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# **Interdisciplinary collaboration and conflict concerning children in difficulties: Conditions, procedures and politics of everyday life in school**

Maja Røn-Larsen

## *Abstract*

This article deals with interdisciplinary collaboration and conflicts concerning children in difficulties in school. By applying a practice approach to the multifarious, conflictual everyday life of interdisciplinary work, the article discusses and problematizes the dominant trope that quality assurance is best achieved through formal guidelines, strict organisation plans and clear legislation. This article suggests that we need to develop a conceptual framework that appreciates the situated, transformative, collaborative procedures through which interventions for children in difficulties are developed in practice; processes that are often overlooked in the endeavour, driven by a “longing for order”, of producing standardized models. In the article, such transformative processes are described in terms of “corridor casework” and “politics of everyday life”.

## *Keywords*

interdisciplinary collaboration, conflictual collaboration, children in difficulties, school, corridor casework, street-level bureaucracy, transformative activist stance, politics of everyday life.

## **Introduction**

When it comes to supporting children in difficulties<sup>1</sup> in school, “interdisciplinary work”, between teachers, family-counsellors, psychologists and school nurses

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<sup>1</sup> I use phrases like “children in difficulties” in the attempt to address the multifaceted contexts in which difficulties and problems develops and thereby dissociate this

etc., seems to be the current buzzword both in Denmark and in a broader international context (Edwards et al. 2010; Hansen et al. 2014). In municipalities across Denmark, strategies of such interdisciplinary interventions are often based on a rationalistic idea of quality assurance through standardized procedures in a strict administrative organisation model, with clear political ideals and bureaucratic demands based on firm, clear legislation. In many municipalities, interdisciplinary casework is supposed to follow certain “scripts”. For instance, the number and sequence of different interdisciplinary meetings is often stated in advance. The number and kind of participants at the different meetings, as well as the content of the meetings, is also identified beforehand by guidelines for the meeting and specific questionnaires.

Such standards and guidelines typically appear in local municipal handbooks or manuals, which are regularly updated due to the on-going contestation of former adjudications by the Appeals Board for Special Education (Madsen et al, 2015; Wittek-Holmberg et al, 2017). In this way, the processes are intended to follow certain, supposedly clear and transparent, standards. This is both in order to assure the quality of the interventions (due to a fundamental idea of transparency and equality in relation to bureaucratic processes) and in order to prevent complaint-cases from citizens (Lipsky, 2010, Madsen, et al. 2015, Mik-Meyer, 2017). In this article, I term such ideas the “longing” for organisational order. I problematize such longings based on participant observations and interviews with different participants in interdisciplinary processes in everyday life.

In the present study, the different contexts – from school to appeal board – seem marked by dualities between ideas of strict abstract standards and the complex, conflictual collaborative everyday life. On the one hand, the municipal and national strategies of systematic interdisciplinary work are driven by an idea/ambition of strict order and logic in the procedures of intervention. Problems appear as “something to be sorted out” by “fixing the chain of management”, as a head of the municipal office expresses it in a personal interview. On the other hand, the multifarious everyday life and interdisciplinary, collaborative work repeatedly go beyond the clear and neat organization models. In practice, much work is done that does not apply to the formal policies and administrative standards, not because the different participants “make mistakes”, but because they continuously need to take necessary “un-scripted” actions in order to get things done. They make joint decisions, manage, organize and arrange their collaborative work around common matters in relation to children’s school-life. In the article, I call such processes “corridor-casework”, a term

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approach from the widespread tendency to individualize problems to a question of the child’s inner dispositions.

chosen to emphasize the flexible and unpredictable ways in which problems find their solutions in social practice. In other words, the problems of the field do not appear to be solvable through the ambitions of “ordering”. Rather, it seems that many of the complex activities necessary in the interdisciplinary collaboration become invisible or even restricted by the ordering intentions. Such observations call for a theoretical and conceptual transgression of the idea of quality assurance through “a precise legislation” and a “firm, transparent model of administration” in relation to interdisciplinary interventions for children in difficult life-situations. This means that we have to reject the perception of problems or “errors” in practice as consequences of “rule-breaking”; a rejection of importance, since such perceptions are very dominant in municipal and national evaluations of interdisciplinary courses of interventions. Rather, observations from the interdisciplinary collaboration point to the everyday life of people as the central scene in which the significance of law and administration needs to be studied as part of situated collaborative procedures that are fundamentally political. The dominant idea of law and management as central “tools” or “strategies” to order and disambiguate processes around children in difficulties in school needs to be challenged. Instead, the institutional conditions must be analysed as part of the on-going interdisciplinary practice of everyday life and struggle among different participants connected through a common matter - as something, being constantly changed, negotiated and bent as part of subjects’ participation in flexible procedures and political processes of everyday life.

The theoretical perspective of this article draws on theoretical perspectives from critical psychology (e.g. Dreier, 2008a; Holzkamp, 2013) and social practice theory (Lave, 2011). These practice-approaches emphasise subjects as active agents participating in the overall development and transformation of institutional structures (Dreier, 2006, 2008b; Stetsenko, 2013). Subjects participate in situated processes of interdisciplinary collaboration in complex and contradictory institutional conditions, which they simultaneously are determined by and determining. From this perspective, the focus is turned to people’s situated activities in everyday life processes - the conflictual processes around a common matter about school and child-life and the multiple ways in which legislation and administration play in, is negotiated and interpreted as a part of collaborative practice of interdisciplinary work around children in difficulties. In this light, the article discusses how to break with terms of “order” through standardization and control – and instead sharpen the focus on collaborative processes about inclusion and children in school as processes that are neither coincidental nor predictable. It focuses on theoretical discussions of how to grasp interdisciplinary practice and its institutional conditions as constantly changing, negotiated and bent as part of flexible procedures and political processes of

everyday life, and discusses how law and administration can be conceptualised as something that is part of such interdisciplinary social practices, rather than as an exterior frameworks determining them.

### **Empirical background**

The interdisciplinary project informing this article has been developed in collaboration between myself, a researcher in social psychology at Roskilde University, and Stine Jørgensen, a researcher from the faculty of law at Copenhagen University. It is part of a larger project of a research-collective concerned with various aspects and perspectives involved in conflicts about children in school. A main objective of the overall project is to investigate the relations between historical, societal conflicts about school – and the situated conflicts between different participants in the everyday life of school (Højholt & Kousholt, in prep.). Our specific project analyses the institutional conditions for interdisciplinary collaboration, such as school politics, legislation and administration (Røn-Larsen & Jørgensen, 2018).

For two years, we have conducted participant observations and interviews with different participants in the compound interdisciplinary practice concerned with inclusion and children in difficulties in school, such as psychologists, family counsellors, teachers and other participants in the municipal administration. In addition, we have analysed the legislation across different areas and sectors involved as well as different strategy documents that relate to developing the interdisciplinary work from the involved municipalities. Finally, we have studied a number of complaint cases (documents) from the Board of Appeal of Special Education from the period 2012-2016.

The analyses draw on material across these various empirical sources from different, connected contexts, because each of them tells us something about how legislation and strategies of administration are interpreted, developed and made important in different ways in the collaborative processes among the participants in practice.

### **A starting point: the “paradox of inclusion” – revisited.**

An underlying problem that has motivated this research project is an ongoing curiosity about the “paradox of inclusion”, as I have termed it earlier (Røn-Larsen, 2012). This phrase highlights the apparent contradiction between general strategies of inclusion versus an ongoing and, perhaps even strengthened, tendency to isolate difficulties in school to a question of (dis-)abilities or

dispositions of individual children. I have been interested in the institutional conditions for handling, understanding and categorising children in school. One of the analytical approaches in relation to this interest was to study the gaps between children's everyday lives on the one hand, and the way the problems of the children and the schools are described in the case files, on the other. This research revealed how social problems around children in school tend to be individualised in order to gain access to resources and develop possibilities for helping the children and the schools (Røn Larsen, 2011, 2012, 2016a). Here, legislation and administration seem to play an immensely important part as central conditions for the persistent tendency to individualise problems in school. The analyses also showed how conflicts in courses of intervention relate to contradictions in demands from different parts of legislation. For example, this was the case in a conflict concerning a boy starting in a family class, an intervention designed to develop the parental support for children's school-life. The children are supposed to attend family class together with a parent for a period of time, to prepare for full-time inclusion in the regular class. In the specific case, the boy was referred to the family class together with his mother, a single parent. After a brief period, the boy was transferred to another special class. He was very unhappy with this decision, since he had already made new friendships in the family class and did not know anyone in the other special class. The reason for transferring the boy related to his mother's unemployment and her obligation to participate in a job-training programme. Consequently, the mother could not attend family class together with her son, such as the rules for the family class prescribed. In this way, the specific problems in the boy's school situation (and the professionals' conflicts about the case) was related to the conflicting legal requirements: for activities related to reintegration of unemployed people into the job market, on the one hand, and the requirement for the parents to participate in their children's school-life, on the other (Røn-Larsen, 2016a, 2016b). In other words, legislative and administrative procedures seem to be a part of school problems and collaboration and conflicts among different professionals and families.

The problem in such research is that it tends to end up pointing out more or less vaguely, that problems of individualisation and exclusion somehow relate to contradictions in the legislation or the strategies of administration related to the different child care and education areas. It tends to stop "at the borders" of law and administration, to treat them as external conditions, as a framework "outside" of practice that supposedly determines what is happening, and is therefore also somewhat "beyond the influence" of the different participants in practice. However, from studying practice in other family classes or even similar cases in the same class at another point in time, we learn that such conflicts can be solved

differently. Across the different research projects over time, we are experiencing how everybody, both professionals and administrative personnel, explicitly strive to follow every rule and regulation to the letter. For instance, observations from interdisciplinary meetings show that the professionals and administrative personnel often discuss “the right way” to organise the interdisciplinary procedures in relation to confidentiality. It is also commonly discussed how the procedures can be organised in ways that prevent complaint cases from involved clients (Madsen et al, 2015). At the same time, however, studies across different settings show how such procedures evolve in multiple different ways, both across different municipalities and within the separate municipality. What tends to be “the right way” in one situation, might fail in other situations – an aspect that the different participants in the interdisciplinary processes also discuss continuously. Different solutions are developed to handle similar problems depending on the specific situation, the specific relations between different participants and the specific collaborative interpretation of the legislation. In other words, understanding the meaning or significance of a specific act/law depends on a situated analysis of the complex interplay between many different participants in a specific, ever-changing institutional arrangement, in which the different participants make up conditions for each other.

### **Outlining the theoretical challenge: law and administration as institutional conditions**

In many ways, this insight spurred the project that forms the basis of this article. It fuelled a growing curiosity about the importance of legislation for interdisciplinary practice, but it also gave rise to the question of *how* we can understand the influence of conditions such as law and administrative standards and models for the interdisciplinary work.

The theoretical and analytical challenge is to analyse the structural aspects of such processes, e.g. political, legal and administrative conditions, without either dismissing the structural aspects or assigning determining power to them. How can the significance of law and administration in interdisciplinary practice be reconsidered in terms that break with the common or even dominant tendency to think of this area in terms of strict order and control? How can collaborative processes about inclusion and children in school be comprehended as something that is neither coincidental (they are not developed in a vacuum “with no strings attached”) nor predictable (they are not the results or effects of a plan or a fixed set of principles)?

How can we understand such collaborative and conflictual processes as more than individual differences between professionals (conflicts of interests), differences in professional perspectives per se (struggles of professional power) or as consequences of dysfunctional organisations with unclear divisions of labour (faults in legislation or administration). These are all figures of understanding already well-known in the field. For instance, they are widely used as explanations in relation to “faults” in the studied appeal cases. However, such figures of understanding seem to be inadequate when trying to understand the concrete and situated collaborative and conflictual practices.

A central aspect here is that such understandings insist on addressing conflicts as problems, as either a result of egocentric counterparts or as a question of somebody breaking rules and regulations, either the scripts of the organisational plan or the law. However, in the observations of the study, conflicts are not necessarily the problem. Rather, it seems that conflicts tell us something valuable about the conditions for the collaborative work of inclusion and difficulties in school. Sometimes, conflicts turn out to be necessary generators of development, because it seems as if the actual practice develops through constant processes of conflictual problem solving (Axel, 2002, 2010).

### **Corridor-casework - conflictual interdisciplinary collaboration**

The institutional arrangement around schools is characterized by struggles and conflicts. In spite of apparently common issues and goals, the specific practices around children in difficulties are continuously problematized, debated and are full of conflicts, doubts and dilemmas for all the various participants. The children, parents and various professionals (teachers, pedagogues, psychologists, social workers), school principals, municipal managers/bureaucrats and politicians) all have different perspectives and conditions for their contributions to interdisciplinary practice. They encounter different demands and follow different interests in their trajectories of participation across different settings. Nevertheless, they are interlinked in various forms of collaboration in order to make up everyday life in school work for all children (Højholt & Kousholt, in prep.).

Observations, interviews and material from the complaint cases in the present research project show how the legal complexities and the administrative procedures are not at all clear and unequivocal. Law and administration do not work as an external and clear framework of practice. Rather, they permit and invite contradictory interpretations in practice. Law and administration form central conditions for the different parties, but they do not represent strict



guidelines, and even more importantly, they are unable to do so. This is due to the democratic processes of developing and debating different legislative bills resulting in acts that express different and sometimes contradictory political purposes. But even more importantly, it is also related to the fact that legislation is constantly becoming part of an on-going social practice in which the different participants follow different engagements in order to help children in school. These are processes that are fundamentally political, because the participants are engaged in developing the school and thereby the societal conditions (Holzkamp, 2013; Stetsenko, 2013).

The multiple observations of many different professionals show a multitude of activities, which do not appear in any legislation or manual/script. This ranges from occasional meetings with colleagues or other professionals/resource-persons in the corridors, where different perspectives on what to do about a child or a class are discussed, to “behind the scenes” telephone calls to central persons in the organisation in preparing for and arranging a relevant placement for a child, or informal telephone calls or meetings with parents in order to settle conflictual situations etc. I term situations like these “corridor-casework”. Such different activities are necessary in order to develop relevant interventions and solutions in relation to the children in difficulties in school. However, such important activities are rarely documented or reported. Often, the activities even “break with” or overstep the “scripted procedures”. In practice, the problem does not seem to be that the school politics and administrative demands are not honoured properly. Rather, this immanent longing for clear, unambiguous legislation or policy tends to be an illusion that becomes part of the problem. It tends to cover up the fact that problems are always solved through messy and conflictual collaborative processes that cannot be ordered beforehand.

In these collaborative conflictual processes, legislation and administration create ambiguous conditions. They are something people have doubts and conflicts about, something that is repeatedly interpreted, negotiated and modified as part of the situated conflicts and collaboration. The observations show negotiations of interventions, where arguments related to legislation and administration are used as tools for both inclusion and exclusion, depending on the participants’ access to different resources, action possibilities and mutual interplay. In this way, legislation and administration are not definite. They are something that different parties refer to, both explicitly and implicitly, but often with different meanings. The point is that the meaning of any piece of legislation is not an autonomous entity – it constantly develops through complex transformative social practice that involves subjects in different positions. Accordingly, different interpretations by different professionals in different situations cannot be reduced to a question of who has interpreted the legal

demands correctly, and who has misunderstood them. I would suggest instead that this is how law and legislation work in an institutional arrangement. They are moveable, contradictory and negotiable in practice – as part of the collaboration and conflicts of a compound and continuously moving, multi-faceted common matter.

In relation to the institutional hierarchy between collaborative everyday-practice, municipal administration and appeal board processes (and the concepts of the meaning of legislation and administration), the processes of corridor-casework seem to be a kind of necessary “underground activity”. These situated activities fundamentally challenge the idea of “ordering” through standardization, because they consist of unpredictable, contradictory and conflictual processes.

### **Lipsky’s concept of street-level-bureaucracy**

This sort of critique is not exactly new. It has been raised in many forms and from different perspectives within organisational psychology, sociology and pedagogy with terms such as formal/informal learning, tacit knowledge, unheeded knowledge etc. (Ahrenkiel et al, 2013). Such perspectives have made rich contributions to the field. Nevertheless, they often seem to uphold the figure of understanding that I criticize, namely that two practices are running in parallel: formal procedures are running constantly while unheeded and informal knowledge fills the cracks of the formal system. From my perspective, we need to go further on and fundamentally challenge the idea of a “system” existing beyond the specific and messy practice in which different subjects participate.

Similar to the perspective presented in this article, many scholars, especially within sociology and ethnography, have been occupied with the need to break with an understanding of practice as a simple, top-down reflection of law and policy and its underlying political ideas. For instance, Michael Lipsky has conducted several analyses of *street-level bureaucracy*, a concept that bears a resemblance to my own about corridor casework, but as we shall see, also differs from it. With the concept of street-level bureaucracy, Lipsky draws our attention to local practices and their conditions, when he emphasises how policy processes are formed in the concrete relations between street-level bureaucrats (“frontline-workers” in public service e.g. police-officers, social workers, teachers etc.) and citizens. Lipsky’s work on “street-level bureaucracy” describes situations in which citizens actually encounter law and legislation (e.g. Lipsky, 2010, 2013; Brodtkin, 2013). Within this tradition, the work of different professionals forms crucial sites, because they represent situations where policies actually unfold.

Lipsky points to what he describes as “an essential paradox” in street level bureaucracy, where on the one hand, the work is “highly scripted [in order] to achieve policy objectives” and, on the other hand, “requires improvisation and responsiveness to the individual case” (Lipsky, 2010: xii). Taking this paradox as a starting point, he frames an analysis with a specific focus on the problematic role of the street-level-bureaucrats as policymakers, when forced to balance the bureaucratic requirement to treat all citizens alike, with the effort of exercising professional discretion and responsiveness to the individual case. Lipsky points out how restricted time and resources force street-level bureaucrats to routinize their practice, simplifying and reducing the information needed to make decisions, and thereby mass-producing categories of clients. In his analysis, Lipsky states that, “(...) policy conflict is not only expressed as the contention of interest groups, as we have come to expect. It is also located in the struggles between individual workers and citizens who challenge or submit to client-processing” (Lipsky, 2010: xiii).

From Lipsky’s perspective, street-level bureaucracy is an expression of professionals repressing strategies that are created in order to handle restricted institutional conditions of the different welfare-institutions. His analysis sheds light on important issues of professional and interdisciplinary work, and on professionals’ specific processes of handling their conditions as central to the policy in practice. However, his analytical perspective also tends to stay within a framework where the problem about such street-level bureaucratic processes is identified as being that the professionals do not (have the possibilities to) properly follow the intentions of the law, and do not live up to the bureaucratic ideals for the legal rights of the individual. So, the ideal situation still tends to be that, if the conditions of the institutionalized practices could be arranged in such a manner, the professionals would be able to follow the (clear) legislation and the correct bureaucratic scripts. In this respect, Lipsky’s frame of reference differs from mine. The locally situated activities of negotiation and collective, flexible and conflictual action tend to be either problematized or simply overlooked in Lipsky’s perspective. In contrast to this, I am inclined to find that such processes are both unavoidable and often a central driver for the development of possibilities in the collaborative processes about school difficulties. As I will argue in the following, such processes can also be described as fundamental aspects of human social practice.

### **Transformative activist stance by Stetsenko**

Studying interdisciplinary conflictual collaboration implies discussions about how to understand and conceptualize the subject as a participant in collective societal transformations, a discussion that has been addressed by Anna Stetsenko with her “Transformative Activist Stance” (TAS) (Stetsenko, 2013, 2008). From a Vygotskian point of view, Stetsenko is concerned with the theoretical discussions of how to understand human processes such as learning, development and cognition as fundamentally societal. As part of her argumentation, she states that such conceptual revolution is inherently part of the dialectical processes of empirical and theoretical work (Stetsenko, 2013: 8). Against this background, I have reflected on her approach in relation to the field of interdisciplinary work in school.

A main point in Stetsenko’s work is that people’s actions are always contributing to the communal processes of transgressing and transforming the societal status quo. She states that all human activity is always already part of society, and that all human actions are engaged in the collective practice of humanity. The subjects are “agents of communal history” (ibid: 9) and their activities matter as contributions to the constant communal practices of societal transformation. In the transformative activist stance, human activities are fundamentally politically anchored in historically and culturally developed visions of a better future:

“...human beings – already by virtue of being human – always act and know in ways that are meaningful and that matter within their evolving life agendas and visions for the future tied up with the social dynamics and politics of our communities.” (Stetsenko, 2013: 21)

Stetsenko’s point, that the many collaborative actions matter/make a difference in a political sense is important in order to understanding the corridor casework mentioned earlier – since it gives us a way to grasp the engagements of the different participants’ actions. They do not coincidentally meet up in the corridors, they meet up because they are trying to solve problems and to contribute to the overall transformations in the concrete (school) world for the children, the families and the professionals. In these processes, they make up conditions for each other. The different participants also meet up in the corridors because they are dependent on each other, since the difficulties of children are rarely related to one place or one situation, but extend into other arenas with other responsible participants. The children live their everyday lives across their home and school, school and afterschool centre, special class and regular class. Hence, problems and difficulties for children need to be understood in relation to

such complex trajectories of participation. This has been shown in several studies of children's everyday lives (see, for example, Fler & Hedegaard, 2010, Højholt & Kousholt, 2018; Røn-Larsen, 2016a; Stanek, 2013).

In addition, the different professionals are institutionally connected in a specific institutional arrangement, where their access to diverse kinds of knowledge or contexts for problem solving might be regulated by other parties. (The teacher must invite and allow the psychologist to make observations in class. The afterschool centre must apply to the school manager for an extra resource-person etc.). These aspects are collectivity and conflictuality related to the various participants' different positions and perspectives (within a certain institutional arrangement) and are aspects that Stetsenko mentions, but does not concentrate on. In the following, I will explore these aspects by drawing on the work of Ole Dreier, Uffe Juul Jensen and Erik Axel.

### **Institutional arrangements and conflictual collaboration**

Observations from the research project show how subjects participate from different positions with different perspectives. At the same time, however, they have interests in the common cause of improving school for children who are in different difficult situations. Different professionals participate in an on-going social practice with certain collective conditions, such as legislation and strategies of administration, conditions they simultaneously interpret, arrange and actively change, each from their different standpoints and action potential. Ole Dreier's concept of *institutional arrangements* enables an understanding of how the on-going organisation of the work influences the ways in which different participants handle their tasks in relation to inclusion and children in difficulties (Dreier, 2008b). Such a perspective implies a decentred approach (such as the one presented as part of the present research-project), which allows us to study not the subject and its actions isolated "as such", but as subjective participants in compound, institutional relations between different people's actions in different locations, with different demands and conditions. Activities in one context cannot be understood without exploring the subjects' trajectories of participation to other locations and in relation to the things going on here (Dreier, 2008b). This is one of the reasons for the complexity in the overall research project. Such a decentred approach across different contexts in the institutional arrangement, from children's communities, to teachers' professionalism, to school management, to legislation and policy processes in welfare work, enables an analysis of how different social practices make up conditions for each other, and how they are developed in interrelated ways. The concept of "institutional arrangement" also emphasizes how the societal institution of school cannot be

studied as a fixed organisation. Rather, it is repeatedly produced, transformed and reproduced through people's collaborative actions - *arranged* and rearranged through different participant's activities in their on-going social practice of collaborative work (Dreier, 2008b). In the research project, our attention is drawn to exactly the processes through which different people are *arranging and transforming together*, making decisions, navigating and managing their different tasks in ways that *matter* as a part of the multi-faceted development of school.

### **The concept of procedures in a practice perspective**

One of the concepts used to grasp interdisciplinary conflictual (policy) processes is the concept of "procedures", such as Uffe Juul Jensen and Erik Axel's work as part of their practice-approaches in relation to areas within Health Care and Buildings Construction. They both use the concept of procedures to grasp such situated conflictual processes in practice. Contrary to the general view of health care services, Juul Jensen shows how procedures in health care practices are not expressing uniform standards or strictly scripted governance technologies. Rather, procedures in practice constantly vary in relation to an on-going exploration of the possibilities in specific situations (Juul Jensen, 1986, 1999).

Erik Axel has conducted similar analyses of interdisciplinary procedures in the construction industry. He uses the concept of procedures to pinpoint the need to understand interdisciplinary collaboration as something that is neither completely standardised/settled, nor non-systematic/coincidental. Instead, it points to processes of constant arrangement among parties with engagements in a common and multi-faceted matter. Axel's discussions of the concept of procedures specifically emphasises how our personal engagements are never fixed, but are constantly evolving as part of the exploration of and experiences with the conditions of practice. To put it in Stetsenko's terms, one needs to emphasize how the transformative processes that the subject contributes to are never settled beforehand. They are always related to the constant collective involvement in which different participants make up conditions for each other, where your actions constitute conditions for my action possibilities and vice versa. This is why the investigation of relevant action possibilities in the interdisciplinary collaboration is always a collective process. The situated possibilities and conditions for the professional always depend on the other participants.

Such an approach challenges Lipsky's "paradox" between the bureaucratic regulations, on the one hand, and professional discretion, on the other. In practice, professional judgement is not only related to professional expertise nor

is prior knowledge based on specific educational attainment. Rather, it expresses a professionally positioned exploration of the specific possibilities together with other participants, an exploration that also involves knowledge gained through previous experiences of such collaborative practices in specific institutional arrangements. This is why we cannot understand people's reasons for their activities beyond social praxis, as implied by Lipsky when he relates the reasons for professional activities to the paradox between bureaucracy and professional judgement, both of which are rather abstract prior knowledge bases.

Axel's and Juul Jensen's conceptualisations of "procedures" are productive for the analysis of the interdisciplinary field around children in difficulties. Due to the existing vocabulary of the field, the term procedures might not be the best, since the word "procedures" is already widely used to describe exactly the fixed, standardised organisational chart, which the practice approach insists on overcoming. However, especially Axel's persistent emphasis on collaborative processes as collective exploration and as something that cannot be determined beforehand, but rather as something constantly developed and refined for specific situated reasons in the on-going conflictual collaboration between the many different parties, presents a central theoretical contribution to the field of interdisciplinary collaboration.

In the interdisciplinary processes about inclusion and children in difficulties in school, the many different parties are struggling with the same matter: the development of school as a societal institution for the education and welfare of the children in society. However, it is a matter they experience and understand very differently because they have different positions, perspectives and tasks in relation to it. At the same time, each one of them has to coordinate their efforts with other participants' efforts and with various other situations and demands that they encounter in their participation across different settings. These are all aspects that the idea of creating "order" once and for all tends to neglect.

### **Summing up - toward concepts of procedures and everyday life politics**

The aim of the article has not been to show how laws, rules and regulations do not make any sense or have completely arbitrary meanings in practice. Rather, the aim has been to shed light on the fact that they have different, unpredictable, yet not coincidental meanings, according to the different local practices they play into – and the different political struggles they are entangled with locally. Such aspects depend on the fact that law, i.e. acts, rules and regulations, are in themselves conflictual and contradictory, since they convey different political processes and therefore reflect different interests and compromises. However, the

key point of this article is that they also play into specific conflictual social processes, where different participants – with different positions and different tasks - collaborate in interpreting the rules and regulations in order to organize good solutions in relation to common matters for children in difficulties. These interpretations are made as part of various political struggles in the collective everyday life of many parties. This is important to emphasize because such conflictual collaborative practices are often overlooked or underrated when it comes to developing strategies for the development of efforts for children in difficulties – strategies that are instead anchored in “the longing for order”.

Through the article, I have attempted to show how such longing for order tends to be elusive in relation to the specific corridor-casework needed to solve problems in everyday life, where many different professionals make great efforts to find solutions for children and schools.

If we return to Stetsenko’s transformative activist stance, and her emphasis on the many participants transforming contributions through this perspective, we come to understand that the procedures are not only responding to conditions and demands in the specific practice. They also express the different participants’ participation in what could be termed the politics of everyday life. They develop procedures to get things done in practice, but through the procedures and collaborative actions, they also contribute to the transformation of society, and through this project, the practice of school and interdisciplinary interventions around children in difficulties.

When I, as initially stressed, state that we also need to understand these processes as *political*, it is because a part of the collaboration is also related to understanding participants in practice as people struggling to get it right for the children, as participants who are collaboratively giving meaning to the legislation through their continuous work. As part of this on-going work in social practice, they also contribute to the on-going political struggle about the multi-faceted matter of ‘making school’. In other words, they participate in the on-going negotiation of what, and for whom, school is supposed to exist.

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