

Young People in the Nordic Region  
– Mental Health, Work, Education

# **CREATING PARTICIPATION FOR YOUTH WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

- Cross-sector collaboration between public services  
and the civil society in Denmark and Sweden.



**norden**

Nordic Centre for  
Welfare and Social Issues



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# CONTENT

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<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Resume .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Recommendations .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>12</b>
Creating participation and change across welfare sectors .....	12
<b>Background.....</b>	<b>13</b>
Participation and marginalization among young adults with mental health problems .....	13
Clarification of the term ‘young adults with mental health problems’ .....	14
New tendencies in social services.....	15
Welfare mix and hybrid arrangements .....	18
<b>Theoretical inspiration .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Storytelling and positioning in hybrid practices .....	20
<b>Methodology .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Case study.....	24
Case A: partnership between social psychiatry and culture house.....	25
Case B: collaboration between study center and public players .....	25
Case C: partnership between activity center and voluntary sports organization .....	27
Fieldwork and interviews .....	27
<b>Analysis of three cases .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Partnership between social psychiatry and culture house .....	29
<i>Co-governance with the civil society.....</i>	<i>29</i>
The civil society as an opposite to the social psychiatry service .....	29
The civil society as a diverse community.....	29
The underlying paradoxes in the collaboration with the civil society .....	31

<b>Creating change in the culture house.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>A strong narrative of an inclusive environment .....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>The ambiguous positions of the agents of change in the culture house .....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Barriers and dilemmas as agents of change in the culture house .....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>The young adults' narratives of the culture house as a free and diverse community.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Dilemmas and barriers for participating in a more boundless practice.....</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>Possibilities and barriers for transcending marginalization through the culture house.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Collaboration between study center and public players .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Co-governance with a voluntary sports organization.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<i>Close collaboration as an important contributor to recovery .....</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>The social enterprise as a complementary social service .....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Learning across sectors.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>A vulnerable economic situation and competition for market share.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Dilemma of philanthropic particularism.....</i>	<i>53</i>
<b>Creating change in the study center.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<i>A strong narrative of personal engagement.....</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Creating internal and external network .....</i>	<i>56</i>
<i>Barriers and dilemmas facing agents of change in the social enterprise.....</i>	<i>57</i>
<i>The young adults' narratives of the social enterprise as a link to     education and personal development.....</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Possibilities and barriers for transcending marginalization through the social     enterprise.....</i>	<i>62</i>
<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>65</b>

<b>Partnership between activity center and voluntary sports organization .....</b>	<b>67</b>
Co-governance with a voluntary sports organization.....	67
<i>Close collaboration as an important contributor to recovery .....</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>The voluntary sports organization as a contributor to user involvement.....</i>	<i>68</i>
<i>The challenges and limitations of the described hybridity .....</i>	<i>68</i>
<b>Creating change in the activity center .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<i>Narratives of contradictory logics.....</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>The position of the agents of change as facilitators.....</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>The challenges of undefined positions in the activity center.....</i>	<i>72</i>
<i>The challenges and dilemmas of registration and evaluation .....</i>	<i>74</i>
<i>The young adults' narratives of expectations .....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>The young adults' narratives of personal development .....</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>The construction of certain narratives of mental health problems.....</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Possibilities for and barriers to transcending marginalization through the activity center.....</i>	<i>78</i>
Summary .....	80
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Extended recommendations .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>References .....</b>	<b>86</b>

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## PREFACE

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The Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues project, Youth in the Nordic Region – Mental Health, Work, Education, is commissioned by the Nordic Council of Ministers for Health and Social Affairs. The main aim is to provide knowledge that will be useful in developing initiatives for young people at risk of mental ill-health and social marginalisation. One objective of the Nordic countries is sustainable welfare, and one area of focus is the work to prevent mental ill-health, early retirement and exclusion, and to promote rehabilitation. One constant challenge is how to ensure social security at a time when the labour market is undergoing constant change. The direct target group for the project is politicians, officials, practitioners and researchers in the Nordic countries, and the indirect target group comprises the young people aged 16-29 who are at risk of exclusion.

### PREFACE

The aim of this project is to generate useful knowledge and to describe measures directed towards the group of vulnerable young people at risk of exclusion or early retirement. Sharing of experiences between Nordic countries is particularly valuable.

Dividing responsibility for vulnerable young people between public, private and third-sector players is expected to improve welfare, but this requires active coordination and collaboration. All countries have been affected by global processes that have brought about structural changes in how cross-sectoral youth initiatives are organised, and the third sector is gaining an increasingly important role. In the cross-sectoral work we can see an openness and curiosity about new ways to improve participation and inclusion of young adults with mental health problems. Here, the social services are very important. Young adults with mental health issues often describe challenges in their everyday lives that are very complex and often related to mental, physical, and social problems. Tackling these issues necessitates a coordinated approach where support is provided across services and welfare sectors. These welfare services are delivered through a mix of the public, private and third sectors, as well as through families, households and social networks.

In this publication you can read about three different partnerships and collaborations between the public sector and third sector, and how these provide social services to young adults with mental health problems. The study examines how the various players participate and construct change in these hybrid arrangements, with the aim of helping young adults in Denmark and Sweden overcome or avoid marginalisation.

The report also considers how these partnerships and collaborations produce different discursive environments that construct and enable different processes of participation and change among the

players. The overlap or intersection between social institutions and the third sector creates spaces or practices where new opportunities and challenges for citizen participation and user involvement emerge. Hybridity might increase if the public sector became more pluralistic.

We wanted to find social services where players from different sectors and the local community worked together in providing everyday support to young adults with mental health problems. After a long search we found these three cases. We hope the report will provide inspiration and constructive ideas.

Special thanks to Sine Kirkegaard, doctoral student at Roskilde University, who spent over eight months observing and participating in three hybrid organisations. Sine also interviewed 60 people, analysed all the material, and wrote this report.

Many thanks to Sine's two supervisors, Trine Wulf-Andersen, PhD, and Professor Linda Lundgaard-Andersen at Roskilde University, who provided support and valuable input.

Last but not least, thanks to all the young people and the professionals in the three hybrid organisations for welcoming Sine into their everyday work and sharing their experiences.



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## RESUME

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The purpose of the project has been to investigate how different Nordic welfare services in cooperation across sectors create participation and change for young adults with mental health problems. Partnerships and co-production across welfare sectors have become a popular policy discourse and a prescription for many professionals across a wide range of public services. Within the area of mental health services, it has been suggested that the support should be designed more around the need of the users than around professional concerns. A more active involvement of users and other civil players in the care is regarded as a fundamental contributor to this process. However, there is still a lack of empirical studies investigating practices where professionals, volunteers and young adults with mental health problems collaborate and interact in everyday activities. This report is a contribution to this gap in the literature.

Using three case studies set in partnerships between various public and civil players, this report investigates how change and participation are constructed within different institutional arrangements in Denmark and Sweden. The empirical data comprises ethnographic field notes and 60 interviews with leaders, professionals, volunteers, and young adults with mental health problems. The discourses and narratives

constructed in the cases are analysed to understand the rationalities and values produced in the different cross-sectoral collaborations. The transformation processes of professionals, volunteers, and young adults are analyzed to understand their positioning and negotiation of participation and change in the hybrid practices.

The analysis shows that the partnerships and collaborations across sectors consist of both common values and contradicting logics that make the interactions both productive and challenging. Underlying paradoxes in the collaborations generate a certain form of hybrid governance that can be difficult for the players in practice to navigate within. However, the case studies also provide evidence that cross-sectoral collaboration and interaction create some unique possibilities for promoting participation and inclusion of young adults with mental health problems. The hybridity of the practices creates a complexity where new work roles and positions are produced for the players involved. The three case analyses underline that the hybridity is produced and negotiated in different ways, which leads to diverse outcomes for the young adults' possibility of transcending marginalization.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

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On the basis of the three case studies, some general recommendations are made. The purpose of these recommendations is to inform policy makers and other players interested in the field. Hopefully, they can learn from this investigation and obtain valuable knowledge for further development of the practice.

***Valuable collaboration and co-creation across sectors demands time and resources***

The analysis of the three cases demonstrates that collaboration and co-creation across sectors can promote participation and positive change for young adults with mental health problems. However, it is a process that demands time and resources. In the brief review of cases in Denmark and Sweden, it was very difficult to find examples of where the players worked together across sectors as routine practice. A partnership

is an ongoing and challenging process, and it is important to establish resources that can support dialogue and participation between the players. It is important to create encounters for these discussions, because different types of resources and competences are required to sustain a hybrid practice with different players and networks involved.

***Create possibilities for reflection and discussion of the positions of welfare professionals and volunteers within the hybrid practice***

Welfare professionals and volunteers need to learn how to operate within a hybrid practice, which demands certain skills and competences. It is important to discuss and consider what consequences the different positions and role transitions have for the roles and rationality of the professionals and volunteers.



### ***Create and facilitate network among young adults***

In the three cases, the young adults emphasize it as something positive when the professionals support the facilitation of network and social relations. They feel comfortable when professionals are available in the activities, but finding a balance in how much they need to be involved is difficult. Many of the young adults distance themselves from more protected environments, while others describe these as necessary for their sense of belonging. Therefore, it is very important to involve the young adults in this process, and to create different ways to participate.

### ***Create a different mix of meaningful activities***

The possibility of participating in a different mix of activities is important in the process of transcending marginalization. The young adults report participation in different activities together with others as meaningful. The mix of activities supports the construction of different positions and processes of change, where the voluntary participation is an important aspect. The young adults can change position and gain recognition through these different and meaningful activities.

### ***Create and facilitate links to the local community***

Many of the young adults explain that they want to be part of communities with other young adults, without feeling stigmatized as mentally ill. It is important that the professionals support this process, because some of the young adults find it difficult to take these steps by themselves. The young adults must themselves be involved in the process of defining the relevant communities or arenas. It is also important to support the professionals' process of establishing networks with different players in the local communities, such as voluntary organizations, educational institutions, and the job market, because these arenas are important collaborators in the process of sustainable and long-term inclusion of young adults.

### ***Challenge the institutional requirements***

Institutional requirements of a certain and narrow understanding of change need to be challenged. They are produced both internally and externally, but it is important to challenge and question these different discourses and rationalities. A broader understanding of a meaningful life must be developed, and the young adults must be involved in this definition process.



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# INTRODUCTION

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## CREATING PARTICIPATION AND CHANGE ACROSS WELFARE SECTORS

The current welfare discourse consists of an increased focus on cooperation between the public, private, and third sectors. The cooperation has various names, such as welfare pluralism, partnership, co-production, and co-creation. These trends have created a new situation where it is important to investigate the intersection and collaboration across traditional boundaries. In this project, partnerships and collaborations across sectors in Denmark and Sweden were mapped within the area of social services for young adults with mental health problems.

Three different cases of good practice were identified for further investigation. These three cases illustrate different partnerships and collaborations between the public sector and the third sector, aimed at developing and providing social services to young adults with mental health problems. We explore how the different players participate and construct change in relation to transcending marginalization among young adults in Denmark and Sweden. The empirical data consists of ethnographic fieldwork and 60 qualitative interviews conducted in the three cases with different players: employees and volunteers from the public and third sectors, and young adults with mental health problems aged 18-30. The group of employees consists of different welfare professionals, such as leaders, social workers, teachers, coaches, and peer workers.

I analyze how these partnerships and collaborations produce different discursive environments that narratively construct and enable different processes of participation and change among the players. The different governance strategies and values in the partnerships and collaborations are analyzed in order to understand the possibilities and challenges in these hybrid arrangements. The three different hybrid practices are investigated to understand how these discursive environments shape and construct participation and change in the interaction between the different players. These processes of change produce both barriers and possibilities for transcending marginalization among young adults with mental health problems.



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## BACKGROUND

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### **PARTICIPATION AND MARGINALIZATION AMONG YOUNG ADULTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

In the Nordic countries, there is increasing concern about the stability of social cohesion and the ability of the welfare states to secure inclusion and participation of those in marginalized positions. Debates on participation and marginalization seem to dominate the agenda in many European countries.

Participation and marginalization can be understood as twin concepts. They express the opposite side of the same process experienced by individuals and communities. They are two normative concepts, as it is expected that people struggle to avoid marginalization, but participation and marginalization can also be understood as subjective. From a subjective point of view, the understanding of participation and marginalization can vary greatly from the outside looking in. People can be categorized as a marginalized group by their surrounding society, without the individuals themselves feeling marginalized. Interest has been growing in people being able to play a more active part in society and local communities, as citizens, service users, and patients. Active citizenship has become a shared ambition across welfare services. However, a growing number of specific groups of people are in marginalized positions and excluded from participation (Beresford, 2013; Matthies & Uggerhøj, 2014).

Young adults with mental health problems are a group who experience exclusion and a lack of participation in different aspects of everyday life (Olsen & Tägtström, 2014). These people evidently face many barriers in becoming involved, which can be reinforced by exclusion of their perspective in public debate and policy making (Beresford, 2013). In the past 15-20 years there has been an increased focus on people's mental health. This is because of the large number of people diagnosed with mental health problems, and the recognition of mental health as an important barrier for participation in social relations, education, and employment (Due et al., 2014). Studies indicate that most mental disorders in high-income countries are seen among young people aged 16-24 (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010).

The Nordic countries in general have better physical health and material living conditions than other European countries, yet the number of young people in the Nordic region with mental health problems seems to be increasing (Olsen & Tägtström, 2014). The group of young adults with mental health problems is very heterogeneous, but there are still some common patterns in their narratives of the exclusion processes that many of these young adults experience in their everyday life. Youth unemployment is an increasing problem in several of the Nordic countries, and the number of young adults on disability pension due to mental health problems is also rising (Olsen & Tägtström, 2014, Hultqvist, 2015).

These are some of the challenges that the Nordic welfare states are facing regarding participation of young adults with mental health problems. Many studies show a link between stressful life events and a variety of mental health problems (Jordanova et al., 2007), so it is also important to understand the young peoples' own narratives and construction of change in their lives. To understand the processes of marginalization and participation among young adults with mental health problems, it is essential to grasp these narratives, but it is also important not to analyze them as isolated individual events. In the field of social research there is a need to extend the analysis of marginalization beyond a psychological process, and to understand it as part of a broader socio-cultural context (Mikkonen, 2014).

## CLARIFICATION OF THE TERM 'YOUNG ADULTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS'

Diagnoses are individualized and do not tell us much about the different circumstances and exclusion processes leading to these young adults' marginalized position in society. Mental health problems can be both diagnosable disorders and conditions bordering on diagnosable disorders (Olsen & Tägtström, 2013). There is an ongoing debate about whether or not research contributes to the reproduction and stigma of these young adults when we use expressions such as 'young people at risk', 'vulnerable youth', and 'young adults with mental health problems'. It has been argued that many of these categorizations help to individualize the problems, meaning that the problems are often identified and investigated in the young adults instead of focusing on circumstances around them (Neidel, 2014). Furthermore, the expressions are very broad and cover many different aspects of the problems (Larsen, Thingstrup, & Wulf-Andersen, 2014). In this investigation I use the term 'young adults with mental health problems', as I am investigating different social interventions where this category is their target group.



Another unclear and confusing term is 'young adults'. The divisions between categories like childhood, youth and adulthood are not clear, as they are a cultural and social construction. These categories are always being constructed and reconstructed in different contexts, situations, and across time and space. The categories have discursive power and control that also determine and shape these young adults' participation in everyday life (Bengtsson, 2012). The transition from youth to adulthood is often understood and defined from contradictions between the two lifespans. Youth is often described as a period where things are more out of control and involves a potential risk of danger (Nayak & Kehily, 2008). In research many studies have focused on either young peoples' cultural expression or their transition to adulthood. The research on young peoples' transitions has focused on the structural circumstances as the main factor in understanding the young people's lives. This perspective has been criticized for having a mechanical understanding that does not capture the complexity of the transitions. In the past decade, more studies have acknowledged this dilemma, and recognized that there is not just one theoretical perspective that can capture the complexity.

In this investigation, I follow this argument, as I believe that young peoples' lives and cultures are best understood as social constructions based on intersections of ethnicity, gender and class (Bengtsson, 2012; Nayak & Kehily, 2008). The young adults in this investigation are aged 20-30. This broad age range means that these people both see themselves as young people and as adults, depending on the individual, but it also varies from different situations and contexts.

## **NEW TENDENCIES IN SOCIAL SERVICES**

The Nordic welfare governments are searching for new ways to involve and secure participation and inclusion of young adults with mental health problems. Here, social services are very important. Young adults with mental health problems often describe challenges in their everyday lives that are very complex and often related to both mental, physical, and social problems (Bengtsson & Knudsen, 2014). Consequently, some of them require a coordinated approach that involves support across services and welfare sectors. These welfare services are delivered through a mix between the public, market and third sectors, as well as through families, household and social networks (Evers, 2005; Matthies & Uggerhøj, 2014).

In the Nordic countries it has traditionally been the welfare governments' responsibility to develop and deliver professional help and treatment. Research shows that, among young adults with mental health problems, many have had negative experiences relating to these welfare services (Claveirole, 2004; Rutter et al., 2004). Transitions from one system to another or collaboration between different professionals have been described as significant barriers to receiving sufficient help and treatment. Many young adults with mental health problems are getting support and treatment from professionals, but research also indicates that young adults are experiencing different barriers when it comes to seeking help. A meta-review of international studies indicates that only 18-34 % of young people with high levels of anxiety symptoms or depression seek professional help (Gulliver et al., 2010). The young people perceive stigma and embarrassment as some of the barriers to seeking help, while they also experience problems



recognizing their symptoms, and prefer self-reliance (Gulliver et al., 2010). The relationship to the professional is therefore an important factor in how young adults experience their contact with the social and mental health systems.

The relationship between professional and user has long been identified as a cornerstone of social work (Alexander & Charles, 2009). A Swedish study shows that the quality of the relationship between professional and user is one of the most significant factors in the recovery process (Denhov & Topor, 2012). Professionals are expected to establish a relationship with the user to bring about change and achieve goals, but at the same time they are expected to remain professional (Alexander & Charles, 2009). This represents a well-known dilemma in social work between autonomy and governance (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2012).

The interaction between professional and user has been investigated within a broad field of social work and in many different contexts (Andersen, 2014a; Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2012; Mik-Meyer & Villadsen, 2007; Nissen, 2012; Uggerhøj, 2003). These studies show that in some cases the governance of the individual leads to a very narrow categorization of problems, which excludes users who do not fit into a specific category. In other cases, the power relationship can be productive and create tran-

scendence of marginalization. However, more research is needed to understand the specific components in these relationships between young adults with mental health problems and the professional (Denhov & Topor, 2012).

Another important factor in the recovery process is social networks. In the past 10-15 years it has become clear that recovery from a mental illness is a process in which social relationships and everyday life play a key role (Bengtsson & Røgeskov, 2007; Neidel, 2014; Schön, Denhov, & Topor, 2009). Consequently, strategies to promote participation cannot only be individualized and delivered within the public welfare settings. These young adults often live most of their lives outside these institutions and need to be included in the local communities where they live. Social networks and local communities are an important resource in the recovery process and an important collaborator in the creation of an inclusive society (Socialstyrelsen, 2013). In recent years, there has been a rediscovery of the community and its potential for creating social inclusion of marginalized groups (Taylor, 2003). New forms of social services are emerging and challenging the traditional patterns of production (Verschuere, Brandsen, & Pestoff, 2012).

## WELFARE MIX AND HYBRID ARRANGEMENTS

In recent years, we have seen the growth of hybrid arrangements in the provision of public services, particular in the field of social services (Brandsen, Donk, & Putters, 2005). An increasing number of publications and studies have also focused on the ‘third’ domain between state, market, and community. In the Nordic countries, the area of third sector research was relegated to the forgotten fields of welfare research for a relatively long time, but in the 1990s this research field started to grow rapidly (Matthies, 2006). The literature often contains differing and unclear use of the concept, and terms like ‘non-profit sector’, ‘civil society’, ‘third sector’, and ‘voluntary sector’ are used. The academic debate has repeatedly discussed the relationship between the third sector and the state, particularly the ability of the third-sector organizations to combine the role of being an advocate for change with that of a service provider (Pestoff, 2014). Some researchers argue that it is easier to find constellations or organizations that are hybrid in their form than those with an ideal typical notion (Brandsen et al., 2005).

By definition, hybrids are the offspring of two different species, and the concept has its origins in biology. In the management and organization literature, the term has been used to describe organizations that span institutional boundaries (Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014). According to Victor Pestoff (2014), hybridity is assumed to increase as the public sector becomes more pluralistic. He argues that co-production increases hybridity and complicates the governance of third-sector organizations (Pestoff, 2014). The overlap or intersection between social institutions and the third sector creates spaces or practices where new opportunities and challenges for citizen participation and user involvement emerge.

Co-production is one such innovation and refers to the ways in which service users, supervisors, and members of communities can be involved in the development and delivery of services (Fenge, Fannin, & Hicks, 2011; Pestoff, 2012). Pestoff and Brandsen (2009) define this co-operation at three different levels: co-governance, co-management, and co-production:

“Co-governance as an arrangement, in which the third sector participates in the planning and delivery of public services, Co-management as an arrangement, in which third sector organizations produce services in collaboration with the state; and Co-production as an arrangement where citizens produce their own services at least in part” (Pestoff & Brandsen, 2009: 8).

The three levels can co-exist and are not limited in time and space. The current welfare discourse is very positive regarding such partnerships and co-operation across sectors. However, this welfare pluralism is also very challenging and not only creates more cooperation, but also competition. These trends have created a situation where it may be more important to investigate what is happening in the intersection between the public, private and third sector instead of focusing on what is happening within each sector (Jensen, 2015).

According to Billis (2010), research into hybridity is characterized by three different approaches. The first approach understands hybridity and hybrid organizations as a continuum between sectors. The second approach has a single-sector perspective, which implies an understanding of where organizations have roots in one particular sector. A study using this approach will usually be concerned with either the public or the private sector, with a distinct focus on the specific sector characteristics in the analysis of the organization. The third understanding of hybridization and hybrid organizations has gone one step further, with the argument that hybridization is a permanent feature in the welfare society (Brandsen et al., 2005). In this approach the sector metaphor is replaced with an understanding where hybridity is a core principle and part of the organizations' identity (Billis, 2010; Brandsen et al., 2005). This perspective challenges the welfare triangle and the sector approach as represented by several European third-sector scholars (Evers, 2005; Pestoff, 2014). On the other hand, it is argued that more and more players have appeared to end up in hybrid quadrants, because it is not only the third sector that is divided into many segments; how-

ever, these segments are also fuzzy and hybrid, and there will be no fundamental distinction between what we understand as third sector, community, market or state. According to this view, it is more appropriate to analyze the third sector as a part of society where competing values and methods coexist in the attempt to produce and deliver social services (Brandsen et al., 2005).

In many ways, the idea of sectors is complicated and ambiguous. Sectors operate at different levels and the abstract ideas concerning specific features belonging to each sector are likely to contrast with people's everyday experiences. However, the boundary between each sector is real in the sense that it is governed by specific rules and many people still associate specific characteristics with each sector: "This is part of the paradox of hybridization; although sector realities may become hybridized, ideas about sector continue to carry important meanings" (Lewis, 2010: 223).

Hybridization not only affects the delivery of social services, but studies also shows that it has an impact on the people participating in these hybrid zones (Lewis, 2008). Crossing boundaries can be seen as a form of work role transition where people will try to adjust and make sense of their new practice (Lewis, 2010). Some studies show that hybrid spaces with no clear boundaries create positive change and inclusion of people in marginalized positions (Rosenberg, 2013). There is increasing research interest in developing theory and investigating processes of hybridization, but there is a lack of empirical studies investigating the phenomena in practice (Evers, 2008).

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# THEORETICAL INSPIRATION

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## STORYTELLING AND POSITIONING IN HYBRID PRACTICES

This investigation is inspired by the theory of social interactions in institutional settings or discursive environments. I use storytelling and positioning as analytic tools to understand three hybrid practices. This theoretical approach enables a way to interpret practices where the construction of coherence is diverse and interactive (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). Gubrium and Holstein understand institutions as ‘discursive environments’ and by this they mean:

“Interactional domains characterized by distinctive ways of interpreting and representing everyday realities. Institutions or environments can take many different forms as job interviews, therapy sessions, medical interviews, schools etc.” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998).

These everyday institutional arrangements surround and frame the storytelling. They are arranged to produce particular kinds of narratives that are in line with predetermined stories (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). In some ways, such institutional contexts provide normative expectations, but they cannot control conversations completely: “Orienting to practice allows us to see the storytelling process as both actively constructive and locally constrained” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998: 2).

Following this theoretical understanding, the narratives of change in hybrid practices will be analyzed to investigate the discursive environment and the production of selves. Holstein and Gubrium argue that institutional selves are “... locally salient images, models, or templates for

self-construction; they serve as resources for structuring selves” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2001: 11). Individuals do not have equal opportunities in the matter of choosing discursive arrangements for construction of selves; socially and economically privileged groups often have more opportunities. People in marginalized positions, such as young adults with mental health problems, may be excluded from some of these discursive arrangements and interactions (Andersen, 2014a; Gubrium & Holstein, 1998).

In addition to understanding these processes of personal stories and their coherence in practice, the relation between ‘how’ and ‘what’ of narration will be analyzed (Andersen, 2014b; Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). The young adults with mental problems, professionals, and volunteers in the three different cases tell narratives in the process of recovery. The focus in the analysis will be on ‘how’ the construction of stories takes place in hybrid practices. The ‘what’ concerns the stories told or the content of these stories, so storytelling is both a contextualized and interactive process (Andersen, 2014b; Gubrium & Holstein, 1998).

The interactional perspective provides a framework for understanding the construction and development of narratives and selves in discursive environments such as hybrid practices. In addition to developing this perspective, it is relevant to involve the concept of positioning. In accordance with Harré and Davies (1991), I understand positioning as a:

“... discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story




lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. However, it would be a mistake to assume that, in either case, positioning is necessarily intentional. One lives one's life in terms of one's ongoing produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production.” (Harre & Davies, 1991: 8)

This understanding of positioning as a process offers a dynamic and changeable tool for analyzing what it is that people do in interactions with each other. If we are to come close to understanding how young adults with mental health problems, professionals, and volunteers actually interact and participate in hybrid practices, we need this metaphor. People are constituted in positions or they negotiate new positions by refusing the position the narratives made available:

“... we are constituted in one position or another within the course of one story, or even come to stand in multiple or contradictory positions, or to negotiate a new position by 'refusing' the position that the opening rounds of a conversation have made available to us.” (Harre & Davies, 1991: 15)

Investigation of three hybrid practices will allow an analysis of which multiple positions are available, constituted, refused, and re-produced in the social interactions. In this process of positioning, it is important to be aware that these processes are not necessarily intentional or optional for the players involved. These theoretical perspectives of both storytelling and positioning offer an analytic tool for understanding the construction of participation and change in hybrid practices.

A stylized map of the Nordic region, including Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and the Arctic region, is shown in white against a blue background. The map is positioned in the upper left corner of the page.

*The Nordic co-operation involves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland and*

## **NORDIC CENTRE FOR WELFARE AND SOCIAL ISSUES – AN INSTITUTION UNDER THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS**

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Although there are some national differences in the Nordic welfare systems, there are also great similarities between the countries. National differences provide opportunities for comparison and learning from each other's experiences. The Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues is a key-actor in explaining, supporting and developing the Nordic welfare model.

Our work aims at developing strategic input to politicians, compiling research findings and arranging Nordic and international conferences on current welfare issues.

### **Our focus areas are:**

- Welfare policy
- Disability issues
- Labour market inclusion
- Alcohol and drug issues
- Welfare technology

## **Nordic Council of Ministers**

The Nordic Council of Ministers is the official inter-governmental body for co-operation in the Nordic region. The ministers within each specific policy area meet a few times a year to collaborate on matters such as working life issues, social and health policy, and education and research.

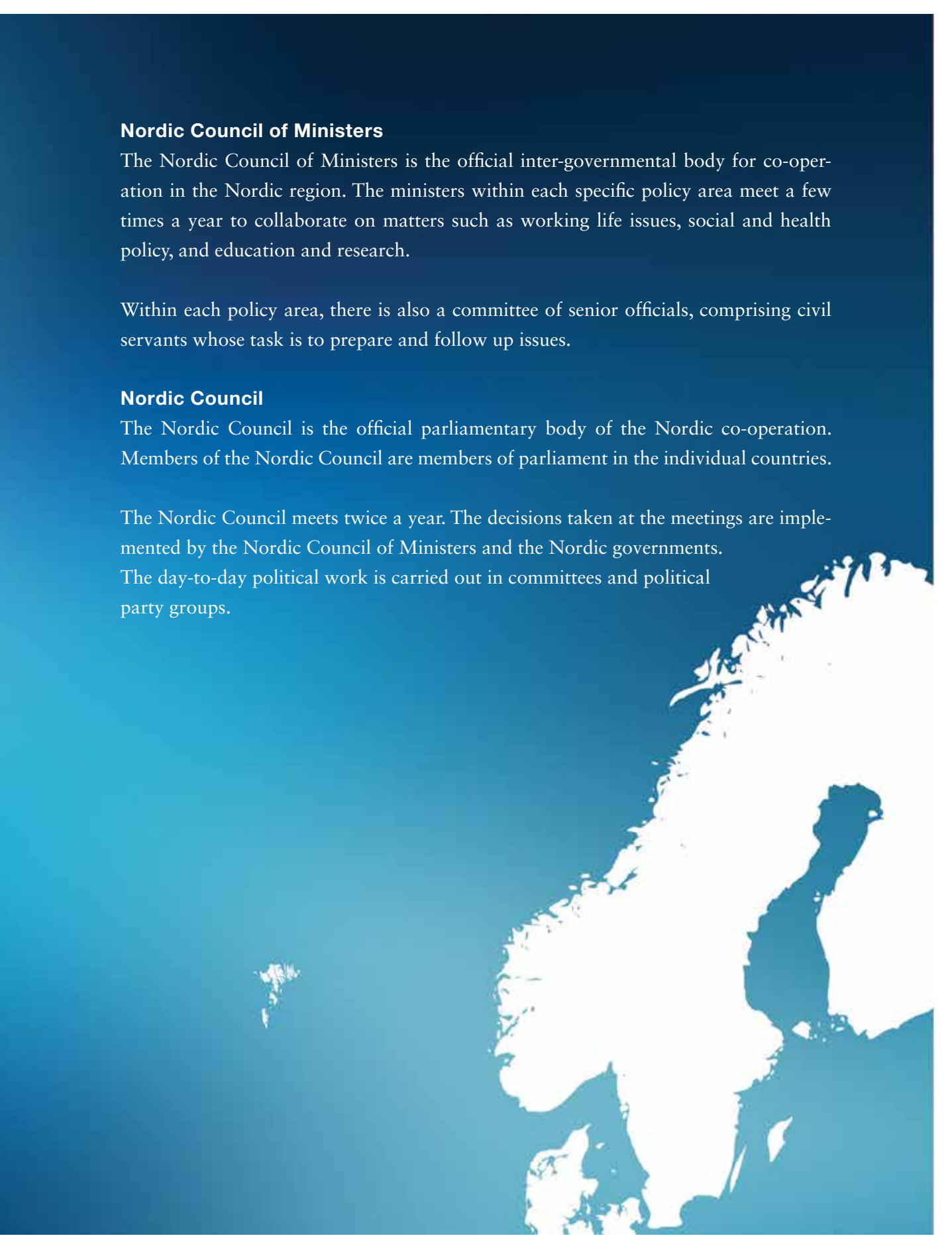
Within each policy area, there is also a committee of senior officials, comprising civil servants whose task is to prepare and follow up issues.

## **Nordic Council**

The Nordic Council is the official parliamentary body of the Nordic co-operation. Members of the Nordic Council are members of parliament in the individual countries.

The Nordic Council meets twice a year. The decisions taken at the meetings are implemented by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic governments.

The day-to-day political work is carried out in committees and political party groups.



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## METHODOLOGY

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### CASE STUDY

A review was carried out in Sweden and Denmark to find three cases that match the selection criteria. The review, conducted from September 2014 to June 2015, was mainly based on research on Google, websites of municipalities and voluntary organizations, public documents, and interviews with people in the field. The selection criteria were developed from an interest in investigating social services with a hybrid character. The social services were to be network oriented in supporting participation and inclusion of young adults with mental health problems in (local) communities. The hybrid arrangement could be through partnerships between the public, private, and third sectors. It was not a specific criterion that all three sectors were represented, as the interest was primarily on the intersection between the public and third sector. The main interest was social services that tried to create significant user participation and influence in the provision of services both individually and collectively with players from the third sector.

This intersection is interesting as it creates a hybrid practice where professionals, volunteers, and users are intertwined. However, such hybrid arrangements were difficult to find. A previous study of cross sectoral welfare services in Sweden and Denmark also shows a lack of cases where players from the private, public, and the third sectors collaborate and develop social services across sectors. In both countries a more common finding was cases where public sector and the third sector or the private and the public sector worked together (Andersen et al., 2014). These existing arrangements were typically at a structural and organizational level,

where the collaboration was characterized by an economic partnership or more nebulous agreements about collaboration across sectors.

Within the area of social services for young adults with mental health problems there were many individualized services, including mentoring, interventions, therapy, counseling, and peer support. These services were primarily delivered by the public sector, private sector, and – in some cases – by voluntary organizations. The network-oriented interventions consisted of drop-in centers, cafés, social enterprises, and voluntary sports organizations. Many of these interventions were provided by third-sector organizations, but public and private players also provided some of the services. Very few of these interventions played an active role in the local community. They were mainly characterized by being a place that supported young people with mental health problems, offering them an environment, where they could spend time with one another.

The collaboration between the sectors consisted mainly of a practice where professionals from the public sector recommended that young adults use voluntary counseling, get a voluntary mentor, or engage in more social relations through, for example, the drop-in centers, and sports organizations. In some municipalities this collaboration was described as a new partnership with the community and voluntary organizations. However, it was difficult to find social services where players from different sectors and the local community were integrated in each other's everyday work with young adults with mental health problems. Within the area of social housing this kind of collaboration was

much more common. The review also showed that collaboration and involvement of the local community in public social services were very difficult to establish. Many of the network-oriented interventions had different activities placed in the local community, but co-creation with local players was difficult to find.

In June 2015 three cases were identified for further investigation. Two were placed in Denmark and one in Sweden.

### **CASE A: PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY AND CULTURE HOUSE**

Case A is a partnership between the social psychiatry service in a Danish municipality and a third-sector organization. Usually, the social psychiatry team offered supported housing to young adults with mental health problems, but expanded the service in collaboration with players from the third sector. The third-sector organization is a social enterprise initiated by people from the local community in a medium-sized Danish provincial town. The organization can be characterized as an alternative Culture House with many different activities, such as folk kitchen, food catering (a work-integrating program), sports activities, café, music, and other creative workshops. These activities are constantly changing, as they are started and developed by users of the house. The house is open for everyone and used by many different people. It is an entrepreneurial initiative and characterized by the idea of combining the aims of social integration with business activities in which profits are reinvested in the venture. The organization has both volunteers and paid staff, and a democratic structure to decision-making. People's involvement in the house is very flexi-

ble, as many roles are available, such as member, user, volunteer, job trainee, employee, and visitor. Every week approximately 1.000 people visit the house. Empowerment and social innovation are key concepts.

The Culture House has an economic framework agreement with the municipality and social psychiatry supervisors work in the Culture House. The supervisors have set up various initiatives, such as a café and a cooking club for young people. The social psychiatry service has recruited four young volunteers to help once a week in the cooking club. The supervisors are also available for counseling, and make presentations in the Culture House at different times throughout the week. The young adults with mental health problems that already receive supported housing may also receive some of their counseling in the Culture House. These different activities are part of the social psychiatry services' social networking strategy. The aim is to create participation and inclusion of young adults with mental health problems together with players from the local community. In the Culture House, they mix with other young people with and without mental health problems, volunteers, supervisors, and people from the local community.

### **CASE B: COLLABORATION BETWEEN STUDY CENTER AND PUBLIC PLAYERS**

Case B is a collaboration between a social enterprise and different public players in a small town in northern Sweden. Youth workers and young people from the local community initiated the social enterprise in the 1980s. They started the organization as a work-integrating social enterprise (WISE) that combined rehabilitation and

work training for young people. The organization initiated a restaurant, bakery, TV station, conference center, PR-office, and an annual festival in the town. Many things have changed in the organization since the start. Today the social enterprise is a smaller entity that has different project-driven initiatives going on for young people with mental health problems. A Study Center and a Meeting Place are project-driven collaborations between the social enterprise and various players from the civic and public sector (e.g. voluntary organizations, psychiatry center, educational institutions, job center, habilitation center).

The funding of the projects is temporary and covers a period of three years. The projects apply a holistic approach in creating participation and inclusion of young people in the local community. The Study Center and the Meeting Platform offer support in social training, health, education/employment, and everyday life. The staff working at the Study Center is paid employees from the social enterprise and teachers from an Adult Educational Center in the municipality.

The teachers from the Adult Educational Center receive their salary from the Adult Educational Center, and they work both in the Study Center and the Adult Educational Center. The social enterprise also includes employed people with special needs and young adults who have been former users of the Study Center. Staff from the social enterprise, teachers from the Adult Educational Center, users of the Study Center, and users of the Meeting Place are part of each other's everyday practice. Furthermore, they collaborate with different players from the public sector and civic sector, as it is part of their strategy to create participation in arenas outside the social enterprise. The social enterprise has few regular and organized activities. Instead, it wants to create a space for co-creation and user-driven activities where the needs of the young adults are the most important factor.



## **CASE C: PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ACTIVITY CENTER AND VOLUNTARY SPORTS ORGANIZATION**

Case C is a partnership between an Activity Center within the social psychiatry service and a third-sector organization in a large Danish city. The Activity Center runs a youth program for young adults with mental health problems aged 18-30. The third-sector organization is a voluntary-membership organization for people with mental health problems and their relatives. The voluntary organization is a sports organization with many different sports activities. In collaboration with the voluntary sports organization, the Activity Center offers citizens with mental health problems various services such as sports activities, a fitness center, a café (selling lunch every day), work integrating programs, peer support, group therapy, individual counseling, and alternative treatment.

The youth program offers young adults a 24-week program in social, mental, and physical health. The program has continuous intake with a maximum of 14 participants at any one time. The staff in the youth program consists of coaches, peers, volunteers, and interns. The aim of the 24-week program is to support young people on their way to education or employment by working with a holistic approach to recovery. The program is 20 hours a week, with scheduled activities. These activities consist of mental and physical health courses, fitness, team games, cultural activities, outdoors activities, and individual counseling. The activity center also has open drop-in activities, such as sports activities and study groups, and an open social night every week for young adults.

These activities are compulsory for the young adults in the program, but open and voluntary for other young adults between 18 and 30.

## **FIELDWORK AND INTERVIEWS**

The empirical data primarily consists of ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviews conducted in the three cases. In line with symbolic interactionism, I understand social interactions as both meaningful and meaning-creating (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005), so meaning is created through interaction and interpretation. This process is continuous and created by social and physical circumstances as well as generated by material and conceptual resources (Bengtsson, 2012; Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). Following this perspective, the ethnographic data does not generate effects or general outcomes, but complex and situated knowledge. Names of the three cases and participants are not used in the report, which is part of the efforts to secure anonymity. Some details about the three cases are also altered in the interest of anonymity.

My ethnographic fieldwork was conducted through participant observation in the everyday practice in the three cases. My primary data in the two Danish cases was collected through fieldwork for eight months in 2015. I also paid a shorter visit to the Swedish case for two weeks in 2015. First, I participated a couple of times a week for five months in the activities in case A, followed by daily in case C for three months, and daily in case B for two weeks. In case A, the social psychiatry services only had activities 3-4 days a week, hence the longer duration of the stay. In some periods, I visited case A every day because I also wanted to investigate the practice without the supervisors from the social psychiatry services being present. Cases B and C had

daily activities, which I participated in. All three cases had activities away from the center, such as cultural arrangements, shopping, sports activities, outdoor tours etc., which I participated in. However, the majority of my fieldwork took place within the walls of the Cultural House, Activity Center, and the Social Enterprise.

I took field notes every day in all three cases. In some activities, it was not possible or appropriate to take field notes. In these situations, I took notes afterwards as quickly as possible. I wrote the field notes by hand in a notebook and typed them into the computer later the same day. The participant observation included discussions

with a wide range of different people in the three cases. Some of these talks were framed, as individual interviews, while others were more informal talks as part of the everyday interaction. I conducted 60 interviews in the three cases. These interviews lasted between 1-2 hours and were audiotaped with a Dictaphone. Twenty-five of the interviews were transcribed and the remaining interviews were listened through. I conducted 28 interviews in case A, 13 interviews in case B, and 19 interviews in case C. The distribution of the interviews reflects the size of the three cases, as case A has more participants than both B and C. Table 1 provides an overview of the 60 interviews.

	Case A	Case B	Case C	Total
Employees from the public sector	7	4	5	16
Employees from the third-sector organization	3	3	1	7
Young adults with mental health problems	13	6	9	28
Volunteers/interns/other users	5		4	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>60</b>

*Table 1: Overview of the position and case affiliations of the interviewed individuals.*

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## ANALYSIS OF THREE CASES

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### **PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL PSYCHIATRY AND CULTURE HOUSE**

#### **CO-GOVERNANCE WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY**

##### ***The civil society as an opposite to the social psychiatry service***

The social psychiatry leader understands the collaboration with the third-sector organization in the local community to be an essential and crucial approach in the process of creating participation and inclusion of young adults with mental health problems. He explains that social networking and creating inclusive arenas in the local community is one of the main tasks of social psychiatry:

“It is to ensure that young people within ten years do not end up in an institution, doing nothing. They should have the same things as you and I; an apartment, a boy- or girlfriend, and the opportunity to live a normal life. They might need support in this process, but the important thing is to have a perspective where you can work and be a normal citizen in Denmark, whether you are mentally vulnerable or not. I am very focused on creating such frameworks in the civil society, because then you can be where everybody else is.” (Peter, social psychiatry leader)

In this narrative, the civil society or local community is situated as an opposite to the institution. In the civil society it is possible to live a normal life and be a normal citizen with work and relationships, while the institution is associated with a more inactive and isolated life. This narrative is part of a broader discourse within

the field of social work and social psychiatry. The psychiatric institutions in Denmark were decentralized and deinstitutionalized in the 1970s and 1980s, and in the 1990s the social psychiatry service was set up. The approach to supporting people with mental health problems has changed as part of this development. Participation and involvement of the civil society became an important strategy in the social policy and social psychiatry. The discourse of the civil society was often in opposition to the state, which was being criticized for categorizing and stigmatizing citizens, so the potential of the civil society as an arena for social network and active citizenship was emphasized (Villadsen, 2004). The narrative by the leader of the social psychiatry service can be understood as part of this broader discourse. Part of the social psychiatry governance is to involve the local community and civil society in the process of creating participation and inclusion of young adults with mental health problems. This welfare mix consists of supervisors from the social psychiatry service and citizens, based on the voluntary work of individuals and groups involved in the production of service.

##### ***The civil society as a diverse community***

According to the social psychiatry leader, the motive for co-governance with the civil society is both to create participation and the opportunity to live what he states is a normal life, but also to avoid stigmatization:

“Previously, if a person was diagnosed with schizophrenia, they were expected to end up in an institution. From my point of view, this is actually more stigmatizing. We have helped

people so much that we in some ways have produced this stigmatization. I myself take a totally different approach – my view is that institutions are not the place for them to be. They should be in the civil society.” (Peter, social psychiatry leader)

He argues that social psychiatry has stigmatized people with mental health problems and that co-creation with civil society is a way to overcome this problem. Consequently, co-governance with civil society is based on a normative appeal of creating non-material value through the civil society. The Culture House and voluntary players in the local community represent civil society. The leader from the Culture House refers to the same non-material values when describing the aim of the Culture House:

“In the beginning it was much more complex and something about ‘being an artist in your own life’ and ‘inspiring people to create a good life for themselves and each other’, but we discovered that it is more simple than that. It is about active participation. That’s what it’s all about.” (Peter, Culture House leader)

Participation is also an important value in the Culture House, and a declared aim is the importance of ensuring that everyone can participate. The co-governance between social psychiatry and the Culture House is based on some of the same norms and values, but the leader of the Culture House also emphasizes that there is not just one narrative that can explain their organization’s purpose and values, as it depends on the context and the narrator:

“You can choose to construct your story on the basis of the cultural aspect of the house by saying it’s a culture house that has the ambition

of being both social and a business enterprise. However, you can also say it’s an entrepreneurial environment where the culture is part of the production, or call it a business. It all really depends on who’s asking. We have learned to accept that there might be a thousand stories about this place, and we don’t have to control them, because they are written by the people who tell them.” (Kirsten, Culture House leader)

In the quotation, the hybridity of the practice is also implied. The purpose or values of the organization cannot be categorized as belonging to one sector, as it is a fluent organization with no permanent or static features (Brandsen et al., 2005). The Culture House is a discursive environment where participants actively construct many different stories. A common story and a shared value in the partnership is the narrative of diversity. Both the social psychiatry leader and the leader of the Culture House explain that it is very important to create a practice with a mix of different users:

“A single group of people can’t comprise more than 20 percent of the house, because then the balance is tipping. That’s a rule to go by. I observe the house 24/7 and I always consider this balance regarding the users’ profile and the activities in the house.” (Kirsten, Culture House leader)

This story includes a normative component, as diversity in the community is understood as an important factor to secure the process of inclusion. The partnership between social psychiatry and the Culture House shares the value that diversity is essential for the existence of the practice. This mix of different people creates a practice where it is possible to create different stories and construct different positions.

### ***The underlying paradoxes in the collaboration with the civil society***

Social psychiatry emphasizes that the diversity of the Cultural House is what makes the place meaningful and different from many other interventions for people with mental health problems. The diversity of the practice helps to overcome stigmatization, but this story of diversity is also important to constrain:

“Right now, we’re very aware of telling, especially the politicians, that there are many young people from social psychiatry in the Culture House, but we’re also very aware of not telling this story too much, because to other people we want to construct another kind of story.” (Kirsten, Culture House leader)

This narrative expresses the dilemma of inclusion, but also a paradox that arises in the partnership between social psychiatry and the Culture House. The dilemma is characterized by the wish to create inclusion of young people with mental health problems through a diverse community, but at the same time this narrative and process of inclusion produces exclusion.

Narratives are told in order to achieve particular outcomes (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998). In the above quotation the Culture House leader explains that the story told to the politicians is different from the one constructed to other people. This story illustrates a paradox in the partnership. To obtain funding from the municipality the Culture House needs to convince and document that its activities involve many young people with mental health problems, because the politicians expect value for money. Social psychiatry expresses the value of the Culture House in terms of being the opposite of the public services. For example, the importance

of creating inclusion through the civil society is emphasized because of the user-diversity in the Culture House, but at the same time there is a risk of opposing diversity by controlling the users of the house. This paradox in the partnership is complex because social psychiatry does not want the Culture House or civil society to be just projections or a mirror of the public services. The aim is that the Culture House is to be autonomous, yet there are also attempts to control the activities through economic governance.

Economic insecurity and sustainability is often discussed in the Culture House. The Culture House’s resources to create inclusion of young adults with mental health problems depend on its financial framework agreement with the municipality. This agreement is a cause of discontentment, and the Culture House does not feel that the resources from the municipality meet the costs. The economic agreement between the Culture House and the municipality produces a focus on the economic value of the inclusion process. This means that the narratives of the non-material value of the partnerships become more complex, with a focus on effects and economic resources. If the Culture House is to receive more resources from the municipality, it must evaluate and document the effect of its work. The disagreement about the economic value of the inclusion process creates communication problems:

“I wish we could be good at measuring the outcomes of the social value that we produce, not that I have any need of this measurement, but just to solve the communication problem.” (Kirsten, Culture House leader)

This discursive environment also produces stories of potential exclusion of young adults

with mental health problems: “Right now, we have problematized to the municipality that the mentally vulnerable youths are taking up too much of our resources, and it is a problem” (Kirsten, Culture House leader). Consequently, these narratives of social inclusion as having a certain economic and material value create challenges and dilemmas in the partnership.



## CREATING CHANGE IN THE CULTURE HOUSE

### A STRONG NARRATIVE OF AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT

The Culture House is a unique place in many ways. The physical surroundings and materiality of the place contribute to its strong narrative as a creative and alternative environment. Field notes from one of my first visit in the house support this assumption:

“The Culture House premises are a former abattoir, which is still noticeable in the industrial nature of its appearance. The house has a carpentry and a forge placed in the two wings of the house. Three young adults are making costumes for role-play in the forge. In the courtyard are benches made from old wooden pallets, and bicycles are parked next to the main entrance. The Culture House is very close to the train tracks and there is some noise from passing trains. In the main house you walk into a hall where coats are hung and there is a message board. The board contains various information about what is happening in the local community. Inside the main building is a large open room with an industrial kitchen at one end. The house has a nice atmosphere, but you also feel alone in the large room where everybody seems very engaged in various activities. People are hanging out in small groups. In the middle of the room are two tables and at the end of the room there is a stage and a wood-fired stove. The wood stove creates a cozy atmosphere and it seems like a meeting place. Various quotes are displayed on the walls, where users have narrated their personal experiences of the house. All the stories are positive, and the display also contains various ideological statements about recycling, ecology, etc. There is no coordinated furniture, and it seems haphazard, where people

have various items. The place appears more unstructured and casual, but still with some kind of organized disorder.”

In the interviews all participants were asked to describe the Culture House. The following words occurred in their narratives: innovation, diversity, chaotic, cozy, open, a living room, a train station, unusual, alternative, social, safe, inclusive and being something different. Most of the descriptions were positive, and they were also related to the inclusion of young people with mental health problems:

“In the Culture House nobody looks down on the young adults with mental health problems. They can be here with their differences without being excluded or feeling totally left out. I believe that many of these young people see the Culture House as an open space, where you can be yourself.” (Hanne, social psychiatry supervisor)

The people in the Culture House are also described as being something very special and a distinctive characteristic of the Culture House:

“You get a totally different view of other people here. You don’t just see the negative side of the individual – you actually see the whole person. That is what the people in the Culture House are so good at. The Culture House is just a building; it’s the people inside it who make it so special. They see the whole person and not just a part of it. I would call them humanists.” (Nina, social psychiatry supervisor)

Discourses of collectivism, active citizenship, diversity, social inclusion, autonomy and the uniqueness of the people in the house are also represented and part of the everyday storytelling in the daily practice.



## **THE AMBIGUOUS POSITIONS OF THE AGENTS OF CHANGE IN THE CULTURE HOUSE**

The social psychiatry supervisors explain that a very important part of their work in the Culture House is to produce social networks across different groups of young people. They have developed different strategies in their daily work to facilitate the process of social networking:

“If somebody is hanging out or doing something in the house, then I include the young people by saying: ‘Come on, let’s go over there and have a look at what they’re doing’, and then we sit down and talk. I try to create different relations that way.” (Hanne, social psychiatry supervisor)

The supervisors position themselves as facilitators of creating social relations between the young adults with mental health problems and other people in the house. They explain that their presence in the house is very important because it gives the young adult with mental health problems a sense of belonging and a sense of security.

It is not only the social psychiatry supervisors that consider the facilitation of social networking and creating a good atmosphere as one of their main tasks in the house. The employees and volunteers in the Culture House have developed a special function they call ‘social host’. The social hosts take care of visitors and new people in the house. They show people around and make sure that they feel comfortable in the house: “My primary job is to create a good atmosphere in the house. I do that by talking to the people who need it.” (Niels, Culture House employee) Users and visitors are also very aware of creating an inclusive environment and interaction across different groups.

Many of the interviewees emphasize the importance of the voluntary aspects of the social interaction in the house. Social psychiatry has also recruited four young volunteers to be a part of their cooking club. Two of the young people explain that they have recovered from mental vulnerability, and they use their own experiences in relation to the young people from social psychiatry:

“In relation to these young people, then I’m someone that they can look up to. They come here as mentally vulnerable youths with some kind of diagnosis, and then I can be a good example and show them that you can have a diagnosis, but still live a normal life. Many of them also ask me about school and stuff, so I guess they can better identify themselves with me than with the social psychiatry supervisors.” (Daniel, social psychiatry volunteer)

In the quotation the volunteer positions himself as a role model for the young people. He believes that the young adults with mental health problems regard him as a more equal relation, because they can identify with him. This identification is explained by the fact that they share some of the same experiences with mental health problems, but they also share other things associated with being a young adult, such as everyday life, education, relationships, and common interests.

The volunteers understand themselves in general as being positioned differently than the supervisors from the Social Psychiatry. The volunteers often use terms as ‘being a grown-up’ or ‘being an adult’ about the supervisors because they have the responsibility in relation to the young adults with mental health problems. The volunteers position the supervisors as having more responsibility in the daily practice, but they

think of themselves as being somewhere in-between. The supervisors also describe the volunteers' position as being in-between, and they consider this position as a productive aspect of their role in the practice. The fact that the volunteers are the same age as the young adults with mental health problems creates a special and more equal relationship: "I believe the volunteers have something special. They can talk with the vulnerable youth in a different way, some kind of youth talk, you know?" (Jane, social psychiatry supervisor) Consequently, the supervisors and volunteers see the process of change as being created through the volunteers' in-between position as both an equal partner and a role model.

The supervisors describe their position in the Culture House as being different from that in social psychiatry:

"In the Culture House, people don't have to know who we are. People can ask if they want to know. There's a lot of people here I don't know, and a lot of people that don't know me either. We've often talked about this issue, because I don't tell everybody here that 'I'm Helen from social psychiatry'. Our leader says that we should call ourselves 'undercover agents'. That's what's so unusual here... In the Culture House I'm not a supervisor – I'm just Helene." (Helene, social psychiatry supervisor)

According to the supervisor, the positions in the Culture House are personally developed rather than professionally created. The discursive environment in the Culture House enables the supervisors to construct these various narratives about themselves. The Culture House surrounds this storytelling of being an undercover agent or just Helene because it is an environment where

the position of user and helper is not distinctly delineated. The hybrid practice in the Culture House constructs and makes different positions available where a person may be a volunteer, user, visitor, employee, entrepreneur, artist, etc. The supervisors are trying to navigate in this hybrid practice by constructing a narrative about the positions as being more personal in the Culture House. The social psychiatry leader tries to position the supervisors as undercover agents, but it seems like the supervisors do not want to fully accept this position, as it contradicts with their own self-construction as being a real or authentic version of themselves.

The supervisors explain that their position and participation in the hybrid practice also involve the need of other qualifications than in social psychiatry. Their position as agents of change is different: "You need the ability to embrace chaos and to work in chaos" (Hanne, social psychiatry supervisor). The supervisor uses this more chaotic environment to construct and bring about change for the young adults with mental health problems:

"The unpredictability in the Culture House can be very frightening for many of our young people. The furniture, for example, is never placed at the same spot, but moved around all the time. This chaos can be a challenge for the young people. They try to prepare themselves to come here by figuring out where to sit in the room, but then it can be difficult for them when they enter the room and see that the couch is in a different place. This can be a chaotic situation for the young people, and I can understand that, but at the same time, that's how it works in the real world." (Hanne, social psychiatry supervisor)

The supervisor describes the chaotic environment in the Culture House as a positive aspect of the practice, as it makes the environment more real and closer to reality. According to the supervisor, this environment can teach the young adults to handle chaotic situations in the real world. They describe this as a very unique feature of the Culture House and different to other interventions in social psychiatry: “This is difficult to find in social psychiatry because it is difficult to create flow and creativity when everything is so structured.” (Helene, social psychiatry supervisor)

### **BARRIERS AND DILEMMAS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN THE CULTURE HOUSE**

The Culture House as a discursive environment where narratives of an inclusive community are constructed, and also contains stories of a practice with limitations and challenges. The social psychiatry supervisors experience that it can be very difficult to facilitate networking across different groups in the Culture House:

“I don’t know what we can do to involve other young people in our activities. Maybe we need to invite them more or maybe tell them that we are not dangerous or something. I don’t know, but I have noticed that there are many groupings in the Culture House.” (Lene, social psychiatry supervisor)

Creating change by facilitating social networking across groups of young people from social psychiatry and young people from the local community is a challenge. The supervisors explain that it is typically young adults with mental health problems who participate in the activities arranged by social psychiatry. Through my fieldwork in the Culture House, I also noticed these groupings that the supervisors describe. When other young people from the

local community use the house, they often come in groups, and they have a specific aim when in the house: watch a movie, do school work, play music or engage in other activities with their friends. They are not necessarily in the Culture House to get new social relationships, but to do certain activities with people they already know. These circumstances challenge the possibility of creating social relations across different groups of young adults.

The ‘in-between’ position of the volunteers recruited by social psychiatry also creates dilemmas and challenges in practice. These are related to the supervisors’ governance of the volunteers. The dilemmas occur when the volunteers do not act in accordance with the supervisors’ norms of being a good volunteer or a role model. The supervisors describe various situations where they felt a need to set up boundaries and rules for the volunteers’ behavior in the Culture House. The volunteers are not allowed to drink alcohol in the Culture House because the supervisors do not associate this with being a role model for the young adults with mental health problems. The supervisors describe various situations where they have confronted the volunteers with issues related to alcohol. They describe these situations as difficult to handle because they feel uncomfortable about setting up rules and boundaries in a hybrid practice with strong narratives of autonomy. On the one hand the supervisors embrace the boundless practice and the autonomy of the volunteers, but on the other they feel a need to control the practice, when the autonomy is not managed in accordance with their norms of good behavior. The volunteers are neither positioned as professionals nor regular user, but are recognized for their equal and altruistic relationship with the young adults with mental health problems. The

volunteers are valued because of their non-professional position, yet they are expected to demonstrate some kind of professionalism:

“Volunteers have a different role in the house, and they need to be aware of that. Being a volunteer involves being a role model for the young people, but it is a really difficult and interesting discussion. I believe that volunteers need to be aware of the boundaries and not cross them.”  
(Hanne, social psychiatry supervisor)

These different narratives and understandings of the volunteers’ multiple positions in the house create dilemmas in practice. Some of the volunteers have a user background in social psychiatry, and they are encouraged by the supervisors to share their problems and receive support from the supervisors in the Culture House if necessary. Furthermore, the volunteers often visit the Culture house and participate in activities outside those organized by social psychiatry. In these situations, they are positioned more as visitors or regular users of the house.

The supervisors describe that it is difficult for them to set up these boundaries and rules in the Culture House, as it contradicts not only the produced storyline of the house but also their own produced self of being less of a supervisor or professional. The employees and volunteers from the Culture House explain that the social psychiatry supervisors are important resources in the Culture House due to their knowledge and expertise. Consequently, there are contradictory narratives of the supervisors’ contribution and position in the house. The supervisors often act as supervisors from social psychiatry by positioning themselves this way. One example is when they define the

role of the volunteers and set up boundaries for their agency in the house. The supervisors often try to position themselves as having a more blurred professional position in the house. This subtle form of governance is a strategy to avoid stigmatization and categorization of the young adults with mental health problems, but it often creates dilemmas and contradictions in the daily practice instead of positive change.



## **THE YOUNG ADULTS' NARRATIVES OF THE CULTURE HOUSE AS A FREE AND DIVERSE COMMUNITY**

The young adults with mental health problems have very different life stories, but one thing they have in common is that they have felt excluded from various youth communities, such as education, employment, and social activities. The young adults' stories of being diagnosed with a mental illness are narrated in different ways. They often describe it as a process of stigmatization but also as an unpleasant, but necessary, categorization to receive sufficient help and support. Many of them do not understand or identify with their diagnosis, and others describe it as the cause of the exclusion processes they have experienced in their life. These distinctive narratives of diagnoses lead to different construction of stories about belonging in different communities:

"I'm not very good at living with people that also have a diagnosis like mine. I would rather be together with normal people because I don't feel that I have a diagnosis. I know that I have a diagnosis, but I don't feel that way. I don't really believe in it." (Marie)

Marie does not identify with the diagnosis and does not feel she belongs in that category or position. Instead she struggles to create a different story about herself where she is positioned as part of a 'normal' community. The young adults that narrate stories about identification with their diagnosis explain it as meaningful to some extent to be part of communities with other young adults in the same position. They describe these communities as more tolerant and a place to gain recognition and a feeling of belonging, but at the same time they also construct stories of feeling marginalized and excluded from the

broader society. These communities are therefore important for the young adults, but many of them also describe them as places where they try to move away from in their process of transcending marginalization.

The young adults' different life experiences and narrations about belonging also construct their stories of the Culture House. They often compare the House to other drop-in centers or social psychiatry communities where they have participated. One example is a young adult who for a long time participated in the social psychiatry drop-in center; however, when he started visiting the Culture House he stopped using the drop-in center. In his description of the Culture House he compares it to the drop-in center:

"The Culture House is more free. In the Culture House you can challenge everything and do what you want. There are not really any boundaries or limitations. They have economic resources. The drop-in center is a bit more protected and more a place for people that don't need a lot of activities. The drop-in center has more fixed boundaries, you could say – I think that's how you could describe it. It's a quieter place, where you can eat together and talk with other people, and sometimes they also have some external activities, but it's nothing like the Culture House." (Benjamin)

Benjamin's narrative of the Culture House is described very differently to the Drop-in Center. The users of the Drop-in Center are positioned as people that need to be in a more protected community with no need of a lot of activities. It is described as a place for people in more vulnerable positions, which is a community the young adult is trying to move away from. Benjamin did not want to position himself as part



of this community anymore, and now belongs to a freer community with no boundaries in the Culture House. Many of the young adults construct stories about the Culture House as a more autonomous place with no rules and expectations. These descriptions of a free environment are also described as something more unsafe and chaotic that most of the young people initially perceive as negative or have mixed feelings:

“In the beginning I was really skeptical about the place. I visited the house once and I just felt totally out of place. I couldn’t identify with the place or figure out what to do here. It was definitely not a good experience, but after some months I visited the house again, and this time it went better.” (Rasmus)

Rasmus narrates these initial feelings about the Culture House as something that belongs in the past. The young adults describe that they have changed and learned to navigate in the autonomous and chaotic environment, and now emphasize these characteristics as more positive. Their stories reflect changes in their feelings about and use of the Culture House.

The diversity of the house is emphasized as something positive, as it enables people to construct different stories in the discursive environment. The young adults feel they can construct narratives about something other than diagnoses, which is important for some of them. Some describe it as an opportunity to change position: “This means a lot to me because you can be yourself without thinking about that you have this big label on you that says that you have a diagnosis.” (Anders)

Consequently, the Culture House entails some discursive processes that enable some of the

young adults with mental health problems to construct storylines and produce selves they can identify with. The Culture House is described in a way that contrasts with social psychiatry services; this is emphasized as a positive aspect because the young adults feel less categorized and stigmatized in this environment.

The young adults with mental health problems participate mainly in the café or the cooking club in the Culture House. The social psychiatry supervisors facilitate these activities, but the narratives about the two initiatives vary. The young adults that participate in the café and the cooking club are not necessarily the same individuals, but some started in the café and then transitioned to the cooking club when they felt ready for it. The storyline of the cooking club is part of the broader discourse in the Culture House, but the narratives about the café are constructed in a different way:

“The people in the cafe are people with mental health problems, so there is a certain understanding among us. We know why we’re here and we know what we’re doing here, so we don’t need to have this conversation. The vast majority come with a mentor or with somebody else from social psychiatry, so everybody knows what’s going on. We don’t need to have certain conversations about it because we already know the reason why we’re there.” (Thomas)

In this quotation the users of the café in the Culture House are categorized as people with mental health problems; this is emphasized as an important characteristic because it creates a feeling of belonging. The café is narrated as a protected and quiet environment where people share a common understanding about mental health problems:

“A good thing about the café is that, if you suddenly feel bad when you play a game with the others, then you can just walk away because they’ll understand. If you’re in the middle of a conversation and you feel bad, then they won’t consider you impolite just because you suddenly leave. They know it’s just the way things are. I mean it removes the common rules that usually apply to people interacting in activities and conversation. When we’re all mentally ill, this removes those rules.” (Thomas)

Thomas uses the café but no other activities in the Culture House. He considers himself mentally vulnerable, and identifies with the other users in the café because of this common categorization. He describes the other activities in the Culture House as very chaotic and too overwhelming for him, but he also explains that his position as a participant in the café is something that he is trying to move away from. This underlines the complexity in the young adults’ participation in the Culture House. They feel categorized when they participate in the café, but they also feel that they belong here because of shared life experiences and life circumstances.

The young adults’ narration and participation in the cooking club is different from the café. They describe the users and the activities in the cooking club within the same discourse as they describe the Culture House. They all emphasize that the cooking club is for everyone and not only for people in social psychiatry. This storyline is important for the young adults’ participation, as it enables them to position themselves in ways they can identify with. They explain that they feel part of a community where they don’t have to talk about their diagnosis, but they can just talk about matters relevant to young people and the activities in the cooking club. It

is important for the young adults that they meet around these specific activities:

“I think it’s amazing in some ways that we’re so different, but there is still a meaning to it all, when we sit together and do something together. Then you just concentrate on the activity and the other person can be black or white, it doesn’t really matter.” (Klaes)

Shared projects in the cooking club are grocery shopping, cooking, eating, and cleaning, and sometimes external activities. They meet once a week and it is the supervisors and volunteers who structure the evening; the young adults are expected to help with practical things. Some of the young adults describe that they have created new social relationships in the cooking club: “I believe that my network is getting better. I have more friends now compared to earlier.” (Morten) Another young adult explains that she also spends time with some of her friends from the cooking club outside the Culture House. However, most of the young adults in the cooking club describe their relationships to the other users as more superficial.

From my interviews with the young adults in the cooking club, I noticed that all participants had been in contact with psychiatry or social psychiatry at some point in their lives. Many of them have received supported housing and know the supervisors that facilitate the cooking club. The young adults do not necessarily share this knowledge with each other because it is important for them to reproduce the story about the cooking club as a ‘normal’ youth community: “One of my friends once asked me if this place was just for crazy people, and I was like; no it’s not. It’s totally normal people who hang out here, so you can just come.” (Nanna) This

quotation underlines the young adults' struggle to belong in a community that is categorized as 'normal', because this storyline defines their position and understanding of selves.

The different narratives constructed about the two activities can be understood in relation to the duality and process of belonging. The concept of belonging is part of the young people's identity process and is not a static idea, so belonging is related to the intersection between belonging, being, and longing (Davies, 2000; Larsen, Thingstrup, & Wulf-andersen, 2014). The young people with mental health problems describe the activities differently, as their narratives are related to their construction and understanding of selves. The hybridity and more boundless practice that characterizes the Culture House enables the young adults to construct and reproduce these different narratives. The young adults create narratives about the café as a place where they belong because of common characteristics related to mental health issues. The young adults in the cooking club locate themselves in another and opposite discourse where they emphasize the user diversity and more autonomous environment. These different narratives and understanding of selves also constrain and reproduce their participation in the various activities in the Culture House.

## **DILEMMAS AND BARRIERS FOR PARTICIPATING IN A MORE BOUNDLESS PRACTICE**

In the young adults' description of their participation in the café and the cooking club, there is a shared understanding that the supervisors' presence in the house is very important in both activities. The young adults describe that they have very close relationships with the social psychiatry supervisors, and it makes them feel comfortable that they are available in the house:

"They [supervisors] are important. If I had nobody to hold on to when I'm here, then I wouldn't show up, because then you don't have anybody to turn to if you need to talk or just need to sit down with somebody. Then you would just feel alone and that you don't fit in." (Jimmy)

The supervisors therefore hold a very important position in the house, as they create a safe environment for the young adults. Many of the young adults explain that they find it difficult, for example, to strike up a conversation, so the supervisors then support and facilitate: "The supervisors are good at pushing you a little bit and are good at saying 'come on, go over there instead of sitting here doing nothing'." (Anne)

The young girl narrates this pushing and involvement from the supervisors as a positive aspect, but this kind of governance also creates ambiguity and dilemmas in practice. In the narration of the supervisor's strategy it is also implied that it is Anne that needs to do something or change behavior: instead of sitting here doing nothing. The quotation contains an imperative of the active and responsible citizen. This imperative is part of the broader discourse in the Culture House and the understanding of co-creation.



Co-creation demands active and involved citizens and the young adults who can participate are regarded as competent subjects. The young adults who cannot participate in the community are at risk of further exclusion:

“I understand it more as shallow relationships. I feel a bit left out from the group, so I believe it’s more shallow relationships than real friends. Maybe I don’t talk that much with them because I have other interests. I don’t know... But I guess it’s my own fault.” (Patrick)

Patrick participates in the cooking club once a week, but he often sits on his own and describes it as difficult to participate in activities and conversations with the others. In the quotation Patrick understands it as his own fault, which can be analyzed as the marginalizing aspect of co-creation and participation in a discursive environment with strong narratives of active, autonomous, and responsible citizens. In this example Patrick is seen as a non-competent and passive subject. This understanding produces and reproduces the boy’s marginalized position. This underlines the dilemmas and dualities in the hybrid practice where the governance exists through activation of individual commitment, free choices and morality within the community setting (Rose, 1996). This discourse also demands subjects that can navigate moral responsibility in a practice with strong narratives of boundlessness. This becomes a dilemma for some of the young adults when they do not act in accordance with the supervisors’ understanding of responsible behavior.

This is the case with Christian who participates in the cooking club. He is often described as problematic with a lack of awareness of such boundaries, so his various contact persons accompany him every time he visits the Culture House. From my fieldwork, I noticed that the contact persons always watch Christian and follow him around in the house. The contact persons do not really participate in conversations or activities, but they intervene if Christian talks too much or behaves inappropriately. Here, social psychiatry has decided to constrain the boundless practice by setting up boundaries. Christian explains that he does not understand why the contact person is with him, but he believes that it is something the municipality has decided. Christian also says that he likes the various contact persons, but not their presence in the Culture House:

“I would prefer them not to be here... then I could just hang out. They follow me around, and they always keep an eye on me when I send a text to somebody or talk to people. They’re always like: ‘Who are you talking to?’ They always tell me what I’m allowed to do when I’m here.” (Christian)

Christian is very aware of the presence of the contact persons and describes how they constrain his behavior in the Culture House. This governance categorizes and stigmatizes him as problematic and different from the other people in the Culture House, so Christian says that he would prefer to be in the house by himself like the others: “Then I could just do what I want to. I would feel freer in a way, and I could just talk to my friends and have a good time” (Christian). The hybrid practice creates dilemmas for those young adults that are categorized as problematic and unable to navigate in the ‘right way’

within this practice. In an attempt to include the young adult in the community the supervisors create boundaries in a way that also contribute to a stigmatized reproduction of the young adult's marginalized position.

The young volunteers recruited by social psychiatry participate mainly in the cooking club, but sometimes also visit the café. The young adults describe the role of the volunteers in various ways, both in regard to their position in the house and their relationship with them. Not all of the young adults are aware of the volunteers' role. They are described as both volunteers with certain responsibilities and as regular users:

"I can talk to the supervisors about private stuff. If you have a bad day or if something bad has happened in your family, things like that. I can't talk to the volunteers about that. It's more like a friendship where you talk about how your day has been or something like that." (Sofie)

Sofie positions the volunteers differently to the supervisors. The volunteers are more like acquaintances and the supervisors are those who can handle private stuff. Sofie further explains that she actually sees the supervisor as both a family member and a friend: "She [the supervisor] is like a mother to me, but also like a good friend". In this example the relationship with the volunteers is understood as more superficial, unlike the close and private relationship with the supervisor. This is an interesting description as volunteers are often described as unique in the sense that their altruistic foundation can create more authentic, engaged and close relationships.

One explanation could be that the volunteers' participation is not continuous. During my fieldwork three out of the four volunteers in the cooking club resigned. Two of them moved from the city because of their studies and one resigned because of lack of time. Their relationship to the young adults is often for a shorter



period of time. However, from my fieldwork I noticed that the young adults are very interested in the volunteers, but some experience rejection from the volunteers in the daily interactions. The following field note describes such interaction between a volunteer (Daniel) and a young girl from social psychiatry (Miriam):

“Daniel walks in to the room, and sits down in the couch with some of the other young adults. They start talking. After a few minutes Miriam walks in to the room. She doesn’t say hello to the others, but walks directly to the couch where Daniel and the other young adults hang out. She looks at Daniel and want to give him a hug, but he rejects her by saying: ‘My back hurts today, so I can’t’. Miriam tries to convince him and says: ‘argh... come on, Daniel’. Daniel stays in the couch and still refuses to stand up to give Miriam a hug. Miriam looks at him for a few seconds, and then she sits down in a chair. After some minutes another girl walk in to the room towards the group of young adults in the couch. Daniel gets up from the couch, and says: ‘I can give you a hug’.”

The field note describes some of the dilemmas and conflicts that can arise between the volunteers and the young adults. The young adults position the volunteers as role models, which is an unequal relationship. This construction can be problematic in the interactions when the volunteers exclude some of the young adults, like Miriam in the above example. Another young girl explains that she has invited one of the volunteers to participate in social activities outside the Culture House. She describes and positions the volunteers as friends. The young adults have very different relationship with the volunteers and they position them in various ways.

## **POSSIBILITIES AND BARRIERS FOR TRANSCENDING MARGINALIZATION THROUGH THE CULTURE HOUSE**

The young adults who use the café and the cooking club explain that they mainly just talk to the people participating in these two activities and not the other people in the Culture House. However, some of the young adults explain that they sometimes have contact and small talk with others. These conversations often occur when there are special events such as parties or flea markets, or if there are some practical duties in the Culture House that need to be done.

The Culture House is placed in an old abattoir and appears very raw and unfinished. This is part of the strong narrative about the Culture House, as it encourages active participation and co-creation. In everyday activities, there are groupings in the Culture House, but sometimes interactions across these different groups occurs; these are often through initiatives because of certain physical characteristics of the place. The house is old and unfinished, so things often break and need to be repaired by the users of the house. In these situations, conversations and collaboration across different groups in the house are often initiated, as they have a shared problem or duty that needs to be solved. The young adults emphasize it as something positive when they have talked to other users or just been in contact with other people from the Culture House. In their narratives they often describe the other people in the Culture House as being very different from themselves:

“I would say that the people I’ve talked to are mainly people from psychiatry or people with mental health problems. When I’ve talked to people who I don’t think are patients or supervisors, then the conversation has been different.

It's just a different way of talking because it's two different mindsets. I don't know what to call it, but it's much bigger. There's much more openness among people who are not psychiatric patients because they don't have anything to hide. They're more open about stuff and they talk about most things. In contrast, a psychiatric patient will be a little more unassuming because you don't want to lose something by opening up too much." (Ian)

In this narration, Ian positions psychiatric patients as very different from other people. Ian is a psychiatric patient and he feels that is at risk if he participates in a conversation with other people in the house. He also explains that he still enjoys talking to other people in the house because he believes they can learn something from each other.

Some of the young adults have transcended their position as help seekers, and they now work as volunteers or social hosts in the Culture House. The other young adults sometimes try to challenge their more marginal position, but they are often constrained by structural categorizations or circumstances that prevent this transgression. However, these young adults experience that they are part of a meaningful community when they, for example, help with practical things in the house or participate in the cooking club and the café.

The Culture House is therefore a very important community for many of these young adults: "It gives me some kind of meaningful content in my everyday life. I actually believe it brings me joy in life, because I can talk to people and hang out with them. I can't say anything about this place that I dislike... It's been very good for me at least." (Anders) The quotation underlines

that the Culture House creates some meaningful communities where the young adults can participate. The hybrid practice enables some of the young adults to construct and locate themselves in different storylines they can identify with. These different narratives produce and reproduce their position and understanding of selves within the practice. The Culture House creates both barriers and possibilities for the young adults' participation and struggle to transcend a marginal position.

## SUMMARY

In the partnership between social psychiatry and the Culture House, there is a strong narrative about the Culture House as being something different from the social services in the public sector. Civil society is understood as an important arena for inclusion of young adults with mental health problems. However, the narratives of social inclusion as having a certain economic and material value create challenges in the partnership. The Culture House is narrated as a place where diversity, autonomy, and active participation are important rationalities. In the partnership it becomes difficult when social psychiatry tries to control and measure these values. These dilemmas are part of the underlying paradox in the partnership where social psychiatry wants the Culture House to be autonomous, but also feels a need to control its activities.

In the daily practice this paradox also becomes a dilemma for the agents of change in the Culture House. The supervisors and volunteers experience different situations where it is difficult to navigate within this practice, because their position in the house is unclear. The free and boundless practice enables the young adults to change position and transcend marginalization, but it

also creates barriers when the agents of change feel a need to control and set up boundaries for some of the young adults.

The mix of different players in the Culture House is an important contributor to the production of positive change for the young adults, but there is a need for further discussion of how the supervisors and volunteers should navigate within this practice. The facilitation of social

networks, relaxed atmosphere, and a diverse community are narrated as positive elements of the Culture House, and something that creates positive change for the young adults. It is also very important for the young adults that the Culture House is not social psychiatry, so it is essential to discuss how to balance this dilemma and collaboration between public social services and civil society.



# — COLLABORATION BETWEEN STUDY CENTER AND PUBLIC PLAYERS —

## CO-GOVERNANCE WITH A VOLUNTARY SPORTS ORGANIZATION

### CLOSE COLLABORATION AS AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTOR TO RECOVERY

The social enterprise collaborates with different players from the public sector, but its collaboration with the Adult Educational Center is more formalized. The formalized partnership involves two schoolteachers from the Adult Educational Center working in the social enterprise some hours a week to teach and support the young adults in the Study Center. Furthermore, there is close collaboration across the two organizations, as many of the young adults are enrolled in the Adult Educational Center and receive support in the Study Center. However, the chairman of the board in the social enterprise underlines that all players who can contribute with something positive to the young adults' lives are important collaborators. She emphasizes that partnerships and collaborations with public, private and civil players are essential, as it supports the fundamental aim of the Study Center:

“This is a place you move away from. It's a springboard to something else and here you can get support in that process. Studying can be one way to move on, but it can also be that you meet people who matter to you. The important thing is to feel like a whole person.” (Inger, Chairman of the Board in the social enterprise)

The motivation for partnerships and collaborations with different players is based on some

collective and social values where change is constructed as a social process. These values are in line with the motivation for initiating the Study Center:

“In the past 15 years I have met so many people with mental health problems who didn't have the opportunity to fulfill their actual potential in different jobs. I have met so many gifted individuals who haven't completed their studies, and I could simply not just let these people down. I meet them through the job center and psychiatry, and it is actually very little support that they need to get through their studies. They definitely have the intellectual ability, but it's other kinds of barriers that can be difficult to get past.” (Inger, Chairman of the Board in the social enterprise)

In the quotation the chairman of the board is very passionate, with a high degree of personal engagement in the cause. The motivation for initiating the Study Center was based on moral values about social justice, duties, and a commitment to help individuals in need. In the quotation, mainly altruistic values are emphasized, which have often been characterized as an ideal typical voluntary notion. The organization has undergone a period of rapid professionalization, but it has also moved away from more profit-oriented values and a bureaucratic structure. This underlines the complexity in hybrid organizations, as it is not meaningful simply to understand the practices from a one-sector point of view. The organization mainly has paid staff with different professional

backgrounds, but most of them have a previous career as schoolteachers or social workers in the public or voluntary sector. These circumstances and the historical context of the social enterprise create a different mix of logics and rationalities in the governance arrangement.

### **THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AS A COMPLEMENTARY SOCIAL SERVICE**

There is an understanding in the social enterprise that the public sector has not been an adequate player in supporting young adults with mental health problems. Therefore, the Study Center was also initiated as a complementary social service to the public sector:

“In the public system they’re good at working with specific groups of people, but we need interventions where it’s not a foregone conclusion what the solution is. We need an opening in the understanding of the support, which should be based on the young adults’ situation instead of being predetermined. We need to learn it from the young adults. I mean, we need to learn from them, how we do this.” (Inger, Chairman of the Board in the social enterprise)

The quotation is part of a broader critical discourse of the public sector as being more rigid and more liable to categorize than third-sector organizations. This narration is also created in the interviews with the collaborators from the public sector:

“The municipality is a rigid organization sometimes. We have actually tried to build up our own meeting place in social psychiatry. The professional has some activities at this place, but I don’t believe these are developed individually. It is much better here in the Study Center where they don’t really have certain activities, but instead they talk with the individuals about

their need and what they want to do. The Study Center supports the users in getting out in the community.” (Sigrid, municipal leader)

In the quotation, the Study Center is narrated as a more flexible and individualized initiative. The activities are not predetermined but the users are actively involved in this development.

The leader emphasizes that the Study Center focuses on the users’ inclusion in the community instead of creating activities in-house. This narration is in line with the Chairman of the Board where she describes the Study Center as a springboard to something else. A shared purpose is to create a link to the broader society by supporting inclusion in local communities.

### **LEARNING ACROSS SECTORS**

A shared understanding is that the Study Center has some special features that makes inclusion in the community possible:

“From my point of view, it’s a place where you are seen for who you are... You can be yourself here. You can have different dreams and challenges, but here there is someone who listens to you whenever you need it. They listen to you exactly when you need it and they make reasonable demands. You can have a conversation about your exact needs and there is no time pressure. You can do it at your own pace and then develop...” (Susanne, Leader of the Adult Educational Center)

Despite the evidence that the idea of sectors may be losing coherence, many of the people working in different sectors continue to identify a certain set of characteristics within these. These ideas still carry important meaning that are reproduced and maintained in the different players’ narratives about the collaboration between the

municipality and the Study Center. However, the different players also mention that the partnership and collaboration across sectors have changed their perspective, as they have learned and imported ideas and values from each other: “The teachers restore the mindset to our organization where we have become even better at individualizing and supporting in each situation. This way, it’s skills development for our teachers. They learn from the employees at the Study Center what is important for the different groups of students.” (Susanne, Adult Educational Center leader)

In the partnership, an important purpose is to learn from each other across sectors. In the quotation, the leader of the Adult Educational Center explains that the teachers bring a certain mindset from the Study Center to the Adult Educational Center. It is a shared understanding that the ‘boundary crossers’ can offer solutions and contribute to improving organizational performance. When the teachers cross boundaries between the Study Center and the Adult Educational Center, they are forced to engage in a process of sense-making within the different contexts, which can bring a change of perspective. This boundary crossing is a dynamic act that may both unlock and generate change at various levels in the organizations (Lewis, 2010).

#### **A VULNERABLE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND COMPETITION FOR MARKET SHARE**

The collaboration between the Study Center and the various public players are narrated as very unproblematic. The players state that it is very easy to collaborate because they know each other across organizations very well. It is a small town, which means that many of them are former colleagues or part of each other’s professional or private networks:



“It is not difficult to collaborate, but it is more the lack of time and a wish to support the students even more that is a problem. Collaboration is actually very simple. We are physically placed close to each other and the people involved are very easy to talk to. There are no bureaucratic barriers.” (Susanne, Leader of the Adult Educational Center)

The challenges in the collaboration are narrated as a question of economic resources. The Study Center and other activities in the social enterprise are project-driven and mainly financed by funding. This is a vulnerable and insecure economic constellation, which can pressure the social enterprise to close down or drift away from their original mission and values. Their economic strategy might yield short-term benefits, such as by continuing services otherwise threatened with closure. However, over time the social enterprise may be forced to take over more characteristics from private or public sector organizations and move away from their original non-material values. This process would make them little different from public and commercial service providers. There is a risk that the social enterprise may, by default, slip in to a full-scale public or private service provider, without having any intention to become so. The chairman of the board explains that she is uncertain about the direction of the social enterprise, as it is up to the users to decide how the organization will develop. One of the social enterprise’s former project-driven initiatives has been implemented fully in the public sector, which is considered a positive development. This could also happen with the Study Center, and the chairman of the board explains a dilemma regarding this development:

“We are in an unusual municipality because they want to take care of everything, so maybe it’s going to be that way. There is always a risk when the public authorities take over, because there are so many rules and restrictions that you may lose people in it.” (Inger, Chairman of the Board in the Social Enterprise)

The chairman of the board implies a tension between the social enterprise and the municipality concerning the universalism of the welfare state. The municipality runs a large facility with activities and employment for people in vulnerable positions:

“The place is similar to ours, and it’s the place the municipality use. It’s a good place, but the down side is that it’s very difficult for other people to start something. They cut themselves off from other people and they are not included in the local community. It’s good for some people, but not for everybody.” (Inger, Chairman of the Board in the Social Enterprise).

The example above underlines that welfare pluralism does not only mean more cooperation, but also new and increased tensions between different players competing for market shares. Research shows that in many cases the non-profit providers will experience more struggles to survive than other providers (Howard & Taylor, 2010). One reason is that non-profit organizations like the social enterprise are small and less well equipped with the essential administrative, political, and economic resources to survive in a more competitive environment. Another reason is that it is very difficult for the municipality to control non-profit organizations because they claim some degree of autonomy. This lack of control can make it appealing for the municipality to stop funding the social enterprise and other non-profit organizations (Jensen, 2015).

## **DILEMMA OF PHILANTHROPIC PARTICULARISM**

Another dilemma in the collaboration concerns the users of the social enterprise. The narratives about the users depend on the different initiatives in the social enterprise. The Study Center is for people interested in education, and the meeting place is mainly for people with neuropsychiatric diseases. However, the narratives become ambiguous as the social enterprise does not want to reject anyone, but at the same time they care for a certain sub-segment. The dilemma arises when the public authorities refer the most vulnerable people to the social enterprise:

“There are simply not enough initiatives for the groups of people that are seriously mentally ill. We’re not supposed to fill that gap because then we can’t be who we are. It’s important with that kind of demarcation, but we shouldn’t make that demarcation together with the users, but with the public authorities.” (Inger, Chairman of the Board in the social enterprise)

The quotation describes a dilemma of philanthropic particularism (Jensen, 2015). It is the tendency where non-profit organizations concentrate on a small sub-group of the population. This is the social enterprise strength but, as shown in the example above, also its weakness. While helping a particular group the enterprise is at risk of neglecting others who are in need. It is part of the rationale to cater for a certain interest, but if too much is left to the social enterprise a serious gap in coverage can occur. Furthermore, when initiatives in the municipality and the social enterprise target the same sub-group, then the groups of people that are seriously mentally ill are neglected.

## **CREATING CHANGE IN THE STUDY CENTER**

### **A STRONG NARRATIVE OF PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT**

The social enterprise has a long history with strong narratives of social activism and collective agency in the local community. The original idea of the organization was to create a system where everyone needed one another. These predetermined stories of the social enterprise arrange and produce particular kinds of narratives, as told by the participants:

“It’s a place where we support human strength. Here are people who have decided that they want to take care of people who have lost a bit of belief in themselves. It’s all about bringing back that self-confidence and make them even stronger. We believe that everyone is good at something, but you just need to find the right place where it can be developed.” (Trine, coach in the social enterprise).

The participants describe the social enterprise as a place with a strong focus on non-material values, such as empowering citizens in marginalized positions. The social enterprise is narrated as an ideological project, but still with an institutional requirement of creating change for young adults through a certain form of professionalized approach. These circumstances are also materialized through the physical surroundings of the place. Field notes from my first visit describe this mix:

“The social enterprise is located on the university campus, which creates a certain institutional atmosphere. They have tried to create a different framework for the place by choosing a different interior with a more urban and youthful vibe.

The lounge contains colorful furniture, a coffee machine, and various signs and decoration on the walls. On the right is a lunchroom with a kitchen, table and chairs. These two rooms promote more informal conversations, but the place still appears very structured and organized. Down the hall are the employees' offices, which create an institutional and more formal work-related environment. In the middle of the room a tractor tire is hanging next to a table with computers where some young adults are sitting."

The physical appearance of the social enterprise is in line with the approach to promoting change for the young adults. It has tried to create a platform for both social and professional activities that appeal to a youth culture.

In the social enterprise, there is a strong internalized belief in the cause, which also mobilizes a high degree of personal engagement among the people working in the organization. They do not have a clear description of their tasks in the organization, as they narrate these as being defined by the users' needs. However, a common story is the need to be flexible and capable of solving many different tasks. These often consist of having individual mentoring, , such as visiting sports activities, theater, and cooking together. According to the people working in the social enterprise, these different tasks require a different kind of professionalism. They do not position or understand themselves as traditional social workers, teachers, or educationalists, even though most of them have this educational background or have worked as such in the public sector. Many of them also narrate stories of situations or dilemmas that they could not have handled without these professional skills and experiences:

"The situation would have been very difficult if I had not worked as a teacher before. When you have a student with difficulties then you just really want to help, I mean, almost too much, so that's something I've learned how to handle." (Jacob, coach in the social enterprise)

In the quotation the profession of being a teacher and having this professional background is narrated as a necessary skill. However, this is not the most important competence to possess as a coach in the social enterprise. A common story told in the organization is about the last time they employed a coach: "In the job ad, we didn't seek a person with a special education or anything, but we wrote that we wanted a person with a good heart." (Jacob, coach in the social enterprise)

In the social enterprise a strong social language is used with an order of collective being, responsibilities, and obligations. Nevertheless, this kind of moral pluralism also requires a moral individual with obligations and responsibilities (Rose, 1996). The people working in the organization also feel a high degree of responsibility for the young adults, and they explain that they are willing to support them with almost anything. This is also reflected in their relationship with the users and in their way of creating change:

"You have close contact with some of them, while others may have a period of time where they feel really bad, but you still keep in touch because it is so important, when they feel bad, that you keep showing that you are there for them. In these situations, you shouldn't let them go, because this is when they need you the most." (Mikkel, coach in the social enterprise)



In the quotation, the coach is positioned as a very important person in the young adults' life. It is emphasized that continuity and personal engagement are considered important features in the process of creating change for the young adults.

## **CREATING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL NETWORK**

Another important way of constructing change is by facilitating social relations and inclusion in the local community. A strong narrative in the social enterprise is that it is a springboard to something else:

‘I would describe it as a staging point to something else. You can’t get stuck here even though some people have been here for a very, very long time, but the ambition is that we want people to develop and feel strong on their own.’ (Anna, coach in the social enterprise)

The coach describes that they often create change by developing a link to the local community and broader society. They understand themselves as important facilitators of this process. The coach further explains some of the different strategies that they use to create this connection. One very important aspect of this process is social networking at different levels. The inclusion process, for example in voluntary organizations, is often the first contact made through people that the coaches already know from their professional or private network. They often explain it as an easy process to create a link to different players in the community because everybody knows each other across networks. Therefore, an important qualification is to have many contacts across different networks.

The collaboration with the Adult Educational Center is very important in this process. The coaches regard education as a very important step to inclusion in the broader society, so they often support the young adults in their contact with the Adult Educational Center. The young adults determine the support, but the coaches explain that they often participate at meetings with teachers because it makes the young adults feel more comfortable.

The coaches also explain that, for many of the young adults, it is easier to participate in activities in the local community if they are together as a group of people from the social enterprise. There are different groups of young adults who have met each other in the social enterprise. The coaches have brought some of these people together and others have just met because of shared interests. The coaches understand it as a very important task to create networks, both internally in the social enterprise and externally in the local community.

The teachers from the Adult Educational Center position themselves differently from the coaches in the social enterprise. They narrate their primary position as teachers because they support the young adults with schoolwork:

“The Adult Educational Center pays my salary here [the Study Center], because so many of our students come here. My primary job, when I’m here, is to help them with math. I’m here twice a week in the afternoons. We sit together and talk about the math and I help them with it, but often a lot of other issues also come up.” (Kirsten, teacher from the Adult Educational Center)

The teacher positions herself with a primary purpose when she is in the social enterprise: to help them with the math. This purpose is not very different from the described purpose of their work in the Adult Educational Center. However, it is obvious that the teachers also support and help the young adult with other issues when they work in the social enterprise. Study-related issues are often the starting point for the relationship between the teachers and the young adults, which often evolves to a deeper relationship. The teachers' narratives about their different positions in the social enterprise are also related to this process. They describe their position as different than in a school setting, because they have the time and resources to offer more holistic support when they work in the social enterprise. Furthermore, they also describe that the power relations have a different character in the social enterprise because they do not have to evaluate the young adults like they do in the Adult Educational Center. According to the teachers, the different positions also demands certain competencies:

“You have to enjoy being a teacher, of course, but you also have to be patient and good at keeping a structure. You also have to be able to see the whole picture and not only the school, because so many factors are important. You need to understand that even small steps can be very important steps in the right direction, if you know, what I mean... It's an ongoing learning process. I'm not particularly good at it yet, because there are a lot of things that I need to learn, but you learn something new every day. I believe that the best thing about this job is that I also learn something in my job as a teacher at the Adult Educational Center.” (Henrik, teacher from the Adult Educational Center)

In the quotation, multiple skills that the teachers need to possess and learn are described. The teacher emphasizes that he has learned some more 'soft' skills – such as being patient – but must also have a more holistic approach toward the young adults. Ideas that have been developed within the third sector have been carried over by the teacher as a boundary crosser, and successfully implemented in his job as a teacher in the public sector. Hybridization not only affects the way the support is delivered, it also has a strong impact on the people working within these hybrid zones. In the quotation it is interesting to see how the teacher engages in this process of learning by drawing on previous experiences and on the resources available in the social enterprise.

### **BARRIERS AND DILEMMAS FACING AGENTS OF CHANGE IN THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

In the social enterprise, different stories about barriers and dilemmas facing agents of change in the daily practice are constructed. The personal engagement in the organization is narrated as being very important constructing change for the young adults, but the personal engagement is also a value that makes the job difficult:

“It is so difficult when you don't reach the goal, because you really want everyone to succeed, but sometimes you have people where you believe it's going well and then they just suddenly disappear. They don't answer your texts or calls, and you have no idea what's happened to them. That's hard.” (Henrik, teacher from the Adult Educational Center)

The people in the social enterprise find it very difficult when they lose contact with the young adults. They have established close relationships

and, in some cases, the help is very dependent on one person. This makes the relationship vulnerable, but it is also difficult for the teachers and coaches; they become the primary helper, which can put a lot of pressure on them, and in the worst case scenario cause them to burn out. The narratives of the social enterprise as a practice with strong moral social responsibility and no bureaucratic structure also produce a practice with more undefined boundaries for help, responsibility, and position of the people working within it. The more boundless practice enables the players to produce positive change for the young adults, but in some situations it also creates barriers and dilemmas.

These dilemmas can also occur in relation to the collaborators. The coaches understand their position as agents of change as important in relation to creating a link between the young adults and the broader society. They describe that this position can be a challenge when they want to create a relation between the young adults and the labor market. They point out that it can be difficult because they feel that they need to personally vouch for the young adults if they recommend them for a job. The coaches also feel responsible if something goes wrong. Players from the social enterprise describe situations where supervisors across sectors have questioned whether the teachers in the social enterprise helped the young adults too much: “There can be a problem with other teachers because some of them think it’s cheating if the students get help from us, some teachers see it that way.” (Henrik, teacher from the Adult Educational Center)

The described dilemma with the teachers can also be a challenge in relation to the students. The teachers who work in both the Adult Edu-

cational Center and the Study Center transcend boundaries by simultaneously being active in both organizations. These two positions are not entirely distinct, but reinforce each other. In some situations, the teachers describe this as a challenge:

“It’s not so good if I have the same students at the Study Center and in the Adult Educational Center. That’s not an ideal situation. The good thing about being here in the Study Center is that I’m not their teacher who has to evaluate them.” (Henrik, teacher from the Adult Educational Center)

The teacher also explains that he sometimes has the same students at the Study Center and the Adult Educational Center. This can be a challenge because then the students might not ask the same questions or may feel uncomfortable about the relationship. The players experience these situations as conflicting because they emphasize that the Study Center is not a school with traditional teachers, but it becomes a problem when the students position the teachers that way. Being active in both sectors can be a challenge for the teachers, but it is also narrated as a barrier to creating positive change for the young adults.

### **THE YOUNG ADULTS’ NARRATIVES OF THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AS A LINK TO EDUCATION AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In the young adults’ narratives of change, education is understood as a very important factor in the transformation process. In the construction of stories about their dreams and future, education is narrated as a dependent factor for success in life. A majority of the young adults tell stories of dropout and neglect in relation to



education. The stories about their dropouts are often constructed in relation to narratives about some very difficult life circumstances: “I have lived at fourteen different institutions, so I’ve moved around a lot, and I’ve been transferred to different primary schools ten times.” (Tina)

The young adults do not construct many stories of education as challenging because of the academic level: “Early on in high school, I was a good student, but I was kind of a weird person, I suppose.” (Mathias) Many of them explain that they have learned something from these difficult situations: “I’ve never lost hope and I’m grateful in a way, because it’s made me wiser but, most of all, I feel stronger. I’ve learned that even though it is very difficult, you can get something positive out of it.” (Line) These different narratives are a way to make sense of a difficult past, because it enables them to construct stories of a better future where education becomes a dependent variable in the construction of the right story.

They typically narrate educational challenges relating to their diagnoses: “I take medicine for my ADHD. I stop taking it for a while, but when I started school I needed to start again because it helps me stay focused.” (Tina) They describe that they have certain needs in relation to education, which have often been misunderstood in the past: “I don’t really fit in to any of those diagnoses, but I’m in the autism spectra, which they didn’t know at the time, because I was pretty talented, so they thought that I was just acting out.” (Mathias) These narratives about special needs in relation to education also construct their position or categorization as help seekers. All the participants in my interview explain that these special needs are the reason why they got in contact with the study center:

“I remember the first time I heard about this place was at my school. I think it was my study counselor, who told me about it. I told her about my special needs, and then she thought that the Study Center was a good place to get study support, and then I started here.” (Tina)

The young adults’ entry to the social enterprise is often determined by the identification of special needs, which are constructed as an entry requirement to receive help. However, the young adults try to construct a different story about the place and the users:

“This place is a solution for education and social integration, but that is kind of technical and it doesn’t really mean much, you know. I think this place is a great platform to practice for anyone. It is important that it’s central, it’s close to town and the campus, and they make you feel involved right away.” (Mathias)

Mathias describes the social enterprise as a place for education and social integration, but he simultaneously takes some distance to this story about the place. Mathias tries to construct a narrative about the social enterprise as a platform for anyone, and not only people with special needs. The young adults need to belong to a community where they do not feel stigmatized or marginalized, but at the same time they also legitimize their need for help with a construction of themselves as someone with such special needs. In the social enterprise as a discursive environment, this particular storyline is shaped to make sense of the young adults’ past, present, and future.

The young adults explain that their primary reason for visiting the social enterprise is to study. However, for most of them, this purpose has evolved into something more:

“I feel, that I belong here. I want to come here. I’ve never felt that I belonged like this anywhere else. I’ve opened up here and developed as a person, because I’ve not felt any pressure on me, so I’ve been able to handle my internal conflict in a different way, and I’ve been able to talk to people here. They’re flexible and dynamic, and they want to go that extra mile for you, so you feel comfortable.” (Hans).

The young adults narrate the social enterprise as a very unique place in relation to their construction of change. The feeling of belonging is narrated as an important circumstance in the

transformation process. The young adults often narrate stories of the social enterprise as a place where they have changed and developed because there has been no pressure on them.

In the construction of transformation, the process is narrated as a personal development that is generated in collaboration with the people working in the social enterprise. The young adults often visit the social enterprise to have personal conversations with the coaches. This close relationship is constructed as a very important aspect of the personal development. The coaches are positioned as a significant other in the transformation process because they are willing to go that extra mile and they give the young adults the time they need. The process of self-change is expected to take time and the coaches are positioned as active collaborators



in that process. They collaborate about defining the young adults' transformation process by asking relevant questions and by setting up different possibilities for the direction of change. The coaches in the social enterprise are also positioned as producers of a certain social order in the daily practice, which supports the participation and change of the young adults:

"Negative behavior is discouraged in a very positive way, but it has to do with the social structure that they form. They talk a lot and they have a very equal system among each other. There are leaders here, but they are not like bosses." (Hans).

Different techniques are used in the daily practice to shape and achieve a certain development. The other users are also positioned as important players in this process:

"It's not only because of the people working here, but also because of the other students, who have the same symptoms as me. Some of them are in high school or study at the university even though they have a diagnosis. This inspires you and makes you feel motivated, because you realize that it's possible to follow your dreams, and my dream has always been to get a higher education qualification." (Line)

The other users are positioned as important contributors in the process of change, as they produce hope and motivation. The young adults also point out that there is an important kind of solidarity among the users of the social enterprise. They feel that they have something in common and that they can share experiences. There are different groups of young adults that play cards, do programming, paint, knit, and engage in other creative activities in the social

enterprise. This community is also narrated as the reason why the social enterprise is something special, and a place where the young adults like to spend time:

"Sometimes I just come there to drink coffee and hang out, and I see people playing cards or other things. People do a lot of creative stuff, which I like even though I haven't joined in. These creative groups of any kind make me feel at home and I feel comfortable when I see that." (Tina)

These different activities are narrated as important even though the girl in the quotation explains that she has not participated in any of the groups. The creative initiatives contribute to a comfortable atmosphere. Many of the young adults explain that it is important that the social enterprise has this mix of different groups because it makes it possible to do other things than studying. Two of the young adults in the interviews have completed their studies, and they explain that they still visit the social enterprise because they can participate in or start up different initiatives and evolve professional skills at their own pace. In this case, they evolve skills by programming together in a small group that meet once a week. The social aspect and creative environment help to bring about change.

### **POSSIBILITIES AND BARRIERS FOR TRANSCENDING MARGINALIZATION THROUGH THE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

The institutional requirement for change in the social enterprise creates both barriers and possibilities for transcending marginalization. In the social enterprise, stories are shaped and encouraged – especially in relation to education. A common construction of change is narrated as a story of a difficult past with different challenges in relation to education. Through the Study

Center they have received support that enables them to make sense of their past and construct a new meaningful understanding of selves. This meaningful understanding is typically shaped in relation to education, because it is perceived as necessary in constructing a meaningful life.

Most of the young adults can construct these stories and understandings of selves, which can produce a transgression of marginalization. However, it becomes a problem for the young adults if they cannot construct these narratives and live up to the produced norm. It also becomes a problem for the young adults who have finished an educational program, but still feel marginalized and excluded. They explain that they find it difficult to move on with their lives because they cannot get a job. They still visit the social enterprise, but they construct it as a place they need to move away from: “I can stay here for a while to develop my skills, but then I have to move on.” (Jonas) They construct the social enterprise as a community where they belong, but at the same time they narrate it as a springboard to something else. This process becomes very difficult, when this ‘something else’ does not exist.

In the social enterprise they try to handle structural barriers by creating other meaningful initiatives the young adults can participate in. They have hired people with special needs who work in the social enterprise, which the other young adults narrate as a very positive aspect: “A good thing is that they’ve hired someone with the same challenges as me. It motivates me, because then I can see that I also can get a job one day.” (Tina) It is regarded as positive that the social enterprise has jobs for people with special needs, but it is not narrated as a real option among the young adults:

“I want to be free and I don’t want to be here all my life. I want to be alone and strong on my own, but it’s maybe a stupid thing being a lone wolf, because nobody can be alone, but I don’t want to be dependent on people all the time.” (Mathias).

In the quotation, a dilemma produced within the discursive environment is constructed. A particular narrative of autonomy is shaped and reproduced in the social enterprise. Autonomy is narrated as something the young adults accomplish if they move on and become strong on their own. This narrative creates dilemmas, as some of the young adults are very dependent on the people in the social enterprise. This dependency becomes a problem for the young adults when it contradicts with the produced narratives of autonomy. Some young adults also narrate their dependency as problematic in relation to the project-driven initiatives in the social enterprise, because they are afraid that the social enterprise will close down: “Because then you suddenly just stand without anything.” (Line) Different dilemmas occur because of the required construction of certain narratives of autonomy and dependency within the discursive environment.

The young adults narrate it as very positive that they can influence the activities in the house, and that the coaches support their ideas. Nonetheless, they also experience that their position as active participants can sometimes be a challenge. The barriers for creating positive change are narrated in relation to the individual conversation with the coaches. The young adults explain that it can be difficult for them to bring the initiative to discussion because the coaches are busy:



“For people like me who don’t really ask for help, then it’s difficult, because they don’t really have time to talk about problems if they get too serious. I’m concerned about that – especially in relation to new users. I feel comfortable here, but it must be difficult for the new ones.” (Tina)

The young adults’ positions as active and autonomous subjects are difficult to navigate within. The relationship with the coaches is narrated as a voluntary arrangement where the young adults are positioned as the ones to decide if they want to engage in it or not. This voluntary aspect creates positive change for some of the young adults, but it also demands active participation, which some of the individuals describe as a barrier to receiving help.

The young adults have built up a very close and trustful relationship with their coaches, and it is narrated as a very valuable skill that the coaches know how to balance this relationship: “They don’t let go of you even though you feel bad and disappear. I know they will do everything they can to make me feel better, but they also respect that they can’t put too much pressure on me, when I feel bad. It’s so good that they’re aware of this.” (Tina).

In the social enterprise, the relationship with the coaches is narrated as a very important aspect in the process of creating positive change.

## SUMMARY

The collaboration is based on moral values about social justice and a commitment to help individuals in need. The social enterprise is narrated as a complementary social service where the main purpose is to support inclusion in the local community. Education is an institutional requirement in this process. The collaboration between the social enterprise and public players is described as very positive and unproblematic, which is often explained by the fact that the different players know each other very well. It is a small community, which produces a close relationship between the different players, but it also makes the constellation more vulnerable. The social enterprise is project-driven, and has a more insecure economic structure, which is narrated as a challenge in the collaboration. This circumstance can produce more competition for market shares between the different players, and underlines that welfare pluralism is more than just producing more cooperation.

The different players describe the collaboration across sectors as being very valuable in creating inclusion for the young adults. The agents of change explain that the work across sectors has changed perspective, as the players have learned and imported ideas and values. The young adults also identify this function as being very important for their inclusion and participation in educational communities. However, the positions of the boundary crossers are also challenging and demanding because many different skills are required.

In the social enterprise, there is a strong internalized belief in the cause among the agents of change. This belief is narrated as very important for the young adults, because it contributes to building a trustful relationship between the

young adults and the agents of change. However, this relationship can also be vulnerable and difficult in those situations where the agent of change becomes the primary helper. The narratives of the social enterprise as a practice with strong moral social responsibility also produces a practice with more undefined boundaries for help, responsibility, and position of the people working within it.

The institutional requirement of education creates both barriers and possibilities for transcending marginalization. Many of the young adults regard it as very positive that they can receive help in relation to education. However, the strong institutional requirement is also at risk of producing a further exclusion of those individuals who cannot participate. The same problem arises for those young adults who have finished their education, as they describe it as being difficult to move on from that position. This dilemma is reinforced by the institutional requirement of change and personal development. Therefore, it is very important to further consider how to develop alternative and meaningful communities for these young adults.



# — PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ACTIVITY CENTER AND VOLUNTARY SPORTS ORGANIZATION —

## CO-GOVERNANCE WITH A VOLUNTARY SPORTS ORGANIZATION

### CLOSE COLLABORATION AS AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTOR TO RECOVERY

The Activity Center and the voluntary sports organization understand their partnership as a fundamental contributor to the construction and development of common values in the building. They have shared facilities and collaborated for ten years, and the voluntary sports organization is narrated as an essential partner in the foundation of the Activity Center.

A shared goal is to create recovery and empowerment of mentally vulnerable individuals, and both establishments strongly believe in the importance of physical activity as an essential contributor in this process. The narrative is that the voluntary sports organization developed the idea of involving sports activities in the recovery process. There is a strong personal story about a former psychiatric patient who initiated the voluntary sports organization because he realized how much physical activity meant in his own recovery process. This narrative also shapes the understanding of the voluntary sports organization as a legitimate part of the Activity Center:

“This place developed together with the voluntary sports organization, because they were actually here in the first place. The voluntary sports organization existed long before my time,

and they have had many different locations, but because they received more and more funding from the municipality a decision was made to establish this building, and of course it was natural that the building was developed together with the pioneers and people from the voluntary sports organization.” (Stine, coordinator in the voluntary sports organization)

The people from the Activity Center and the voluntary sports organization cooperate in daily practice and offer services and activities to the same overall group of users. This group is divided into sub-groups dependent on the interventions or activities within the building:

“You can use the Activity Center without having a diagnosis and you don’t need a visitation, but there are some courses, in the youth activities for example, where you need visitation. This place is actually like a drop-in center, or not exactly a drop-in center, but a place where people just can drop in from the street. If you live in the municipality, then you can be enrolled in some of the courses, and the voluntary sports organization belongs in the house and has very strong collaboration with the Activity Center.” (Stine, coordinator in the voluntary sports organization)

The collaboration between the Activity Center and the voluntary sports organization has an influence on the users of the house, as many of the people participate in activities across sectors. A shared purpose is to support this user transition from activities in the Social Psychiatry to

activities in the voluntary sports organization. This has also generated a co-creation project where a youth division has been developed in the voluntary sports organization. The purpose is to support an increased transition and membership among the young adults from the Activity Center with mental health problems.

### **THE VOLUNTARY SPORTS ORGANIZATION AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO USER INVOLVEMENT**

The leader of the Activity Center feels that this constellation makes them different from other interventions or services within social psychiatry:

“We are different from other interventions because of our complexity. We have a voluntary organization, and they are autonomous in a way. They have their own budget, which they manage, and they have users and members who are elected, make decisions, and manage the operation of their services. The fact that we have such a sovereign user organization in the house affects the way we think about our own services.” (Susanne, leader of the Activity Center).

The leader explains that the partnership creates a complexity that produces more co-creation with the users within the social psychiatry services. The leader understands this involvement of the users as a fundamental motivation for collaboration with the voluntary sports organization:

“We do things together. We try very hard to co-create instead of only providing services, and we ask the people who are involved. We walk in front of them, next to them, and behind them, depending on what the users’ needs are, and that becomes very clear and explicit when

you have a voluntary user organization in the house.” (Susanne, leader of the Activity Center) According to the leader, the collaboration supports the focus on the users’ need, and the voluntary organization is understood as an important contributor to strengthening general user involvement in the daily practice. The partnership has also generated a focus on implementing peer support in the Activity Center. An important strategy is to ensure that the employees understand that the users’ voice is essential in the delivery of services. The Activity Center offers a mix of these individual and collective efforts to facilitate and support user involvement, which is a shared value in the partnership. It can be argued that the level of hybridity in the Activity Center has increased the diversity of service providers in the daily practice.

### **THE CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE DESCRIBED HYBRIDITY**

The described hybridity in the Activity Center also creates challenges and dilemmas in the partnership between the Center and the voluntary sports organization. These challenges are often described as being associated with the voluntary sports organization’s dependency on the Activity Center. The Activity Center provides financial support to the voluntary sports organization, as it pays the salaries of the coordinator and two part-time employees. This dependency on the Activity Center creates conflicts in the partnership in terms of governance structure and decision-making authority. A common narrative is that the voluntary sports organization could not exist without the financial and professional support from the Activity Center:

“Sometimes it’s important for a coordinator that there are some permanent employees. The people from the voluntary organization have

been involved from the beginning, and the chairman has always had a very close relationship with the leader of the facility, so it can be very difficult to separate these things. The collaboration is probably because the voluntary organization would find it very difficult to function in a stable way if it wasn't part of social psychiatry." (Stine, coordinator of the voluntary sports organization)

The motivation for initiating the partnership with the Activity Center is described as a necessary circumstance to survive. This situation often produces dilemmas because the voluntary sports organization experiences that they are pushed towards homogeneity with social psychiatry. They want to keep their autonomous position, but they find this difficult:

"It is very ambivalent, because they [people from the voluntary sports organization] will not be controlled from the top. They have become used to the system being the evil ones in a way, but at the same time, they are aware of the necessity of this process, because otherwise the organization can't run on full throttle. They know this, but at the same time they oppose it." (Stine, coordinator in the voluntary sports organization)

In the quotation the ability to run on full throttle is described as a value, which becomes a problem for the voluntary sports organization. They lack the human and financial resources to manage this development. The board members are people with mental health problems, and they lack the resources to run the organization without support from the municipality. The increased hybridity of the practice caused the voluntary organization to become part of social psychiatry. This situation produces differ-

ent conflicts in the partnership. The co-creation project between the voluntary sports organization and the youth program is described as problematic, because the members of the board in the voluntary sports organization feel that they have been disregarded in that process. The hybrid governance promotes situations where the power relationships and the decision-making processes in the partnership become unclear:

"It is something with the structure, which is not as transparent here as it is anywhere else. We don't have formal house meetings, and it's not obvious where things are discussed. The information channels are not clear, because there are so many activities and possibilities in the house, and the lack of clarity or lack of structure are also described as frustrating." (Susanne, activity Center leader)

The leader of the Activity Center describes this hybrid governance as both a promoter of possibilities and limitations. The hybridity is described as creating a possibility for many activities in the house, because of the involvement of different service providers like the voluntary sports organization. The limitations are constructed in relation to the more unclear and subtle forms of governance that the complexity creates.

## CREATING CHANGE IN THE ACTIVITY CENTER

### NARRATIVES OF CONTRADICTION LOGICS

In the Activity Center, the purpose of the program for young adults with mental health problems is described very specifically. The program is for those who want to work with mental and physical health to find their way to education and the labor market. The young adults are enrolled in the program for 24 weeks, and after this period they can continue to use the open drop-in services in the Activity Center and the sports activities in the voluntary sports organization. From my first visit in the Activity Center it became very clear that the place is part of social psychiatry, and that people use the place to receive help from professionals. The following field note describes this:

“The Activity Center is located in a building together with a dancing school, private apartments and a public social office. At first you don’t see the Activity Center, because you have to walk through a gate into a courtyard, and the main entrance is on the right. In the courtyard is a greenhouse and garden furniture. Next to the main entrance is a sign with the name and opening hours. Inside the building is a kitchen with an open room and five dinner tables and chairs. At the end of the room is a couch and next to it two computers. The room is called the café, but that is not the association you get when you enter the room. It reminds me more of a canteen or a clubhouse. Two adults prepare food in the kitchen. On the window-sill are various brochures with information on mental illness and different services such as sports activities, self-help groups, and therapy. Three young adults sit at one of the tables. They

drink coffee in silence, while an adult sits with a list of names and a telephone in her hand.”

The field note gives a very brief introduction to the practice, but the materiality of the place is related to the interactions that take place. The field note supports the assumption that social change functions locally as an institutional requirement. When the young adults are enrolled in the program, they have a personal coach, and they are obligated to participate in activities twenty hours a week. The coaches describe this obligation as a positive aspect of the program: “We expect them to attend, and expect them to become part of the community – this is what they signed up for. We expect them to participate in the counseling, and expect them to set some goals or at least do it together with their coach.” (Lise, coach in the Activity Center)

These expectations are described as motivating and important factors in the construction of change. In practice these expectations are part of the daily routine in the program, which is also demonstrated in the above field note. The coaches practice this roll call every morning to register attendance and participation, and those who are absent receive a phone call or a text message. The coaches describe this routine and documentation as an important strategy in the transformation process:

“We do it in a very caring way, so it’s not like you have to come, and if you don’t, you will be marked absent. It’s more like a negotiation, to show them confidence, and help them to understand that the most important part of being ready to study or even just coping with everyday life is to figure out how to get started.” (Lise, coach in the Activity Center)

This strategy is presented as a tool to prepare the young adults for education and everyday life. The narrative is also shaped in this way, because the coaches are trying to make sense of this practice. It is part of the discursive environment that it is important to construct confidence and equal relationships in the Activity Center. However, the unequal relationship between the young adults and the coaches become very obvious. Registration is a requirement set by the job center, because most of the young adults in the program are on social security benefits. The coaches are trying to make sense of this contradictory logic by presenting it as a caring and trustful procedure, which creates positive change for the young adults.

#### **THE POSITION OF THE AGENTS OF CHANGE AS FACILITATORS**

The coaches emphasize a trustful relationship with the young adults as a fundamental aspect of creating change. In the daily practice they have individual counseling with the young adults once a week. The counseling is regarded as a necessary activity in the creating of change. The coaches describe their own position in the counseling as being more passive, because it is important for them that the young adults set the agenda. The coaches explain that this passive position demands a certain dialogue, where the young adults are the talking subjects and the coaches are the silent. This represents a reversal in the traditional arrangement of speech between the young adults and the coaches. This transformation is noticeable across various institutional settings and professional domains, and can be seen as a component in the more general critique of hierarchical forms of management (Karlsen & Villadsen, 2008).

The coaches explain that they use different tools and evaluating schemes in the counseling to promote the young adults' transformation, and to evaluate the relationship between the young adults and the coaches. These tools are presented as a way of structuring the conversation, and to ensure that the transformation process is constructed correctly. This includes the young adults' own interpretation and narration of the problem, which is understood as motivating for the process of change. The coaches are positioned as the facilitator of this process rather than the controller or expert.

The coaches also describe their position as agents of change as important in other activities. They explain that the combination of these different activities and the social aspect is very important in bringing about change, because it enables them to interact with the young adults in many different settings:

"I believe it's important that you bring many skills into play, I mean, it's not just about talking to another person, it's not just about being physically active, and it's not just about being in a classroom. It's also about getting changed together, it's also about taking part in sport together, taking a trip together- There are always so many different things that come into play, and people have different strengths and weaknesses, which means that we always have something to talk about, because some activities are easy for some of them and difficult for others, and vice versa." (Kristina, coach in the Activity Center)

The different activities in the program are described as being very important in the process of change. The young adults participate in three different courses in the Activity Center; a mental health course, a physical health course,

and physical training. They also participate in social activities every week. This combination of different activities is regarded as being very important, because it makes different positions available for the young adults. The coaches are the teachers in the various courses and activities, and they describe it as very valuable that they get the chance to see different sides of the young adults. They construct this constellation as meaningful, because it enables change in a more holistic way.

The social aspects of the activities are regarded as being particularly important, because the collective aspect creates solidarity and a commitment to participate. The coaches understand the importance of their own position in this regard, and they often support and facilitate these collective processes: “My role is to include everybody in the group, and to help them with this

kind of social training, and to invite them to open up and talk to the others. Another role is to keep an eye on them, for example, if somebody is very challenged or is having a bad day, or if somebody is feeling sad.” (Mie, coach in the Activity Center) A common narrative among the coaches is that the regular social activities help the young adults discover that there are other people in the same position as them, and that they learn and develop social skills in a protected environment.

### **THE CHALLENGES OF UNDEFINED POSITIONS IN THE ACTIVITY CENTER**

The agents of change narrate different stories of challenges and dilemmas in constructing change in the daily practice. In the Activity Center the engagement of peer support is an important part of their practice, and this function is also part of the youth program. The players describe



the position of the peers in the program very differently. However, the main type of direct work is described as physical training, advocacy, socialization, role modeling, and gathering information.

The peers are enrolled in peer-support training, and are employed as interns in the Activity Center. The peers are presented as belonging to the team of employees in the Activity Center, but their position is different from the coaches: “I’m not sure it’s the right thing to say, but I believe that my role is also to be a friend for them [young adults].” (Nicholas, peer in the Activity Center) The position as a friend is stated to be something that is not completely allowed, but it is described as a meaningful position for the peer. The peers often describe uncertainty about their position in the Activity Center. The legitimizing of the role is often described in relation to the ability to build a special relationship with the young adults. Peers are felt to understand the young adults’ problems in an important and distinctive way:

“There are things that can be very embracing, right? I think they [young adults] know that I understand it. Having anxiety, for example, if you haven’t experienced it, then you have no idea about what it’s like to wake up in the morning with anxiety. It’s the worst thing in the world, and we can talk about that. I can tell them that, even though I’m here, there’s no miracle cure, but there are things you can do, such as be changing your daily routines.” (Nicolas, peer in the Activity Center)

The peer engages in relationship building and is positioned as a role model for the young adults, because of their experiences. The position of the peers is described very diversely in the Activity

Center. The vagueness and insufficient structure of the position also creates various practical dilemmas. The peers are both positioned as belonging to the groups of young adults and to the group of employees. This creates dilemmas about where the boundaries lie in the relationship between the peers and the young adults, and finding a balance is difficult:

“The other employees don’t have this problem, because they are just employees. I’ve been in therapy with some of them, so they still see me as that person who they drank coffee and smoked cigarettes with, and told cock-and-bull stories with at the hospital, right? So it’s a difficult balance, right?” (Nicolas, peer in the Activity Center)

The experiential sharing is generally described as a positive aspect in relation to the peers’ position in the house, but it is also regarded as a challenge for the peers to navigate within. In addition, the vagueness of the peer position also promotes situations where it is not clear how the other employees should relate to the peers.

These challenges are also described as applying to the interns and volunteers in the Activity Center. The coaches position some of them as role models, because they have undergone a positive transformation process from the youth program to work or education. A minority of them are also users or volunteers in the voluntary organization. The coaches describe this transgression as very important, because it creates hope and motivation for the other young adults in the program. They explain that they have learned that it is essential to acknowledge these different transgressions: “It has been a process for us to learn that this shift in roles is actually very important. That’s because the principle of

equality is so important in the youth program, which means, that for me, she is still just Anna.” (Pernille, coach in the Activity Center)

There is a standard ritual every time one of the young adults finishes the youth program. They are presented with a diploma and their coach makes a speech. This is described as a way to stage the transgression and the new position of the young adults. The staging is very important, because it is difficult to see the different positions due to the principle of equality in the Activity Center. The mix of different agents of change in the Activity Center is an important contributor to the construction of change, but understanding and balancing the boundaries of the different positions is also a challenge.

### **THE CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS OF REGISTRATION AND EVALUATION**

The coaches report that using the registration tools and evaluation schemes in individual counseling with the young adults can be a challenge. The tools can be difficult to use when the young adults are not ready to set goals for their future. The coaches describe different situations where they have had young adults with very serious psychiatric symptoms, such as anxiety and hallucination, where it seemed pointless and impossible to fill out questions about future education or work.

In the weekly counselling session, the young adults are asked to evaluate their own development, which makes it possible to monitor their development on different variables such as education, social network, and physical health. This process is difficult when the young adults do not experience this transformation process within the 24-week program. The coaches explain that they feel very inadequate in those situations:

“I think it’s because I find it difficult to navigate. Where I’ve had a relationship that didn’t work in the individual counseling, it’s also been difficult to make it work in the other activities. I actually spend a lot of my time thinking about that.” (Mie, coach in the Activity Center)

The coach explains that the difficult relationship in the counseling also affects the relationship in other activities, which increases the barriers to creating change for the young adults.

The registration of the young adults’ attendance is also described as a practice that creates dilemmas in the relationship between the coaches and the young adults. A common situation in practice is that the young adults have a high degree of absenteeism, which is a common condition in the work with young adults with mental health problems. The coaches often discuss this practice of attendance registration, because they experience that it is a challenge that many of the young adults do not participate regularly. At a team meeting one of the coaches questions this practice:

“How can we prevent absence registration having an impact on the relationship? If somebody hasn’t attended for three days, I report it, and they lose their social security benefits. How do we keep a good relationship, where they still feel that we’re on their side?” (Lasse, coach in the Activity Center)

The coaches position themselves on the side of the young adults, which conflicts with the job center’s demands for registration. Recording absence can have a negative effect on the trustful relationship between the young adults and the coaches, which is fundamental in the process of change. The registration practices are regarded

as a challenge and, in some situations, a barrier to creating positive change for the young adults.

### **THE YOUNG ADULTS' NARRATIVES OF EXPECTATIONS**

The majority of young adults in the Activity Center report that they have one or more psychiatric diagnoses, and this is a typical reason for their participation in the youth program. The young adults who do not give a diagnosis as the reason for participation attribute their participation to other difficult life circumstances, such as previous drug or alcohol abuse. The majority are referred to the youth program by the job center or psychiatric treatment. The content of the young adults' stories about the Activity Center are shaped by this circumstance. Many of the young adults explain that they started in the program because of a lack of other opportunities, or because their own proposals for activity had been rejected by the municipality:

"I started here with no expectations. I really wanted to do something else, but I wasn't allowed to, and I had to do something. And then I thought, all right, but I never expected that I would complete education. I really didn't believe that, and I certainly didn't expect to get friends here, because when I was admitted to the psychiatry service, we all felt so bad, and I couldn't really handle that again. But here it was different, because people live by themselves, so I was surprised, because people here are feeling better than I had expected." (Melissa)

The young adults acquire their preliminary understanding of the program by constructing a narrative about the process of change they have gone through. Many of the young adults report negative experiences with the municipality, which shapes their stories about a lack of

expectations regarding the youth program in the Activity Center. The quotation emphasizes it as something positive that the program is for young adults who live by themselves, because this is regarded as an important indicator of their mental health situation. The Activity Center is regarded as being different from the psychiatric institutions, because people are feeling better when they enter the program. This is regarded as important, because it enables some of the young adults to identify with others in the program.

### **THE YOUNG ADULTS' NARRATIVES OF PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The majority of the young adults explain that they are in the program to work with their personal development. They describe the individual counseling with their coach as the place where they construct the goals for this process: "The meetings with my coach are mostly about my goals, and why I'm here, and it should be directed at education and personal development." (Louise)

Many of the young adults say that they have a trustful relationship with the coaches, and they often share personal issues with them. They position the peers and the other young adults differently: "I don't want to bother my friends about how bad I feel all the time. I want to have fun with them, but with my coach, I can talk in depth about my problems, and how I really feel." (Simone). They position the peers and the other young adults more as friends, where they can share common experiences and everyday issues. The coaches are positioned as someone with whom they talk about problems.

The young adults feel very positive about the youth program consisting of various courses

and social activities, because it gives them a feeling of being part of a meaningful activity and community:

“The important thing is that you have something to do. You have a reason to get out of bed in the morning, and it’s really nice to be part of a community where you can talk to others about your problems. We’re also taught something at the same time, and it’s very good that exercise is mandatory, because I don’t do it by myself, and exercise is really good if you have mental health problems.” (Marlene)

Many of the young adults state it as important that they have something to get out of bed in the morning for, because it gives them a daily routine; this is often reported as difficult to maintain alone. The young adults are especially very fond of the physical activities and the social aspect of the program: “I feel that the more I exercise, the better I feel mentally.” (Karen). It is very important for them that they learn something, and the social aspects in the Activity Center support this process, because it makes them feel comfortable. The participation in physical activities is also regarded as an important contributor to creating positive change for the young adults. Many of them state that it gives them self-confidence and something to talk with the other participants about.

### **THE CONSTRUCTION OF CERTAIN NARRATIVES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS**

The young adults also participate in a mental health course where they learn to tell stories about their mental health problems. In the course, they are encouraged through different techniques to share certain problems by presenting them in a particular way. The young adults

are given different assignments every time, where they have to relate to different themes such as recovery, mental health, everyday life, and coping strategies. In these assignments, personal development is a key component. One example of this particular construction of change is presented in the dialogue between two young adults (David and Melissa) and a coach, in a session where they discuss their past lives. In this session the young adults are asked to discuss in groups what they have in their ‘emotional baggage’ as a metaphor for their emotional life. A field note describes this dialogue:

“David explains to Melissa that his anxiety and paranoia are so bad right now that it takes up 95 percent of his baggage, which makes it difficult for him to carry it around. The coach interrupts the conversation, and asks Melissa how she feels. Melissa explains that, right now, her problems only take up 30 percent of her baggage. The coach asks David: ‘So David, what do you get out of hearing that?’ David says: ‘It gives me hope’. Melissa continues: ‘I have learned to cope with my anxiety through different techniques, you just have to think about what’s the worst thing that can happen, and you can also try to stand on your head with the anxiety or just laugh at it. I have even heard about someone who got so angry at the anxiety that he just scolded it’. The coach says to David: ‘Yeah, at first that might sound a little crazy, but I think Melissa’s point is, that you can try to play a little with your anxiety, David’. David is silent.”

The dialogue is shaped and constrained by the coach, which is a typical example of how certain narratives of change are constructed in the youth program. The young adults’ stories about mental health problems have to be told as a process of positive change, or they have to be told



in a way that generates motivation and hope of a positive change. The coach silences David's story of his difficult situation because it does not comply with the discursive environment, as he fails to describe positive change. The social and collective aspects of the program are used creating this transformation process, as the young adults are encouraged to share their experiences of positive change, because it is constructed in a way that gives hope to the other participants.

### **POSSIBILITIES FOR AND BARRIERS TO TRANSCENDING MARGINALIZATION THROUGH THE ACTIVITY CENTER**

In the Activity Center, narratives about diagnosis and mental health problems are part of the discursive environment, which creates both barriers and possibilities for the young adults. Young adults who do not identify with their diagnosis are also enrolled in the program, and they describe it as very difficult to position themselves within this discursive environment: "I don't want to have a diagnosis, because I don't see the point in it, what do I need it for?" (Henriette) The young adults who do not identify with their diagnosis or mental health problems find it difficult to be part of the community, because a different storyline cannot be created. These young adults explain that they do not feel they have anything in common with the others in the Activity Center, and they find it very difficult to position themselves in the community.

A certain kind of narrative about mental health problems in relation to recovery is often rewarded in the Activity Center. The young adults learn to construct these in the youth program's individual counseling and mental health course, but many of the young adults find it very difficult to narrate these stories of recovery. They are encouraged to share experiences with

each other, and to open up about their mental health problems. These stories have to be told with motivation and hope for a better future. Many of the young adults say that they do not feel this process of change, while others find it very difficult to position themselves in the discourse of mental health problems.

The young adults in the youth program are offered free membership in the voluntary sports organization, but very few of them accept this offer. They often talk about the voluntary sports organization as being a very protected environment, and some of them explain that they want to have friends outside social psychiatry. This narrative about the organization creates barriers for their participation, because they are trying to move away from the position of being mentally vulnerable.

Some of the young adults who have completed the youth program are volunteers or users of the voluntary sports organization, and they regard it as a very meaningful and valuable community: "I felt this huge defeat... like no places wanted to have me, and eventually it got personal, so I went down again, and then it was all about finding myself, and I did that through the voluntary sports organization." (Chris) Chris had completed the youth program, and then started working, which he describes as a very difficult process, promoting a huge defeat. He talks about the voluntary sports organization as being the community that helped him in this process, because he began working as a voluntary sports instructor in the organization. This position is described as meaningful, and an important contributor in the process of transcending marginalization.

The participants in the youth program, former participants, and other young adults use the open drop-in activities in the Activity Center. The majority of the young adults regard these sports activities and the cooking as a very meaningful community:

“I really like the open activities, because it’s really nice that your old friends are here. When I finish in the program, I also look forward to being able to visit it every Wednesday, and there will also be a study group, because many of us are starting education soon, and I think it will be so good that we can keep in touch with the teachers and the others.” (Marissa)

They describe the activities as being a very comfortable environment, and a place where they can get support, even when they are no longer enrolled in the program. They also regard it as very valuable that it is a place for them to keep in contact with their friends from the program. However, some of the young adults do not participate in these activities, and they describe it being ‘too chaotic’ as an environment. The mix of different activities in the Activity Center is important, because different people regard different activities as meaningful and possible to participate in.

The young adults participate in the youth program for 24 weeks, but some of them participate twice, because they are not ready for education or employment. One positive aspect of the program that many describe is that they have time to develop, but it can be a problem for the participants who are not prepared for education or employment within this period of time.

Not all of the young adults are allowed to participate in the program for 48 weeks, and others

may not be ready for education or employment after the two periods. These people report it as being very difficult to transcending marginalization, but the Activity Center tries to create meaningful activities for some of these young adults. Various positions have been created in the café or the youth program where some of the young adults are employed as interns. In this way, the Activity Center tries to overcome some of the structural barriers by constructing alternative activities where the young adults can be employed for a shorter period.



## SUMMARY

The partnership between the Activity Center and the voluntary sports organization includes a shared goal to help people with mental health problems recover through different physical activities and social arrangements. The Activity Center and the voluntary sports organization have a close relationship, because one strategy is to secure user involvement and co-creation. However, this form of hybridity does not seem to produce more co-creation with the voluntary organization. Instead, the voluntary organization has a lack of influence in the daily practice. The voluntary organization is very dependent on financial resources from social psychiatry, which produces a situation where the voluntary organization becomes a part of the public sector. This dependency on the Activity Center creates conflicts in the partnership in terms of governance structure and decision-making authority.

The youth program is part of the Activity Center, but in everyday activities the young adults do not interact much with the other users. Of the young adults, only a minority use the activities in the voluntary organization. The young adults often state that they struggle to move away from a position where they are considered as mentally vulnerable, which they find difficult in the discursive environment of the voluntary sports organization.

The youth program contains conflicting logics, which creates different challenges for the agents of change. The coaches' facilitation of social relationships among the young adults is regarded as a very positive aspect of the practice. The different social activities in the Activity Center create a comfortable environment where the young adults feel included. The mixes of both social and physical activities are also said

to be an important contributor to transcending marginalization. The activities that are open to former users of the youth program, peers, interns, and volunteers support the transgression process, because the young adults explain that it gives them hope and motivation to talk to these young adults.

However, some of the different positions in the house also create barriers and dilemmas in practice, because the positions are very unclear. The institutional requirement for change also produces barriers and dilemmas for the young adults. Certain narratives of the young adults' recovery process are shaped and constrained, which create dilemmas for the young adults who cannot participate or identify with this story. The young adults are encouraged to share stories of mental health problems, but the stories have to be presented in a way that highlights hope and motivation. Many of the young adults explain that they do not feel this process of change, and others find it very difficult to be positioned within this narrative.

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## CONCLUSION

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The partnerships and collaborations across sectors create different forms and levels of hybridity, which have been analyzed in the three different cases. These different governance arrangements constitute different discursive environments, where players from different sectors try to create participation and change for young adults with mental health problems.

The players interact in a socially complex everyday practice, where players from the different sectors and users construct different narratives of participation and change. These are constructed through talk, interactions, and material arrangements, which are analyzed in the three different cases. The different hybrid practices promote possibilities and barriers for transcending marginalization among the young adults with mental health problems.

The partnership between social psychiatry and the Culture House had many shared values and goals related to participation and inclusion. However, the governance techniques also created challenges in relation to the balance of different interests and multiple goals of both material and non-material value. These challenges are related to different and competing logics that influence the partnership, and the players in the daily practice.

The discursive environment in the hybrid practice consists of strong narratives of diversity, active participation, co-creation, collective action, social morality, and free choice. Many of the young adults understand and position themselves within this discourse. They narrate stories of belonging in the community and transcending

marginalization. However, the discourse also demands certain competent subjects that can navigate within this more boundless practice. Not all of the young adults can position themselves within this practice and navigate as a competent subject.

The social psychiatry supervisors are encouraged to set up boundaries for these individuals, which contradicts their understanding of the practice and their position within it. The boundaries in the practice become visible when they are violated, which creates dilemmas and challenges for the agents of change and the young adults. The hybrid practice creates positive change for the young adults who are able to navigate within this complexity, and it is regarded as a very valuable community that supports the process of transcending marginalization.

The collaboration between the social enterprise and the Adult Educational Center had a shared value of creating participation and change for young adults with mental health problems through education. Other public and private players also participated in the collaboration, which both promoted possibilities and challenges for the social enterprise. The collaboration between the different players was described as unproblematic, because the different players knew each other very well across sectors.

However, these circumstances also make the collaboration vulnerable. The social enterprise had project-driven initiatives financed by public and private players, and the insecure financial structure created dilemmas and competition for market shares. In the daily practice the shared

value of creating change through education promoted possibilities of transcending marginalization for some of the young adults with mental health problems. However, the strong institutional requirement of education is also at risk of further excluding those individuals that cannot participate.

The agents of change have established trustful and close relationships to many of the young adults, and this is described as an important contributor to positive change. Some of the agents are boundary crossers and active in both the social enterprise and the Adult Educational Center. These positions are regarded as an important part of the learning process and contribute to the creation of shared values and understanding across sectors. In the social enterprise it is important to promote inclusion of the young adults in the local community, and this process has succeeded for many of the young adults. However, structural circumstances and lack of possibilities make it difficult for some of the young adults to participate in the change process. They tell stories of a more insecure future, where it is difficult to transcend their marginal position.

In the partnership between the social psychiatry Activity Center and the voluntary sports organization, a shared goal is to create participation and change through sport and social activities. However, it is difficult to balance different goals and competing logics. This has created a situation where the voluntary sports organization has lost influence, and is pushed closer to the Activity Center, and a greater level of homogeneity with social psychiatry. The different service providers in the practice create a complexity, which is difficult to balance and navigate within for the change agents.

The ambiguity of the different roles and positions in the Activity Center is controlled by subtler forms of governance, which produce dilemmas in practice. Participation and change for young adults with mental health problems are constructed through different strategies and activities in the youth program. The discursive environment encourages particular stories of change in relation to recovery, but some of the young adults find this difficult. These stories are shaped through different technological requirements, such as registration, measurement, and evaluation. These requirements cause barriers and dilemmas for the agents of change and the young adults.

The many different activities and the combination of sport and social arrangement are regarded as bringing about positive change for the majority of the young adults. The importance of the voluntary and open nature of these activities is emphasized, because the feeling of belonging supports the young adults' inclusion and participation in other arenas outside the Activity Center. Only a few of the young adults use the voluntary sports organization. Many of them cannot identify with the users, because they are trying to move away from a position and stigmatization as mentally ill. However, the young adults who use the voluntary sports organization regard it as a very important and meaningful community.

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## EXTENDED RECOMMENDATIONS

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In the investigation of social services in Denmark and Sweden, it was difficult to find cases where players from the different sectors collaborated in network-oriented interventions for young adults with mental health problems. Partnerships across sectors were typically characterized by a more superficial arrangement. The social services offered to young adults with mental health problems were typically individualized interventions with a focus on the mental and psychological process of change. The three cases described in the report are best-practice cases. Various recommendations have been developed on the basis of the analyses of these three cases.

### ***Valuable collaboration across sectors demands time and resources***

A partnership will often be initiated because of a common goal, but different interests and competing logics will typically arise in the collaboration. Consequently, it takes time and resources to learn to balance these different interests and goals. A partnership is an ongoing and challenging process, and it is important to establish resources that can support dialogue and participation of the involved players.

In the brief review of cases in Denmark and Sweden, it was very difficult to find cases where the players worked across sector in the daily practice. In the case analysis, it was emphasized that the different service providers created possibilities for the young adults, but the large number of players involved also created a situation where the governance and decision-making process seemed subtler and ambiguous.

Collaboration between public players and third-sector organizations consists of a paradox, where the third-sector organization is at risk of becoming a mirror of the state. In the analysis of case C, the voluntary organization was pushed more and more towards the public sector, which created a practice with a lack of influence and participation in governance. In contrast, the third-sector organization can also try to retain some of its social and non-material value by participating in various networks that focus on participation and co-creation. The organizations and players need to discuss which type of hybridity they want in order to operate and survive. It is important to create possibilities for these discussions, because different resources and competences are required to sustain a hybrid practice.

### ***Create possibilities for reflection and discussion of the position of welfare professionals and volunteers in the hybrid practice***

The welfare professionals and volunteers working across boundaries need time and support, because it is an ongoing learning process with many challenges and dilemmas. They need to learn how to be professionals and volunteers within a hybrid practice. It is important to discuss what kind of consequence this position has for their understanding of being a professional and volunteer. How should they navigate, and in what work practice do they belong? What about the boundaries and the relationship to young adults and other players within this practice? These circumstances raise different ethical dilemmas – for example in relation to sharing

information with the different players in practice. The case studies indicate the importance of discussing the negotiation of authority, trust, control, and autonomy in relation to the changed positions. Different dilemmas are raised in the three different cases regarding these issues, and these should be the subject of further discussion.

### ***Create and facilitate network among young adults***

In the three cases the young adults emphasized it as something positive when the professionals supported the facilitation of networks and social relations. They felt comfortable when the professionals were available in the activities, but perception of how much they need to be involved varied. Many of the young adults distanced themselves from more protected environments, while others said these were nec-

essary for their feeling of belonging. It is very important to involve the young adults in this process, and to create variation in the different ways of participating. However, it is also important to discuss the many different dilemmas that emerge in the facilitation of social network. It is a normative understanding that social relationships are a fundamental need, and it is important to be aware that the normativity does not evolve into an oppressive imperative.

### ***Create a different mix of meaningful activities***

The possibility of participating in different mix of activities is important in the process of transcending marginalization. The young adults regard it as meaningful that they can participate in different activities together with other young adults. The mix of activities supports the construction of different positions and processes of change, where the voluntary participation is an important aspect. The young adults can change position and gain recognition through these different and meaningful activities.

### ***Create and facilitate links to the local community***

Many of the young adults explain that they want to be part of communities with other young adults, where they do not feel stigmatized as mentally vulnerable. It is important that the professionals support this process, because some



of the young adults find it difficult to take these steps by themselves. It is important to involve the young adults in the process of defining the relevant communities or arenas. Moreover, it is important to support the agents of change in establishing networks with different players in the local communities, such as voluntary organizations, educational institutions, and the job market, because these arenas are important collaborators in sustainable and long-term inclusion of the young adults.

### ***Challenge the institutional requirements***

Institutional requirements of a certain and narrow understanding of change need to be challenged. They are produced both internally and externally, but it is important to challenge and question these different discourses and rationales. There is a need to develop a broader understanding of a meaningful life, and to involve the young adults in this definition process.

In practice, different use of governmental technologies such as registration, measurement, and evaluation contribute to a certain understanding of change, which often conflicts with other logics within the hybrid practice. It is important to discuss and challenge these different institutional requirements, and develop new solutions that can accommodate and contribute to the complexity of practice.



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