

Employee Union - Representatives: Trajectories of learning and collective knowledge building in challenging times

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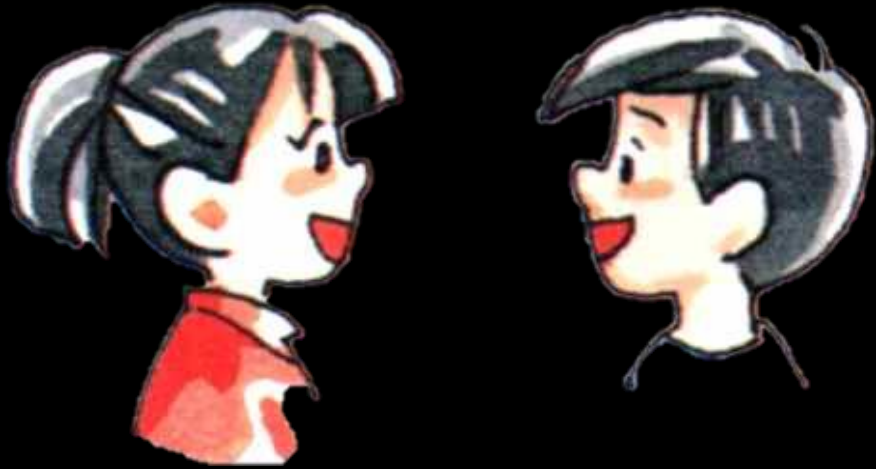
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Outline

- Introduction
 - Background
 - Research questions
 - Theories
- Methods
- Findings and discussion
- Conclusions and implications

Jonn's story



- Anne learned that by accepting a second opinion, she got support as well as new ideas for action.
- Tom learned the importance of consulting Anne for her version before accepting his colleague Jonn's words as truth
- Jonn learned that unions cannot do magic. The employer possess the freedom to manage.
- The local chapter learned the need to clarify the premises and expectancy before entering a case

So what?

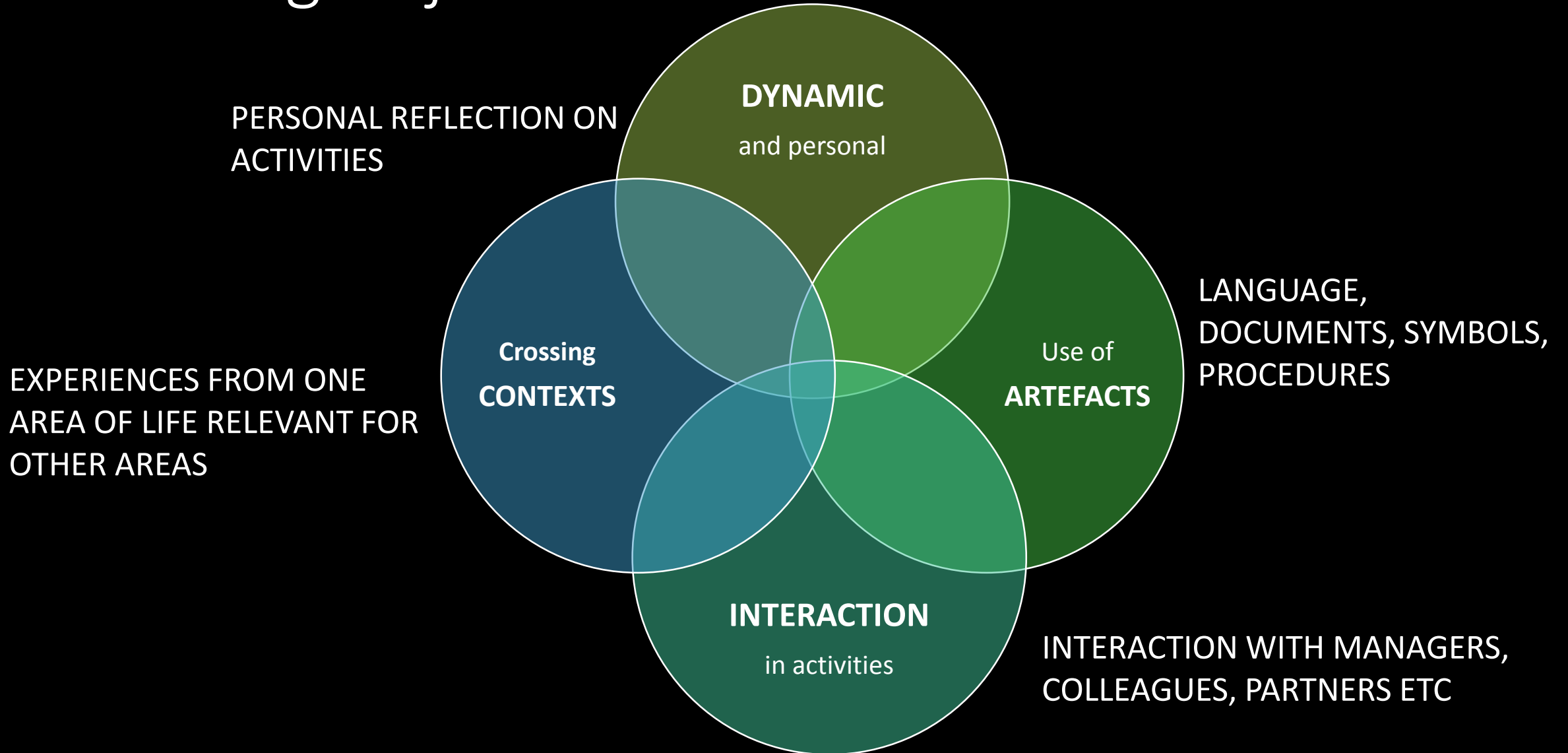
- Knowledge is power
- Formal and informal learning
- Learning by reflection
- Dual training systems



Questions:

- How do union representatives develop learning trajectories while working with their tasks, and
- How does the union act as a community of practice?

Learning trajectories



Communities of practice



Training in unions

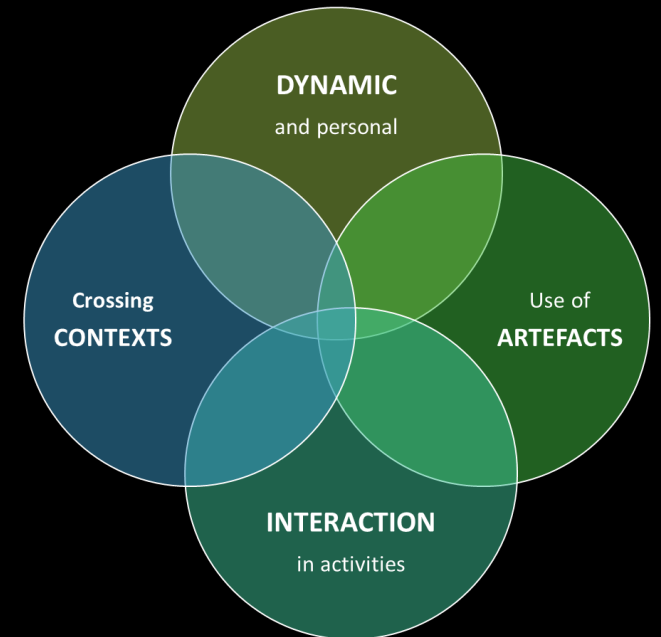
- Long traditions
 - Agreements employer – union
 - Union handbooks
- Training vs needs
 - Legislation and agreements, taught through lectures and personal reflection
 - Complex and situational challenges, taught by dialogue based methods and collective/group reflection

Methods

- Using ourselves and accepting our influence
- Pilot local chapter
 - How the representative achieve knowledge needed to do the job,
 - With whom the representative discuss the cases they handle,
 - To what extent cases are discussed and results debated within the local chapter, and
 - Whether the representative participate in formal training initiated by the union or not

Findings and discussion Q1

- Dynamic process
 - learning through activity, interaction more than instruction, personally meaningful
- The use of tools; reps search knowledge/information through
 - written sources/the net, by consulting colleagues in the local chapter or superiors in the union
 - different cultures in the merging chapters
- Interaction in activities; challenging cases are discussed with
 - the union secretariate, union chapter,
 - Faculty, immediate leaders
- Crossing contexts
 - roles: representative vs professional
 - merging institutions



Findings and discussion Q2

- Domain
 - Identity as union representative
 - Common understanding of major lines
 - Several lack a distinct understanding of the role and duties
- Community
 - Differences in trust and confidence in the community between merging institutions, campuses, individuals
 - Chapter leader, chief representative most central
 - Local community
- Practice
 - Practices differ, but slowly emerging
 - More information sharing than knowledge building

-> more of a working partnership than a CoP



Conclusion and implications

- all arenas were reps meet, formal and informal, represents a potential for learning and should be regarded as so
- as learning trajectories are personal, and learning take place by contrasting, comparing and reflecting, more dialogue based methods should be addressed in training
- developing a CoP require time and togetherness; a great challenge during organisational change and mergers.
- Work in progress

Selected literature

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