Praxeological dialogues from within, handling tensions in dialogical praxis-oriented Action Research

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Abstract: This paper addresses the need to develop concepts and terminology more and better adjusted to knowledge production with and from within practices, and help handle tensions between research and practice in Dialogical Praxis- oriented Action Research. Building on Olav Eikeland's ideas of dialogues towards Praxis-based Theoria, supported by Hanna Arendt's perspectives on action, and based on experiences from a concrete project, the question explored, is whether Jakob Meløe's praxeological perspectives can give us concepts and terminology which can help us handle this challenge. After describing the ideas and methodology of the praxeology, the author discusses its potential impact; To support dialogical deliberative learning processes, acknowledging knowledge as an open-ended question of becoming, and praxis as a form of relational and ethical kind of knowing, empowering the subjects to create new beginnings, engaged in the never-ending process of change.

Keywords: Dialogical Action Research; Tensions; Praxis; Jakob Meløe; Praxeology.

Diálogos praxeológicos desde adentro: gestión de las tensiones en la investigación-acción dialógica orientada a la praxis

Resumen: Este artículo aborda la necesidad de desarrollar conceptos y terminología más y mejor ajustados a la producción de conocimiento con y desde dentro de las prácticas, y ayuda a gestionar tensiones entre la investigación y la práctica en la Investigación Acción orientada a la Praxis Dialógica. Construye sobre las ideas de Olav Eikeland en torno a diálogos orientados a la "Theoria" basada en la Praxis, apoyada por las perspectivas de Hanna Arendt sobre la acción, y sustentadas en experiencias de un proyecto concreto, la pregunta explorada es si las perspectivas praxeológicas de Jakob Meløe pueden darnos conceptos y terminología que puede ayudarnos a enfrentar este reto. Después de describir las ideas y la metodología de la praxeología, la autora discute su potencial impacto; Apoyar procesos de aprendizaje dialógicos deliberativos, reconocer el conocimiento como una pregunta abierta que esta continuamente convirtiéndose, y la praxis como una forma de conocimiento en la acción relacional y ética, empoderando a los sujetos para crear nuevos comienzos, comprometidos en el proceso de cambio sin final.

Palabras clave: Investigación Acción Dialógica; Tensiones, Praxis, Jakob Meløe, Praxeología.

Addressing challenges 'with' and 'within'

After 15 years as a social work practitioner, I started my journey to become a researcher. Now, after 15 years as an Action Researcher, where I have been navigating between practice and research, aiming to understand and develop practice from within, I am filled with experiences of various tensions. This paper addresses the need to develop concepts and terminology more and better adjusted to knowledge production from within practices, and help handle tensions between research and practice in Action Research. "Within" challenges the traditional roles between researchers and practitioners and brings tensions to the surface. As dealing with power and change, tensions are a natural part of Action Research. Several studies describe various tensions, for example tensions that arise in the interplay between top-down and bottom-up dynamics, evidence based and reflective practice, individual autonomy and community practices, and tensions between different actors, dual purposes and expectations (Phillips et al, 2018; De Finney & Ball, 2018; Aas, 2014).

But what tensions are emerging, depends on ontological, epistemological and methodological viewpoints in play. In this paper, I am concerned with offering concepts and a theoretical framework that is particularly suitable for supporting the process and goal of Dialogical Praxis-oriented Action Research (DPAR). Building on Olav Eikeland's (2007) ideas of dialogues towards Praxis-based Theoria, supported with Hanna Arendt's (1958) perspectives on action, the outcome of dialogue become clear; It is directed towards praxis as phronetic and ethical action, deliberating the different subjects capacity to exercise human freedom and create new beginnings in dialogue with others. Then the tensions between subjectivity and plurality, becomes crucial.

In a DPAR project where I collaborated with practitioners and young people, I experienced tensions related to language, the goal of exploration, power and habituated expectations. It also became clear how we all were influenced of the modern society's ideas of scientific research. I found that the Norwegian philosopher, Jakob Meløe's praxeology helped me to explore practice both *with* my collaborative partners, and from *within* practice. His theory can be understood as a kind of ethnographic practice–philosophic framework. It has many similarities with Yrjö Engström's (2001) cultural-historical activity theory, aimed at helping those involved in research to explore each other's views in agentive collaborative action, through critical dialoguing that recognises and recovers each participant's place and voice in the world. Common for them both, is that they offer perspectives and questions for examining practice from within, that they seek understanding of situated, historical and contextual practice, and that they are concerned with socio-materiality. In this paper I will explore whether Meløe's praxeological perspectives can give us concepts and terminology which can function as a frame for DPAR, with and within practices, and if such an approach can be helpful, handling tensions between research and practice.

After focusing the dialogical tradition of Action Research, I will explore some of the tensions which come to the surface in such collaboration, as I try to answer *why* there is a need to develop concepts and terminology more and better adjusted to knowledge production from within. Doing this it becomes clear that both the ontological question of what counts as knowledge and the epistemological question of how we get knowledge about the world comes to play. From here I go into the idea of praxis and practical knowledge, guided by Eikeland's idea of the Aristotelian concepts of Praxis-based Theoria, describing DPAR as research with

and within. Altogether, this helps me to address the needs, of what Meløe's praxeology should contribute to answering. Then I will describe Meløes's praxeology, after which I will discuss his contribution, whether his perspectives fit as a framework for DPAR with and within, and if it helps us to handle tensions between practice and research.

The Dialogical tradition of Action Research

Action Research is development-oriented research in a field of practice and is carried out with and not about or on the subject area (Nielsen, 2004). It represents a family of research approaches, builds on different ontological and epistemological positions, and at the same time with some commonalities, featuring (1) action, which refers to creating and implementing new practices, (2) research, which refers to contributing to new theory and also to generating and testing new knowledge; and (3) participation, which is about placing a strong value on democracy and control over one's life situations (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). By nature it is context-bound where both practice and knowledge are developed through a cyclical process of concrete experiments and learning (Hiim, 2020).

This paper explores Action Research within a dialogical tradition, where the main focus is about organising meeting places for dialogue and power as a free discourse; collective reflection and broad participation, aimed at the organisation's goals and tasks, are in focus (Eikeland, 2012a). Within this tradition, the researcher does not "speak science" or otherwise attempt to teach scientific theory to the real-world practitioner, but instead attempts to speak the language of the practitioner and accepts her as the expert on his organisation and its problems (Mårtensson & Lee, 2004). The researcher's main responsibility is to facilitate dialogues, making conditions for everyone to be able to express themselves and be heard, and for collective reflection, learning, and development (Eikeland, 2012b). The idea is that change emerges from the collaborative dialogue between different but at the same time equal participants. When we change the way we think, we can also create change in our environment. This way, knowledge can be understood as that which makes possible or inhibits change (Halås, 2021).

Compared with functionalist approaches to action research, processes in dialogical approaches become more open toward multiple pathways, more explorative, and more complex than merely "solving problems" and giving "the right answers" (Hersted et al., 2020). Also within this tradition researchers ground their work differently, for example leaning toward phenomenological or social constructionist frameworks of understanding. As I see it, the Aristotelian concept of praxis transcends this, allowing us to explore practice at one side as something old; as experienced and habituated, and at the same time as something new, that emerges and in some way is created or constructed when we reflect upon intentions and future opportunities. It is both about to grasp practice as being and becoming, in a movement from the past to the future.

Bakhtin (1984) has given us perspectives for understanding the dialogue as a part of the human condition, the basis for human development and understanding in the world, and as an idea of exploring and developing understanding by allowing different voices to speak. He was interested in the situated socio-political nature of language and people and the spatially and

temporally situated nature of the word. He believed in the unfinalisability of the human being, emphasising the open-endedness of dialogue and inquisitiveness about the power of language. For him, our being in the world could not be expressed in one truth, because they are future oriented, situated anticipations, whose function is to enable individual people to coordinate their actions in achieving socially shared outcomes.

This leads us to dialogues empowering potential, and the idea of dialogues as a deliberating process, for emancipating the participants from the often unseen constraints of assumptions, habit, precedent, coercion and ideology (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Here Hannah Arendt's (1958) thoughts of democratic subjectivity, can help us illuminate the goal of dialogical action research. Based on the Aristotelian distinctions between poiesis and praxis, Arendt described three forms of human action; labour, work and action. Building on this, David Coulter (2002) discuss what counts as action in Action Research, and shows how different conceptions of action involve different relationships with theory and knowledge. *Poiesis* is a kind of action that is connected to labour and work, directed at accomplishing a predetermined end, while *praxis* is a kind of ethical action, that cannot be determined in advance, but must be discovered and acted by the subject in particular contexts and situations. Hanna Arendt described subjectivity as the freedom to create new beginnings, where the outcome of dialogue in this kind of Action Research, is directed at acknowledging and deliberating the different subjects capacity to exercise human freedom in democratic dialogue with others (ibid). Then you need to find the balance between subjectivity and plurality. This leads us right into the tensions of dialogical Action Research. What could these tensions look like?

Addressing and handling tensions

In my Ph.d project, I collaborated with young people, participating in a rehabilitation program, and their professional helpers, doing action research (Halås, 2012). We established a learning community, where we worked together for two years, aiming to both develop the local practice and at the same time develop some kind of general knowledge about effective approaches facing young people in vulnerable life situations. Through the project the learning community invited also other stakeholders to dialogues and the experiences was disseminated in a collaborative written report.

Tensions quickly came to the surface. The dissertation highlights and discusses dilemmas and tensions related to (a) the language of knowledge, where a tension became visible between the researcher's academic written language on the one hand, and my collaborative partner's[1] everyday oral and partly bodily and action-based expressions, on the other hand. Another tension could be linked to (b) the goal of the collaboration, where tensions and dilemmas emerged between the goal of empowerment and the desire for the collaboration to contribute to raising awareness, learning, and strengthening the participants' capacity to act on the one hand and the goal of contributing to the collective development of more general knowledge on the other hand (Halås, 2021). This further led to a description of tensions

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1   There are differences between the positions and prerequisites of the professionals and the young people, which I
     choose not to address in this paper.

related to (c) power-relations, both in terms of the power relationship between the three partners (young people, professionals, and the researcher) and relation to external actors, both in terms of the local community, municipal actors and higher authorities and structures. The dissertation shows how power, based on earlier experiences and habituated forms of collaboration, was expressed in the partner's both oral and silenced expectations of each other. This could be related to both the researcher's and the participants' habitual gaze and preconceptions, which both the young people, professionals, and researcher, in the beginning, was blind to, but which came to the surface in the collaboration. In the beginning, my collaborative partners (both the youngsters and the professionals) had so great a respect for me, that they did not challenge my sayings or doings. And for me as a researcher, it became clear that I had ambivalent expectations of my role.

At the same time as I, informed by the idea of practical knowledge, expressed a goal to do research from within and to contribute to liberating and equal dialogues, I after some time became aware of my experience of having a "ghost of evidence" sitting on my shoulder:

> The ghost asks me if this is research? …(…)… The ghost says that it is not good enough, without heavy theoretical discussions related to the empirical data. In other words, it casts doubt on the durability of my hermeneutic and phenomenologically oriented approach, and of the theories related to participatory research, on which I have based my work. (Halås, 2012, p 175, my translation).

This might be connected to what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe as the holy positivist trinity: Generalisation, reliability, and validity, referring to the logic of the natural sciences, giving an idea of evidential scientific knowledge as causal, measurable, neutral, cognitive, universal, generalisable, timeless and replicable. What struck me, was that this experience of the ghost of evidence shows how this claim of evidence not only came from outside but was also embodied in my thinking and acting, informing my reactions to situations. Moreover, it was fighting inside me against this paradigm of practical knowledge that introduced me to a different form of validation of knowledge, focusing on the unique, situated, contextual, embodied, and time-bound, a perspective more occupied with the process of knowing than knowledge as a transferable product.

All this could be used as an argument that the researcher might not only need an understanding and willingness to turn to practice from within, but also that there is a need to find approaches and language helping her to address and handle tensions related to language, the goal of exploration, power and habituated expectations. Could it be possible to find approaches help restraining my inner ghost of evidence? To find a language that could help gaining a natural attitude of everyday life (Mårtensson & Lee, 2004), and bring words back from their metaphysics to their everyday use (Wittgenstein, 1953). But before I go into that question, there is a need to look further into the ontological question about our understandings of what kind of knowledge we seek to develop, and the epistemological question about how we believe we can get this kind of knowledge of the world.

Praxis-based Theoria

A professional is characterized by the fact that she must use judgment to find out how abstract knowledge, such as psychology, sociology, and law, can be used and expressed in specific

situations. In the face of new people, situations, and challenges, the professional must sense, interpret and create what we can call practical syntheses (Grimen, 2008). In this way, knowledge is transformed into practical knowledge that is expressed in the professional's action, as knowledge in action and knowledgeable doing (Gherardi, 2018). A skilled practitioner is consciously or unconsciously able to meet and respond to the challenges she faces in specific situations. The question of what is right or good practice, and what is valid knowledge, is thus linked to the situation. The concept of practice does not only connect "knowing" with "doing", but also become an array between saying, doing and relating (Kemmis, 2012) and seeing (Gherardi, 2018). Practice then becomes the container of tacit and elusive knowledges, sensible and embodied ways of knowing. Where "seeing" is taken as the bodily activity representative for all sensible knowing, like hearing, tasting and touching (ibid). In this way we could talk about a process of knowing, where knowing is an enactment and accomplishment, rather than a static property. Professional knowledge is in permanent flux, always practiced for another first time (ibid), where the practitioner masters and puts together different fields, forms and sources of knowledge (Halås, 2018), and acts upon this.

Aristotle's perspectives help us further to see how different forms of activities and knowledge, are woven into each other (Aristotle & Rabbås, 1999). Episteme is often explained to be science-based knowledge, which is knowledge of the immutable and the regular. This is often linked to what can be proven and tried. Anyone who possesses such knowledge knows why and how, but does not necessarily need to be able to act based on this knowledge. Techne is described as skills knowledge, and it is the knowledge that shows itself in the form of practical skills. This means that you can trade, produce or create something, but do not necessarily know why you should do it. Phronesis is the knowledge that implies that one has insight and understanding regarding what one does and why one does it, and when one should do what. She who has phronesis can act wisely based on her understandings. This means integrating the knowledge into active action.

The Norwegian working life researcher and philosopher Olav Eikeland (2008, 2015, 2018) offers a deepening understanding of Aristoteles ideas that can help us to further clarify. He understands *'praxis'* as practitioner knowledge, divided among those who are within and part of the community of practice as knowledge subjects. Praxis depends on the existence of a relationship between colleagues who share common standards for how a business should be run professionally (Eikeland, 2018). He relates this to the concept of concord, sharing common understandings: constituted through lógos or reasoned speech, not only in face-to-face relations, but within large linguistic and conceptual communities (Eikeland, 2015).

He makes a distinction between Theoresis and Theoria. As earlier mentioned, the concept of episteme often is understood as knowledge of the immutable. Eikeland interprets the gnoseology of Aristoteles in another way. He finds that there are two kinds of episteme: Episteme[2]) connected to Theoresis, the common forms outside the subject, and episteme[1]) connected to Theoria, as insight, where knower and knowledge is one, or coincide. He refers to how certain aspects of human existence can be described based on scientific ideas that relate to more or less stable and unchanging objects and aspects of existence, which are expressed in Theoresis. However, man is more than nature, he is also culture, which is changeable, which shapes and is shaped by humans, and in constant motion. Here, praxis is a form of knowledge that relates to man as a meaning-creating being.

In the same way that Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) describe professional development from beginner to expert, Eikeland describes the practice as a path of initiation or perfection from

beginner to virtuoso. He argues that the Aristotelian path of perfection or practice is twofold in Praxis[2]) which is about adapting the practice in concrete action situations, and which is guided by deliberation or phronesis in ethics and politics, to choose correctly and adapt a concrete action to goals and circumstances best possible way and Praxis[1]), which he describes as the practice and development of general competence and insight, which potentially can lead to what we can call Praxis-based Theoria.

Phronesis helps us to consider what steps and means are needed to reach the goals in a specific case. It is about finding a way, procedure or method for the individual case. Our judgment helps us to see and distinguish what is similar and different in situations and assess what kind of goals and values should be realised, and how knowledge should be applied. It is about balancing different considerations and acting in a morally and ethically good way. And where choices must be made that seem reasonable based on the situation one is in. To assess what is generally good and what is good in each case, and ethics and moral judgments will therefore always be the focal point for the assessments made by the professional.

Although the professional must use her judgment, the question of what constitutes good practice is not an individual matter. What are good ways to handle situations are learned within the professional community and are practiced, as the professional gains experience of what works or not. Working to realise these internal values, therefore, does not become an individual project, but something that takes place within socially determined practices. Every practice has its tradition and history, and whoever enters into it must submit to the criteria for what counts as good practice within this practice to be able to develop them further. Different communities of practice that are bound together by something, and that have some characteristics that are more or less stable that make us recognise them. Eikeland describes how the form of activities is emerging "…*through practice and habituation, as habitus, habit, experience, ability, skill and finally 'virtue'- skill or expertise"* (Eikeland, 2018).

Praxis can be understood as the practical synthesis the professional creates in the form of a connection between the theoretical, practical, and moral dimensions. Phronesis then becomes the form of thinking that governs practice, which leads to moral action. Through this, Praxis becomes the basis for articulated Praxis-based Theoria, which we aim to develop when we seek to grasp practitioners living tacit and habituated knowledge, as articulated and justified praxis.

This addresses a need for researchers to enter into a dialogue with others as practitioner colleagues in learning and research, where the ethics of dialogue, is about supporting and acknowledging the deliberative and empowering process towards the human freedom to act, helping each other learn and develop. This brings me further to the question of how such a form of knowledge can be researched and articulated.

Action Research with and within

If we follow Eikeland's (2009) thoughts, both the creation of the practical syntheses and the validation of knowledge in action will take place within a community of practice. To learn and acquire such a form of knowledge requires participation and belonging to a living community of practice. By learning from how experienced professionals practice and interpret the ap-

plication of the various forms of knowledge, the professional can acquire both the *seeing, saying, doing and relating* of good practice. In this way, within a practice (hopefully) one gradually gets better all the way. Practice is both historically and culturally rooted in the traditions of the subject and includes both the articulated and the silent and more implicit aspects of practice. The different ways of knowing things within a practice are thus hidden both in language and in different ways of doing things, and are embedded in historical, social, institutional, economic, and cultural forms.

The professional habit becomes a form of patterned experience serves as a storehouse of action, which has an impact on how those who enter into this practice will face future situations. Habits become unarticulated theories, which can have great power, and need to be examined and validated. For Eikeland (2015), such a validation of practice takes place within the community of practice, when experienced professionals self-reflexively, critically, and dialogically analyse the structures of experience embedded in the patterns that lie in their way of doing things.

If the goal is to develop Praxis-based Theoria there is a need for me as a researcher to enter into collaborative learning processes, developing knowledge with my collaborative partners and within practice. Building on Wittgenstein's philosophy, John Shotter (2001, 2005) gives us a deeper understanding of the concept of within. He appeals to the "…need to re-discover, from within our ordinary, daily, spontaneous activities, in which we talk of 'seeing' and 'speaking, some of the rich, living, responsively related activities, from out of which such functions – as we now perceive and talk of them as being – have emerged" (Shotter, 2001, p. 345). It is about 'participative thinking', as 'seeing the face', 'hearing the voice' and grasping the 'social poetics' of the social situation (ibid).

In such dialogues the practitioners become co-researchers and the researchers becomes co-practitioners, together involved in co-creating an "action-guiding sense" (Shotter, 2005). In line with this, I position myself as researcher as an organisational change agent, contributing to the collaborative process by facilitating dialogue and emphasising learning and problem solving processes, contributing to the promotion of different voices and perspectives, and to temporally verbalisation of living knowledge (ibid; Halås, 2021).

Eikeland has helped me understand what kind of knowledge, and how learning dialogues between equals are in line with such an approach. He also shows how the dialogues must engage in adapting the practice in concrete action situations, but he does not give me a clear answer on a more concrete methodological level to how to approach this in a way that helps me to both address and handle some of the tensions in such collaboration from within. Then what kind of theoretical perspectives and concepts can support "with" and "within" – dialogues, participative thinking and processes of democratic subjectivity towards Praxis-based Theoria? And what kind of language can help the researcher to engage in the practitioner's natural attitude, seeing the face and hearing the voice of social situations?

Meløe's praxeology as theoretical framework

When I, as an experienced practitioner, was introduced to the philosophy of Jakob Meløe, it felt like entering a room of recognition, where practitioners were not only allowed, but also

encouraged, to use their everyday language to name their world. It was a kind of both existential and empowering feeling. In a new paper I present a syntheses of Meløe's ideas (Halås, in press 2022). In this paper, I build further on these explorations[2]. Meløe himself called his thoughts as a Praxeology, where the first part of the word, refers to praxis, as we have seen is connected to the idea of "doing/ action". The second part refers both to "word/ language" in combination with "logic", giving associations of how something seems reasonable. A praxeology then becomes a theory of practice, a unity of ideas that offers a way to see and understand both the coherence, patterns and logic of a practice.

Meløe's explorations rest on Wittgenstein's concept of a form of life, Heidegger's concept of a world, and Marx's concept of a mode of production (Meløe, 1997a). For Meløe, the relations between the world and concepts are central. Building on Wittgenstein's idea of the language game, he wants to show how our words are tightened up with our practical activities. By referring to Wittgenstein he replaces ideas of building theoretical foundations with the concept of an activity/ practice/ form of life, and he replaces the concept of "resting on'"with the concept of "*being situated within"* (ibid).

Further he builds on Heidegger's concept of the world, which implicates accepting that the agent is already situated in a world together with her surroundings. When you have completed a description of a thing, you will have described a great deal of the forms of life or the world; When we point at something, we point from *within* that world at something in that world. There is an implication from that to what is the proper language in which to speak about that world: it is the language that is spoken within that world. In that language, there are no descriptions of a man or a woman at work which are not ripe with implications about the world within which that man or woman is working. To understand such a description is to understand that world (ibid). The heritage of Marx lays in the recognition that "…the life of work, the working life of men and women, is at the kernel of any form of life. There is where a description of a form of life should begin" (ibid, p. 442). Meløe rests his philosophy on all of these three, as he finds that all three concepts will become richer by being understood in the light of each other.

He claims that understanding a word is not a question of describing meanings of the world, but about knowing the meaning of a word. With this, he means that a word refers to the practice and that this practice happens within a world. The idea is that the properties of an object appear to us through our work with it, where what appears to us means that we receive concepts for it, concepts to look at, concepts to act on and concepts to work and think with. He claims that we do not have a better understanding of what is said, not by the word nor its meanings, than our comprehension of the interrelated practical activities, and that we cannot understand a remark without understanding the explanation that it gives:

Understanding explanations is no part of what I learn when I learn to speak. But in learning about the affairs of the world I also learn to explain and to understand the explanations that others give, as much of it, that is, as I have learned about the affairs of the world. (Meløe, 2005, p. 114)

Meløe has especially been occupied with studying both fishermen's and Sami practices in Northern Norway. His concern is about our ability to see what is in a situation, and the connections between our concepts of the world and the world and the connections between seeing, understanding, and doing. He shows how our ability to see and understand what is happening in a specific practice is developed through doing, and how we learn to do by doing,

2   The presentation of Meløe's praxeology, rests greatly on this paper.

and think about what we have done (Meløe, 2017). Furthermore, he shows how conceptual communities rest on a practical understanding of what is happening within a practice community. Meløe (1979a; 1989) makes our ability to see and to understand a matter of knowledge. We have a *skilled eye* when we see what is to be seen: "I see what is to see when I see the affair with the concepts that are built into the affair itself" (Meløe 1979a, p. 23, my translation). On the other hand, there at two ways of not seeing what there is to see: Firstly, I have an *incompetent eye* when I cannot see what is to be seen, because I am not experienced enough and lack the concepts or techniques, etc., that are built into the affair I consider, and I know it (Meløe 1979a). Secondly, I am unable to see at all, when I am blind or have a *dead eye*, where I am not conscious that I do not see what is embedded in the affair.

When we are observing, we should strive at seeing what there is to see (Meløe, 1989), to be able to grasp the action as well- defined, from the agent's point of view. And to grasp this, we need to dwell with the agent's actions before we engage in the agent's understandings.

Meløe shows a practical approach to the basic phenomenal recognition, as he states that the same object takes a different shape depending on where you see it from. Being able to put yourself in someone else's place (or arrangement) is necessary to understand what others are doing and saying (Meløe 1979b). We cannot understand people if we do not understand their world: "Without a sense of the world, you also have no sense of people" (1979c, p. 48, my translation). If we don't understand what the agent is doing, do not direct your gaze (only) towards the agents. Gauge the place the agent sees from and direct your gaze to what the agent is pointing his sights towards (ibid). This way; To the understanding of a remark, there belongs both an understanding of the situation in which it is made, the occasion for its making, etc., and an understanding of that which the remark is about (Meløe, 2005).

Meløe (1973; 1983b) asks us to examine what seems constituent to the practice. Here he aims to identify the smallest possible cut of our world that is necessarily part of a practical operation, in which his operations are intelligible where the intelligible refers to what information is needed to understand the meaning of an action. In the description, we must seek to bring out all that it takes to give the action meaning and to understand the action in the situation. In short, this is about bringing out *the action* (what is done), *intentions* (what is sensed/sensed intellectually and bodily, felt and imagined), and *the context* (what is around, and that forms the framework for it, such as people, things, place, all the things that need to be included to give meaning and identity to an action).

Methodological implications

Meløe's perspectives has informed my collaborative research ontological, epistemological and methodological. Occupied with questions related to the act of "seeing the face" and "hearing the voice" of practice, working with language, action, and meaning-making, recognising that practices are woven into our situated cultural-historical background, the road to ethnography is short. Where the ethnographer Geertz (1993) talks about "thick descriptions", Meløe refers to how actions are thickly situated, as satiated within a particular situation, using concepts like the agent's "invisible terrain" or tautological landscape. How could Meløe's perspectives be approached methodologically?

Himself describes his method as follows: "Situate yourself within the practice that this object belongs to, and then investigate the object and its contribution to that practice" (Meløe, 1992, p 131). His way of writing shed further light on his method: He normally starts describing a concrete situation, where he slowly and with great detail invites us into action, framed by some form of practice. Here we can find the repetitive movement between narrative and reflection, in which he tests reasoning and tries different ways to describe and understand the meaning of the agent's actions in an affair. He alternates between the investigative narrative and the constant new questions that drive him forward in his investigations. Addressing the "doings", asking "show me, or tell me, what you do", I found that narratives could serve as a common meeting point for the various actors in the collaboration. This way practice narratives became the starting point for our concrete and critical reflection/ analysis in our collaborative research.

Altogether, Meløe gave us questions I brought in to our learning community, to explore practice from within. This were questions like: Who is the agent?, What does the agent do?, What kind of situation is this?, Where is the agent situated?, Where is she placed?, Where am I placed?, What kind of landscape does give an operation its identity?, What kind of subjects, objects, and tools are included and make the action possible?, and What is the necessary knowledge the agent must have to operate? Overall, the various parts constitute the tautology of the action, and helped us systematically explore the relations between the different aspects.

Meløe's contribution to DPAR

In my Ph.d project I experienced that the participants, both the professionals and the adolescents, gradually became more active in the dialogues. After some time, they also challenged my viewpoints. For example one of the participants claimed that I took part in the repression of them, when, for research ethics reasons, I wanted to omit their full names in the report. They also took active part in dialogues with external stakeholders. Here they did not only address the need for more inclusive practices in the local community, but also, based on their learning from our dialogues, were able to both argue why this was needed and to describe what such inclusive practice could look like (Halås, 2012; 2021). Based on the dialogues, the participants had not only been able to describe and justify what we understood as good practice. They had also gained faith in their own capacity, and willingness to take the initiative to create better conditions for themselves and others. I understand this as examples of deliberated action, in line with Arendt's idea of democratic subjectivity. And for me Meløe's ideas played an active part. What role did he play, and what could then be his contribution to DPAR?

I find that Meløe's praxeology is adaptable and thickens Eikeland's ideas of Action Research from within, both at a theoretical and at a practical/ methodological level. First Meløe gives us a scientific theoretical foundation, concepts and questions for exploring the agent's practical knowledge and collective phronesis, that help us to explore practice to understand what people do, at its own premises, in its own language. He shows us how practice cultures are woven into what we see, and how we interpret and understand what we see. He gives us concepts to see and think with and ask critical questions about the place we

look from, helping us become aware of how different backgrounds of experience give us different prerequisites for understanding, collaboration and create challenges in the collaboration. And, in this way create space for Bakhtin's polyphonic dialogues. In the description, we must seek to bring out all that it takes to give the action meaning and to understand the action in the situation. In short, this is about bringing out the action, intentions, and the context. If we want to understand the meaning of people's different concepts about the world, we need to understand the activities and the world in which their concepts are rooted in. He shows us why it is important not just to listen to what the agent says about her affair. We also have to follow what she does, and her intentions doing so. He helps us to investigate practice as an intelligible practice. He helps to hold back, to ask again and again until we have a meaningful description of the action, accepting there could be different viewpoints in play. He recognizes practitioners' lived practical knowledge, and encourages the use of everyday language. This can be helpful, as it often is a temptation to start explaining the agent's perspectives. Further he invites to explore intentions embedded in practice, striving to articulate the idea of good praxis, embedded in the act of praxis. It helps us to fulfil the first level of validation, as getting a trustworthy description as the foundation for further explorations.

Could such an approach be helpful, addressing and handling the earlier mentioned tensions related to language, the goal of exploration, power, and habituated expectations? Concretely, he offered questions that helped us to become aware of our different viewpoints, showing that although we use the same language, and seem to understand each other, a common word like "home" can mean quite different things. He showed me how both my and my partner's understanding of concepts rested on our experiences, and how this experience was gained within a context, within a world.

I find that Meløe's way of examining the agent in her world has the potential to illuminate and handle the power dynamics between practitioners and researchers, and to become aware of the dynamics between micropolitics and macropolitics, especially how the ghost of evidence colonises the actors lives at different levels. As Meløe encourages and offers questions, helping us to be critically aware of what experiences we see with and the position we understand from, I find that the practitioner's, researcher's, and society's view of the situation is both made aware of and may be challenged.

In sum, I find Meløe's praxeology fits as a frame for dialogues exploring praxis-based Theoria from *within*, aimed at exploring connections between the seeings, sayings, doings and relatings in knowledgeable doing, balancing both knowledge as being and becoming, as well as subjective and collective. Secondly, I find that his framework makes visible tensions in the collaboration, and could be used in a way that leads to praxis-oriented deliberative and empowering learning processes in line with Arends idea of democratic subjectivity. Leading to action in form of living knowledge that strengthen the different subjects capacity to both participate in the dialogues and to exercise human freedom; to both make and be the changes and to create new beginnings. This way I find that his perspectives also could be a suitable frame for doing research *with*.

Revisiting tensions: a critical perspective

A critical question to Meløe's approach is whether the field of practice has the ability and capacity to transcend or renew its practice. Does DPAR aim to address conflicts or tensions between positions, blind spots, or gaps? Or could this kind of close partnership, create bonding relations, making critical positions difficult? In our research, I experienced that my collaborative partners did not want me to write about a sensitive topic (Halås, 2012), a wish I had to respect after collaborative reflection. Could this form of reflection be merely conservative, mediating and helping to maintain an existing practice? Steen Wackerhausen (2008) is focusing on the danger that an experience-oriented reflection can help to strengthen or maintain habits. He claims that the professions have blind spots, which puts them at risk of maintaining and repeating habitual practice, rather than renewing it. Based on Eikeland's interpretation of Aristotle, the knowledgeable practitioners, through collaborative value-based reflection, will be able to create new connections in their practice, and thus transcend the existing repertoire of action. The action choices are and cannot be determined but can only be sketched and therefore continuously concretised again in new situations. Furthermore, they have a touch of uncertainty about them. We can never know if what we are doing is right. But it is through the openness, dialogue, and reflection between the various affected parties that the good solutions and answers lie. This way, practicing dialogues, exploring practice between equals from within, has not only the potential to articulate the premises for change, with a need to implement subsequently, but has a potential to become the new knowledge, as it speaks.

Another point, made by Meløe, is that the dedicated exploration of the agent's actions and the world could represent a critical perspective in its selves. The site of many of Meløe's explorations is done in practices that in today's society are colonized by the modern society's forms of knowledge and values. Meløe describes the problem with this: "Only those ways of looking at the world that is public to some community are valid, and they are valid only where they are public because only then do they let a world be seen. Where my way of looking at the world is not valid, there I am a stranger." (Meløe, 1983). This means that a validated temporary description of practice from within, potentially has the power to challenge inappropriate explanations from above.

Summing up: In this paper, I have been concerned with offering concepts and a theoretical framework that is particularly suitable for supporting DPAR. I have argued for that this is something that requires special attention to tensions and power dynamics. I find that Meløe's praxeology offers a framework that makes this visible, and supports processes of doing research with and within, making DPAR to an epistemic living practice. Final it supports dialogical deliberative learning processes of democratic subjectivity, acknowledging knowledge as an open-ended question of becoming, mere than a fixed being, and praxis as form of relational and ethical knowing, empowering the subjects to engage and in the never ending process of change, making the world a better place.

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