at the relationship between the rhetorical agency involved in acts of resistance and the ultimate outcomes of such acts (Koerber 2006: 88).

In studying what she calls the disciplinary rhetorics of breastfeeding, Koerber cites the tension

between how rhetorical agency is traditionally defined, and "what, in value, it ought to be" (2006: 94). She describes a disciplinary rhetoric as the discourse of a particular normative culture, such as medical discourse, where agency is assumed to lie in the rhetorical acts of the speaker or writer. Koerber (2006) argues, however, that such an assumption limits our understanding of rhetorical agency. Or as Villadsen (2008) points out,

> When we speak of rhetorical agency as something that can be possessed, we are prone to get trapped in the very mode of thinking that the concept was first conceived as an antidote for—namely, a relationship between agent and agency resembling a more traditional modern or less instrumental use of rhetoric (28).

Perspicuity thus needs a place in considering rhetorical agency in order to bar the possibility of theorizing it as an either/or. Rather, agency ought to be seen as an ongoing work of interruptions, identity, negotiations, and contestations straddling the subject/structure axes (Geisler 2004; Modesti 2008; Turnbull 2004). A growing body of works has also appropriated the concept to research in rhetorical institutionalism first pioneered by Mats Alvesson in 1993 (Green & Li 2011).

It is clear that agency signals the success of human agents. The symbolic role of language in the creation of agency cannot be disputed. Often agency manifests itself in people's use of linguistic resources such as questioning (Turnbull 2004), negotiation (Koerber 2006), choice and evaluation (Campbell 2005), and has been examined from a number of theoretical perspectives such as textual analysis, genre analysis, and activity theory (Luzon 2005; Cross & Oppenheim 2006). Agency can also be signaled by such discursive moves as discourse markers, grammatical limiters, and question tags. A critical study of rhetorical agency, then, can be conducted within the framework of tagmemics. This is what I turn to in the next section.

3. Tagmemics and its relevance in the rhetoric of science

Tagmemics is a theory developed jointly by Richard Young, Alton Becker, and Kenneth Pike in their seminal work *Rhetoric: Discovery and Change* (1970). Basically, linguistic in nature, the theory is primarily based on a trimodal principle which consists of contrast, range of variation, and distribution. Tagmemists such as Becker, Young and Vitanza insist that for any linguistic analysis to be meaningful, and hopefully exhaustive, all the three levels of inquiry ought to be attended to. They write, "The principle of trimodalism gives the analyst both a procedure for approaching new problems and a safeguard against a limited view of the data (quoted in Winterowd 1975: 133).

A later version of the theory, however, accounts for how sentential elements (such as those of a research abstract) combine to form what Becker and Young term "the universe of discourse" or briefly a text. In an earlier work, Vitanza (1979) argued that much work in tagmemics has ignored the analysis of the patterns of the expository paragraph—and we reckon that an abstract is essentially a paragraph (see also Odell 1978; Winterowd 1975). For Vitanza (1979), tagmemics should also deal with the usefulness of the three structural patterns developed by Pike and his colleagues, namely (a) Topic, Restriction, and Illustration (TRI); (b) Problem and Solution (PS); and Question and Answer (QA), taking into account points of permutation. Nonetheless, he strongly decried the idea of conceiving of these patterns "as a rule-governed or mechanical procedure for organizing information" (Vitanza 1975: 274). Although he did not explicitly mention the subject of agency, this, presumably, is what he was getting at by insisting that the model is not an algorithm, but instead a model that is responsive to "countless number of forms, depending on the rhetorical strategy a writer might choose…" (274). And so, for Vitanza (1979), as for other tagmemists, the writing process is a heuristic, a discovery process. This is not to say that the theory is above criticism (see Odell 1978).

For one, tagmemics offers scholars in rhetoric of science another pair of sharp lenses for seeing through the dense layers of contemporary scientific texts. The theory is intended to add to the

analytical toolkit proposed by Selzer (1993). It is also a responsive framework for studying rhetoric from an interdisciplinary perspective (cf. Littlefield and Johnson 2012). A tagmemically informed rhetoric of science, as Winterowd (1975) attests, is capable of standing somewhere between the rigorous theories of science and the almost intuitive theories of the humanities. What is most startling about tagmemics is its linguistic agility. If we still hold that one of the chief modes of persuasion is language, then we cannot be wrong to call back to life a theory that pays particular attention to both rhetoric and language. Recognition of tagmemics in ongoing work in rhetoric of science is recognition of the difficulty of separating rhetoric and language as distinct fields. More to the point, what is most fascinating about tagmemic theory is that it pays tribute to the Aristotelian conception of rhetoric in a very special way. The theory valorizes the idea of invention as one of its cardinal principles, and holds that the act of writing any type of genre, in our case a scientific text, can hardly be productive without recourse to rhetorical invention. Doing rhetoric of science through tagmemics is to stay true to the tenets upheld in classical rhetoric. Becker and Young affirm:

> We believe that the procedures the linguist uses in analyzing and describing a language are in some important ways like the procedures a writer uses in planning and writing a composition, and hence that *tagmemic theory can provide the basis for a new approach to rhetoric.* Tagmemic discovery procedures can provide a heuristic comparable to the Aristotelian system of invention; the tagmemic descriptive model can give us a vehicle for describing rhetorical patterns (cited in Winterowd 1975 [emphasis mine]).

In the context of research abstracts, tagmemic theory can enable us to map out how rhetorical agency is created in the abstracts composed by contributors to scientific journals. Unlike in contemporary genre analysis with its emphasis on identifying the prototypical structures of abstracts and their unique macro- and micro-moves, a tagmemic analysis of genres, on the other hand, is useful for understanding how agency could be observed in the ways writers rhetorically vary and present their arguments based on the rhetorical choices they make.

4. Data and methods

As noted early on in the introduction of this paper, the abstracts selected for analysis in this study were collected from the *American Journal of Bioethics*, one of the leading journals in the field of medical ethics. Though I initially decided to randomly sample a small number of 50 abstracts from the "Most Widely Read" and "Most Widely Cited" sections of the journal, I proceeded on the basis of saturation instead of representativeness. Useful in exploratory studies such as the present research, saturation enables a meticulous researcher to understand the point at which collecting new data becomes redundant (Bryant & Charmaz 2007). Its challenge, however, is that it can be arbitrarily determined. To overcome this methodological bias, I engaged two colleagues to critically examine my coding schemes and data in order to achieve a fair level of inter-coder reliability.

Abstracts in the field of bioethics were selected because of my formative interest in medical communication. As pointed out earlier in the background to this study, I have previously examined the persuasiveness of informed consent forms approved by the American Food and Drug Association. Here, I was interested in understanding how the rhetoric of the consent forms highlights such ethical concerns as participant autonomy, voluntariness, and minimal risks vis-à-vis subjects' decisions to participate in the trials (Coker 2013). To this end I sought to discover the kinds of rhetorical strategies that are employed in the consent forms and the strategies employed to enhance the ethical considerations in the forms. It was, thus, in the process of analyzing these concerns that I began to observe the role agency plays in the scientific communication of contributors to the *American Journal of Bioethics*.

5. Doing a tagmemic analysis: findings and discussion

It may be worth re-emphasizing that the present study is a mini data analysis. Its basic goal is to demonstrate the usefulness of tagmemic theory in the analysis of scientific texts. The discussion is by no means comprehensive but exploratory, rather, being essentially a heuristic for further research. Available evidence from the data points to an emerging generic structure displayed by the abstracts. The analysis shows that the majority of the abstracts had a Topicality-Restriction-Instantiation (TRI) structure. Most of them were written by the contributors, using Topicality-Restriction-Instantiation tagmemes. Vitanza (1979), however, cautions that the purpose of the theory is not to provide a grammar of how things ought to be, and that "there is no reason to limit the patterns to TRI/PS; there are other patterns in other forms of discourse as well as in exposition, which await their identification and our use" (274). Before showing how some contributors slightly deviated from the generic TRI structure, let us discuss how the structure was realized in selected abstracts of the *American Journal of Bioethics* (henceforth *AJOB*).

Analysis of the data set shows that the topicality of most *AJOB* abstracts is usually made up of single (and in some cases) sentences with a simple syntax. In this tagmeme, writers aim at providing a kind of context and background information to their research. Given that contributions to the *AJOB* fall under two major categories—theoretical/conceptual and empirical—the abstracts were also written in much the same way. In this case, topical (or topic) sentences were written to cover any one of them. But it appears that topical sentences for empirical studies were fairly simple and straight-forward compared to conceptual topical sentences. This may be due to the ample space devoted to a description of the methods involved in conducting the studies by individual contributors. In comparison, conceptual topical sentences were interestingly complex in their syntactic structures, and sometimes made up of more than one sentence. We may say that it is partly due to the difficulty of conveying the theoretical astuteness required by an author in expressing themselves on a thorny bioethical concern. The latter set, however, dominates in the journal. Below are examples of topical sentences spanning the conceptual/empirical divide:

Text 1

> The term body integrity identity disorder (BIID) describes the extremely rare phenomenon of persons who desire the amputation of one or more healthy limbs or who desire a paralysis (Müller 2009)[2].

This is an example of a conceptual topical sentence excerpted from Katz et al. (2003):

> Much attention has been focused in recent years on the ethical acceptability of physicians accepting gifts from drug companies. Professional guidelines recognize industry gifts as a conflict of interest and establish thresholds prohibiting the exchange of large gifts while expressing allowing for the exchange of small gifts such as pens, note pads, and coffee.

In respect of TRI structure, some abstracts will be reproduced verbatim below in order to provide evidence of the way the structure is realized. This means that their internal structures usually contained topicality, restriction, and instantiation. Below is the abstract of Franklin G. Miller & Luana Colloca (2009).

> Motivations for placebo treatments include complying with patient expectations and

[2] Bibliographical details are available in "List of sample texts".

> promoting a placebo effect. In this article, we focus on two key empirical questions that must be addressed in order to assess the ethical legitimacy of placebo treatments in clinical practice: 1) do placebo treatments have the potential to produce clinically significant benefit? and 2) can placebo treatments be effective in promoting a therapeutic placebo response without the use of deception? We examine evidence from clinical trials and laboratory experiments bearing on these two questions. The conclusion is reached that based on currently available evidence, it is premature to judge whether placebo treatments are ethically justifiable, with the possible exception of acupuncture for pain relief.

A careful analysis of the above abstract, using the TRI framework, reveals the following breakdown:

Text 2

Topicality: Motivations for placebo treatments include complying with patient expectations and promoting a placebo effect.

Restriction: In this article, we focus on two key empirical questions that must be addressed in order to assess the ethical legitimacy of placebo treatments in clinical practice: 1) do placebo treatments have the potential to produce clinically significant benefit? and 2) can placebo treatments be effective in promoting a therapeutic placebo response without the use of deception?

Instantiation: We examine evidence from clinical trials and laboratory experiments bearing on these two questions. The conclusion is reached that based on currently available evidence, it is premature to judge whether placebo treatments are ethically justifiable, with the possible exception of acupuncture for pain relief.

From the breakdown, we reckon that the topicality of a research abstract performs at least two main rhetorical functions. It provides a situational context within which the current article should be read and understood, and it announces the subject of the article. Restriction, on the other hand, delimits the scope subject, and also clearly states the objectives of the article. This is introduced by the phrase "In this article, we focus…" (Miller & Colloca 2009). When authors provide an instantiation of their major concerns, this amounts to providing evidence of the subject matter in much more detail, as in Miller and Colloca's (2009) abstract. It should be noted that the instantiation section, or what Swales (1990) calls the move, often specifies the article's results/findings, thoughts, or claims in a much more elaborate way. Further, when authors instantiate their concerns, they sometimes go a step further to show the implications of their findings or claims, or make suggestions to be followed by the researchers in their community of consensus. In Wolpe et al. (2005), this idea is made clearer:

Text 3

Topicality: Detection of deception and confirmation of truth telling with conventional polygraphy raised a host of ethical and ethical issues.

Restriction: Recently, newer methods of electromagnetic signals from the brain show promise in permitting the detection of deception or truth telling. Some are even being promoted as more accurate than conventional polygraphy. While the new technologies raise issues of personal privacy, acceptable forensic application, and other social issues, the focus of this paper is the technical limitation of the developing technology.

Instantiation: Those limitations include the measurement validity of the new technologies, which remains largely unknown. Another set of questions pertains to the psychological paradigms used to model or constrain the target behavior. Finally, there is little standardization in the field, and the vulnerability of the techniques to countermeasures is unknown. *Premature application of these technologies outside of research settings should be resisted, and the social conversation about the appropriate parameters of its civil, forensic, and security use should begin* [emphasis mine].

In Text 3, the simple sentence "Detection of deception and confirmation of truth telling with conventional polygraphy raised a host of ethical and ethical issues" announces the authors' concern. We know from this topicality that the abstract deals with ethical issues about detection of truth telling. This subject is narrowed down by its restrictive sentences as shown above, as Wolpe et al. (2005) focus on recent electromagnetic methods associated with the brain in detecting lies. It is also restrictive in the sense that it adds color to its argument on the ethics of lie detection. The arguments are then clarified in the instantiation section, and also presented with the authors' final claim on the polemic. The sentences in italics are my own attempt to show the rhetoric involved in instantiating.

The analysis thus far points to rhetorical choices some authors take in presenting their arguments to the communities they belong. It illustrates that contributors to the *AJOB* do not always stick to the TRI structure as though it were a matter of convention. Rather there were instances in the abstracts that substantially violate, but nonetheless do not deviate from, the core of the structure. Some abstracts were interesting in some ways. There were times when the structure of the abstracts exhibited a problem-solution (PS) structure rather than the usual TRI-structure, or exhibited a structure with the I-move containing a solution component (to be explained below). What these analytical results reflect is that writers make rhetorical choices contingent upon the rhetorical exigencies of their arguments. What is more, some abstracts did not contain one or more of the TRI elements. In some instances, some had a TR, RI, or TI structure. Meanwhile, three basic kinds of topicality in *AJOB* abstracts can be inferred from the data, viz. (a) problem-driven topicality; (b) solution-driven topicality; and (c) goal-driven topicality.

4.1 Problem-driven topicality

Research abstracts with problem-driven topicality, as the name suggests, are abstracts written to identify a research gap in the field (of bioethics). In most cases, the problems are clearly stated in one or two sentences from the very beginning of the abstract. The problem-driven topicality is qualitatively either empirical or conceptual in nature, although the latter proved dominant. Below is an example from Autumn Fiester (2012):

Text 4

Topicality: Between 15% and 60% of patients are considered "difficult" by treating physicians. Patient psychiatry pathology is the conventional explanation for why patients are deemed "difficult". But the prevalence of the problem suggests the possibility of a less pathological cause.

Restriction: I argue that the phenomenon can be better explained as a response to problematic interactions related to health care delivery. If there are grounds to reconceive the "difficult" patient as reacting to the perception of ill treatment, then there is an ethical obligation to address this perception of harm. Resolution of such conflicts currently lies with the provider and patient.

Instantiation: But the ethical stakes place these conflicts into the province of the ethics consult service. As the resource for addressing ethical dilemmas, there is a moral mandate to offer assistance in the resolution of these ethically charged conflicts that is no less pressing than more familiar terrain of clinical ethics consultation.

A second look at this abstract reveals that the problem identified in the topicality element is in fact the *topos* of the author's argument. It is not then surprising that in the instantiation column we are offered what could be perceived as the author's view of overcoming the challenge in the field—that is, how to deal with what he terms "difficult" psychiatric patients. He writes, "As the resource for addressing ethical dilemmas, there is a moral mandate to offer assistance in the resolution of these ethically charged conflicts that is no less pressing than more familiar terrain of clinical ethics consultation" (Fiester 2012: 2). Below is another example of a problem-driven topicality taken from Howard Brody (2011).

Text 5

Topicality As the debate over how to manage or discourage physicians' financialconflicts of interest with the drug and medical device industries has become heated, critics have questioned or dismissed the concept of "conflict of interest" itself.

Restriction: A satisfactory definition relates conflict of interest about maintaining social trust and distinguishes between breaches of ethical duty and temptations to breach duty. Numerous objections to such a definition have been offered, none of which prevails on further analysis.

Instantiation: Those concerned about conflicts of interest have contributed to misunderstandings, however, by failing to demonstrate when social arrangements leading to temptations to breach duties are in themselves morally blameworthy. Clarifying "conflict of interest" is important if we are eventually going to develop productive modes of engagement between medicine and for-profit industry that avoid the serious ethical pitfalls now in evidence.

4.2 Solution-driven topicality

Solution-driven topicality is one that straight away announces the intent of the writer to solve or resolve a thorny ethical quandary. Solution-driven topicality is unique in the sense that authors who employ this style in their abstracts usually maintain their position by offering a solution, to a large extent, throughout the remainder of the abstract. As in the case of problem-driven topicalities, solution-driven topicalities are also either empirical or conceptual in scope. Ravitsky and Wilfond (2006) is a good example:

Text 6

Topicality: Investigators and institutional review boards should integrate plans about the appropriate disclosure of individual genetic results when designing research studies. The ethical principles of beneficence, respect, reciprocity, and justice provide justification for routinely offering results to research participants.

Restriction: We propose a *result-evaluation approach* that assesses the expected information and the context of the study in order to decide whether results should be offered.

According to this approach, the analytic validity and the clinical utility of a specific result determine whether it should be offered routinely. Different results may therefore require decisions even within the same study. We argue that the threshold of clinical utility for disclosing a result in a research study should be lower than the threshold used for clinical use of the same result.

Instantiation: The personal meaning of a result provides additional criteria for evaluation. Finally, the context of the study allows for a more nuanced analysis by addressing the investigators' capabilities for appropriate disclosure, participants' alternative access to the result, and their relationship with the investigators. This analysis shows that the same result may require different decisions in different contexts.

In the two-sentence topicality of the abstract in Text 6, we see in clear terms how Ravitsky and Wilfond (2006) from the beginning of the abstract put forward what they call a result-evaluation approach. Their argument is conveyed by the deontic modal *should*, signaling a move to providing a solution to lack of disclosure of research results to volunteers and/or research participants at the end of a study. Observations reveal that this type of topicality was, however, very anecdotal in the data. It may be so because the topicality section of research abstracts largely opens up the argument; it rarely proposes ways of dealing with an argument right away. In the example below (Murphy 2012), the solution is provided just after the first sentence that announces the context of the study, although that sentence and what follows act in concert to function as the solution-driven topicality of the abstract:

Text 7

Topicality: Some commentators have criticized bioethics as failing to engage religion both as a matter of theory and practice. Bioethics should work toward understanding the influence of religion as it represents people's beliefs and practices, but bioethics should nevertheless observe limits in regard to religion as it does its normative work.

Restriction: Irreligious skepticism toward religious views about health, health care practices and institutions, and responses to biomedical innovations can yield important benefits to the field. Irreligious skepticism makes it possible to raise questions that otherwise go unasked and to protect against the overreach of religion.

Instantiation: In this sense, bioethics needs a vigorous irreligious outlook every bit as much as it needs descriptive understandings of religion.

4.3 Goal-driven topicality

The analysis also shows that the topicality of some abstracts is goal-driven. A goal-driven topical sentence clearly states the author's objective. It does little to provide a theoretical, historical, or situational context as a rationale for the relevance of the research or article. The rhetorical significance of this is that, given that knowledge is understood within discourse communities, authors who compose their abstracts using goal-driven topicality may be convinced that their readers would be able to make the necessary connections between given and new information. As belonging to a common community of consensus, such authors may not see the need to expend energy reiterating the obvious. Rather, they delve straight away into their works by announcing the rationale for writing their articles or studies. This is evidenced in Text 8:

Text 8

Topicality: This article examines arguments concerning enhancement of human persons recently presented by Michael Sandel (2004) 3. Sandel, M. 2004. The case against perfection. The Atlantic Monthly, 293 (3): 51-62.

Restriction: Sandel claims, the desire for mastery motivates enhancement and whether such a desire could be grounds for its impermissibility. Section three considers how Sandel draws the distinction between treatment and enhancement, and the relation to nature that he thinks each express. The fourth section examines Sandel's views about parent/child relations and also how enhancement would affect distributive justice and the duty to aid.

Instantiation: In conclusion, I briefly offer an alternative suggestion as to why enhancement may be troubling and consider what we could safely enhance.

We appreciate from the above abstract that Kamm (2001) makes her intention clear right from the very beginning of the abstract thus: "This article examines…". Interestingly, however, she is careful to weave into the abstract the locus of her argument as she provides the needed context to understand her essay. Her work appears as a corrective to the article by Michael Sandel on enhancement of human persons. Speaking from the perspective of rhetorical agency, there was nothing to stop her from ignoring the traditional genre-based demands of providing a niche as it is often said in Swales' (1990) genre analysis.

6. Conclusion

This work is by no means conclusive. While I concede that the analysis offered here is exclusively focused on topicality, readers are encouraged to consider exploring the tagmemes of restriction and instantiation. This limitation notwithstanding, it should not be difficult to see the theoretical and practical resonance of the essay. The article shows that a number of contributors to the *American Journal of Bioethics* are mindful of how they structure their thoughts in order to communicate with their audiences quite meaningfully (Swales 1990). In particular, they make pragmatic choices that are contingent upon key rhetorical exigencies. For example, in building their arguments, science writers of the *American Journal of Bioethics* were shown to employ one of three basic rhetorical strategies for announcing their topics. These are problem-driven; solution-driven; or goal-driven topicality. For the most part, when authors selected any of them, they strove to remain consistent in the presentation of their arguments. The focus on topicality alone from the theoretical framework of tagmemics thus shows that the composition of research abstracts is a rhetorical construction based on the individual writer's agency. At the very least, the analysis serves as a heuristic for composing research abstracts; it values the rational choices the writer makes rather than imposes structures of writing on them.

The discussions are also useful to ongoing work in rhetoric. As I have argued, this study offers empirical evidence to the claim that scientific texts are highly rhetorical. In heeding the call to the rhetorical turn, I suggest that the present work beckons scholars to carry on vigorous studies into the nature of rhetorical agency in scientific genres. The reason is that genres have been studied and presented from an almost calcified perspective, most privileged in genre analysis. At the dawn of the crisis of representation, we cannot but insist that it is perhaps the way to go. I conclude by recalling Cooper's (2011) words that responsible human agents, such as scientists whose abstracts I have studied, are capable of making responsible choices in the way they present knowledge in spite of the structures afforded in their communities of consensus.

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List of Sample Texts

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The strengths and weaknesses of simplicity

Review of Birger Andersen, *Basic English Grammar*, 3rd ed. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur, 2018, 228 pp., ISBN: 978-87-593-3204-7

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1. Introduction

Birger Andersen's *Basic English Grammar* (henceforth, BEG) is the third edition of a descriptive grammar of English marketed as a coursebook for business colleges, business schools, colleges of education, and universities, as well as a textbook for self-tutored readers.

2. Synopsis

BEG contains sixteen sections, most of which subsume a number of subsections. It is divided into three thematic parts: 'Part I: Understanding Sentence Analysis', 'Part II: The Major Word Classes', and 'Part III: Usage Problems'. Moreover, there is a rather short general introduction to the book as such which introduces the reader to the distinction between prescriptive and descriptive grammar. The remainder of the introduction is devoted to convincing the reader that grammatical analysis is useful. The reader is also introduced to the notion of Standard English, Andersen making clear that BEG focuses on British English.

2.1 Syntactic analysis

The first part of the book introduces the sentence analysis system used in the book; considerable space, however, is also devoted to discussing a range of syntactic structural types.

In section two, 'Sentence analysis', Andersen discusses the validity of the notional, the structural, and the formal definitions of sentences, pointing out that all three definitions are unproblematic. In this section, basic notions such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are introduced as are several categories pertaining to clauses and sentences.

The third section, 'Basic clause structure', addresses clause-level constituents and the role they play in clauses. Using the sentence *The bank has closed our deposit account*, Andersen introduces the movement, substitution, expansion, and subtraction tests as ways to identify constituents. Then the distinction between form and function is applied at constituent level. Building on this, Andersen introduces his sentence analysis system and lists the basic form and function labels.

Section four, 'Clause functions', introduces and discusses constituent functions, starting with the verb. In discussing how to identify verbs in clauses, Andersen rejects a number of formal-morphological and semantic approaches and proposes that "perhaps the best way to identify a verb is to look for words that belong to the word class verbs" (p. 42). The section further deals with subjects, direct objects, subject complements, object complements, indirect objects, and adverbials.

The following section, 'Phrase structure', covers phrase types and goes into detail with the structural make-up of phrase structures. As an example, the subsection on verb phrases discusses the distinction between auxiliaries and main verbs and covers auxiliary verb types in terms of functionality and auxiliary verb order constraints.

Section six, 'Subordinate clauses', goes into detail with subclauses (including dangling participles). After an overview of subclause types, which also introduces their form labels, the section moves on to covering finite and non-finite subordinate clauses in substantial detail.

The seventh and eighth sections are entitled 'Peripheral clauses' and 'Coordination' respectively and are both considerably short. The former covers tag-questions, parenthetic clauses and sentential relative clauses, while the latter consists mainly of examples of syntactic analysis of

different types of coordination.

2.2 Parts-of-speech

Having discussed syntactic clausal and phrasal syntactic structures in Part I, Andersen moves on to discussing parts-of-speech, or word classes, in the second part.

Sections nine, 'Nouns', ten, 'Verbs', eleven, 'Adjectives', and twelve, 'Adverbs', are similarly organized. Each section opens with a subsection discussing how to define the word class in question. This is followed by a short section on derivational morphology. Then follow subsections devoted to various categories associated with the word class. For instance, among the topics covered in the section on nouns are countability, reference, collective nouns, concrete nouns, abstract nouns and the genitive, while the section on verbs covers, among other things, auxiliary types, modality, tense and aspect.

The final section, 'Pronouns', deviates from the other sections in Part II: rather than first discussing definition strategies, then morphology and then different subclasses, a subsection is devoted to each pronoun type (personal, possessive, reflexive, demonstrative, reciprocal, interrogative, relative and indefinite pronouns), every subsection discussing morphological, syntactic, and functional features relevant to the pronoun type in question.

2.3 Usage

The third part covers areas of usage that are challenging to many learners of English – namely, subject-verb concord, constituent order configurations and punctuation.

Section fourteen, 'Subject-verb agreement', essentially lists types of subject that may cause problems in connection with subject-verb agreement, such as singular nouns ending in *-s* (including proper nouns and nouns that refer to fields of study, diseases, and games as well as nouns whose plural and singular forms are identical and end in *-s*). This section also addresses quantity phrases, collective nouns, coordinated nouns, pronouns, and anticipatory subjects.

The next section, 'Constituent order', covers the following phenomena which involve non-canonical word orders: front-focus, end-weight, full and partial inversion, adverbial and placement.

The final section, 'Punctuation', focuses on uses of commas, semi-colons, colons and dashes, listing ways in which they are supposed to be used, while steering away from addressing common incorrect ways in which they are used.

3. Evaluation and discussion

BEG evolves around syntactic analysis, and the descriptions of grammatical phenomena throughout the book are linked to the BEG-system of syntactic analysis. This generates a strong sense of coherence throughout the volume, and discussions of grammatical phenomena do not seem disconnected from the syntactic representations of these phenomena. This, of course, all hinges on whether or not one likes the BEG-system. Fortunately, the BEG-system is fairly traditional and not too idiosyncratic. It is based on syntactic functions and may, at least in the perspective of the Danish educational system, easily be framed as an expansion of the function-based sentence analysis system that students are familiar with.

3.1 Simplicity and target readership

BEG's major strength is the clear, succinct and very simple language in which it is written. No mystifying expressions are used, and the vocabulary is generally accessible. Thus, BEG is a particularly well-suited book for untutored readers. Readers who are simply looking to understand the basic structural features of English grammar should find it very useful. Likewise, people who have been admitted into an English degree program at university level who do not feel that their secondary level education has prepared them enough should find BEG useful in preparing them to be

able to follow first semester courses in English grammar at university level before their courses actually start.

BEG seems like a very light read, which makes the ground it actually covers all the more impressive. That said, another reason why the volume is so accessible is that, while it covers a lot of ground, it does not go into complex territory, and there are virtually no discussions of substance in it. I think it may be because BEG, while its blurb claims that the book is suitable for introductory courses at business colleges, colleges of education, business schools and universities, is primarily aimed at business college and business school students. I think BEG is at an appropriate level for business college, business school, and colleges of education, as students under programs at such institutions do not need a very deep and scientific understanding of English grammar.

I do not think, however, that BEG is substantial enough content-wise for students already enrolled in English degree programs at university level. The reason is that students of English at Danish universities need an understanding of English grammar that is deep and substantial enough that they can apply it, not just in their own language production, but also in linguistic analysis in connection with BA- and MA-electives as well as BA- and MA-projects and, of course, their future careers in which an extremely high level of proficiency in, and knowledge of, English grammar is typically expected.

Consider, for instance, Andersen's definition of a suffix as "a string of letters or a single letter put at the end of a word, often with the effect of turning that word from one word class into another" (p. 135). To someone who is only expected to know that a suffix is the same thing as an ending, this formulation is excellent: it is clear, succinct, and neatly gets the point across. Anyone reading this should now know that a suffix is an ending. However, to a reader who is required to have a deeper knowledge of suffixation and is expected to be able to apply it in analysis, description, and explanation, this definition is insufficient[1]. I would recommend BEG as preparatory reading, but I would not recommend it as a BA-level coursebook in an English degree program.

3.2 Tiers and trees

While BEG makes use of what Andersen calls *the* sentence tree (pp. 39, 62, 114) to show general hierarchical relations between constituents at different levels, the actual analyses in the volume are presented in a tier-based format. In tier-based analyses, constituent labels are rendered in a tier underneath the sentence itself. Here is an example of such an analysis from BEG (p. 55):

Fig. 1: A BEG-style tier-based analysis

The supplier	*has sent*	*the buyer*	*a new document*
S:NP	*V:VP*	*IO:NP*	*DO:NP*

Tier-based analysis is indeed very appealing in its simplicity. One advantage here is that it can easily be seen as an extension of the type of sentence analysis that Danish students should be used to from their primary and secondary education. Here, symbols representing constituent functions are inserted in a tier underneath the sentence itself. The sentence in Figure 1 would look like this:

[1] One might also argue that it is misleading to define suffixes in terms of letters, as this gives the impression that suffixation only occurs in writing.

Fig. 2: Symbol-based sentence analysis

The supplier	has sent	the buyer	a new document
X	○	□	Δ

The pedagogical appeal is clear: all you need to do is replace the symbols with letters and then add a specification of the form type, and you are good to go. This allows for a seamless transition from a system with which the students are familiar to the new system with which they must become familiar.

Despite its appeal, tier-based analyses only work well at main clause level. As soon as one has to take into account subordinate levels, tier-based analyses quickly become difficult to decipher. Consider for instance, BEG's analysis of *The documents having been completed, we will send them immediately* (p. 112) which goes down to subclause level:

Fig. 3: BEG-style analysis of sentence with one embedded clause

The documents having been completed,	*we*	*will send*	*them*	*immediately*
S:NP V:VP				
A:ACl (Cling)	*S:NP*	*V:VP*	*DO:NP*	*A:AjP*

We need to introduce a second tier now, already making the analysis a bit more difficult to follow. Now imagine being asked to analyze a sentence with several embedded clauses such as the following:

Fig. 4: BEG-style analysis of sentence with multiple embedded clauses

The documents having been completed, we will send them immediately so you can sign them before they are submitted														
												conj S:NP V:VP		
S:NP V:VP								*conj S:NP V:VP DO:NP A:ACl*						
A:ACl (Cling)			*S:NP V:VP DO:NP A:AjP*					A:ACl						

The analysis in Figure 4 is not easy to decipher. As you can imagine, tier-based analyses only become increasingly complicated when the number of embedded clauses increases.

I have not yet discussed how BEG handles sentences analyzed down to word level. If one wants to analyze down to word level, one must switch to a table layout like this analysis (p. 115):

Fig. 5: Word-level analysis in a table-formatted tier-based analysis

We	*regret*	*however*	*that*	*we*	*are*	*at*	*present*	*unable*	*to*	*deliver*	*the*	*model*	*you*	*ordered*
													H:Prn	Mv
													S:NP	V:VP
									IM	Mv	Det	H:N	DO:RelCl	
									V:VP		DO:NP			
						H:Pr	PC:NP	H:Adj	POM:ModCl					
			conj	S:NP	V: VP	A:PP		SC:AjP						
S:NP	V:VP	A:AvP	DO:NCl											

In my opinion, Figure 5 is well-nigh indecipherable. To me, this degree of complexity overshadows the pedagogical attraction of tier-based analyses at main clause level. Moreover, I find it problematic

that it is necessary to switch formats when analyzing down to word level. This strikes me as unpedagogical, because one must handle two different layout format which threatens the consistency that novice students of grammar desperately need.

It would have been preferable if BEG had stuck to one tier-based layout. However, I would argue that tree diagrams are much more suitable for syntactic analysis than tier-based analysis. Trees visualize the structure and relations of hypotaxis and parataxis relatively intuitively. For the sake of comparison, here are tree-based versions of the analyses seen in Figures 4 and 5; both analyses go down to word level[2]:

Fig. 6: Tree-based analysis of the sentence in Figure 4

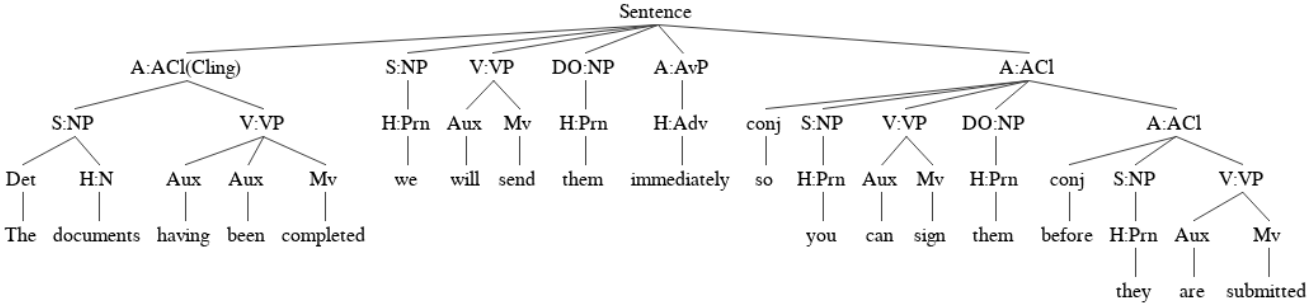
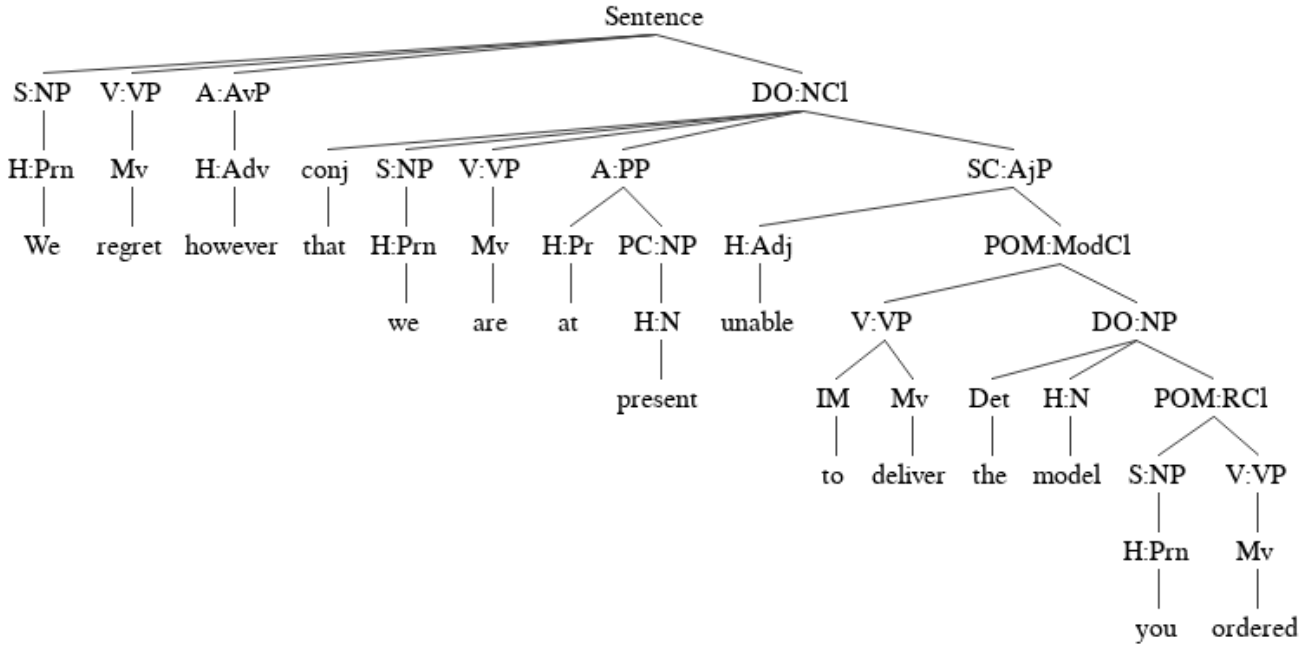


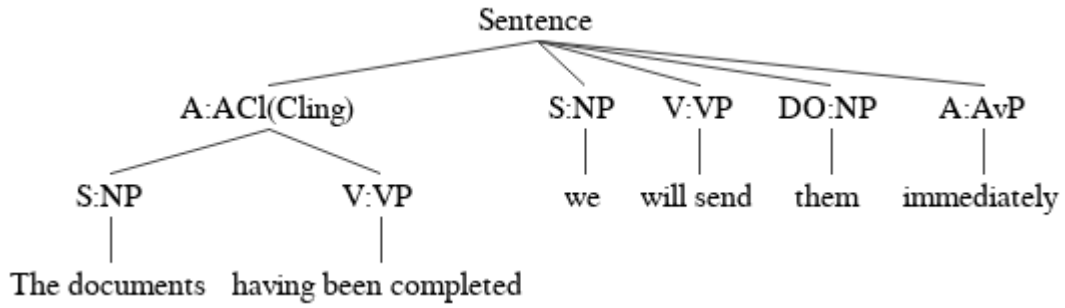
Fig. 7: Tree-based analysis of the sentence in Figure 5



Unlike the tier-formats in BEG, it is not necessary to switch to a different representational format if the analysis does not go all the way down to word level, as seen in the following figure:

[2] The trees were drawn using Eisenbach & Eisenbach (2015), which – with a little training – is very easy to use.

Fig. 8: Clause-level tree-based analysis of the sentence in Figure 5



Perhaps tree-based analyses using the BEG-system should look a bit different from the ones I have made, such that the analysis can come across even more precise. For instance, one might perhaps want to include 'MCl' for 'main clause' underneath the 'Sentence' node. Such details notwithstanding, the sentence analysis system itself is in no way compromised, and tree diagrams would arguably make BEG-style sentence analyses easier to decipher, giving a better feel for the hierarchical structure of a sentence.

Ultimately, I think the BEG-system would be better off had Andersen used tree diagrams or at least shown some examples of actual tree-based analysis. Granted, if all the analyses were rendered as tree diagrams, the book would be considerably longer and more expensive, which might not be desirable for the targeted readership. However, just one section added to the book illustrating, akin to what is seen in Hjulmand & Schwarz (2017) for example, how tree diagrams can be applied within the BEG-system would be extremely helpful, I think.

4. Concluding remarks

Accessible yet packed with more information than one might expect, the third edition BEG is very easy to read and conveys in a seamless manner what is admittedly complex information within a field that many students fear due to what Dienhart (2004: 13) calls a negative education. BEG neatly covers the bases of English grammar in the perspective of English syntax. This is its major strength, but it is also its major weakness. How can that make sense? Well, whether it is a strength or a weakness depends on who the reader is. BEG is unsuitable for students of English at university level, as it lacks the substance and academic stimulation that this readership requires. However, BEG is very suitable for students at business schools, business colleges, and colleges of education who take introductory courses in English grammar, as it lives up to the required level at such institutions and thus provides students within such programs with suitable insights into English grammar and syntax. The third edition of Birger Andersen's *Basic English Grammar* is warmly recommended to teachers and students within business English degree programs at business schools and business colleges as well as in educational degree programs that prepare graduates for teaching English at the level of primary Education. Lastly, untutored readers should find the book very useful and insightful as well.

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