

FUTURIBLERNE

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Theme:

In the midst of it all - New strategies for citizenship

Futures cannot be predicted. Futures must be selected.

The Team behind

On behalf of the Executive Committee

– We are very grateful to:



Clara Riis Ottosen-Støtt for your hard work and professionalism making it possible to publish the journal *Futuriblerne* in English and Danish. Clara holds a Master of Arts in English and Cultural Communication from the University of Copenhagen. She is currently working as a secretary and communications officer for the Danish European Mission and in parallel doing freelance translations between Danish and English. You can contact Clara at clarariis@hotmail.com



Signe Gabriel for her beautiful cover illustration. Signe is a freelance illustrator who lives in Copenhagen. She loves utilizing odd characters and entire worlds, when she makes her creative illustrations. They are often filled with old grandmothers, foxes, rabbits and monkeys. She works by hand with watercolor and pencil and finds her inspiration in fairy tales, old porcelain, patterns on fabrics and everyday life. You will find more of Signes work at <http://signegabriel.com>.



And Graphic Designer and regular contributor **Ken Hommel**, for your dedication and professional work. Ken can be found at <http://hommelgrafik.dk>

And last but not least thank you to writer, editor and public speaker Katrine May Hansen, because you kindly agreed to take on the task as editor and made this October edition possible. Your contributions are highly valued - **THANK YOU !**



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Form Your Future here!

Futuriblerne is a journal of current actions, visions and choices.

Futuriblerne was first published in 1969 by the founder of the Association for Futures Studies Arne Sørensen. This was shortly after the Association had joined the Association Internationale Futuribles and acquired the rights to the name *Futuriblerne*. In 2009 *Futuriblerne* went from written to online media and this year the first English editions were published.

Futures cannot be predicted. Futures must be selected.

Editor's letter



Welcome to this edition of the Association of Future Studies. This edition explores the concept of taking part in this world – what strategies for citizenship and what tools we might utilise in the future in an increasingly complex and globalised society.

In keeping with the edition of *Futuriblerne*, which discussed the topic of crowdsourcing, this time, we have taken a closer look at the idea of participating in society, i.e. citizenship. In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of more and more volunteer, co-creative community initiatives like food cooperatives, conversation salons and, recently, *Venligboerne* ('The Friendly Neighbours'), which is an initiative that has spread quickly to most parts of Denmark and is now establishing local branches in several European countries. Why is it at this particular point in history that we experience a boom in this field? What does it signify, and what kind of opportunities will it afford?

Simultaneously with my work as an editor of this edition of *Futuriblerne*, I myself have experienced citizenship and participation in society in very different ways. In connection with my photo exhibition **'A scarf, is a scarf, is a scarf'**, I have given quite a lot of public talks and have debated with groups of people from widely different cultures and societies in Denmark, and one thing has struck me wherever I have been: the great commitment and desire to talk about things, regardless of political, cultural or ethnic affiliations. My photo exhibit juxtaposes the Muslim headdress, the 'hijab', with the traditional headscarves of Fanø, 'klude', and thus, on one hand, highlights what it actually is we call Danish culture and, on the other hand, our preconceived notions and prejudices about Islam and clothing that

is dictated by culture or religion. The exhibition has brought about many different reactions and has been interpreted in many different ways, and since it is an open invitation to curiosity and dialogue, it has given rise to some very good conversations across otherwise irreconcilable opinions – from the heartfelt dialogue across generation gaps in Vollsmose to genuine wondering about and discussion of religion versus culture on Fanø. For me, one of the most important things in my work is curiosity and openness. Through my work on this edition of *Futuriblerne*, another word has come to hold a deeper meaning for me: the word ‘invitation’. When I approached Toke Møller, co-author of the article on co-creative leadership, and asked if he would like to contribute, he thanked me for the invitation. He said something along the lines of, ‘it is the invitation that allows us to learn from each other’, and I have been pondering that ever since. We have so much knowledge stored inside us, in our bodies, minds and hearts, and it is the invitation that makes us aware of what we actually possess and are capable of – and only then are we able to share it with others. And that is what we do here: we share our knowledge and experiences and extend an invitation to join the dialogue. The four articles and seven writers each offer their views on what is happening within their field and in our world.

Jane Sundstrup writes about taking responsibility for your inner self and building a relationship with your body as the foundation for being able to reach out and take part in the world.

Ida Nilsson and *Ida Winge* write about their vision for more co-creation between libraries and schools and how a greater degree of openness between the two institutions could help them move closer to their original purpose and intention.

Morten Goll describes the ground breaking work being done at the grass roots level at Trampoline House on a daily basis, involving asylum seekers, refugees and volunteer student workers, where citizenship is put into practice.

Toke Møller, Thine Jensen and *Helle Solvang* take the ideas of citizenship and participation in society to a higher level and describe how these concepts of co-creation can be applied on a grander scale.

I hope you will enjoy immersing yourself in this new edition of *Futuriblerne*.



Katrine May Hansen, Editor

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By Jane Sundstrup



Where community begins

How do we, as individuals, deal with loneliness? How do we become able to build meaningful relationships with others so that we can move away from loneliness towards a stronger sense of community and connectedness? How does each of us find our place in communities and in the world?

We live in a time when our relationships are not only created and maintained in the physical world, but also to a great extent in the digital world. The increased use of social media in recent years has allowed us to peek into each other's lives. We have become almost a kind of spectators to each other's daily lives, and we have an abundance of virtual friends. But in spite of this, the current focus in the media is on the fact that a large number of Danes feel lonely. One example is the DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation) documentary "Luk mig ind – det er Blachmann" (Let me in – it's Blachmann), in which Thomas Blachmann helps a group of Danes escape their loneliness by bringing them together, face to face. This widespread feeling of loneliness shows us that our relationships cannot be reduced completely to something that we can manage behind a computer screen – instead, some of our relationships demand that we are physically present.

The body and the desk chair

Let us begin by defining what type of relationships this article deals with. Looking up the word quickly yields a multitude of different definitions of 'relationship'. Some are more complex than others, and one in particular is relevant in the context of this article: "The way in which people or objects are connected with each other". By this definition, we see that a relationship requires two parties, between which a certain connectedness exists; connectedness being the operative word here! It is important, because I believe that feeling connected is something that we all want and need in some degree or other, and consequently that relationships are crucial to our existence. But if we are to build relationships with others and experience ourselves as parts of a community through those relationships, I believe we have to begin by looking within ourselves. Because a relationship with others is rooted in the connection we have – or lack – with ourselves. This article is written from a physical perspective and discusses how we can use that to strengthen our relationships and discover the place we all have in the world.

In my experience, people in the Western world are not very accustomed to listening to their bodies. We may say that we are taking care of our bodies and that we are listening to them, but are we really? Or are we just listening to dictated directions on health that have become second nature to us? Just two generations ago, physical labour

took up a much larger part of most people's days. The body was a working tool, as working life was much less characterised by technology and efficiency improvements. Today, the world looks different. Most businesses have been streamlined and technologised. The body has become unemployed, and in many cases it has been placed in front of a screen where it basically sits curled up every day from eight to four. This may sound harsh, but nonetheless, this is a fact for many of us. The mind and its abilities have become popular commodities in most businesses and in society as a whole. The body, on the other hand, is rated somewhat lower. Indeed, it has almost been forgotten in some cases. And even though we see a growing trend in society today of consulting the body – I am here referring to things like the increased interest in yoga, where the physical activity is not only centred around how many calories are being burnt off in an hour, or how fast we can enter a pose, but rather on the value of the process in itself – in my opinion, we see just as many trends where the focus is on getting the body to fall into line. The body does not really have a say, because most people let the mind get the last say when decisions are made on what the body has to do or not do.

A forgotten potential

I believe that, in our bodies, there is a vast potential for a richer, deeper and more nuanced way of life than many of us realise. A life with a greater degree of satisfaction and acceptance for the individual and thus also more sincere and honest relationships with ourselves and with others. Relationships where our inner lives and experiences also play a role. By this I am not talking about an existence where there are fewer problems or challenges – perhaps even the contrary – but instead a life where these are natural and accepted parts of living. It is a life where we do not only steer clear of challenges, confrontations and unpleasantness, but where we also support each other and ourselves in taking on some of the difficult and challenging experiences and grow because of it. In this way, feeling good or being content is not always equated with always being happy, but rather with living in accordance with how things are.

If this is the case, then how are we to tap into this potential? I believe that we must start on an individual level by becoming more curious about whether it actually exists, and that we must find a desire to explore whether there are more sides to the lives we are living and to each of us than we already know. And I say curious, because in that there is an openness and sincere sense of wonderment at what we might come across. When we stay curious, we are less likely to make judgements about what we think is Right or Wrong.

In my experience, life itself gives many people the opportunity to investigate this question. The opportunity arises when life hurts, shocks us and pushes us out of our comfort zones. This is never pleasant for anyone, but in all these challenges, there is a possibility that the pain might create a new, sharper focus on life and perhaps also result in an altered perspective on life. As if the big picture becomes clearer, and we find it easier to see what is important. We see this in connection with, for instance, serious stress, depression, a death among ones closest, being diagnosed with a serious illness or other shocking experiences. These are events that many of us understandably want to keep at bay because they are unpleasant or painful in themselves, but which probably just as many people experience as being intense and powerful because both life and our relationships with others at these times may briefly seem clearer and deeper.

So what am I trying to say with this? Are pain and difficult challenges suddenly things that we should seek out instead of avoiding? I think that we at least have to realise, whether we like it or not, that when things are difficult and challenging something is also awakened within us. That the pain can help teach us something, and that we shouldn't try to avoid it. No one can avoid the difficult parts of life, but instead of only seeing them as something awful, we might try to look at them as opportunities for growth where we are given a chance to discover other sides to ourselves and the people around us. Sides that will enrich us.

But back to the body and the potential. The body is tangible and, physically speaking, it is the foundation of our lives. We live in it, so to speak. Through our bodies, we live our lives and experience and sense the world. The body has its own language. A language without words that flows on its own through impulses, intuition and physical sensations. A language that manifests itself through things like butterflies in the stomach, heart palpitations and sweaty palms. A language that can't be taught in school, but which each of us has an inborn understanding of. Just consider how we get goosebumps or tears in our eyes when we experience something that touches us deeply, and how we feel shock when we experience something that we find disgusting. Or how a headache may be a warning signal that we have been too busy. So the body's reactions tell us something about how we are feeling and how we feel about a particular situation. You might say that they support our sensations. We all have an innate ability to understand this language, but many of us have forgotten what it might tell us and how we might use that information. Many of us have even forgotten what frequency it is broadcast on.

And why is this? If something is so innate and natural, how come we find it so difficult to get in touch with it? I believe one of the reasons why our access to the body's language and naturalness in some cases is blocked is found in the way that we treat ourselves and our bodies. Individually and as a society. Because the body reacts to the way we choose to live our lives. It reacts to what we eat, how we use it, how busy we are and how we think about it and about ourselves.

The 'ideal body' today

One of the greatest enemies to having a healthy body and a healthy relationship with it is our current idea of the 'ideal body'. It is almost impossible not to be confronted with it every day, unless you stay at home and turn off your TV, computer and mobile phone. Several times a day, you will be met with the same scenario: Images of young, beautiful, smiling girls with slender waists and white teeth. It is an ideal and a warning at the same time. An ideal because we are led to believe that being slim will make us happy. And a warning, because in my opinion, there is almost always a price to pay for slimming down and making yourself beautiful to the standards that are promoted and coveted in the social media. I believe that the media contributes to feeding our anxieties about becoming fat and repulsive and being excluded due to an insufficiently beautiful appearance. Even though new trends of a more nuanced view on the ideal body are emerging, like dads being encouraged to embrace their 'dad bods', I still believe that many of us carry around a fixed idea of how our bodies ought to look different in order to be good enough. The result is that we feel the exact opposite of good enough. Indirectly, we begin to get angry with our bodies and ourselves, forcing the body on strict diets and exposing it to rigorous exercise to make it fit into our own ideals and those of our time.

If this is the case, the body will react to it. It gets tense and closed up and sends back a response in the form of pain, illness, injuries, anxiety, depression etc. It almost breaks. It is as if all our expectations and the demands we make on ourselves block up our delicate system and obstruct the flow of energy, joy and life. The blocks are, physically speaking, static muscle tension i.e. encapsulated energy. When a muscle is constantly tensioned, we are no longer in touch with it and can't use it in the way we wanted, because it can neither contract nor relax like a well-functioning muscle. It is immobile.

Grit your teeth

This does not sound particularly desirable to most of us, does it? And yet, we all – to some degree – carry around undesirable tensions, because the lives that we live demand it. We tense up when something is expected of us – either by ourselves or by others. We pull ourselves together in order to live up to the expectations to our performance – we grit our teeth or set our jaws. We have actually incorporated phrases into our language describing the muscle tensions that we resort to when we have to perform above and beyond.

These muscle tensions can also have a more psychological or social function where they can ensure that we hold back and are able to keep it together emotionally. For instance, most of us don't like to cry publicly and usually suppress our tears if we find ourselves in a situation where crying would be inappropriate. This initially ensures that we are able to remain present in the situation and not have to withdraw or deviate from the social norm. But this way, the crying remains stuck inside the body. The downside is that the muscle tensions don't only block the emotion that we are trying to hold back, but also other emotions like joy, and not least our fallibility and vulnerability which we need in order to relate to others and ourselves. I think that this is exactly where we find one of the main reasons why many people feel lonely: the fact that our norms, behavioural patterns and ideas of what is socially acceptable help us keep each other at arm's length. Because of this, our relationships become superficial, and we don't show our more vulnerable or unflattering sides. We make sure that we don't get hurt or lose face, but at the same time we don't let others see us in those situations where we are probably the most human and honest.

So we practically suffocate ourselves and the potential for more nuanced relationships by lining up rigid ideas and expectations to ourselves. The way in which we see our bodies, our lives, our behaviour and the people around us may very well become what is standing in the way of actually having relationship with ourselves and others.

What to do?

As mentioned above, today we see a movement towards a rejection of the current idea of the 'ideal body'. Dads with pot bellies are encouraged to embrace a more relaxed body type where the six-pack has been replaced by a curvier body. This may very well be a good thing. In any case, I see it as an increased attention and reaction to the effect that the otherwise tenacious idea of the perfect body has had on the well-being and self-image of many people. It is a kind of recognition of the fact that spending several hours at the gym getting your body fit is not a top priority in a busy family with children. At the same time, however, I ask myself whether this is just another idea of what is healthy and natural? If that turns out to be the case, is it then what we really need? I for one am not sure that the only way to a greater acceptance of each other and our different bodies is to decide with our intellects that it is now okay to be more curvy, or even chubby. In that case, what will the naturally slender people do? Are they then 'wrong' or 'right'? What label should we put on them? No, I think we instead need to broaden our view of the world and each other. By that I mean that we stop defining, stop deciding and stop making rules for what is beautiful or healthy and what is not. As soon as someone has decided that something has to be in a certain way, things are locked down, static. This means that the flexibility and openness are lost; the two things that I believe we really need. And since our bodies are affected by how we look at ourselves, openness makes a lot of sense to me. Openness towards the body not having to be one thing or another, but be in motion, be alive.



Ask questions

Aren't we all sometimes tempted to pass on our truth or our prescriptions for how to eat, exercise and live in order to feel right and treat ourselves and others better? I know I do. Just follow these 10 steps, and you'll be happy! But this is not my intention with this article. My intention is to describe and unfold a way of thinking. In my eyes, we have plenty of rules, information, ideals and recipes for becoming more beautiful, healthier, happier and freer. In fact, we have so many of them that we forget how to be humans, because we are so caught up in chasing it. We are practically stuffed with information. We forget that much better solutions are to be found within each of us, instead of looking for them online or thinking them up. We forget that answers sometimes show up entirely independently of our efforts – and in fact sometimes appear by themselves through our vulnerability, because we don't interfere. Because we don't do anything. No, instead of coming up with new precepts, I think we should practice questioning things. Questioning our answers and all the things we are sure that we KNOW! For what if the answer to difficult questions was simple? What if the way forward is back? The way back to a place where we can feel that we have both feet firmly planted on the ground and feel that we are breathing. Where we have a stronger sense of ourselves and our impulses. Impulses to eat carrots as well as chocolate cake. To lie on the couch as well as being busy. To laugh and to cry. To drink water as well as wine. A place where neither one nor the other is wrong or right. A movement to a place where we, in spite of prejudice and convictions, may meet each other as equals. A place where we even appreciate each other's differences, instead of just condemning them, because they actually contribute to the complexity of our society and help us see that there are many ways to live and that none of us are doing it the right way. I think that it is exactly at those times when we experience the open minded side of ourselves that a possibility opens up for a different and more nuances community. In that community there is a possibility for us to open up and be moved by each other – physically as well as emotionally and embrace the fact that the vulnerability found in all of us is not a sign of weakness and loss of control, but rather an expression of naturalness and strength. We can allow for the fact that we are not perfect beings who always do the right thing, but human beings of flesh and blood with innate flaws – and that those flaws might be exactly what make us human.

Just like our physical bodies are not static, neither are our relationships. They swing like a pendulum. They are constantly in motion and forever changing. Relating to your body, yourself and others is also about being brave enough to move, to change between contracting and relaxing, between holding on and letting go; both when it comes to ourselves and to others.

Jane Fischer Sundstrup

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FUTURIBLERNE

By Ida Nilsson
and Ida Winge



Libraries could become the new 'learning playgrounds' for primary schools

The increase in easily available media is a threat to the public library. Its traditional purpose of providing materials is increasingly rendered superfluous by services on the internet, and lending is plummeting. As part of the library's transition the institution has an opportunity to work closely together with the 'folkeskole' (= municipal primary and lower secondary school, from here on: primary school) in order to renew itself without radically changing its foundations. The public library is by tradition informal, playful and characterised by free choice, which means that it has a unique potential for encouraging children's participation in society by creating new learning environments and improving the children's digital skills.

At the close of the 1800's, public libraries got a Government grant, and so the foundations were laid for the institution that we know today where everyone is allowed to take out books. Before that time, libraries consisted of collections of books curated by private individuals, churches or universities. The Library Act has since been amended several times, but the 1950 and 1964 amendments are particularly important. In 1950 everyone were allowed to borrow books for free at public libraries, and in 1964 it was made mandatory for all municipalities to establish a library. Following the ideas of N.F.S Grundtvig (1783-1872) and Age of Enlightenment ideals of how the common man should have access to knowledge and insights in order to become an active citizen and participate in society, the underlying philosophy of the library is that it should take on a central role as a democratic cultural institution. The public library's new objects clause from 2000 states directly that, "The purpose of public libraries is to promote information, education and cultural activity by making available books, periodicals, audio books and other suitable materials, such as music materials and digital information resources, including the internet and multimedia".

Charged with the role of providing access to literature and other media, the public library finds itself in the middle of the digital revolution. Tangible materials like books, CDs and DVDs make way for digital media like e-books and mp3-files, which has resulted in the rise of internet services such as Filmstriben and eReolen where you can borrow movies, documentaries, e-books and online audio books. However, with the rise of the internet and the growing digitisation, a host of private service providers have also sprung up. Just a few free clicks on reference sites like Wikipedia provide unlimited amounts of information on everything from the list of kings to EU. Independent food blogs supplement traditional cook books, and for a modest monthly fee, services like Netflix, Spotify and Mofibo give you access to music, films, literature etc. from all over the world. Jo Nesbø's latest crime novel or the latest album by Marie Key is quicker to access from home by logging into the appropriate internet streaming service than going to the library. In many cases, it's even free as long as you listen to the occasional commercial.

This onslaught of information combined with the changes in availability of media means that we have to ask ourselves whether or not the library still meets its purpose of providing materials for the public.

What purpose does the library serve if it loses its central democratic role as provider of free knowledge for everyone? This leaves an important question unanswered: In what way may the institution contribute in the future? Obviously, libraries contribute in many other ways beyond just providing access to materials, namely the cultural and literary education inherent in the libraries' function as providers of information, their inspiration, knowledge and academic relevance, the personal encounter with artists and writers, experiences in the library space, the community and creativity. And yet, scientists and library employees alike talk about how the role of the public library has to be re-defined. In most places, the citizen service centre has been merged with the library so that you can borrow the most recent novel by Kim Leine and get a new passport, be assisted in ordering a digital signature (NemID) or have your driver's license renewed at the same time. In this way, services that were not found in libraries before¹, have now been made available. Some of the initiatives for rethinking the public library have been met with concern from the Danish Union of Librarians, among others, who worry that the changes may dilute the actual purpose of the libraries. They are concerned that the library will end up as an institution that is unrecognisable to the public.

In this article we will argue that the public libraries do not need to change radically, but rather need to explore and develop the values and core competences already characterising the institution: furthering information, education and cultural activity. As one effort among many in the future development and activities of the libraries, we will argue that if the public library succeeds in creating a good partnership with the primary school, firstly, the institution will become a facilitator of new learning communities, and, secondly, be able to play an important role in supporting digital learning and education. Both of these roles can help establish a stronger sense of citizenship and inclusion in children and adolescents.

An extended collaboration between library and primary school in Græsted Library

Primary schools and public libraries share a democratic purpose in bringing knowledge and education to the wider public. Primary schools target children and adolescents whereas public libraries have to provide access to knowledge to all age groups. One example of how collaboration between the two institutions may work in practice is found in Gribskov municipality. Back in 2001, politicians wanted to merge the public library with the library of the local

¹ A study has shown that only 8 out of 98 libraries did not collaborate with a citizen service centre. (Kulturstyrelsen, Bibliotekschefforeningen, Knudsen Syd and Danmarks Biblioteksforening, 2014).

primary school. The project received funding from the Public and School Library Development Program, and in 2004, Græsted public library moved to the local primary school. The library took over the space previously occupied by the school's sports hall, and shuttlecocks and football goals were replaced by an informal kitchenette and bookshelves on wheels that can be removed in a snap to make room for the many daily activities and special events like concerts or exhibitions. A new sports hall was erected elsewhere, and the combined public and school library is now situated on the school premises. It has become a space that the children naturally pass through in the course of the day and which they use for school work, but also use when they are having lunch or just need to relax.



The idea has caught on in the municipality, and in 2013, Helsingør public library and primary school were also merged. Although there was some initial tension between the different groups using the library, the abundance of children in the library has resulted in increased lending, and the close collaboration between the public library and the primary school has brought about new learning communities between the school, the library and the surrounding society. For instance, the children are now able to draw on more varied fields of expertise than before. Now they have librarians as well as IT staff, a journalist, child and youth workers and teachers at their disposal. When the children are working on projects, members of the library staff are called in to teach things like source criticism and literature search. Pensioners come to play chess and talk to the children, and a group of women have formed a knitting group where children are also welcome. Local operators offer to share their knowledge and expertise, both in actual teaching sessions in collaboration with the teachers in the school, but also after school hours. To this end, a table has been drawn up of the more than 50 different operators who have agreed to participate. The table includes contact information, target audience, information on when the operator

will be available as well as a short description of exactly what they are offering. One example is a realtor who has offered to teach the children how to compose the particulars for selling a house. This list of contributors has been put together to make it easy for teachers to make use of the local community, for instance in connection with the children doing project work. The library is also evolving into a place where the children can be introduced to new technology and challenged with respect to their digital skills. For instance, they are allowed to use the library's 3D-printer and laser cutter and thereby gain a better understanding of digital creation. Additionally, teachers actively draw on the library staff's digital skills in their teaching, and in several of the learning communities facilitated by the library in collaboration with the local community, the digital world is also in focus: for instance, every Tuesday night in Helsingør Library, a team of eight engineers teach children how to program and write computer code. Even though there have been some initial problems – as is the case with all new initiatives – and the library staff as well as teachers and regular users of the library have had to get used to the new space, the collaboration is very well received today. One concern voiced by the regular users of the library was that the abundance of children would turn the library's calm space into an inferno of noise, and that they would not be able to read the daily paper in peace

like they were used to. So, special areas were designated where they could sit in peace. However, shortly after the new library had been opened, it turned out that the regular visitors left the quiet area and went to sit where there were children and activity.

The Græsted case shows us that it is possible to create a new learning space across institutions and professions. Græsted is not a unique example of merging a primary school and a public library. Another example is the combined school library and public library in Ørestaden, which was erected in 2012. In Christiansfeld the primary school and public library were merged in 2013, and back in 2005, “Mosaikken” [The Mosaic] was opened in Kjellerup. Mosaikken is a combined cultural, learning and knowledge centre, in which both public library and primary school are situated, alongside rooms and facilities for cultural and recreational activities.

What does the public library have to offer primary schools?

Unlike the primary school, the public library is not an educational institution, but an institution for culture and knowledge. The public library is something else and it can do something else than the primary school. The library's learning activities are by tradition informal and voluntary and are not conditioned by memberships, fees or previous experience – everyone is welcome. The library is not a place where you are assessed and judged, but a place where people meet in a community of interests that cut across age groups and professions, and in this it is different from the more goal-oriented approach of the established educational system where grades and assessments are mandatory. In 2014, an extensive reform of the primary school was implemented, and, among many other things, this meant that in the future, schools are obliged to collaborate with their local communities to a much greater extent than before. Lessons by the blackboard are to be supplemented by alternative teaching methods, and schools have to actively include the surrounding society by establishing collaborations with local associations, sports clubs and cultural institutions. As a way of supporting the school's collaboration with the rest of society, the library can offer the primary school not only an informal learning space, but also access to the local network. Ever since the public library got a Government grant at the close of the 1800's, it has evolved into an open space where anyone may go to seek out knowledge or cultural entertainment. Libraries have been used for many different activities – for instance, exhibitions by local artists or writers doing talks about their views on literature. Primary schools, on the other hand, do not have the same traditions of stepping out into the local community. This has depended completely on the individual teacher or principal's knowledge of local associations, businesses and organisations.

On a fundamental level, both the public library and the primary school are inclusive, democratic institutions with an important role in society and welfare, i.e. equal access to knowledge for all.

The public library is the place where the local community comes together and an institution that makes materials available for everyone. The primary school is directed at children and young adolescents, and its purpose is to provide a learning space that prepare “the students for participation, responsibility, rights and duties in a society based on freedom and democracy” and is “... characterised by intellectual liberty, equality and democracy”,² as the objects clause to the primary school states. By having a close collaboration, it is possible to strengthen these central institutional ideas, for instance by making sure that the public library's many activities are made available for children who do not normally use the public library. An extended collaboration would ensure that not only the socioeconomically advantaged children, who are introduced to the library by their parents, would visit the public library. The library and all that it offers would become something that all children automatically encountered during their school day.

² The Ministry of Education, 2013

Introducing the library as something recurring and safe during the school day might also have the positive side effect that the children begin to use the library and its services outside school hours.

If you have been doing project work in the library during the first hours of the school day and attended a home work club in the afternoon, it will not seem quite as outlandish to go to a literary talk in the evening. When the library staff encounter the children every day, it becomes easier to engage the children in new learning communities. If the children are in the library during school hours anyway doing project work, it would come naturally for the staff to invite them to an event that evening. In that way, more children would get the opportunity to participate in cultural events and become part of communities of interests that they might not otherwise have heard of or been interested in participating in.

Learning communities in the inclusive library

In a democracy it is vital to facilitate active citizenship. Democracy is not a community that should be taken for granted, but one that each new generation must experience for themselves in order to become part of it. If we are to achieve a stronger sense of citizenship, it is vital to have an open dialogue where the parties listen and seek a mutual understanding. Consequently it is important to facilitate dialogue across fields of expertise, institutions and other identity markers such as gender, ethnicity, age, job title etc. We need informal spaces, where we can meet, get inspired and learn from each other with mutual respect in order to foster a democratic culture. The library can be just such a space, where people can meet and share various common interests. The purpose of the public library is to be a place for everyone, and so it is only natural that it plays a role in introducing children and youths to cross-disciplinary learning communities that promote active citizenship.

Children and youths who feel lonely at school are given an opportunity to participate in other kinds of communities at the library, which may in turn be an important step towards inclusion. At the library you can meet other children – or adults – who share your passions or curiosities, and in this way you can become part of a community of interests that goes across the school's predefined, age based communities. In addition, meeting other citizens outside the age based group that you belong to in school, may offer different and new perspectives on the world as well as a sense of citizenship and, consequently, of acceptance. This might happen in the way that we saw in the Gribskov example where children and youths played chess with pensioners or learned about coding and programming from engineers. It could also be that the library staff used their knowledge of literature to set up a reading/discussion club for children and youths or a board game café. Cultural activities such as games can lead to dialogue – and through that, also learning.

Children and youths can be trained in citizenship through the communities of interests at the library. They can learn to be dedicated and active citizens who commit themselves and want to build something together with others.

The libraries' wealth of knowledge, creative methods and close connections with the local communities are elements that enable the institution to supplement school teaching with lessons and learning activities that may strengthen the students' will to learn, their social skills and their development, motivation and general well-being. But it is crucial that the libraries succeed in offering their expertise to the schools in a way that also makes sense to the teachers and principals. The library staff has to become skilled in framing their professional skills and knowledge about source criticism, information search etc. in new ways that are relevant to the schools.

The digital skills of library staff

In the objects clause of the public library, the concepts of information and education are central, among others. As the increasing digitisation changes society, it becomes crucial for children's democratic life that they have a thorough understanding of the virtual world and the processes and activities happening there. Consequently, information and education also have to include the virtual world. Much of the interaction that goes on between people is being transferred to the virtual world, and so the conversations that the children participate in and the things they learn online should also be underpinned by critical faculties. This is important if we want to avoid that 'likes' and the preferences of commercial search engines like Google and YouTube become the only filters through which new generations see the world. At the same time, it is important to gain an understanding of the digital tracks that we leave behind when we are online. For instance, it is important to know that when you post pictures and status updates on social media all this data is archived and, in principle, you hand over the rights to your photos to the web service. Here, the public library may contribute with specialised knowledge.

The library staff is trained in information seeking, source criticism, selection of materials for specific topics and has a broad knowledge of games, technologies and new media. These are all central elements in the development of children's education in a future that is increasingly digitised.

The library can support and develop the students' acquisition of skills and use of digital information so that they may transform that information into insight and knowledge that is relevant to their (democratic) lives.

The libraries have an important job in developing and strengthening children's digital education: a critical approach to the internet, source criticism and information search. Furthermore, librarians are trained in finding materials and knowing about what resources and materials are available on a specific topic at the appropriate level for the individual child. As part of the collaboration between school and library, the librarians' expertise can be used to bring digital source criticism into focus, whereby the children's knowledge is strengthened by utilising information skills and didactic skills. This is a part of the students' digital education which is very important, because it is vital for the individual's ability to participate in social debate in the online media. A large part of digital education is also about imparting on the students a kind of critical-analytical sense concerning the digital world and an ability to interpret and validate information from the internet.



Strengthening citizenship through learning communities and digital education

In a future collaboration, the public library can offer to the primary school an informal space where children may create new learning communities and learn about the digital world. The libraries can be seen as a kind of technology translators, who can help unlock the education potentials of both digital and analogue media in relation to education and learning. A librarian has an approach to information search different from that of a teacher, and the two professions will be able to benefit from these differences.

In informal learning communities, you would be able to incorporate the use of tablets, internet and analogue tools. By creating a collaboration and letting the two institutions merge some of their tasks in the future, the public library may sup-

port children in their approach to knowledge and teach them how to use digital information critically. In addition, the public library will be able to create experiences that focus on the visual and auditive aspects and it may contribute to making the children more quality conscious and strengthen their skills in relation to source criticism.

The libraries should not become a new kind of after school care, but a free space with an educational aim. As a facilitator of cross-disciplinary learning communities and by incorporating knowledge of the digital world, the public library will still be able to live up to the core idea of promoting enlightenment, education and cultural activity. By strengthening its role as a place where people can meet and where there is room for dialogue and communities of interests, the public library may further children's curiosity and creativity. The library can be a place where there is room for the children's own projects that are not controlled by learning goals or restricted by the participants having to be part of predefined classroom communities. Such new communities that span generations and other predefined divides can provide children and youths with solid skills for becoming active and participating citizens in the future. It can create a greater sense of belonging and carve a path for open conversations – and thereby an understanding of what it means to be a citizen in a democratic society.

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Trampoline House

- a learning space for democracy and citizenship

By Morten Goll



Trampoline House is an independent community centre in Copenhagen, where refugees and asylum seekers can find support, community and a meaningful everyday life. Four days a week, we offer education, activities, counselling and friendships aimed at breaking the social isolation and sense of powerlessness that many asylum seekers experience.

Trampoline House unites asylum seekers, refugees and Danes in an attempt to improve asylum seekers' and refugees' conditions in Denmark. We are a self-governing institution with a board of directors, a paid staff and a large group of volunteers and interns. For five years, OAK Foundation has been the house's main sponsor. Since 2014, we have received funding from the Danish Immigration Service, and a number of foundations have supported us with smaller contributions since the opening of Trampoline House.

Trampoline House was founded in 2010 by a group of artists, asylum seekers, students and professionals as a reaction to the way the government treated asylum seekers. People seeking asylum in Denmark, or who have

been denied asylum, live in asylum centres for months or years while they wait for the authorities to settle their cases – whether it results in asylum or deportation. These centres offer very few or no meaningful activities, and the very low benefits that the asylum seekers receive do not allow them to go outside the centres, which are situated in remote areas far from the cities. Consequently, asylum seekers have limited access to education and have to apply for permission to work and live outside the centres. All studies confirm that many are made ill by the long wait, the insecurity, idleness and feeling of not having any control over your own life.

As in any other home, the members contribute to the daily life of Trampoline House. Together, we organise legal counselling and classes in Danish culture, cleaning, childcare, creative workshops, debates and public campaigns. The Women's Club and The Youth Club have their own weekly schedules. Every week, we have a house meeting where everyone may participate in discussions regarding everything from global refugee politics to the day-to-day management of the house. On all days where the house is open, we share a hot meal, have coffee and tea and chat, and every Friday there is dancing and fun until 11 pm.

At Trampoline House, we believe that asylum seekers and Danes have a lot in common – they are people who possess valuable resources and different experiences. We want to be a constantly evolving, user-driven democratic platform with the aim of providing as many refugees, asylum seekers and Danes with the opportunity to experience the democratic method and the power inherent to the concept of citizenship.

In the following, I will try to describe the complex daily processes that we call the democratic process at Trampoline House. My focus will be on how the democratic space works on a formal plane and also how we handle the informal hierarchy that evolves in all organisations.

Who are the participants?

The volunteers and the users of Trampoline House are here for many individual reasons. However, it is possible to identify three main groups of people.

The non-refugee volunteers ...

are Danes and people from other countries, most often students from universities in Copenhagen. They come from countries with Western, democratic traditions. They work as volunteers at the house, doing various jobs, and in that way, they participate in the day-to-day of the house on a practical level. This group consists primarily of strong individuals who want to work for what they perceive to be a good cause. Their influence at the house increases with their level of contribution. The approximately 40 volunteers have signed a contract with the house, but even though they bring personal resources to the house, they also come here because they, in a natural way, can become part of an intercultural social experiment where democratic practice is nurtured.

The users ...

are asylum seekers living in asylum centres in Zealand. They come from failed nations, war torn areas or nations where they are discriminated against because of their ethnicity or sexual, political or religious orientation. Their previous experiences with democracy as a form of government have often been rather sporadic, if not outright negative, as the pseudo-democratic institutions of their native countries are often marred by arbitrary violence, corruption and repression. Furthermore, a side effect of the asylum system is that they are exposed to poverty, isolation and clientisation. Their influence in the house likewise increases with their level of contribution, but

they are not as well equipped to make use of this influence as the non-refugee volunteers are, because they have fewer resources to offer, and because they are unfamiliar with this form of organisation. New users are introduced to Trampoline House by former users recommending it to them. For the last year and a half, we have not had any need for active recruitment at the asylum centres. All users have signed a contract with us. 4-6 hours a week of work or classes earns them the right to reimbursement of two days' travel expenses. We can accommodate roughly 90 interns.

Volunteer refugees who have obtained residence permits ...

are users who have been granted asylum and are following the three-year integration program in a municipality. This is a group whose members are slowly building a new identity here in Denmark. In many cases, they are less stressed and sleep better, but they still experience, to some degree, that their lives are characterised by poverty, isolation and clientisation. Many of them experience a gradual normalisation of their lives. Others are frustrated because their expectations to the opportunities in our society have not been met. Many of them use the house as a drop-in centre. Others work here as volunteers on equal terms with the non-refugee volunteers. The fact that they return to the house is just as much evidence of the success of the house as it is of the problems that they face in the municipal integration programs. In the words of one of the refugee volunteers after three years in the municipal integration program, "80 % of my Danish social network comes from Trampoline House", and another person, who has spent 2.5 years in the program, says, "Trampoline House is the only place where I feel like I am a part of Denmark".

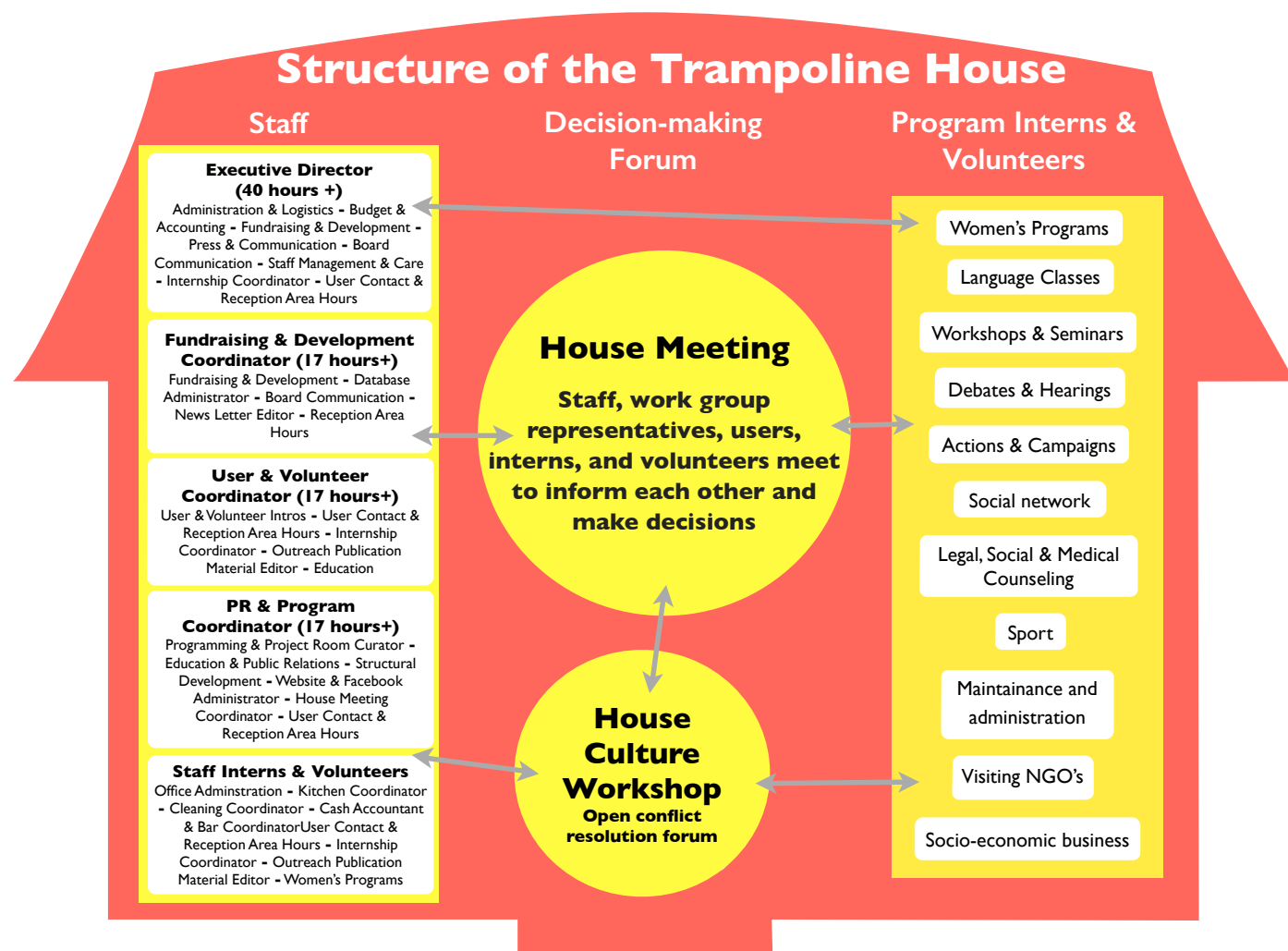
The Trampoline House staff

The staff also deserve a mention. The day-to-day manager is employed full time and carries the main responsibility for all internal and external activities in the house, the financial management, fundraising and development. Thus, the manager is the formal leader of the house. Fundraising, program planning, the women's club, counselling, recruitment of interns and volunteers as well as administration is handled by four additional employees, who work 103 hours a week in total. By virtue of the team's experience and insights into the history of the house and their daily responsibilities, the members of the team are considered leaders within both the informal and the formal hierarchy. Their job is to ensure continuity, stability and improvements, as well as knowledge gathering, but within the social contract, it is ultimately the day-to-day manager who has to fill out the role as leader in a way that ensures that the democratic dialogue and decision process are as active and meaningful as possible. You might say that the manager is responsible for filling the patriarchal role as leader, but is not supposed to make use of this role. Rather, he has to make sure that nobody else fills it. The fact that you need to maintain this "patriarchal structure with a democratic leader" goes to show how vulnerable the democratic process actually is.

Citizenship based on voluntariness, equality, respect and solidarity

The primary principle of Trampoline House is that participation is voluntary. Choosing the house is something that you actively have to do for yourself. The reason obviously being that democratic dialogue cannot take place out of compulsion. The next principle is equality. The advantage of having a "territory" or a "home demarcated by walls" is that it allows you to outline a code of conduct in the house. Equality is an ideal that the house supports and practices with mottos like, "Everyone has something to offer the community" and "It is your house, too". Next is unconditional respect – or "quid pro quo". Mutual respect is an important prerequisite for practising the equality principle. Fundamental openness is required: Everybody has something to offer! The one who both contributes to and receives from the community preserves and improves his self-respect. The individual comes into existence in the social space, where you recognise yourself in others and where you are seen and acknowledged as a fellow

human being by virtue of your actions. This is also why contracts are drawn up for the volunteers and users alike. The purpose of the contract is to match expectations to the relation between the two parties, and it is an essential tool in establishing a safe and stable relation. That does not mean that you are locked down by your contract. It often takes just ten minutes in the office to expand or change your obligations towards the community. We recognise that solidarity is a prerequisite for citizenship and the welfare society, but at Trampoline House, solidarity is experienced as something that takes place between individuals who share a relation built on “quid pro quo” and the idea that everybody possesses important resources that best manifest themselves in a spirit of equality. At Trampoline House, you are a citizen the moment you decide to apply for asylum in Denmark, and this is why we chose to call it a citizens’ centre.



Last, but not least, we believe that nobody is a victim. This is because of the social dynamics inherent in a victim/benefactor relation. Charity creates and maintains the role of the victim. Stepping out of the role of the victim by becoming a benefactor and gaining control of your own life by choosing to participate in a relationship on equal terms built on mutual respect is a step towards democratic citizenship.

The structure of democracy

The diagram shows the house's decision structure. The three main areas, administration, house meetings and working groups are ranked alongside each other, because we want everyone to have equal access to making decisions by participating in house meetings.

Who has the decision-making authority?

The house meeting is officially the highest authority of the house, but on a practical level, it functions as a forum where the employees receive feedback and are made aware of any needs or requests for the improvement of the house. The employees will never directly oppose a decision made by the house meeting, but they may try to influence it. The day-to-day manager and the employees are responsible for guiding the users and volunteers so that the relevant legal and safety requirements and contractual obligations are met and that they adhere to the principle of good neighbourliness. The house meeting has no fixed structure. It should remain flexible in order to accommodate the relevant challenges. One recurrent feature is that all participants are seated in a circle – often divided into language groups to ease simultaneous interpretation. All meetings begin with a presentation round. The purpose of this is twofold: each person is acknowledged by name, and everyone is allowed to speak at least once. The house tries to compensate for the users' lack of democratic experience by using a 'family model', because the family is a universal constellation that everybody recognises. Obviously, many cultures have a strong tradition of patriarchal family structures. We try to counteract this by appointing the day-to-day manager head of the family with the responsibility of implementing the democratic process.

Often, conflicts are solved through a dialogue between equals at the house meetings. But obviously there are also personal conflicts where this is not the appropriate forum. Cases of violence and harassment or conflicts that cannot be solved immediately by the involved parties are brought before a council. The day-to-day manager acts as an impartial mediator between the contending parties. In all of the five years of the house's existence, the conflict council has only been required three times.

In all situations where the administration exercises formal power over the user, a contract is drawn up between the user and the house. This is particularly important in the case of reimbursement of travel expenses. The contracts are part of ensuring transparency in the balance of power, and we strive toward this transparency in all cases involving the exercise of power. You might say that the social contract is based on democratic participation and, where this is not possible, on transparency through contractual relationships.

Circumstances that pose a challenge to the democratic ideal

Communication

The prerequisite for introducing a user democracy is that there is a social platform in place where the participants feel acknowledged, seen and heard and that communication takes place in a way and at a pace that does not exclude any participants. It begins and ends with constructive communication based on unconditional mutual respect and curiosity. Language barriers is one of the major challenges, because social interaction is often limited to people sharing the same language, and this often means that those who speak a different language are excluded. It is not only a question of different languages like Farsi, Danish, Arabic and English. It also very much a question of the different conceptual frameworks that come from different levels of education. Trampoline House has been successful in developing a culture where the users of the house translate for each other when necessary, so that all communication, as far as possible, takes place in the required language and at the appropriate pace and with a use of terms that ensures that everybody is able to participate in the dialogue as easily as possible.

Recurring problems: Charity as a destructive force

The equality principle is challenged by the fact that the participants have different personal resources and experiences with similar situations. A clear, but unintended line of demarcation divides those who live precarious lives in asylum centres and those who live comfortable lives with education, employment, legal status and a social network outside Trampoline House. This creates the basis for a victimisation of the asylum seekers, and subsequently a wish to compensate for the unequal relationship. The non-refugee volunteers, who often come to the house with a surplus of resources to offer the house, easily gain a natural leadership role in relation to the asylum seeking users. This is because of two things: their resources enable them to obtain continuity at the house, which gives them knowledge and, thereby, power, and their Western backgrounds make it easier for them to understand and enter into the social order at a higher level than many of the asylum seekers, who are challenged in both of these areas.

Among the former asylum seekers, a feeling of superiority might arise in relation to the asylum seekers, who are sometimes seen as having lower status. It is a feeling of superiority that does not necessarily correspond with the urge to help that the volunteers might feel towards the users, but one that poses just as large a threat to the equality principle. The one thing holding the equality principle in place is plenty of communication every day between the different groups. The house meeting is the ultimate testing ground for the participants' different degrees of prejudice towards each other. By having open dialogues where all the involved parties are allowed to speak, prejudice can be minimised.

Recurring problems: Traditional hierarchies

There are many different subgroups of asylum seekers, and they constantly negotiate their places within an internal hierarchy that does not necessarily respect the equality principle mentioned above. The aforementioned dynamic of 'knowledge is power' is true for everyone who uses the house, and subsequently, power structures often emerge in different departments where one person begins to dominate the other members of a working team in an undesirable way. Here, it becomes clear that democracy is a social language not everyone masters, and that it can also be challenging to ensure a transparent decision making process. These conflicts are often the hardest to resolve, because the involved parties are not necessarily familiar with the kind of democratic dialogue that we try to practice. We have not found a perfect solution to this problem, but the method we have developed is that every department is given a volunteer work coordinator with a sufficient amount of 'natural' authority for him or her to communicate by his/her mere presence that the department is being managed by a leader, and that there is no need for anybody else to take on that role. The volunteer work coordinator is usually, but not always, a Dane or other Western European person, because most asylum seekers regard these as being more fair than people from their own countries. We have here a situation that shows to what degree the asylum seekers are willing to embrace the democratic method, and that this willingness leads them to prefer the 'educated democratic coordinator'. This highlights the importance of a very high degree of social ethics in the volunteer coordinators.

Recurring problems: Power corrupts

The staff holds a natural position as leaders because they have the most extensive experience and insight into the house's history and present situation. The staff are also responsible for the volunteers and the users. One example of the staff's power is the reimbursements for travel expenses. It quickly became apparent when the house was evolving that reimbursing travel expenses and writing up contracts for interns and volunteers, which are both natural expressions of power in the day-to-day, should be the privilege of the staff. Trying to extend this privilege to other groups or individuals has led to accusations of corruption-like conditions, with dissatisfaction, lack of

transparency and conflicts as a result. In this way, power is centred on fewer people, which is not unproblematic. However, the risk conflict is minimised when the distribution of resources is managed by the staff, who are generally highly respected by the users. However, there is a constant danger of these privileges becoming 'natural'. Meaning that the individual employee begins to believe that it is him, not his office that is privileged. To prevent this, it is a good rule of thumb that all decisions must be easily explainable at a house meeting. If a decision can survive the critical review of the house meeting, it can be considered a good decision.

The effect and extent of appreciation

Although the challenges mentioned above are serious, there are of course practical solutions to them, which constantly pull the house in a democratic direction. You might say that the experience of being seen and being included in the community is the best selling point for democracy. From that moment on, when a new member feels included in the community, feels that he/she is taken seriously and that there is a genuine connection, acceptance and interest in her/his person and skills, that person begins to take an interest in and accept the rules of democracy, because those rules are perceived as fair. However, citizenship only begins in earnest when the community sees and acknowledges the entire person, not just skills and personality, but also his/her situation as an asylum seeker. You have to understand that the process of seeking asylum is such an all-important part of the asylum seeker's circumstance that he/she cannot feel seen and accepted if it is ignored. Therefore, it is necessary to allocate resources to supporting and educating the asylum seeker in the asylum seeking process. That means that Trampoline House has to help the asylum seeker maintain appropriate and qualified communication with the appropriate authorities and pass on their knowledge about how the system works. Trampoline House is obliged to do this for the simple reason that the asylum seekers trust Trampoline House. This transparency of the asylum system that Trampoline House communicates in this way increases the credibility of the system in the eyes of the asylum seeker. Because we operate in an easily understandable and inclusive, democratic mind-set, we are able to explain to the asylum seeker the context in which they find themselves. This enables them to better understand the premise and accept the ruling. The democratic experiment works because all parties benefit greatly from accepting the social contract, and because seeing and acknowledging another person is an amazingly generous act, which calls for reciprocation.

The most basic quality of democracy is the ability to generate, receive and react constructively to criticism brought forward by the participants. The ability to receive and express criticism can sometimes be the only thing keeping the democratic process going. It is faith in each other and the belief that we can do better that creates the constructive room of possibility that enables personal growth as well as development of a citizenship based on solidarity.

Trampoline House – a learning space for democracy and citizenship

The different groups of volunteers and users at Trampoline House may contribute to and benefit from the process based on the level of experience they bring to the house. Even though we know that generalisation leads to prejudice and misrepresentations, I am still going to venture into describing a learning curve for three of the groups described above. I am going to leave out the fourth group, the employees, since it would require a separate article to describe that in any detail.

People living in the centres primarily need a physical space, a social safe haven and guidance. The discovery of the social space and the possibilities it offers for personal development and participation are of secondary importance, but they will usually become increasingly important as the asylum seekers become familiar with the house. Citizenship becomes increasingly important as the impact of being seen and respected as a person whose actions have consequences is felt. In this phase, seeing the person behind the case is what is important, because

it is this person with his/her experiences and competencies who needs to be given the opportunity to grow at Trampoline House. This is why the activities are so important – classes on culture, democracy and the system, cooking, workshops and social networking.

The Danish and foreign volunteers often need Trampoline House as a platform for discovering the solidarity principle through equality and mutual dependency. Combined with the democracy experiment, this results in a constructive playground where the volunteers can test themselves, learn from the encounter with 'the others' and grow into an 'us'. It is this 'citizenship in practice', which offers an opportunity for us to explore and challenge our own, personal assumptions, as well as those of our society, that is so attractive to this group of people.

Refugees, who are going through the three-year integration program, need the house as a place where they can meet Danes and expand their social networks. Many of these people return to the house and tell us that what they are looking for is exactly this sense of citizenship, which Trampoline House can offer, and which they cannot find in the public system. The degree to which this group gets involved in the volunteer work varies, but often they go through a process where they first use the house as a drop-in centre and then gradually get more and more involved and end up asking for a contract with the house where their tasks can be defined. Through this process, their identities evolve from that of a passive victim with few personal resources towards an active, strong member of the community.

Trampoline House works as a learning space and exploratorium for Danes, foreign volunteers and asylum seekers. Even though you learn very different things depending on your point of departure, it is important for all parties that the process is driven by the social dimension and the desire for citizenship. Passing on these experiences is a kind of empowerment of the participants, because knowledge equals options, and because the community makes the individual stronger.

From a societal perspective, it is interesting that Trampoline House, as a self-governing and user-driven organisation has taken on the task of educating people in how to understand the system. We pass on insights into how the asylum system works, why it exists and what roles and power the different authorities have (the police, The Danish Immigration Service, The Danish Refugee Appeals Board, the Red Cross, the Danish Refugee Council and other NGOs). This knowledge enables people to deal appropriately with the relevant authorities during the course of their case. We also educate them in how our welfare society is based on a collective, social contract that calls for solidarity and trust between its citizens and loyalty towards the public sector, which works for the common good. This combination of subsidiarity versus understanding of the system is something that not only asylum seekers need to be educated in, but which many Danes also need to brush up on. We regard this as the main reason why we have never lacked volunteers, neither from the asylum centres nor from civil society.

Every day for the last five years, the house's practice has been to develop a solidarity principle based on the dignity and respect inherent in the concept of 'quid pro quo'. For solidarity to develop into a fruitful principle and an experience that is useful in 'real' society as an understanding of and argument for active citizenship, the exchange has to go both ways. For people to see the meaning and magnitude of the gift that is solidarity, it has to flow from person to person, not from system to client. 'Quid pro quo' works in the intimate human-to-human relationships on which the family model in the house is built. The meaning and purpose of democracy becomes obvious the moment the individual person feels seen, respected, included and last, but not least, sought after for his/her personal qualities. It is in that moment the role of victim is replaced by dignity and the will to act.

Morten Goll

co-founder and daily manager of Trampoline House



Co-creative leadership and active citizenship. Is there a connection?

Toke Paludan Møller has invited Thine Jensen and Helle Solvang to collaborate on this article, which is based on a dialogue that has taken place between them in the spring of 2015. They have all experienced how the circle in the form of co-creative, participating leadership and genuine involvement is experiencing a comeback in Denmark. They also feel that this is necessary! Not least in the case of our democratic development.

A couple of years ago, one of the founders of 'The Art of Hosting', Toke Paludan Møller, was invited to Canada to train Aboriginal Canadian leaders in co-creative leadership. While he was there, he learnt how the Vikings had introduced the Aboriginal Canadians to advanced circle practice and counselling. This was surprising news, which – when we look back through history – shows us that a tradition of democratic forms of conversation has probably existed in our society long before the introduction of our constitution. The Danish constitution ('Grundloven') came into existence as a result of the debate salons and Assemblies of the Estates of the Realm, among other things, and evolved alongside the co-operative movement and public meetings in the village halls, and the circle as democratic tool was practised in the '60s and '70s with the youth revolt and its focus on giving everybody a voice in the decision-making process. Since then, circle practice has been belittled and regarded as frivolous, and not everyone knows that the practice has age-old roots in our culture, that it has been improved and refined during the last thirty years, and that it is actively used for co-creation and long-term decision-making every single day all around the world.



Co-creative leadership

Toke Paludan Møller: What is co-creative leadership to you?

Co-creative leadership, to me, is about creating something together that benefits everybody. It has ancient roots and is especially useful when openness, clarity, and a genuine will lie behind it. It is not interesting in itself as a new concept that someone can use to make money. Leadership has to be co-creative in order to awaken our appetite and life force, so that everyone is inspired to create something that is needed now and in the future. Practicing leadership has always been part of my life, and through the years, I have come to understand that leadership is about leading myself as much as it is about leading others and leading with others. If the only goal of my leadership is to further my own career, without an awareness of who I am as a leader and where my leadership is going in the long run, we miss out on something valuable. As leaders, we must not isolate ourselves, no matter which constellations we become part of. There is a rhythm to teamwork, and it has to serve a greater purpose.

How do you take responsibility and agree on a common goal in a co-creative process?

Taking responsibility is about working towards a goal that has been agreed upon by a group of people, instead of leading people in a way that is to your own advantage or in the direction dictated by the leader. Working towards a common goal that has been collectively agreed upon is a conscious act. If I try to further a cause or lead a group of people on my own – if they are not on the same page as me, or if I tell myself that the responsibility rests on me alone – then this would be the opposite of co-creating, because the greater purpose is missing. Because, what if I am wrong, or lose heart? Besides, it is a huge responsibility to take on an important

cause on your own. By co-creating, we can achieve more in our day and age, where many people want to contribute to the creation of our future together, if, of course, they receive a proper invitation.

When Denmark was bankrupted in 1813, the king, Frederik the sixth, supposedly said: "The greater the challenges, the higher the goals you must set for yourself". As a race, we continue to wage wars as a solution to our problems; we still pollute and destroy the foundation of our existence on this planet instead of focussing on living good lives together and providing food, water, housing, and a good education for everyone on the planet every single day. Peaceful co-existence and a good life for everyone are worthy and great common causes to fight for. Why should we strive for anything less than that? We have the resources for it in our part of the world. But do we have what it takes? Do we dare to strive for something that big, and then co-create the solutions in order to make it happen?

What is the highest common cause that we as citizens in Denmark can strive for today?

The cause that we need to co-create, is to do with peaceful co-existence, sustainable living, and sustainable leadership. Sustainability, to me, is not a political slogan, but a way of life that involves acting in an economically, socially, and environmentally balanced way and living as sustainably as possible on an individual level. This is something that we can all work realising together.

How may we move in that direction?

We can enter into a dialogue about what is important and which common goals are worthy to set ourselves. That is a good place to start. A sensible approach would be to find the common causes that benefit us all and work together on achieving them; even if it is going to take time and practice. The internet, for instance, can – if we use it constructively – be an exercise in discovering and holding on to the understanding that we are all in this together, and maybe in the end discover that we all serve the same higher purposes as inhabitants of the same planet at this time in history where everything is undergoing great changes.

Can you mention any examples of communities where this has been put into practice?

In Denmark, there is the example of Glostrup municipality, where we – my partner Monica Nissén and I – planned and co-created a project in collaboration with a working group consisting of representatives of all the involved parties. This project enabled the citizens, the municipal council, and municipal leaders to co-create and decide on new guidelines and action plans concerning the diet and health of the elderly, the young and children. Each stage was carefully planned and allowed all parties to contribute. The five citizens' policies were quickly adopted and carried out in practice, because everybody had been part of creating them.

"This public participation process is what I am most proud of having taken part in as a politician" – former member of the municipal council in Glostrup.

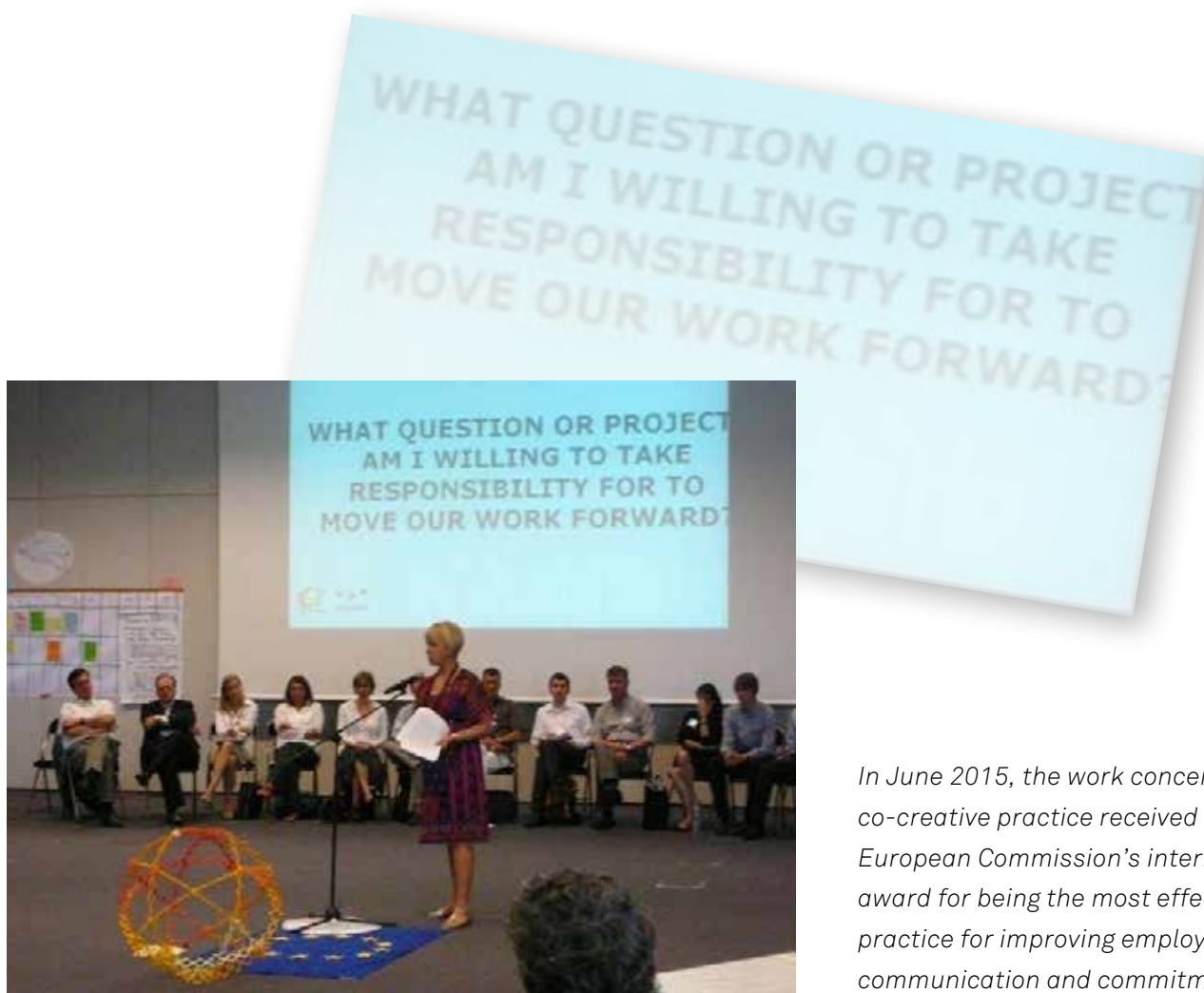
Another example of co-creation is the case of 10 minor schools in Nørrebro in Copenhagen being merged into five schools. The students, teachers, parents, school board, architects and local government drew up the foundations for the future collaboration, for the layout of the schools and the pedagogical aim.

The latest example is from May 2015. Here, 45 academics, officials and local stakeholders took part in a 'laboratory' at Aarhus University. The focus was on young people and outdoor spaces in the residential area Gellerup Park and on creating a common language across professions for the participants. The laboratory will continue in Berlin, Johannesburg, and New Orleans in the years to come, but the co-creative processes have already inspired the participants from Brabrand Housing Association to implement the method locally in the form of both smaller and larger projects.

“The process brings knowledge and skills into play. It is, so to speak, the positive version of the concept ‘groupthink’, where the collective knowledge of a group of people that have been quickly put together is collected and communicated within a short period of time”. - Henning Winther, director of Det Bolig-sociale Sekretariat, Brabrand Boligforening.

An example from outside of Denmark is Columbus, Ohio in the US, where the inhabitants were involved in developing the city’s health care system. We – Monica and I – got involved in 2004, when we trained leaders and citizens in how to co-create, and the project is still progressing well. At that time, 250 leaders and citizens began to develop a more humane, just and sustainable health care system for all the people living in Columbus; a city with one million inhabitants. With the headline: Our Optimal Health, they asked themselves: “How do we want to build a new health care system together, which is sustainable – both environmentally and economically – and which is available to all inhabitants of our city?” Today, half of the inhabitants have experienced a significant improvement in their health care options.

“By taking ownership of our city’s shared intelligence, we discovered that health, not illnesses – is the purpose of our health care system, several years before the rest of the US discovered the same thing” - Phil Cass, CEO at Columbus Medical Association.



In June 2015, the work concerning co-creative practice received the European Commission’s internal award for being the most effective practice for improving employee communication and commitment.

Toke, you have participated in the training of leaders from the EU Commission in practising co-creative leadership. How did that come about?

It was set in motion as a result of several internal strategic talks about important internal issues, and here the potential of a co-creative way of working was demonstrated. Since then, a capacity of more than 2000 active leaders has been built. This means that today, co-creating solutions across organisational silos is a common practice in the EU Commission, where they work on complex issues that have to work in the long term to the benefit of all Europeans. One example is a co-creative conference held in 2011 with the participation of 350 representatives from all 27 Member States by request from top politicians in the European Parliament. The outcome of this meeting was greatly influential on subsequent decisions made in Parliament.



EU Commission leaders participating in a strategic 'discussion café'

Thine Jensen, what insights have you gained concerning the necessity and relevancy of co-creative leadership when you look back at your long journey through companies and organisations in Denmark?

We spend enormous resources on change management where a consultant comes in and tells the company what to be and how to do things, and we are given tools to fix everything. However, in many cases, the tools we get to fix the “broken” things are the same tools that made them break in the first place. Or we are given tools that can fix a problem that has been removed from the context in which it originated.

We gladly receive these tools because they make us feel safe; we know them already. However, we do not remove the root of the problem; we only treat the surface. This is not beneficial. Think about all of the knowledge that we allow to get lost because we are so busy letting ourselves be controlled by mechanical metaphors, hierarchies and control. So why do we accept tools that are supposed to fix everything, as if there was a definitive solution?

I think that we need to become aware of the fact that organisations are living organisms that are constantly in motion because they are made up of people. And if we, as employees in organisations and companies, have contributed to discovering the most meaningful purpose and the best possible solution for all, we do not need the external consultant or change management. We already know that we are building a cathedral and, even more importantly, what it is going to look like, because we have taken part in drawing up the plans for it. When we are contributing and experience that we are needed, we are creating a space where we can meet each other as human beings and learn to recognise each other as human beings, because we have listened to each other and contributed with something of our own. And when we have taken part in the creation, we accept the solutions and decisions, because they are no longer something that is being forced upon us – nobody likes that. It is so obvious that creativity, motivation and good solutions are lost when we are busy responding and defending ourselves instead of listening to each other and asking questions. Unfortunately, I have seen this much too often, both as a consultant and as an employee, in an outside of Denmark.

More than anything else, it comes down to our relationships and how the words and metaphors we use shape reality. That says a lot about our view on the world. It is also important how we work together. The next level of leadership is co-creative in the way that the leader – instead of exercising his right to lead – allows the employees to contribute and replaces “I know best” with “I am listening to what you are saying” and leads in a way that reflects that. In that way, leadership becomes about genuinely expressing and showing that everybody can contribute.

How do you live up to being a genuinely co-creative leader?

Genuinely living up to it means that you, as a leader, truly believe that the contributions of others are valuable. That is the most important factor when you are beginning to practice co-creative leadership, as I see it. Unfortunately, not many people are able to do that, even though the will to do it is emerging in more and more associations, companies and organisations. Most of them push on and try to co-create inside the framework of their existing structures – they are, so to speak, driving a tractor on the motorway.

However, when we talk about co-creating, we need to be constantly aware of when it is sustainable to use this practice and consider when and where it is appropriate. In relation to administration and the day-to-day running of the company, there is a hierarchic structure and organisation in place that is excellent for dealing with the set procedures and routines. However, if we want to create, change and transform – and try to do it within the boundaries of the hierarchic structure, well, then we are ‘driving a tractor’. In those situations, it would be much more efficient and beneficial to utilise co-creative methods. As Einstein once said: “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”.

I believe that there is a fundamental desire in all people to contribute and participate. When we allow each other to contribute with what we each do best, we expand our individual and shared room to manoeuvre. We experience that we are needed. To me, this is the insight that leadership in 2015 must embrace if we are to create human innovation as well as growth. We also have to be open to the idea that learning, change and transformation always result in some degree of chaos.

How can we live with all the chaos that co-creating may bring?

When I was learning about theatre sports, we were taught never to say ‘no’ to each other. Only by saying ‘yes’, were we able to run with on each other’s ideas. When we, as leaders, are brave enough to do that, we get a lot further than we

ever dared believe was possible. This is how we can create joint solutions that last, because everyone has said 'yes' along the way. Therefore, if we want to achieve our goals, we need to relinquish control and stay in the learning process until the new solutions have been found. It is also this balancing act between order and chaos that makes it difficult to say yes, because we no longer exert the same degree of control over neither the process nor the results. This means that we simply have to practice, and this is where the consultant can justify his presence as a facilitator of the process.

For many people it is difficult to stand on the edge of this creative field between chaos and order, because they no longer are able to control things in the traditional sense – neither what happens along the way, nor the results. At the same time, the preparations for co-creation usually take longer than we are used to, and then we get impatient. Here, too, we need to practice and take the time it takes to define a goal that makes everybody want to say yes. Once we have made a good start, however, the mutually creative process accelerates quickly, and because everybody is on board from the beginning and has given it the thumbs up on the path towards the common goal, inspiring and innovative results appear that nobody had dared imagine, and a quick process of change occurs, because everybody knows what the change will mean to them and their daily lives. I like to call co-creation 'change management on speed', but the prerequisite is still that there is no predetermined result. You need to be brave enough to think more in terms of the circle, and everybody must be heard as equals. When everybody gets the opportunity to say who they are and why they are participating, the meeting becomes one where we acknowledge each other, and where the work is done in a different, more positive spirit than that which many of us have previously experienced as leaders, employees and citizens. Unfortunately, many leaders will say that there is not enough time to involve and listen to everybody. However, if you do not take that time, you miss out on a lot of knowledge, ideas and motivation, not least, which is the fuel of any process and the best foundation for any decision.

You talked about the essentials - the relationships in a company or organisation and joint solutions based on listening and respect. What do you notice when you look at Denmark?

Denmark is an innovative society – or rather, it is supposed to be, according to the politicians. However, for that to happen we need to build the structures and the culture of conversation that are required to support that development. In my view, there is too much focus today on the system, on the rules and on predetermined results. It stifles innovation and creativity. I believe that we should instead focus on getting to the core of the shared problem area and start asking the right questions from there, so that we can have those important conversations with each other. If we, at the same time, manage to create structures with room for the individual person and for our respective stories, we can go far. In her New Years' speech a couple of years ago, Queen Margrethe II asked a very poignant rhetorical question, "What if all the wars and discord that we see in the world are caused by the conversations that never took place?"

Which questions can help us initiate the conversations that have not previously taken place in companies and organisations?

Some of the typical questions that leaders ask me are, "How do we make the different departments work together, how do I become a better leader and why do our customers not understand what we are trying to say?" Of course, it is important that the leaders dare ask these questions, where they show their vulnerability and genuine desire to do better. Other questions that might spark good conversations and reflection could be:

- What lies behind the questions that we ask?
- What does it take to truly listen?
- What might become possible if we look past our own convictions?
- How can we lead in a way that brings out the best in others and ourselves?
- How can we develop the ability to meet and respect each other and work together in a way that lets diversity thrive?
- How may our organisation become a place of learning, individual and collective development and societal purpose?

Participatory citizenship

Taking ownership, expressing civic desire and being a co-leader will be the next level of democracy, where each of us can become co-creators in our families, our villages, associations, municipalities, in society and the world. The word 'democracy' hails from ancient Greek where 'demos' means 'the people' and 'kratos' has two meanings. In the entire modern era, we have emphasized the meaning 'rule', as in 'rule by the people'. The other meaning is 'purpose', and we are introducing that through increased use of co-creating. Could 'rule by the people' be replaced by 'purpose of the people'? That the people work in union towards the ultimate shared purpose?

Helle Solvang, how can we encourage citizenship and the will to actively participate in the democratic process?

At this time where we celebrate the 100th anniversary of women and the poor gaining the right to vote, and thus to influence the development of society, it seems obvious that we have reached a new chapter in our democratic history. In this country, when we talk about our democratic rights, we often ask, "What are my rights? And what are my obligations?" Now, I think, we need to ask some new questions in addition to these, such as, "How can I contribute as a citizen?", "How do I choose to use my vote?" and "Who do we want to be as a people?", also in the years between general elections. It will be important for each of us to ask what our contribution is to the common good, for instance in the form of good lives for children, a healthy environment, clean air, produce free from toxins and clean water for everybody on the planet.

So, contributing and taking responsibility are the keywords in how our way of practising democracy has to change and be renewed. For some time now, talking about responsibility has been belittled in the sense that we have allowed the responsibility to be carried on the shoulders of far too few people. We have not held back in defending our democracy; we have even gone to war to defend it and try to introduce it into other cultures. This is how we practice democracy today. Maybe we should be asking, "How are the democratic involvement of the people and the enlightenment actually holding up today?"

We need to work on developing our democracy, because our democratic heritage is definitely something that we can be proud of. I, personally, am deeply inspired by the story of how democracy in Denmark was born as the result of a deep crisis, namely the national bankruptcy in 1813, the failed participation in a war and ethnic unrest – which, in many ways, is paralleled today – and how it grew from initiatives like school reforms, teacher training as well as conversation salons about art and science. Democracy was upheld by visionary thinkers like Grundtvig and Kold and by entrepreneurs like the teachers and founders of the 'højskole' (folk high school), who translated these visions and succeeded in stimulating a people who were learning to read, think and develop business models like the co-operative movement. Many of the attractions and values that characterise Denmark's recent narrative of happiness and equality – as seen from outside – have been created through smart and increasingly equal conversations that have been born in the 30 years following the national bankruptcy. Among them are: the 'folkeskole' (municipal primary and lower secondary education) with equal access for boys and girls (1814), the folk high schools for everyone, including farmers (1844), the amusement park Tivoli for high and low (1843), Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales for adults and children alike (1830s and 1840s), a thriving Golden Age and, finally, the Assembly of the Estates of the Realm and the founding of democracy symbolised by the king surrendering his power to the people (1849). In this creating, creative and innovative environment after the crisis, the foundation was laid for our democratic, non-hierarchical way of thinking. It is truly motivating to see that such radically new thoughts and institutions were able to emerge in the course of such a relatively short period of time.

What is the status of co-creation and principles of equality in Denmark today?

Our history has resulted in one of the most egalitarian societies in the world with flat conversation and management structures that many foreigners observe with curiosity. Today, it seems to me that we rely too much on the assumption that we, as a people, are very advanced in this respect, to a degree where it has become a pretext for inaction in our society. Because the flat, non-hierarchic model only works if all parties actively take ownership and are ready to share the responsibility of leadership. Co-creative leadership is, for this reason too, a crucial new level for any political leader, for all business leaders and for every single citizen. So I believe that it is high time that we explore and challenge our own assumptions that Danes are so uniquely democratic and actively involved. Because are we really when we look at developments in trade, technology and globalisation? We need to get moving, and an obvious place to start is with a revitalisation of the historical model with the conversation salons and Assemblies of The Estates of The Realm and their ways of meeting in the time after 1813! Just in a new, inspiring format.

What would that look like here in 2015?

To answer that, I like to give a very concrete example. What would happen if, every time we began a meeting, we sat down in a way that allowed us all to actually see and say hello to one another. Where we met to discuss a larger, shared goal, gave it our full attention and felt responsible for the energy we brought to the table. Just practising the common courtesy of being aware of one another and checking how each person is doing, actively listening and being seen will help us take responsibility. Those are simple and uncomplicated gestures. And in a complex age, it is important that we can reach for something simple that works. In the national parliament of Denmark, and in many other parliaments around the world, the chairs are arranged in a circle or semicircle, which is brilliant. You cannot hide. You will be seen and heard. This is an inspiration for anyone arranging a meeting.



"If it is about them don't do it without them"

Co-creative leadership can prepare the ground for a more active citizenship in our society

Thine Jensen, where do you see a need for a different approach to citizenship in our society?

Just look at the local communities. Why is nobody listening to the people living there? You might argue that, of course, there are public hearings, but this type of hearings where the outcome is pretty much a given, do not leave much room for having new or big thoughts together. The agenda is often that the citizens must listen, not be listened to. Hopefully, this approach will soon be abandoned so that we may experience a change in behaviour. It is a must that leaders and administrators surrender some of their power, in the form of control and hierarchy, to the co-creating community, but also that the citizens, at the same time, take on a larger degree of responsibility. Only in this way may we enter a new paradigm of citizenship together. It is through speaking together and working together that we find the most sustainable and successful solutions, through co-creation. To me, the most important element in all co-creation processes is that we get to the core of the issue. We do that by asking questions like, "What is this really about and why is it important?" – "What is it really that we are trying to solve?" Often, the questions are more important than the answers!

Helle Solvang, where have you seen signs that a new level of citizenship is emerging?

In mindful conversation processes, you will often spend thirty minutes to an hour letting everyone have their say before the meeting is begun. Afterwards, everyone realises that precisely that hour turned out to be a very important part of the meeting and perhaps the most important prerequisite for making the co-creation work. In several countries, among others Scotland, Portugal and Denmark, political parties are now emerging who create their policies in collaboration with the citizens. Many municipalities are also now using circle methods in their work and invite citizens, associations, organisations and businesses in a genuine desire to co-create. In Denmark, there is the example of Holbæk municipality where they have years of experience with co-creation in relation to youth issues. Likewise, Nordfyn municipality, Odense and Kolding have opted for co-creation. They experiment with letting citizens control parts of the budgets. For instance, a part of the budget is delegated to the citizens of a particular part of the city, and they then get to decide for themselves how to spend the money. So, even though the opposite is still very often the case, where market forces shape the city's appearance and meeting places, we find a more satisfying, reproducible and scalable model in some of the more visionary municipalities. 150-300 years ago, our ancestors created a completely new form of government and paved the way for many people getting an education and being freed from serfdom and lords. It was a ground-breaking paradigm shift and improvement after a deep crisis. Today, we have to ask ourselves, "In what way would we like to contribute to a sustainable development in our time?" In Denmark, as in many other countries, we have an inordinate amount of meetings. And every meeting we participate in has the potential to become a tiny, sprouting seed of evolution. This means that it is crucial how we conduct these meetings. This is what these visionary pioneer municipalities have realised.

What are the prerequisites for co-creation to emerge between people in our meetings and conversations?

For the co-creative meeting to make sense, it has to have a higher purpose than a 'command and control' meeting where the decisions and results are put down in a script beforehand. The times when I have gained the most experience have been my broadcasts on the radio station P1, where I have interviewed hundreds of pioneers, changemakers, project managers and entrepreneurs. It does not work for me if the questions and answers are written down beforehand in a tightly controlled manuscript with every second accounted for, as is the norm in news broadcasts. It might work, but it bears little resemblance to a truly inquisitive and open conversation.

To me, a conversation space is always a unique opportunity to gain information and explore what is to be our common goal as world citizens in our time. The radio studio is particularly well suited to this, because most dedicated citizens and leaders grow when they enter such a concentrated space as a radio studio. They are prepared, the purpose is clear and the microphone is on. What should be guiding the conversation is curiosity, openness and questions in tune with the purpose. Many listeners notice the “many intelligent people I talk to on the radio”, and that is just magical. The concentrated space and the appropriate questions bring out the best potential in everybody. Be open, curious and clear. Co-create a purpose, ask questions that are in keeping with it and listen. Perhaps some of the questions that I ask dedicated people and leaders might unlock a way to move beyond the topical and sometimes elusive opinions of the day:

- What is the common thread in your life?
- What is the most important factor that has shaped your life?
- What seeds have you planted?
- How have you nurtured and used your talents?
- What kind of collaboration and leadership lies behind your results?
- How have you benefited from your experiences in the course of your life?
- When do you feel most alive?
- In what situations do you feel that you use your innate gifts in the best way?

What have your questions and experience taught you about what lies behind people's opinions and positions?

Well, the questions are simple, but also powerful. They bring out something universal and recognisable. The conversation, then, is no longer only relevant to those who hold the same or the opposing views. It becomes relevant to us all as fellow human beings. In that way, a door is opened to a new and deeper, shared dimension. Instead of quickly being defeated by the other person's opinions and positions because they go against your own, you begin by looking at the things that are fundamental and common to all. The questions are an invitation, and the answers you get are useful – in my view – for building communities, schools, societies and futures. If we share what we have learned from life, beyond opinions and positions, we extend an invitation to one another to be open and share the best of what we have. In the words of the Persian poet, Rumi, “Out beyond ideas of right and wrong doing, there is a field. I will meet you there.” It is in this way that a conversation may come to serve and mean something to many more than just those present, and reach far beyond the meeting itself.

Toke Paludan Møller, in what way does co-creative leadership relate to a more active citizenship today? What are your thoughts?

I often think about our own history, before our formalised democracy was founded, and where the king and the noblemen, in the age of absolute monarchy, could lead and do what they wanted to their subjects. Power is not bad in itself, but the question is how you use that power. As leaders, we are in a position where we can host co-creative learning processes where people may share their life experiences, their talent, their intelligence and their humanity and let others do the same.

Leadership and citizenship are closely connected – they rely on each other. Too much of one of them undermines the other and brings imbalance. But co-creative employees and citizens can improve our democracy. If you practice co-creation in your workplace, you quickly become better equipped for hosting and entering into co-creation in your local community. Hosting, co-creating, citizenship and democracy are not new concepts, but simple and powerful practices that anyone can learn. It is in our nature and history to host meetings and learn and co-create good solutions together and make wise decisions for the benefit of all. We are particularly well equipped for that here in the Nordic countries.

Personally, I gather energy and inspiration from history

Some years ago, I was invited to come train Aboriginal Canadian leaders from the Cree, Dakota and Ojibwe tribes in Winnipeg, Canada in co-creative leadership. One of the female leaders told me that it was the Vikings who brought advanced circle practice to the Cree tribe. My assumption up until that moment had been that the Aboriginal Canadian peoples had been the most advanced in the use of the circle as a tool for dialogue and deliberation, and not my own tribe, the Vikings. She continued, “The grandmothers of my tribe, who are the ones who keep our important stories alive, told me that more than a 1000 years ago, a Viking tribe sailed up the river and went ashore. When we discovered that they were as skilled warriors as ourselves, we welcomed them. After a few months where trust had grown between us, they taught us how to use the circle for council deliberations and for making wise decisions on behalf of the tribe”. I was astounded and moved by this instruction in my ancestors’ skills, and I realised that being educated in taking responsibility as a citizen is a positive element of our Viking-DNA. And we could easily work on strengthening that today.



“Who do we focus on in our work?”

Another inspiration from history is the Danish folk high school. The folk high school's founders and their understanding that the purpose of education is to create alert and active people, who are learning for life, not just for the diploma. The underlying purpose of the folk high school was and is that, through the learning process in the school, you become equipped to make conscious decisions about how you want to participate in the community and in society. It is training in active citizenship. But, of course, not all Danes attend a folk high school, so we must learn and inspire each other in the work place as well as at school, in our families and in our local communities.

In your experience, what does it take for us to step forward more consciously as co-creating citizens?

First of all, we probably have to begin to see ourselves as leaders in our own lives.

And then we can begin to ask questions like:

- Who am I when I lead?
- How do I lead myself?
- How do I cultivate my desire and ability to listen to others?
- How do I find the courage to work for the common good?
- How do I exercise my co-creation muscle?
- What keeps me inspired, focussed and aware of my fellow human beings?

We also need to make an extra effort not to lose our inspiration and civic desire when destructive things happen around us. Courage is the medicine that helps me when I am afraid and fearful. When I am afraid, I easily lose focus, but I can move through the fear and find my strength again by reminding myself about what I know in my heart works best in life. And what works best is moving in a direction that feels healthy and natural. If I practise seeing things as they are and do not distort them, and if I keep my compassion and humanity alive – no matter what happens.



When you harvest the essence of important conversations, you create opportunities for subsequent effective and powerful actions.

What is 'The Art of Hosting and Harvesting conversations that matter'?

The Art of Hosting is a highly effective way of setting free the collective wisdom and self-organising capacity of a group, no matter its size. It is a practice where you train and act out the art of hosting and harvesting conversations that matter. This practice is based on the assumption that people give their energy and lend their resources to what matters most to them – in work as in life. The Art of Hosting what matters blends a suite of powerful conversational processes that all invite people to step in and take on a little more responsibility for the challenges facing them. Groups and organisations using the Art of Hosting as a working practice experience a better culture of collaboration and a higher level of innovation that is built on many people's input and resources and that they, because of that, make better decisions on everybody's behalf.

People who experience this way of working and meeting typically say that they are inspired to begin having meetings and conversations in a way that makes them more thorough and effective and leads to better results for all.



A harvest of the essence of the entire article...

Toke Paludan Møller

*is co-founder of The Art of Hosting and Harvesting conversations that matter,
The Flow game and Warrior of the Heart Dojo.*

Thine Jensen

runs the company Interaktion.

Helle Solvang

hosts the program Sproglaboratoriet on P1 and also produces themes/features.

Links

The health sector in Columbus, Ohio – a large scale systemic Art of hosting and harvesting process since 2006, which has been greatly influential on the entire operating system of the health sector.

<https://prezi.com/1uuufbxc4xxw/our-optimal-health-the-beginning-to-the-purpose/>

Interview with Philip Cass, CEO of the Columbus Medical Association: **<https://vimeo.com/114123670>**

The EU parliament, where the results of the meeting became greatly influential on subsequent decisions that would further and support volunteer work across all of Europe

http://www.interchange.dk/download/Volunteer_conference_Newsletter_6withoutTC_654.pdf

List of co-created projects at Interchange by Toke Paludan Møller

<http://www.interchange.dk/resources/>

Insight into co-creative processes involving 200 citizens from all over the world from 2011 to 2013 with the Danish national bankruptcy of 1813 as starting point. The network still exists, and continues to inspire citizenship initiatives and sustainable societies.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43a7UOLS-ew>

The Gellerup project, URO LAB by Aarhus Universitet

http://uro.au.dk/fileadmin/uro/UROLab/URO_LAB_1_-_Newsletter_1.pdf

“Denmark 1813 - from crisis to possibility”- network

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/541868812506612/?fref=ts>

Series on P1 about crises and new opportunities, produced by Helle Solvang

<http://www.dr.dk/p1/danmark-og-bankerotten/>

P1 program about co-creation in Denmark, produced by Apropos

<http://www.dr.dk/p1/apropos/apropos-2015-06-01/>

Author summary

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Where community begins

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Libraries could become the new "learning playgrounds" for primary schools

Ida Marie Winge (1986), Cand.comm. (MA) in Journalism and Social Sciences from Roskilde University. At Roskilde University, Ida has worked intensively with concepts such as democracy, citizenship and social change in the context of the welfare state. Has volunteered in citizenship projects for Danish Red Cross Youth, the think tank Cevea and 3F, among others.

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Trampoline House – a learning space for democracy and citizenship

Morten Goll (1964), MFA from Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, US (interdisciplinary arts), 1999.
MFA from the Danish Academy of Art, Copenhagen, Denmark, (painting), 1993.

Morten is an artist, and for the last 25 years, has been working with painting, performance, video and drawing. Since 2001, his interest in socio-political issues has drawn him towards a greater degree of social commitment with the aim of creating social change. Since 2010, he is co-founder and day-to-day manager of Trampoline House, an independent citizens' centre in Copenhagen for refugees, asylum seekers and Danes.

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Co-creative leadership and active citizenship. Is there a connection?

Toke Paludan Møller (1948) has 40 years' experience as process manager and strategic advisor. He has a background as a professional conference planner and is the former national president of Dansk Iværksætter Forening. For several years, self-awareness, meditation and aikido have been part of how he practices personal leadership. He is the co-founder of Interchange, a process management business, which he has co-created with leaders, organisations, municipalities, networks, businesses, villages, NGOs and political departments all over the world. He is co-founder of The Art of Hosting and Harvesting conversations that matter, The Flow game and Warrior of the Heart Dojo.

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Thine Jensen (1972) has more than 15 years' experience in management communication and organisation development in private businesses as well as public institutions and NGOs, both in Denmark and internationally. Since 2007, she has run the company Interaktion, which helps people, teams and organisations move towards more sustainable management, development and change through strategic conversations and co-creation. She primarily works as a process consultant, facilitator and communication advisor for leaders and groups who work across areas of business and professional competencies.

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Helle Solvang (1967) has 20 years' experience at DR within the areas of art, culture and society. She currently hosts the program Sproglaboratoriet on P1 and also produces themes/features. For a number of years, she met with Danish pioneers and fireballs in the popular P1-show, VITA. She is a much-requested moderator and developer of conversations. After the financial crisis, she took steps to gather people from around the world who were interested in sustainable, educational and economic transition in a number of collective conversation salons exploring crises and opportunities in 1813 and today. Subsequently, she produced the acclaimed theme series, "Danmark og bankerotten" for P1.

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