HÖGSKOLAN
I SKÖVDE

WHOSE STORY?

Exploring communicative practices among
international development organisations using
learning approaches designed for complex
situations

Masters dissertation within Pedagogy A1E
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Resumé

Internationellt utvecklingssamarbete tar plats i sammanhang som ofta är komplexa och kräver förhållningssätt till lärande som uppmärksammar denna komplexitet. Förändringar är oförutsägbara när utveckling ses som en process som inkluderar flera aktörer med deras föränderliga samband och gränser. Denna etnografi undersöker de kulturella förändringar som sker inom kommunikativa praktiker bland icke-statliga organisationer (NGOs) som antar nya förhållningssätt utformade för att uppmärksamma komplexitet. Studien utforskar hur *Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting* och *Most Significant Change,* som kulturella verktyg, ger utrymme för lärande i ett deltagarperspektiv. Data i denna studie skapades genom en etnografisk ansats i det lokala Kambodjanska sammanhanget.

Studiens resultat gör synliga de spänningar som en förändringsprocess till 'nya' förhållningssätt till lärande innebär för de organisationer som är inkluderade i denna studie. Studien beskriver hur de tre förhållningssätten till lärande synliggör maktrelationer och ger förutsättningar till att förändra aktörernas roller och bidrag till positiv förändring. Rollerna och relationerna mellan utsatta samhällsmedborgare, statliga institutioner, NGO personal, och biståndsgivare förändras, vilket medför betydande konsekvenser på en verksamhet. Detta förstås som en dynamisk process mellan agent, kulturella verktyg och kontext. Lärandesystem befinner sig i spänningsfält mellan flertalet syften för ansvarsutkrävande och lärande. Denna studie belyser en rad förändringar inom kommunikativa praktiker som fokuserar på lärande, i termer av horisontala och vertikala praxisgemenskaper som skapar utrymme för situerat lärande och meningsskapande. Flertalet berättelser med flertalet röster kan vara ett effektivt verktyg för att stödja lärande i dessa praxisgemenskaper för att kunna se positiva samhällsförändringar.

Abstract

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The context in which international development work takes place is often complex and requires learning approaches which pay attention to complexity. Change is unpredictable when development is viewed as a process including multiple actors with their changing relationships and boundaries. This ethnography investigates the cultural changes that take place in communicative practices among Non-Government Organisations that adopt 'new' learning approaches designed for complex situations. The study explores how Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change, as cultural tools, make space for learning as participation. The data in this study was created through an ethnographic approach in the local context of Cambodia.

The results of the study make visible the range of tensions that the change of learning approaches entails for the organisations focused upon in this study. The results show how the three learning approaches make visible power relationships and have the potential to change the roles of the actors in contributing towards positive change. The roles and relationships between vulnerable community members, government agencies, NGO staff, and donors change, having significant implications on practice. This is understood in terms of a dynamic process between agents, cultural tools and context. Learning systems are placed within tensions of multiple purposes for accountability and learning. This study sheds light on the range of changes in communicative practices that focus upon learning, in terms of horizontal and vertical communities of practice creating space for situated learning and meaning. Multiple stories with multiple voices can be an effective tool in support of learning in the context of these communities of practice in order to see positive social change.

Foreword

This thesis would be incomplete without a recognition of those who have been part of this study. The dedicated and thorough support of my supervisor, Giulia Messina Dahlberg, who believed in my idea, and the conversations with fellow students and course leaders during the university programme made this project even possible. People and organisations in Cambodia, Myanmar, India, Afghanistan, and elsewhere have allowed me to be part of their contexts and engaged in discussions around the joys and challenges of working in "complexity". They have not only been important for content in data creation, but they have been crucially involved in analysis, making them, in a sense, co-authors of this study. From another perspective, my husband, Phil Smith, who introduced me to the "new" learning approaches designed for complexity and currently works in a 'Northern' context of the funding chain, has continually provided me with insights and engaged me in valuable dialogue. My parents and parents in-law have faithfully been filling in the gaps in many ways to give me time for this creative process. Finally, my children, Jakob, Mika, and Anna, have not only been patient with my long hours on the computer and trips to the field, but they have provided great excuses to get out into nature, giving my work a broader perspective and much needed times for reflection!

Mariam Smith

Bleket, Sweden, 2017

Contents

PART 1: BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

My interest in organisational learning comes from my own experience in development projects in Cambodia, seeing the difference that project learning approaches make on practice. During experiences of working in projects among the indigenous people in Cambodia for over 10 years, I developed a strong personal belief in local capacity. During this time I served in leadership and advisory roles. I experienced how supporting the indigenous minorities' work with language and culture allowed them to engage in participatory processes of learning and change. Through various design and implementation processes, I also experienced how tools and approaches made a difference for communication within and beyond the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) while helping the project staff to more intentionally and creatively work towards their visions. Before these approaches were created and known to the NGO I worked for, we had worked within a different paradigm strongly flavoured by a positivist world view. For decades, development projects have been restricted by a fulfilment of donor[1] expectations. These donor expectations have an assumption that change happens through a linear logic of causality. In practice, this has meant that projects have used the logical framework analysis (logframe)[2], or similar tools, as a direct requirement or as a result of the dominant discourse of the international development community. These tools entail filling in boxes with numbers relating to activities that were planned sometimes years earlier, during the design of the project. 'Learning' is defined, from a logframe perspective, by the met or unmet fulfillments of predetermined plans referring to some envisioned ideal state, 'did you do what you said you were going to do?'

There is a growing dissatisfaction among NGOs working in international development in using these traditional methods for planning and monitoring results, as there is an increased awareness of the complexity of social change. When complexity is defined as cause and effect being unpredictable, with patterns only emerging retrospectively, a complex development context does not lend itself to linear planning (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003). In my own experience, adopting new learning approaches which recognise complexity and focus on human behaviour was a significant change in how our organisation worked and learned. The inclusion of approaches that recognised complexity and making them central in our learning systems, allowed for learning and activity to be focused on the target community. (See Table 1 for an overview of some key terminology). The approaches focused on in this study were not used in isolation in our situation

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[1] I have used the word *donor*, although funding partner or supporting partner may be more preferable. The reason I chose *donor* was because of its common usage among the NGOs that are part of this study.

[2] The logframe is the most commonly used approach and tool used among international development organisations for communication with donors and for monitoring of their work. The logframe is the commonly used term referring to the logical framework analysis, although many will think of the logframe table or matrix as the central aspect of the analysis. This table normally includes aims, outcomes, objectives, activities, and outputs, which provide a clear link to the budget, providing boxes for numbers and explanations for why activities were not achieved. (Fujita, 2010; Beaulieu, Diouf & Jobbins, 2016)

in Cambodia. Neither should they, in this study be seen in isolation from other tools and methods for planning, reflection, negotiation, staffing, financing, and communication for learning and accountability of an organisation. Creating systems that integrate all of these needs are important, but this study has limited its focus on the three learning approaches and their tools, Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting, and Most Significant Change Stories, only paying attention to greater systematic issues when attention was naturally drawn to them.

Table 1: Key terminology used in this text[3]

System	refers to the way that approaches and activities are practically organised, interlinked and implemented
Approach	A particular *way* of thinking and organising within the programme or organisation. It includes methods, tools and concepts which have been designed upon underlying values and principles.
Tool	Something that you use in order to perform a job or to achieve an aim, often to enhance clarity in communication. Sometimes they have clear steps and concrete methods, other times they are more abstract.
Complexity-appropriate approaches	refers to a combination of all three approaches in focus.
Outcome-focused approaches	refers to both Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting
Outcomes	refers to intermediate and emergent changes which are not necessarily wide societal changes yet, for example changes in behaviours, relationships, attitudes, and policies.

The three complexity-appropriate approaches[4] that the project used as part of the learning system when I worked in Cambodia (and continue to use to date) were *Outcome Mapping*, *Outcome Harvesting*, and *Most Significant Change Stories*. These approaches are emergent among development practice. To quickly provide an overview, *Outcome Mapping* is an attempt to better recognise complexity in planning and monitoring processes by focusing on actors, their relationships and behavioural changes (Earl, Carden & Smutylo, 2001). *Outcome Harvesting* has its roots in Outcome Mapping. Unlike Outcome Mapping, it does not focus on planning, but instead on the collection of outcome stories which can help a project to learn from the actual changes and contributions of actors towards these changes, whether it is for internal monitoring purposes or for evaluation. The collection of *Most Significant Change* stories similarly has a focus on stories, and uses a process of choosing them for the discussion of values and perspectives, and for deeply understanding change. In addition to designing learning systems and using these approaches for the project I worked for in Cambodia, I have also, during the last few years, gained wider experience with these approaches by following other projects and organisations in their transition to learning systems like the ones focused upon in this study, noticing changes in behaviour among staff.

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[3] Partly borrowed from and inspired by Van Ongevalle, Huyse, Temmink, Boutylkova & Maarse (2012)

[4] Or these could also be called narrative-based approaches.

Currently, there is little empirical academic research available that looks closer at how organisations change their learning systems to address complexity. Through the research reported in this study, I aim to contribute to organisational learning with a description of the cultural change processes that take place through or in the context of their use. Focus lies on learning as participation and negotiation in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), for example with the target group, with colleagues, with other organisations/institutions, and with the donors. By exploring the shift to these emergent complexity-appropriate approaches from a pedagogical point of view, this study aims to help the international development community create and maintain better learning systems to support complex social change and to understand the group of people who work in projects run by NGOs in Cambodia and elsewhere working closely with the grassroots.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to explore cultural change in the context of organisations adopting and implementing new learning approaches. Cultural change here is a broad term encompassing changes in knowledge, behaviour, relationships, skills, policy, and attitudes. This study is based on international development NGOs who are seeking to recognise the unique challenges of complexity, and it focuses on three approaches to learning and monitoring their work which have been gaining interest in the international development practice, Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting, and Most Significant Change Stories. The aim of the study can be framed in terms of the following two key questions which overlap and are explored through an ethnographic approach:

1. What are the kinds of communicative practices that arise between target groups, NGO staff, donors, and others in the context of adopting and implementing new learning approaches?

2. In what ways are these communicative practices made visible or enabled through the use of the new learning approaches?

1.3 Framing the problem through previous research

The nature of international development organisations

While all organisations need to be learning organisations, there are different factors that affect what an organisation should learn. Businesses and service delivery organisations pay attention to customer satisfaction, whereas the international development organisations which are focused upon in this study have other needs for learning. Many organisations, and in particular those working with development, aim to create a better world, but what this "better" world means and how we know we are moving towards a 'better' world depends on ideological agendas and discussions on values. Myers (2011) describes a historical overview of the term 'development'. In the 1950's the term 'development' was used to emphasise the need for economic growth with an underlying assumption that Western values needed to be adopted in order for poor countries to

also gain economic growth. In the 1980's a more people-centred approach emerged, starting to view poverty as entangled social systems, but success was still measured in economic terms. It was first in the 1990's that the measurement of development shifted to focus on people. A significant contribution to this was a development economist Amartya Sen, who developed alternative indicators and framed poverty in terms of the deprivation of freedom. Human well-being started to be defined in terms of human rights and as something that people are, do, and choose to do rather than their consumption. As can be understood by Myer's (2011) historical account, the term 'development' has been shaped by the sociocultural context and has an impact on how social change is viewed. One of the most current developments in international development is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is "a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity" and recognises the interconnectedness of tackling the world's issues (United Nations Development Programme, n.d.). In the context of international development, organisations can see themselves as players in a complex environment (Hinton & Groves, 2004), rather than merely providing service, which was often the focus of international development organisations in the past.

When an organisation seeks to influence actors to move towards social change, these processes can be seen as a type of constructive *public pedagogy*, which Andersson and Olson (2015) define as "various practices, processes and situations and spaces of learning and socialisation that occur both within and beyond the realm of formal educational institutions" (p. 115). A view of citizens as political subjects (Ljunggren, 2011) enables critical thinking and agency in society. This is also a core concept in Freire's (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where the role of the oppressed is seen as critical in creating positive social change. The role of the international development organisation can be to support actors in the creation of public space in order to change social problems and work towards less inequality (Sandlin, O'Malley & Burdick, 2011). The organisations work together with the communities they are trying to affect to address structural inequalities in continual learning processes. Placing target community issues in a larger context helps disadvantaged participants to see their own issues and link them with others (Biesta, 2011). It becomes an active citizenship and an issue of power. Hinton and Groves (2004) mean that "the challenge of political participation is not only a question of who is sitting around the table, but of whether the table even exists, and whether the language and terms of debate are accessible to those whose voices need to be heard" (p.12).

Many countries in the Global South currently experience change at a much faster rate than in the Global North. Cambodia, for example, where most of the organisations focused upon in this study are located, has moved from a traditional monarchical, patriarchal, rural economy system to a mixed economy including the use of technology and other changes at the structural level. While this may bring benefits for some, in terms of, for example increased wealth, there is also a loss of freedom and resources for others (Reimer, 2012). The country has a turbulent history and struggles with some of the highest levels of corruption and a wide range of human rights violations, which places many people in vulnerable positions (Reimer, 2012). The constant changes and destabilised systems that are a consequence of this change have broad effects on social interaction, power, value systems, and a wide variety of traditional practices, creating new contexts in which the international development organisations operate. Common to all the

international development organisations included in this study is that they work within a human rights framework in order to strengthen civil society in the face of all these changes in society. In contrast with large international organisations working at a global level, the organisations focused upon in this study mainly work within the geopolitical boundaries of Cambodia to seek societal changes at the grassroots level, although sometimes their work also entails affecting systemic issues beyond the grassroots. Also common to all of the organisations focused on in this study, is that they use funds raised from government sources or from public sources in the political North to implement their agenda. They become part of a funding chain similar to that shown in Figure 1, a figure which can also be seen as a system of power relationships which also have implications on learning which will be explored further in the next section.
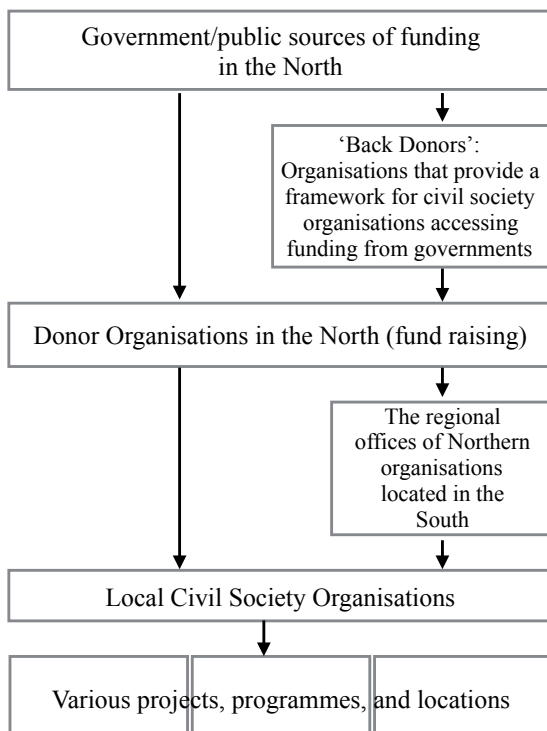
Figure 1: A funding chain common in international development

Learning systems and approaches for international development projects

International development projects design and implement learning and accountability systems from various perspectives on how they believe change happens and how much they assume to know answers to the specific development issues, i.e. how positivistic they are. Trends in the discourse about international development have moved away from colonial approaches in favour of participation, mutual accountability, and sustainability (Conlin & Stirrat, 2008). Simultaneously, there is demand for cost-efficiency and of quality (Boni, Peris, McGee, Acebillo-Baqué, & Hueso, 2014). In order to access funding, organisations create communication, learning tools, and systems that are aligned with the discourse of participation, mutual accountability, sustainability, cost effectiveness, and quality. However, these concepts are socially constructed with multiple interpretations which can contradict with one another in

practice. When an international development context is defined as complex by an organisation, this has implications on how the organisation views its own role and can effectively work in that context.
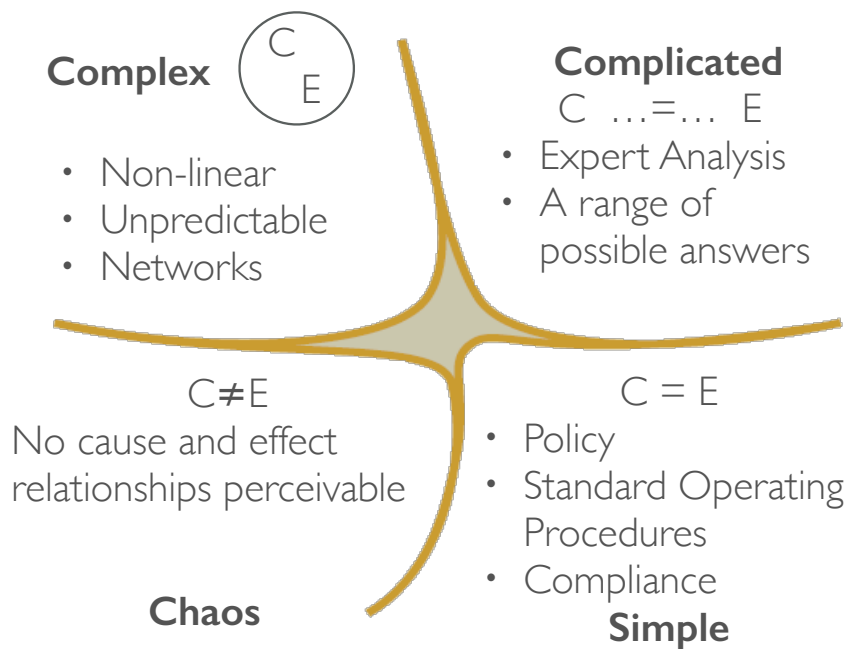
Figure 2: The Cynefin adapted from Figure 1 on p. 468 (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003).
(C=cause, E=effect)

One way of defining complexity is in terms of the inability to predict outcomes in advance (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003). The Cynefin diagram (See Figure 2) distinguishes between four different perceptions of a situations. When a situation is perceived as "simple" and therefore fully predictable, it requires a learning approach that values compliance and fidelity. In a 'complicated' situation, the goal is clear but the situation involves multiple factors requiring expert analysis and therefore a learning approach which measures the distance to the goal. A 'complex' situation, instead, is perceived as unpredictable, the goal is not clearly understood as it takes perspectives into account, and cause and effect have some relation but these can only be understood afterwards. To illustrate the difference between complicated and complex, launching a rocket into space can be seen as complicated while raising a child can be seen as complex (Lacayo, Obregón & Singhal, 2008). For a situation perceived as 'chaotic' there is no order or pattern and the learning approach may only focus on compliance trying to achieve some order, but people quickly organise themselves and it can be debated whether situations really are chaotic.

While a positivist view tries to simplify change into 'complicated' or 'simple' understandings, from a constructivist view of reality, work involving the behavioural change of multiple actors in societies implies that change is seen as a complex process. Within international development practice, situations that are perceived as complex call for both new learning approaches and the need for adaptive management. These two aspects should be seen as existing within the larger

dynamic systems of institutions and society where they are interrelated (Conlin & Stirrat, 2008; O'Donnell, 2016; Carden & Earl, 2007). International development practice is unable match the rhetoric of "changes in power and relationships" unless the complex dynamics of organisational norms, procedures, and reinforcements of power relations are attended to (Chambers & Pettit, 2004, p. 137). One of the new movements in international development is a Doing Development Differently (DDD) community which started in 2014 and now has a manifesto with a growing amount of signatories.[5] A recent research by Wild, Booth, & Valters (2017) portrays how well the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) applies the concepts from DDD. Another network of practitioners is the Big Push Forward where members are discussing the politics of development (Shutt, 2016).

Complexity requires learning to be viewed as people with various perspectives and enterprises being involved in communities of practice. These communities of practice have various boundaries and perspectives, with identities that are constantly being negotiated, a process integrated in conversations and activities (Wenger, 1998). Seeing the constant changes in the negotiations between people is especially important in the field of international development, which requires reflexivity to see both expected and unexpected consequences of how work is planned, implemented, and reported, and a "humility in the scale of claims" (Mowles, Stacey, & Griffin, 2008, p. 815–816). This requires a focus, not so much on the finished states of things, but on people. Societal change is therefore largely seen as cultural and behavioural, whether it is within the boundaries of an organisation or in society (Hinton & Groves, 2004; Chambers & Pettit, 2004). Behavioural changes in people cannot be a technical linear process towards a goal. It requires a realisation of the organisation as a 'change agent' to be reflective on the experience of international development practice (Chambers & Pettit, 2004). Being clear about theories of change can be one way of helping programme staff and others to purposefully link activities with the changes they want to see and to communicate about these theories (Funnel & Rogers, 2011). There are also ways of presenting theories of change in a less "pipe-line" way of linear logic, which can help to "unpack the relationships between activities and intended outcomes" (Funnel & Rogers, 2011, p. 180). This helps a programme to be clear about a programme's rationale of choices. The Outcome Mapping approach, for example, can, in a sense, be seen as an actor-focused theory of change (Beaulieu, Diouf & Jobbins, 2016), but takes into account emergence. Mowles, et al. (2008) suggest that "instead of predicating our intentions on the idealised transformation of others, we could pay attention instead to the daily, difficult and messy experience of working with others to achieve things together, and the opportunities for changing ourselves that these present" (p. 816).

The use of results-based management approaches in complex environments

The logical framework is one of the most widely used tools among international development within a results-based management approach[6] to learning (Shutt, 2016). The tool allows

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[5] http://doingdevelopmentdifferently.com

[6] Van Ongevalle, Huyse, Teeming, Boutylkova, & Maarse (2012) distinguish between results-based management approaches from a positivist world view, such as the logframe, and one that is more from a more complexity-oriented theoretical perspective, such as Outcome Mapping.

organisations to work with the kind of linear logic that corresponds to how the top levels of organisations and donors envisage the relationship between implementation and results in the organisation (Fujita, 2010). The logical framework approach (logframe) summarises the intervention in a matrix, which is particularly useful for busy managers or donors, but not for those dealing with the messy realities of development (Fujita, 2010). The logframe tends to over-emphasise control or an illusion of control (Fujita, 2010), which has huge implications on the ability of an organisation to be flexible in their communicative practices in the local development context (Hira & Parfitt, 2004). The tool, as common practice and dominant discourse, can therefore be seen as embedded power relationships. There have been numerous adaptations to results-based management approaches in which the logframe is used, but, interestingly, strengthening participatory processes in the logframe analysis does not necessarily make practice more adaptable to the messy realities. Instead, it can restrict implementation to the consensus achieved around the logframe (Fujita, 2010, p. 8). Because logframes come from a mindset of positivist thinking where the 'right answer' and 'the way to get there' is assumed to be known, goals and activities are linked in a chain of events which can often be understood in terms of input-activity-output-outcome-impact. The logframe here focuses on the first three parts of the chain, being inputs, activities, and outputs, as if part of a formula or procedure towards impact (Chambers & Pettit, 2004). When projects fail to "(re)produce" these towards 'right' results, staff are often blamed (Mowles, Stacey, & Griffin, 2008). Practitioners working in complex environments acknowledge that they may not have fulfilled the 'right' results, but that they have worked appropriately, ethically, and efficiently with the actors in their current context. These practitioners therefore have a growing interest for alternative approaches such as the approaches described in this study and systems thinking (Shutt, 2016). Systems concepts provide different methods and approaches that can be used in order to make sense of or handle situations that are complicated or complex (Williams & Hummelbrunner, 2010). They are complex adaptive systems which pay attention to interrelationships, multiple perspectives, and boundaries. Systems thinking uses various quite extensive tools to explore these, and Outcome Mapping is one important tool as it pays attention to interrelationships, perspectives, and boundaries (Williams & Hummelbrunner, 2010).

Three emergent approaches for complex environments

Three of the emergent approaches (and their inherent tools) which are in focus in this study are Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change. They were designed from a complexity perspective, putting people as actors in focus (Davies & Dart, 2005; Wilson-Grau, Kosterink, & Scheers, 2016; Earl, Carden & Smutylo, 2001). Acknowledging complexity means acknowledging that many people play an important role in the creation of the complex situation[7], something that has recently been discussed in the Outcome Mapping Learning Community. This is a recognition that any social problem, e.g. illiteracy or inequality, is viewed as a social construction formed from the interrelationships, power, and behaviours of the multiple social actors involved. In short, *Outcome Mapping* helps practitioners to clarify vision in terms of outcomes, defined mainly as changes in behaviours and relationships, and identifying those individuals or groups of people, so called 'boundary partners', which an organisation

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[7] This was a recent discussion on the Outcome Mapping Learning Community, in which Bob Williams was a strong contributor. See literature on systems thinking: http://www.bobwilliams.co.nz/

chooses to work with directly towards that vision. Framing a problem through a lens of looking at 'boundary partners' is key in Outcome Mapping. Organisations develop monitoring tools to pay attention to the emergent 'outcome' changes they see in the boundary partners. These intermediate outcomes are thus understood to be more useful in iteratively influencing practice, as opposed to high level outcomes which often take many years. It is understood that the organisation will struggle to claim *attribution* of outcomes, as outcomes cannot fully be controlled or produced. The organisation instead sees itself as an actor, learning from the past, and seeking relevant strategies to contribute to change in relationships with others. *Outcome Harvesting*, a spin-off tool from Outcome Mapping, collects outcome stories to see what changes have actually happened. Similarly, the collection of *Most Significant Change* stories, enables the organisation to analyse stories about change and impact, through a variety of processes that go beyond the organisation, by looking at values and contribution. It enables conversation on abstract values, of 'what is better and why', around concrete stories. Academic research, mostly from fields of international development and organisational learning, theoretically argue for the appropriateness of these approaches in complex environments and describe their use through case studies (Carden & Earl, 2007; Davies & Dart, 2005; Earl & Carden, 2002). Empirical research on these approaches is scarce and there is a need to look at these approaches and learning systems through the means of empirically-pushed research, using a pedagogical theoretical lens as well as a management/leadership lens. There is, however, an active online discussion on the Outcome Mapping Learning Community[8] where well-known theorists and practitioners alike are engaged in exploring various topics, sharing working documents, values, and insights they find useful. The material referred to and accessed through this online community is valuable also for this study. Table 2 gives an overview of the three approaches.

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[8] https://www.outcomemapping.ca

Table 2: Approaches and tools designed for complex contexts[9]

	Outcome Mapping	Outcome Harvesting	Most Significant Change Stories
Main Purpose	Planning and Monitoring	Monitoring and/or Evaluation	Monitoring and/or Evaluation
Strength	- Helps to articulate vision, interrelationships, perspectives and boundaries. - Supports the gathering of qualitative data through a set of progress markers used to monitor intermediate outcomes.	- The collection of outcomes inform about change and the possible contributions of a programme. - A particularly helpful approach in extremely complex situations and large networks - Less technical than other approaches.	- Supports qualitative data through providing the depth of stories and perspectives. - Makes values explicit at different levels of an organisation and with partners in the community.
Weaknesses	Requires relationships with those that the organisation is trying to affect.	Requires skills in collection and analysis of stories. The support of someone experienced can be a help.	Requires qualitative interview skills
Level of focus	intermediate outcomes (changes in behaviour and relationships)	intermediate outcomes (changes in behaviour and relationships)	intermediate outcomes and impact (wider societal change)
Steps (but each of the approaches emphasise the need for adaptation!)	1. Vision 2. Mission 3. Identification of boundary partners 4. Outcome challenges for each boundary partner 5. Progress markers for each boundary partner 6. Strategy maps 7. Organisational practices	1. Design the outcome harvest 2. Review documentation and draft outcome descriptions. 3. Engage with informants in formulating outcome descriptions 4. Substantiate 5. Analyse and interpret 6. Support use of findings	1. How to start and raise interest 2. Defining domains of changes. 3. Defining the reporting period 4. Collecting SC stories 5. Selecting the most significant of the stories 6. Feeding back the results of the selection process 7. Verification of stories 8. Quantification 9. Secondary analysis and meta-monitoring 10. Revising the system

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[9] This is only a brief summary, with more comprehensive descriptions available at https://www.outcomemapping.ca https://www.outcomeharvesting.net, and http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf

The three approaches in Table 2 start from the changes at an outcome or impact level and work inductively to determine what activities or outputs are most appropriate and effective. The logframe, on the other hand, works deductively to test a prior theory of how change takes place, focusing on fidelity to the proposed theory and plan (Patton, 2011). In contrast to the logframe, the three approaches view the relevance of input, activities, and outputs in light of the outcomes and impact. These approaches do not try to fit learning into boxes provided by a predetermined theory of change and related plans. Instead, they are designed to help organisations to learn from and deal with complexity. A growing number of donors, including the USAID[10] and UNDP[11] are starting to recognise Outcome Harvesting as an appropriate tool for evaluating complex situations.[12]

At this point, the reader should note that the term *complexity-appropriate approaches* is used to combine all three approaches together. The term o*utcome-focused approaches* include both Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting. This term excludes Most Significant Change, however, since Most Significance Change may also cover levels of greater and wider impact, and is not only focused on intermediate outcomes in terms of changes in behaviour, relationships, attitudes, and policies. When the text refers to only one approach, I name the approaches by name.

Previous research on the three approaches

Although Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting, and Most Significant Change are emergent approaches, it is possible to find some peer-reviewed articles such as those of Davies (1998) and Earl & Carden (2002) on the three learning approaches and other approaches that focus on complexity. In these articles, organisations and individuals share their experiences in using the approaches, often in narrative form, providing case studies which shed light on the type of contexts and dilemmas which generated a need for change in approaches to better work with complexity. The articles argue for the need of learning approaches which are manageable and useful for organisations in their particular contexts. For example, one study describes how Outcome Harvesting started to be used yearly by a large global partnership and how this enabled learning from what was emerging in their complex environment (Wilson-Grau, Kosterink & Scheers, 2016). Another example is Carden and Earl's (2007) study of how the culture of the organisation focused upon in their study changed through an internal process of using interviews to deepen their capacity for evaluation, and improve their accountability systems. Davies (1998) reports about an organisation that abandoned the use of indicators[13] in favour of the identification of "significant change as perceived and interpreted by the various participants" (p. 243). Previous monitoring systems had failed, but this new system allowed subjectivity and discussion on values, and continued to be used beyond the agreed timeframe. Interestingly, it

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[10] United States Agency for International Development

[11] United Nations Development Programme

[12] http://www.cid-bo.org/2017/images/OH.pdf

[13] Indicators are what is measured in order to verify the logic of the logframe.

provided new definitions of success and gave value to the people "closest to the experience being monitored" (p. 248–249). A report produced during an action research in a three-year learning programme describes the movement from results-based management to results-based learning among ten organisations (Van Ongevalle, Huyse, Teeming, Boutylkova, & Maarse, 2012). For programmes seeking transformational change, changes are less measurable and the report shows the significance of stories to help go beyond definitions and single perspectives. The research reported in this study intends to go beyond case studies to describe common elements, dilemmas, and patterns amongst the communicative practices of organisations associated with the new learning approaches. It focuses on complexity issues and tools, but explores the issues from a different perspective from that of Van Ongevalle, et al (2012).

In addition to peer-reviewed articles, there is more material available, that includes practical resources and online discussions amongst practitioners, academics, evaluation consultants, and project staff, especially in regards to Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting. I wrote a post to the Outcome Mapping Learning Community asking for tips on peer-reviewed articles or PhDs related to Outcome Mapping and although I received some great literature (which mostly had not been peer-reviewed), many others asked me to share my findings with them. Taking existing perspectives into account allows the ethnographic experiences to be reviewed in light of the theories and discourses already in use and enables my research to find ways to affect discourse.

1.4 The theoretical lens

This study views communicative practices and the change of learning approaches in the international development context through a pedagogical lens. Key concepts explored in this section place the research in a social context, focusing on people's participation in communities of practice in their various locales, and their use of cultural tools and boundary objects. Theories on organisational learning and reflective practices are also explored.

The purpose of this study is framed within a sociocultural perspective on learning and development. The Russian psychologist Lev Semënovich Vygotsky stressed that learning is a process situated within a sociocultural context, whether physically, by being part of the environment, or through other sociocultural tools, such as language (Wertsch, 1998). Vygotsky introduced the concept of *zone of proximal development* – ZPD in which he stressed the need for proximity for learning (Wertsch, 1998). A similar concept to this, is the idea of *situated learning*, that learners are in a sociocultural practice moving towards being able to fully participate in those practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The term *legitimate peripheral learning*, emphasises the important process of gaining experience and competence in practice while in the periphery (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the ZPD, the cognitive functions of the brain cannot be seen in isolation, as the possession of an individual, as these physical functions develop in a context of social functions. In the same vein, Bakhtin and others, stress the dialogical aspect of the human mind to illustrate the tension between individual cognition and the sociocultural context (Wertsch, 1998). Each person borrows, or uses, language in a process which is never neutral, since language is always produced by people in sociocultural contexts. Making sense of language is a creative

process which, according to Bakhtin, is a process of making language one's own with one's own intentions and accents (Wertsch, 1998).

Wertsch (1998) goes even further and describes how the use of *mediational means*, or *cultural tools*, like language can affect learning. Instead of only focusing on competence or skills in an individual, a focus on the use of cultural tools shed light on human development and learning. In *Mind as Action*, Wertsch (1998) emphasises that cultural tools are placed in a complex set of relationships. He focuses on the dynamic tension between an 'agent' (who) and the instrument used for human action, without viewing them in isolation. One of the most important cultural tools is language. As Wertsch (1998) points out, cultural tools have a major effect on people's learning even when the tools are completely transparent for the user who is thus not aware of the support and role played by the tool itself in the learning process. Like Wertsch and others emphasising a sociocultural perspective, this study places the cultural tools of the complexity-appropriate approaches in a context of people. A focus on the relationship and tension between agents and their cultural tools, has the potential to bring new insight to learning in the international development context like the one focused upon in this study.

Wertsch (1998) points out that all cultural tools, including language, exist with their sets of *constraints* and *affordances*. Cultural tools are situated in history where contexts and people change. Typically, the cultural tools can be used for multiple purposes and come in conflict with the purposes of the agents, and these factors contribute to the need to adapt or change the tools. Even though tools may be created by accident and even though there may be a clear need for change, people are often resistant to the change of cultural tools. Yet, even though a new tool is created, it does not automatically imply the end of negotiations and tensions. When created to overcome a problem, new cultural tools will contain affordances, but also a new set of constraints (Wertsch, 1998). According to a sociocultural perspective, the constraints and affordances become necessary aspects to be explored in this study which looks at the cultural changes that take place in adopting and implementing new learning approaches.

The metaphor of *participation* for learning as a picture of learning as opposed to the metaphor of *acquisition,* emphasises that learning takes place when a person participates with others in a setting and this is in line with the sociocultural perspectives. For the purpose of this study, focus lies on people's relationships with cultural tools, in this case the use of complexity-appropriate tools in communicative practices, and *participation* is therefore a useful metaphor. The participation that is called for then links various perspectives of people into an account without reducing them to one another (Wertsch, 1998). When cultural tools are used by multiple agents or groups, the tools can also be theoretically framed as boundary objects which is explored in more depth in the following paragraphs.

From a sociocultural perspective, this study recognises the essential role of communicative practices and cultural tools in organisational learning. Various learning theories explore how communication takes place among agents and across boundaries (Akkerman & Bakker 2011, p. 134). This connects with the term 'communities of practice' used by Wenger (1998) to describe

how people are engaged in informal groups around a common enterprise. People belong to various communities of practices, contexts, or social worlds and often belong to more than one community, negotiating and moving in and out of these, thus crossing boundaries between communities (Wenger 1998; Star, 2010). It is in the communication and negotiation across boundaries that the value of differences and of alternative meanings is important for learning to occur (Akkerman & Bakker 2011). Disruptions and gaps create the potential for transformative learning, but this transformative learning requires joint enterprises or problem spaces which hold intersecting practices together (Wenger 1998; Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). This is where the concept of boundary objects is important in the development and maintenance of "coherence across intersecting social worlds" (Star & Griesemer, 1989, p. 393). The dilemma of learning requiring both the creation of gaps and the need for some coherence can be of relevance to the international development context seeking social change.

The nature of boundary objects are explored further. Boundary objects can be loosely-structured tools that various types of people and groups share and use in communication, but they can mean different things to different people and can develop differently in the people's own locales (Star & Griesemer, 1989; Star, 2010). Different communities will participate in practice in ways that pay attention to certain aspects of the world. These cultural ways of doing things and are reified[14] by the participants in a way that will affect each person's identity (Wenger, 1998). It is important to note here that identity is not seen as fixed attributes, but rather as a result of a "cascading interplay of participation and reification" (Wenger, 1998, p. 151). Communities of practice may reify a very diverse set of artefacts, from the language that is used to forms for filling in information. Although reification is part of a community of practice, it is interesting that in the studies of boundary objects by Star (2010), it is evident that people can cooperate even without consensus (Star, 2010). Engeström (2007) similarly pays attention to groups of people and boundaries but emphasises the dynamic aspect of activity systems, describing less fixed boundaries. People move in and out of boundaries and here there can be a need for both staying within boundaries and a theory of change with persistence, or being more improvising to achieve goals. With an understanding of these theories, it will be important for my study to gain an understanding of the various communities of practices and the movements of people. It will also be important to understand people's activities in relation to the shared boundary objects during, for example, project planning, implementation, and reporting.

Just as Engeström puts less emphasis on groups, Stacey, from a management perspective, puts less emphasis on organisations or groups of people as entities (Norman, 2009); he argues that organisations cannot learn, but that people can (Stacey, 2003). Individuals are part of a complex responsive process where conversations and their responses dynamically evolve and create change processes (Stacey, 2007). He therefore argues for the crucial role of conversation and acceptance of diversity which is where both change and its associated development/negotiation of ethics is possible. It is in communicative practice that culture is created and maintained or changed. He argues that it is impossible to design organisational change and focuses rather on

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[14] Reification is a term used to describe the artefacts which are produced by the persons in a practice through long and diverse processes (Wenger, 1998).

the interaction of people in everyday experiences, acknowledging their interdependence (Stacey, 2007). If this is true, pedagogical leadership that seeks change in society would need to emphasise different ways to encourage conversation. Beyond directly and concretely starting conversations, creating environments and tools that stimulate conversations might be an indirect way to see change happen. In paying attention to conversation, there is a movement from control to the experience of interaction in relationships and seeing change in a less linear manner (Stacey, 2007). Learning, or understanding change, will need to pay attention to conversations in communicative practices. Paying attention to conversations may not always be easy in an organisational context when conversations are not valued as learning. In Cambodia, for example, where most of the data has been created for this study, knowledge is often defined in terms of hierarchical positions. Learning from experience may not necessarily be perceived as learning (Pearson, 2011). In these situations, there can be ways to support a legitimacy and an environment for communication, which presumes that there are relationships which can allow interaction to occur. The interest in this study lies on the cultural changes in communicative practices when new learning approaches are adopted and implemented. The latest trend in international development seems to acknowledge learning as situated in a context of conversations and everyday practice (Shutt, 2016), making the following quote by Wenger (1998) relevant,

> Learning cannot be designed. Ultimately, it belongs to the realm of experience and practice. It follows the negotiation of meaning; it moves on its own terms. It slips through the cracks; it creates its own cracks. Learning happens, design or no design. And yet there are few more urgent tasks than to design social infrastructures that foster learning. (p. 225)

If learning occurs naturally in communicative practices, it seems crucial to analytically focus on such practices and to create spaces for both dialog and reflection imbedded in such practices. Schön's (1991) 'double loop learning' might have relevance in trying to understand how different kinds of reflection can foster learning and improve practice. His term 'double loop learning' refers to the attention to "questioning assumptions, policies, practices, values, and system dynamics" which go beyond the reflection on how to correctively respond to a situation (Patton, 2011, p. 11). Schön (1991) points out that reflection in action, especially for complex environments, require a dynamic relationship of trying things in a context and letting the situation talk back. It is an artful, iterative process of testing ideas, of asking 'what if'. The practitioner is very much part of a particular context, where he/she can make use of reflective practices and multiple perspectives related to the setting and not just in a theoretical world. The practitioner can frame the situation by, for example, expressing, or framing the problem, in order to better relate to it (Schön, 1991). Lave and Wenger (1991) also spell out the situated nature of learning which for international development could put the spotlight on what actually happens in the different locales where change is expected, rather than broad generalisations and assumptions about how change should happen. If NGOs aim to be relevant to their context with their vast demands and changing nature, it is likely that innovations in activities and processes will be needed. According to Wenger (1998), organisations will need to strive beyond their communal competence to have deep respect for each experience:

> [...] a well-functioning community of practice is a good context to explore radically new insights without becoming fools or stuck in some dead end. A history of mutual engagement around a joint enterprise is an ideal context for this kind of leading-edge learning, which requires a strong bond of communal competence along with a deep respect for the particularity of experience. When these conditions are in place, communities of practice are a privileged locus for the creation of knowledge. (p. 214)

This study attempts to go beyond a set of arguments for the use of complexity-appropriate learning approaches by empirically showing what cultural changes can take place in the adoption and implementation of the approaches in the particular communicative practices of the organisations that are part of this study.

PART 2: METHOD

2.1 Choice of method

My interest in ethnography and its ontological and epistemological foundations

Ethnography reminds me of my own work with indigenous people in Cambodia during a period of over ten years, in which I observed and conversed with people, trying to understand various parts of their culture so that we could more effectively work with them. In my relationships with them, I could, through my listening and observing, be a support to their own reflective processes, strengthening their own identity in relation to the 'other' (Wertsch, 1998), and no matter what my official role was in the NGO, this might have been what I could mostly contribute with. As much as I sought to understand the people in their context, they probably sought to understand me. I was an outsider who took pride in comments of being their 'white Bunong'. In remote villages, they knew the name of my family's labrador, Lukas, and I knew the names of their buffalo, Chamroeun. Our kids played together, we shared meals, planned workshops and village visits, and fell off motorbikes on slippery roads together. Yet, there were and will always be ways in which I was strange to them and they were strange to me. There were ways that I could see them which they might not easily have seen on their own and likewise there were similar aspects in their view of my life. My assumption during my work in Cambodia was that a lived understanding of the group would enable me to better support them and their activities. Like Asad (1986) has found common in ethnography, I was often finding myself translating, not just their words, but their way of life to people in the majority culture or Western cultures.

Similar to my own experience working in Cambodia, an ethnographic approach seeks to observe a group's life, what it does and says, assuming that this is valuable in its own right. Truth is not sought after from a positivist world view; there is nothing 'out there' which is completely separate from the researcher himself/herself; neither is it possible to explain *how* we understand. Although ethnography, historically, with its roots in anthropology, would view a group of people and their culture as objects, it has since progressed from its colonial, dominant view, to acknowledge the ways in which various representations of a group can ever only be partial and that knowledge can only be "fuzzy" (Agar 2008, p. 36). Some ethnographers, following philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Heidegger and Dewey, abandon the idea of accurate representations altogether (Rabinow, 1986). The ethnographer takes a humble position in becoming a learner of a group which is constantly changing in an interconnected world, building "conclusions over time" (Agar, 2008, p. 16). In the end, the ethnographer hopes that the ethnography is as useful for the academic world as it is to the group themselves (Agar, 2008). This requires an interactive and explicitly dialectic type of research suitable for the purpose of my study, which does not just seek a finished 'product' but a "means of experience" which the reader himself/herself contributes to (Tyler, 1986, p. 138). Following this line of thought, while the ethnographer historically has searched for holistic representations, context, and meaning, in later traditions he/she is aware of the researcher's own subjectivity in observation, analysis, and representation, which will only partially represent the world. Historically, with a clearly defined 'other', ethnographers had an illusion of achieving a "mountaintop view", or objective and

superior, view of culture (Clifford, 1986a). In contrast, current ethnography sees cultures as connected and enmeshed in power. This is in line with an understanding of research endeavours as representations of cultures, and the negotiation of relations of power between subjects (Clifford, 1986a). Thus, culture is not a stable object, but something that is collaboratively produced over time and space; it will be both contested and emergent (Clifford, 1986a). The 'other' in this study and my 'self' are continuously changing through discursive practices. This makes much of the world's and my knowledge contingent and only "a story among other stories" (Clifford, 1986b, p. 109). So, no matter how good an ethnography that has been written, it may only be useful for a purpose and refuted later. The point is not to create representations which perfectly and holistically reproduce the world, but that strategically inspire others to act ethically.

An ethnographic approach can describe what takes place in situated learning and in communities of practice, as it recognises the interrelatedness of people and groups and how they create meaning and knowledge. Although Agar (2008) claims that "knowledge is neither enlightening eternal truth nor pure social construction" (p. 36), the view of people constructing reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1966) is highly relevant to an approach to learning that recognises meaning-making and identity negotiation in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Ethnography has the potential to capture a glimpse of the complex process of learning. As it takes a strong interest in the study of the practices of everyday life (Agar, 2008), it can strive to understand organisational and institutional groups in their complexities of everyday experience.

Ethnography and power

One key element which is often overlooked in traditional ethnography, is the issue of power (Agar, 2008). Ethnography plays an active role in terms of being placed "between powerful systems of meaning", enmeshed in the power systems where languages and cultures of higher status can manipulate the weaker ones (Clifford, 1986a, p. 2). Ethnographers tend to focus their analytical perspective on a microlevel of analysis, showing how the world at large *affects* the local level, for example the effect of international market on the local group of people in their local environment (Marcus, 1986). The analysis at the macrolevel of this particular study is framed in terms of international development discourse, and consists of international funding frameworks and policies. At the microlevel of analysis, the international development practices of NGOs in their local contexts are focused upon. This is where I gained an emic perspective through experiences I have had in the context. The mesolevel of analysis in this study can therefore be seen as levels in between, including the donor agencies and their management. Here I have also gained an emic perspective through relationships with donor agencies at various levels. Portraying two or more levels and locales simultaneously can effectively show power relations (Marcus, 1986), which is important also in the context of international development organisational learning. The emic perspectives gained through analysis at the micro and macrolevels shed light on the international development discourse, attempting to put the research in context. Ethnography has the potential to play an important role in development work to allow the learning situated in practice to become visible at the other levels of analysis and to contribute to theory.

The ethnographic study as part of a human and complex context

There are numerous factors which justify the use of qualitative approaches for the area of my interest, including the cultural aspects, the complex environment, and the interconnections of relationships (Patton, 2015). What interests me about an ethnographic approach is the focus on people and their relations. As previously mentioned, the approach is particularly suitable for taking my own practical experiences with the group, into an ethnographic account. Just as the people I studied aim to work with communities in a participatory way, I have also worked with them collaboratively, as participants, rather than merely as objects of this study. I did not see the group I researched only as mechanised actors towards some ends, but as collaborators in a common enterprise. In this common enterprise, we saw multiple realities and allowed space for dialogue and meaning-making. This dialogue was made possible due to the linguistic and cultural skills I acquired during my years in Cambodia. I am able to function well in spoken and written forms of the national language Khmer and the indigenous language Bunong. Interviews and conversations were held in English or in Swedish with those who were not Cambodian. The participants in this research and I shared underlying beliefs about sustainable development as a question of restoration of relationships between humans. Paying attention to relationships is also an underlying theme in the learning approaches under study. This study, therefore, aims to contribute in meaningful ways towards an understanding of people and their dynamic relations. In seeing the group's learning as situated in communities of practice, the study aims to capture what emerged as important elements for organisational learning for the group in focus, with possible use for groups beyond.

The ethnographic study as part of an emergent, practical, and wider context

Using general insights from discourse analysis supported my understanding of what was said and where this might have come from, since discourse has an effect on culture and organisational learning. I see discourse as the "meanings that events and experiences hold for social actors", as something that can have a constitutive function (Wetherell, Taylor, Yates, 2001, p. 1). Discourse will then include historical and cultural aspects as acknowledged by Berkvens (2009). It will also include international development discourses where language and especially the has an important role, and especially the emergence of English as a global language, serving as "both the vehicle and source of much of the globalisation of the order of discourse" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 231). Incorporating perspectives from various working documents forming the discourse of emergent organisational learning approaches such as Outcome Mapping, is important, since research in this area is scarce. This also provides the imperative for this and more research. Ethnography is an appropriate tool for studying Outcome Mapping as *emergent* in the context of organisational learning. Understanding what happens in the everyday life of NGOs in international development practice, as in the examples of previous research, are helpful to others, not for the sake of blind reproduction, but rather for asking better questions, and making meaning of own experiences. Action research, case studies, ethnographies, and other more narrative approaches are especially suitable for that purpose. A conclusive generalisation from establishing a large sample and extensive methods for control of data as in quantitative methods, was not of interest. Instead, I used my curiosity and a systematic iterative process to search for patterns, describe their existence, and find glimpses of their distribution (Agar, 2008). One such pattern I looked for was how discourse had changed or is changing as a result of the complexity-

appropriate approaches. I observed what people did and said differently, in a similar way as Outcome Mapping tracks behavioural change (Earl et al., 2001). This can be compared with the issue of analysing "thought as a public and social practice" (Rabinow, 1986, p. 239), paying attention to issues of identity and positive and negative forms of power. I focused on what was perceived as problems, causes, and solutions. When lived ideologies and culture did not seem to be coherent (Edley, 2001), I sought to understand this through relationships with the group, while realising that culture can be fragmented and include contradictions.

2.2 On data

The organisations included in the study

This study focuses upon organisations mainly working in Cambodia, most of them working in direct contact with vulnerable or disadvantaged persons, commonly referred to as the grassroots. They work with a variety of projects including community development in city slums, prevention of human trafficking in the region, improved agriculture, and strengthening of indigenous people's rights. The NGOs involved in the research are those with which I have collaborated with across time either as an employee setting up complexity-appropriate approaches, or as a consultant in the area of designing and implementing learning, monitoring, and evaluation systems. Specifically, the NGOs' requests have focused on one or several of the three complexity-appropriate learning approaches in this study, Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting, and Most Significant Change. I chose to study these organisations because of our common interest in the approaches, my understanding of their contexts, my easy access to data creation, and the feasibility within the time frame. As I did not seek to understand individual perceptions, but rather to understand the organisations and their communicative practices, I had contact with several types of staff positions and roles within the NGOs, including directors, field staff, finance staff, project managers, and educators, engaging with them in different ways in the offices, in workshops, and in the field. Although individual perspectives have enlightened this study, the focus is primarily on understanding the structures at the organisational level in their communicative practices with other organisational levels and with the groups that they work with. I complemented this data with other data created in contact with an international consultant and the two NGOs where he had provided support, in Afghanistan and India. Broader perspectives were also created in contact with people working with other organisations in Cambodia and in communication with those in the Outcome Mapping Learning Community. This broader data creation was necessary in order to potentially make the findings useful for contexts beyond these organisations and beyond the geopolitical boundaries of Cambodia (Agar, 2008).

Figure 2 and 3 show the levels of hierarchy which provides background for the reader to understand the power relations which will be described later in the study. It enables the reader to understand the various relationships and perspectives. For ease of reading and to keep anonymity, I refer to the organisations with the use of their short abbreviations, i.e. Cambodian Organisation 1 is referred to as CO1. Projects are not referred to by name, but instead have a short description to provide the reader with information about the context. Names of persons are

fictive yet inspired by names often used in those areas. Please note that any reference to 'above' or 'below' refers to the place in the diagram of Figure 3. It is not a description of importance. Each of the NGOs are at different stages in their use of these approaches and tools; some have been using them for years and others have only started to design or to use them. This study focuses upon organisations mainly working in Cambodia, namely Cambodian Organisation 1 (CO1), Cambodian Organisation 2 (CO2), and with the four Cambodian organisations (CO3, CO4, CO5, CO6) partnering with Swedish Organisation B's (SOB) regional office in Cambodia. The donor relationships included in this study are portrayed in Figure 3, but the reader should note that the various organisations and projects have a number of other donors that they are relating to in addition to these. Likewise there are more projects and other relationships which are not part of the figure. My own relationships to each of the organisations will be explained further in the following sections. Data was created with all of the organisations and project locations shaded grey in Figure 3. The relationships with the closest contact in this study are depicted by the bold border lines in Figure 3. In these locations, I had conversations and observations beyond single interviews and single perspectives. Besides the persons and organisations included in Figure 3, I had a few other conversations in order to include their perspectives which the reader will be introduced to in the results section.
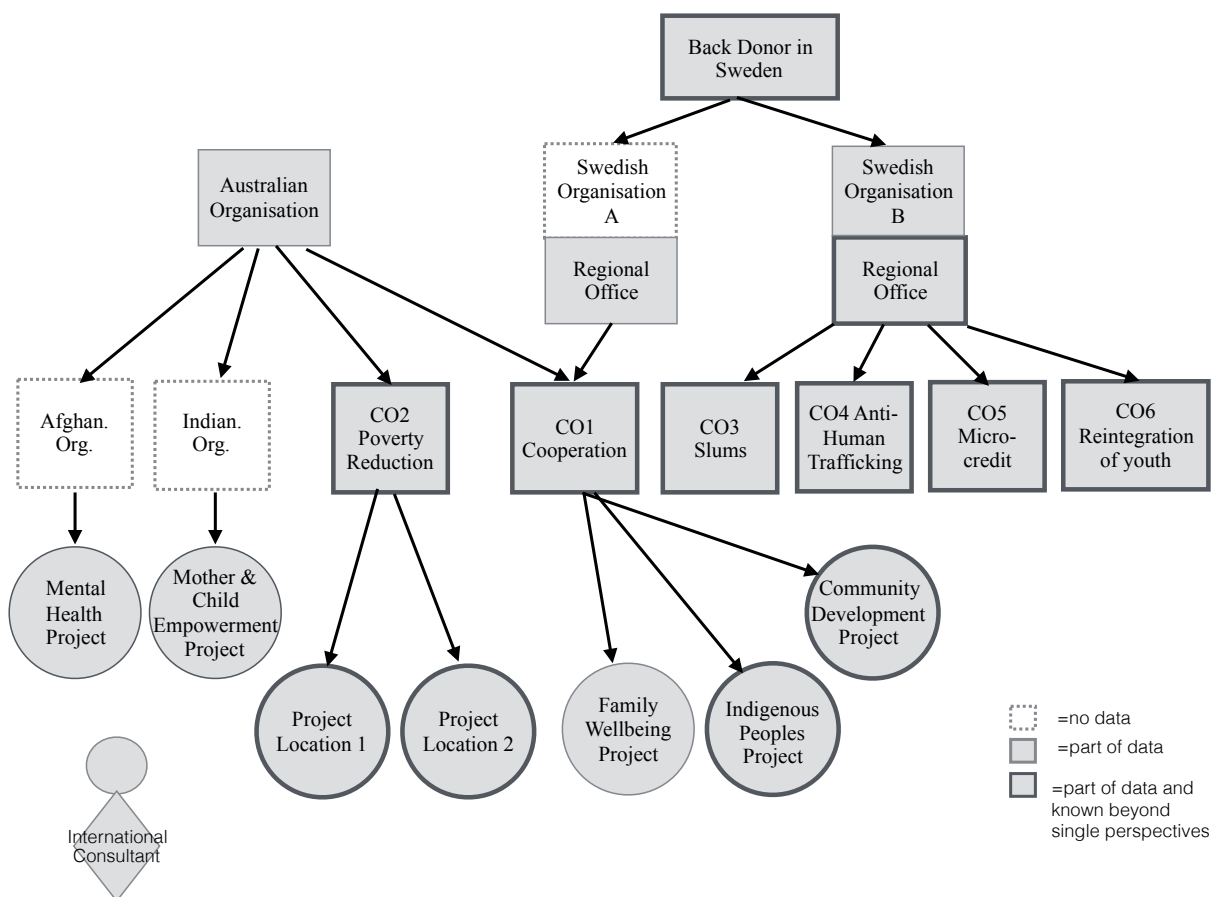

Figure 3: Overview of data creation

Type of activities for data creation

Most of my interaction with the organisations took place in relation to workshops and meetings around the process of adopting new learning approaches for complex situations, Outcome Mapping, Outcome Harvesting, and Most Significant Change stories. During fieldwork, I focused on how things were done, what conversations were taking place, what was said and how. My conversations with the participants could dig deep into perspectives putting behaviour into a context, but these dialogues were imbedded in the main ethnographic project of this study during participant observation, where behaviour was observed in naturalistic contexts (Agar, 2008). Conversations and observations took place in various settings such as during workshops, interviews, practical conversations online or during mealtimes, visits to the field, written communication in e-mails, and in a focused group discussion. My engagement in these activities contributed to the data creation, in a dialectic relationship with the participants (Agar, 2008). See Table 3 for an overview of the data sets included in the analysis. The aim of the study served as a framework to determine the inclusion in the process of data creation and data selection.

Table 3: Type of activity

Type of activity	Documentation
Interviews (informal conversations) dealing with organisational learning with organisations and individuals in Cambodia, Sweden, Australia, India, and Afghanistan	Notes (17 pages) Sound recording (2 h, 53 min)
Phone conversations and e-mails, on the Outcome Mapping Learning Community forum and on Skype.	Notes, e-mails, online forum (approx. 70 pages)
Workshops, evaluations, and other work in Cambodia, which include observations and conversations during field work and in office/workshop locations.	Notes (18 pages typed up notes), evaluation reports, photos, videos
Project documentation from organisations in Cambodia	Reports and plans (approx. 250 pages)
Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in Cambodia 1/2 day on March 6, 2017	Sound recordings (2h, 49 min), drawings, photos, notes (1 page)

Focus group discussions are generally not set in the daily practice and are set up in advance for the purpose of the study. In this case, however, the discussions provided insightful data as relationships were already part of an existing community of practice, and the group had their own vested interest in the topic. My prior relations with each of those participating in the Focus Group Discussion (see Table 3) made the discussion even more interesting. Their stories were connected to contexts and processes that I was familiar with. I have no control over their use of these approaches and the fact that they continue to use them and develop them further is worth noting in understanding their own interest in the topic. Participants were eager to joint discussion. No one was paid to come, but as one project was struggling with their capacity building budget, they asked if I could pay for travel and accommodation for one staff member, which I did. I provided a location, some snacks, and lunch to make it easier for those who had traveled far, which is common practice and I believe it did not affect the reliability of the data. The discussions brought up serious issues described through textured, nuanced accounts of their experiences, which would not just reiterate the theoretical advantages of the new learning

approaches. The simple plan for the focus group discussion was to listen to one another's stories of what happens in the organisations' use of the complexity-appropriate approaches and have a discussion regarding common topics and challenges that emerged from the stories. I had told the participants that I could provide theoretical input at the end, which provided an opportunity for me to be part of the dialogue and not just use them as objects. This discursive practice of relating to 'other' could be a support in their own reflection and processes of negotiating identity (Wertsch, 1998). (For more details on the plan, see Annex 1.) Possibly due to the organisation's knowledge of one another and their common interest, the stories as well as the discussions were incredibly focused and the material was deep and dense.

Conversations and interviews held with participants in this study were built on similar trust relationships and a common interest in the topic, enabling each experience to become part of a reflective meaning-making process around a common enterprise rather than an exercise of being the object of an interview (Wenger, 1998). Interviews from my previous field study on vertical learning explored how learning takes place 'above' the practice of the participatory action research through the main questions: "What factors hinder vertical learning in the implementation of Participatory Action Research? How can these factors be overcome?". Although the purpose of the field study was broader than this study and focused on the specific context of learning from the Indigenous People's project of CO1, I was able to find specific mention of the complexity-appropriate learning approaches in those interviews for the purpose of this ethnographic study. For more detail on interview questions which served as possible topics to explore, see Annex 2.

The following text first describes data creation processes with the NGOs in Cambodia, where my roles and relationships with each NGO become visible. There will be some glimpses of results, but with the purpose to provide an overview of the processes while simultaneously providing a background so that the reader can place the results in a context. Making my relationships visible is important to understand the levels of trust which enabled the process of data creation, and provided the emic perspectives in this study (Agar, 2008). As mentioned, parts of the process of data creation took place before the formal design of this particular study, but occurred during the time of my masters' programme, inspired by my interest in organisational learning in the international development context. Those who have participated gave their consent for me to use the data for my university studies. In the last part of this section, I explain the connections and relevance of creating data beyond the boundaries of these NGOs.

Cambodian Organisation 1 (CO1)

CO1 is the organisation with which I have the longest, and historically, the closest relationship. CO1 implements a variety of projects, three of which are included in this study (see Table 4). Rather than using real project names, I have given them descriptive names. I have also included the head office in Cambodia, to be explicit about the relationship that I had with the head office in implementation of this study. Donor relations in this study were developed mainly through my relationships with CO1.

Table 4: Implementation with CO1

Part of institution/ Project Name (Fictive)	My background/relationship	Source of Data
Head office	• I reported to them while employed • M&E consultancy role to community development project.	• Interview for study on vertical learning • 4 persons from different departments joined the Focus Group Discussion.
Indigenous People's project	• I worked in leadership functions here, setting up learning systems managing relations with donors. • Continued conversations	• Interview for study on vertical learning (4 in leadership positions) • 3 persons joined the FGD (only 1 of them were part of the interview above)
Community Development project	• Joint CO1 events and leadership meetings. • On-going consultancy support in designing their M&E system.	In the process of consultancy: • Skype conversations with leaders • 1/2 day workshop with all the staff (July 2016) • Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change workshop (Oct 2016) including field observations during MSC story collection • Reflection/Follow up workshop, conversations (March 2017) • On-going technical and advisory support in setting systems up (this is done to date).
Family Wellbeing project	Joint CO1 events and leadership meetings. My husband and I helped another project set up Outcome Mapping. When that project closed down, a main leader brought the Outcome Mapping approach to this project.	1 person joined the FGD

A particular project in CO1 with which I have had most experience is the Indigenous People's project. Having had on-going contact with them through personal relations since leaving the project one and a half year prior to this study, provided an essential understanding of context which supported data creation and analysis. Another project in which I have been involved during this study is the Community Development project. As can be seen in Table 4, there have been multiple ways to connect with the Community Development project with a purpose of helping them with their monitoring and evaluation system. Several learning systems had previously been designed, but none of them had been put in practice. When they had contact with the indigenous people's project and learned about their system, visiting them in the project location, they felt that Outcome Mapping could work well for them. As I read through their project documentation, I noticed that the project was set up around boundary partners and with visions and goals which could work well with an Outcome Mapping approach. Still, during the first meeting I had with them in July, 2016, I decided that we first needed to explore what they wanted to do with their learning system and if they, after learning some of the basics about Outcome Mapping, still were interested in it. See Figure 4 for some of the project teams thoughts on what they wanted to do with their systems. What became evident to both me and the team and
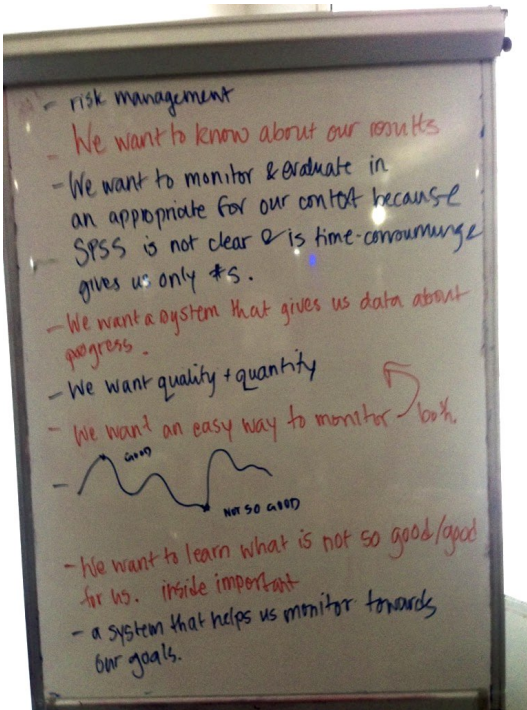
Figure 4: The purpose of the Community
Development project's learning approaches

which becomes visible also in this list (Figure 4) was the need to in different ways define words such as 'good' and 'not so good'. We started with a historical scan (see Figure 5) in which their strong values, desires, and ways of working with the community became increasingly evident.

Figure 5: The historical scan "River of Life" including expressions of values (Faces have been blurred to provide some anynomity).

Together, the project team and I saw the need for the learning systems and communicative practices which would help them to keep working effectively towards their vision while including their values. A few months later, in October 2017, I facilitated a workshop for a full week, helping them through a practical process of designing Outcome Mapping as well as a Most Significant Change training and experience out on the field in order to capture unexpected change and perspectives. The workshop plan itself was presented as a road map, portrayed in
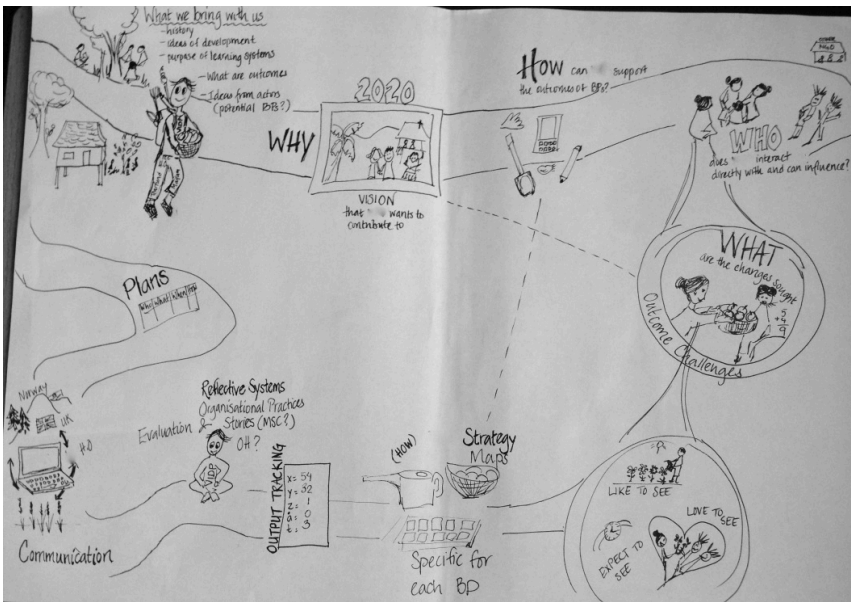
Figure 6: A "Road Map" for the workshop on Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change as part of the process of design the Community Development project's learning system.

Figure 6, which might help the reader understand the broad goals of the workshop. While purposes were clear, the workshop plan itself needed to be flexible. For example the training on Most Significant Change was one of the activities we added from dialogue with participants in the beginning of the workshop. The Most Significant Change process in itself allowed me to have observation on the field. The participants used the process to discuss design issues around boundary partners and test writing evidence from interaction with various boundary partners for their newly designed progress markers. Another significant point of data creation was in the half day follow up workshop in March, 2017, when Outcome Mapping had continued to be used in practice. The agenda itself was set up by the participants' own expectations as an 'expect to see', 'like to see', and 'love to see'. They told stories about what they had done so far before discussions went in to various practical topics about their learning systems, how to set things up on in their monitoring forms, how to keep time for reflection, and who writes reports and how.

Cambodian Organisation 2 (CO2)

I got to know CO2 through co-facilitating an evaluation of this organisation and their two projects. The two projects mainly worked with the same types of issues, but in two areas divided up geographically. They had been set up with an Outcome Mapping design by a previous donor, but had not used it yet for learning or monitoring. The evaluation experience started with an initial workshop with their leaders, four community members and four other staff in preparation for a participatory Outcome Harvest, making sure there was a common definition of "outcomes" as changes in behaviours, relationships, attitudes, and policies.

We then worked with those participants out in the 'field' with 'boundary partners' in the various districts, spending days and nights during two weeks out in the communities (see Figure 7). We finally finished the evaluation with a findings workshop in which boundary partners participated and contributed to the findings for further use by the project. Although this experience with them was in the summer of 2016, several months before the design of this study, I had documented the experience well and it was relevant to my interest in organisational learning which was something I had been immersed in, particularly through my study on vertical learning in the

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Figure 7: One of the field locations for the Outcome Harvests.
Conversations were held at rice fields, in the shade of bamboo
groves, in institutions, and in people's homes.

Spring of 2016. Four key persons among the staff from various roles in the organisation joined the Focused Group Discussion on March 6, bringing important perspectives on their organisational change.

Swedish Organisation B (SOB) and Cambodian Organisations 3, 4, 5, and 6

A representative from Swedish Organisation B (SOB) asked me to conduct an Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting workshop for their regional office and their local Cambodian partner NGOs, named CO3, CO4, CO5, and CO6 in this research. Some particular features in my relationships and my data creation with these organisations are illustrated in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Implementation with SOB, CO3, CO4, CO5, and CO6

Organisation	My background/relationship	Source of Data besides the OM&OH workshop which all organisations in this table participated in.	Number of staff at the workshop
Swedish Organisation B	• Representative in Sweden is a former colleague. • At regional level one of the staff is a former colleague.	• Conversations with representative in Sweden and with regional team in planning and review of the workshop • 1 person joined the Focus Group Discussion.	3 persons (full representation of the team)
CO3 working in slum areas	No relationship prior to the workshop	(The Outcome Harvest took place in their project locations.)	5 persons
CO4 working with anti-human trafficking	Some collaboration with CO1 in various settings.		7 persons
CO5 working with micro-credit	No relationship prior to the workshop		2 persons
CO6 working with re-integration of youth. They have already used Outcome Mapping.	Used to be part of CO1 before it became its own organisation. I helped to train them in MSC story collection.		5 persons

All of these organisations have one or more projects that receive funding from SOB. Also, common to all of these organisations is my relationship with them through this workshop. In SOB's invitation to the workshop, they made clear to the organisations that there would be no expectation that they had to use any of the approaches. One of the organisations had been using Outcome Mapping, but Outcome Harvesting was new to them. Each of the local Cambodian organisations sent several staff to the workshop, who during large parts of the workshop worked in their own teams to make the work useful and not just an exercise. After an introduction to theory, each organisation shared their histories, bringing out what they felt was important about their identity. They went through several processes of breaking down their visions into terms of being able to picture what a good situation might be like in three to five years (see Figure 8).

Through drama they defined the results and how they felt they had contributed to them. Through maps they explored who the most important boundary partners might be in their context, and through discussion they decided what progress for each of their boundary partners might look like in order for them to reach their visions. The various organisations provided input on the progress markers that each of the teams had written up. Discussions at this point illustrated how
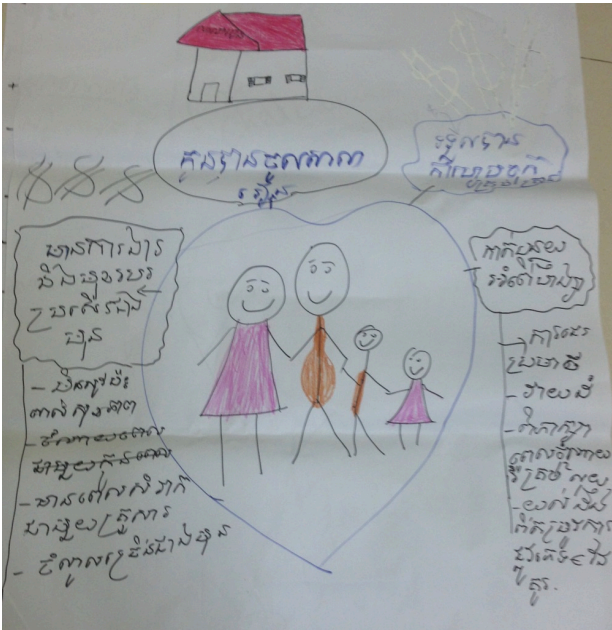
Figure 8: One of the teams in the beginning of the process of
defining and "breaking down" their vision.

well the teams had understood the outcome focus. See Figure 9 for an example of how progress
markers in the end were written up for the boundary partner of one of the organisations. As part
of the workshop experience, after an introduction and a simple design of an Outcome Harvest,
the workshop participants and I spent a day in the slum areas where the organisation conducts
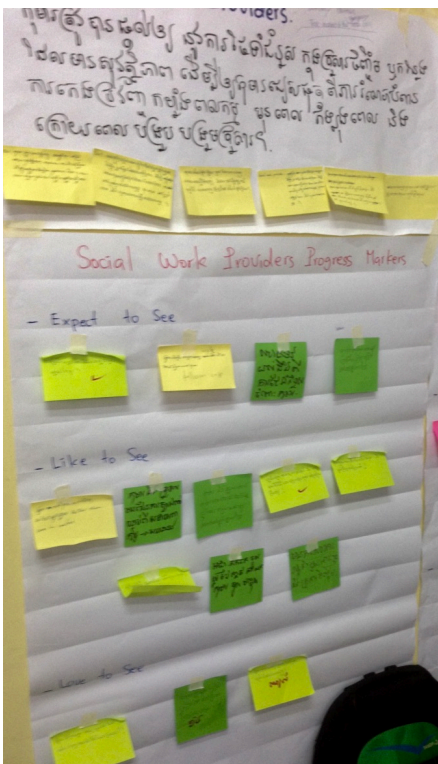
Figure 9: The "Outcome Challenge"
and progress markers of one of the
boundary partners for one of the
organisations.

part of their work. Here, the teams were able to put into practice what they had learned about Outcome Harvesting by looking for changes in behaviours, relationships, attitudes, and in policy.

Other perspectives

Direct contact with SOB in preparation, implementation and review of the workshop provided a perspective on donor relations with NGOs pertaining to the topic of adapting to the complexity-appropriate learning approaches. Further data to understand the donor perspective was generated through interviews from the vertical learning study, which has already been mentioned, as well as through a casual conversation and one additional informal interview with a back donor[15]. All of the interviews and conversations were with people that I have been in contact as a result of my work in Cambodia, in relation to the Indigenous People's project as an employee of SOA or with the consultancy work for SOB. The interviews and casual conversations were with the following organisations: a Finnish donor, SOA in the regional office, SOB in Sweden and regionally, a Swedish 'back donor' for SOA and SOB (2 persons), and an Australian donor. Project documentation supported the understanding of the culture of the organisations and their communicative practices.

In order to check the data created with organisations outside the geopolitical borders of Cambodia, I asked to interview an international consultant, with experience on several continents. I felt this could increase the relevance of the study beyond the Cambodian context. This consultant is familiar with a variety of evaluation methods, but is also highly engaged in work with Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting, and active in the online Outcome Mapping Learning Community. At one point he evaluated a project that I worked for, and since then, I have also co-facilitated an evaluation with him. In my interview with him he shared the ways that he felt the communicative practices had changed or become visible through complexity-appropriate approaches. I shared the themes and patterns that I had noticed so far, and he suggested contact with two organisations which could help provide further insight. These two organisations were located in India and Afghanistan, and interestingly receive funding from the Australian donor which has already been part of my research.

2.3 Analysis

Overview of Process

During data-analysis, available literature and my own previous experiences of organisational learning help to frame the explorations accounted for in this study. These frames have affected data creation, analysis, and the potential use of my research. Being explicit about my research process helps the reader to understand it and increases a sense of reliability of the results (Bergström & Boréus, 2012). Overall, I have looked for patterns in the data to identify some possible relations of cause and effects for these patterns. Throughout the process, I have attempted to be open and understand what the NGOs and people involved in the use of

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[15] For lack of a better term, I have used *back donor* to refer to the organisation that has an aid framework with the government in the North, although the government more suitably could be called back donor. In this study, they are a link between government funds and their member organisations who apply for the funds.

complexity-appropriate approaches emphasise while recognising gaps in understanding between our worlds, as I will explain further (Agar, 2008). It was not just a matter of writing down what I saw, but looking for repeated themes and working with them in a structured way (Agar, 2006).

Agar (2008) defines ethnography by participant observation. In the analysis of what happens in these observations, in relationships with people, so called *rich points* occur. These *rich points* are gaps in understanding between worlds which I, in my ethnography tried to resolve. Through this process there is an assumption that there is a context in which the rich point will somehow make sense. In trying to inductively make sense of these rich points, I then set frames, or a set of expectations, which were continuously modified in order to understand that part of culture. Through testing these various frames in experiences with the group, I was not limited to a closed system of deduction or induction, but could use an abductive approach, "working from consequence back to cause or antecedent" (Patton, 2015, p. 561). Abduction allows for new theories or ideas to arise, taking complexity and new "material", which does not fit existing theory, into account (Agar, 2008). One such example of a rich point was how, on the one hand, people said that Outcome Mapping gave them a better focus, while, on the other hand, others said that it gave them a broader view. Through listening to the stories and relating them to my own observations in the field, I was able to understand that the bigger picture was an inclusion of other people who had not yet been considered, while the organisation was able to define their own role and relation to these people in a much clearer way. CO1's Community Development team, for example, started to communicate with their 'boundary partners' in a way that they had never done before, discussing expectations. Of course some of my observations would have been influenced by my preconceptions, including theory, but in practice I tried to look at *any* pattern occurring during the communicative practices. Patterns are sequences of behaviour that reoccur in the data (Agar, 2008), for example the numerous questions I received from participants during field work about forms and tools in the work of the organisations. I did not know at first if this was a lack of confidence and a cultural concern for knowing the 'right method' and being 'professional' in terms of having lots of forms. I soon suspected it primarily had to do with a search for more appropriate communication tools with donors for communicating about complexity and integrating it in their work. Through the various interactions with different people and organisations, I could gain a better picture of this search for appropriate boundary objects, as will be discussed further in the results section.

A closer look at the collaborative and constructive nature of analysis on the field

During my field observations, the analytic process started already in my actual physical experiences in Cambodia with the people who were part of the study. I could take note in a workshop, for example, on how dramas depicted only a certain type of activity. I took note of these observations and could later analyse the experiences further in how they talked about their work, how they acted in the field, how they drew up action plans/project plans, and how they reported them. Besides taking notes and taking photos during the actual observation, I took time for reflection each evening, expanding the notes with further descriptions from memory, and if appropriate connect it to further examples. Sometimes the analysis came through conversations on the topic of organisational learning with others. Some of these conversations then provided further data, which needed further analysis. Fortunately, rather than being a transcendental

observer, ethnography is a collaborative and dialogical production (Tyler, 1986). The group I studied collaborated with me in creating data and constructing discourse, and in this process we continuously affected one another. In the focus group discussions, for example, I took notes of
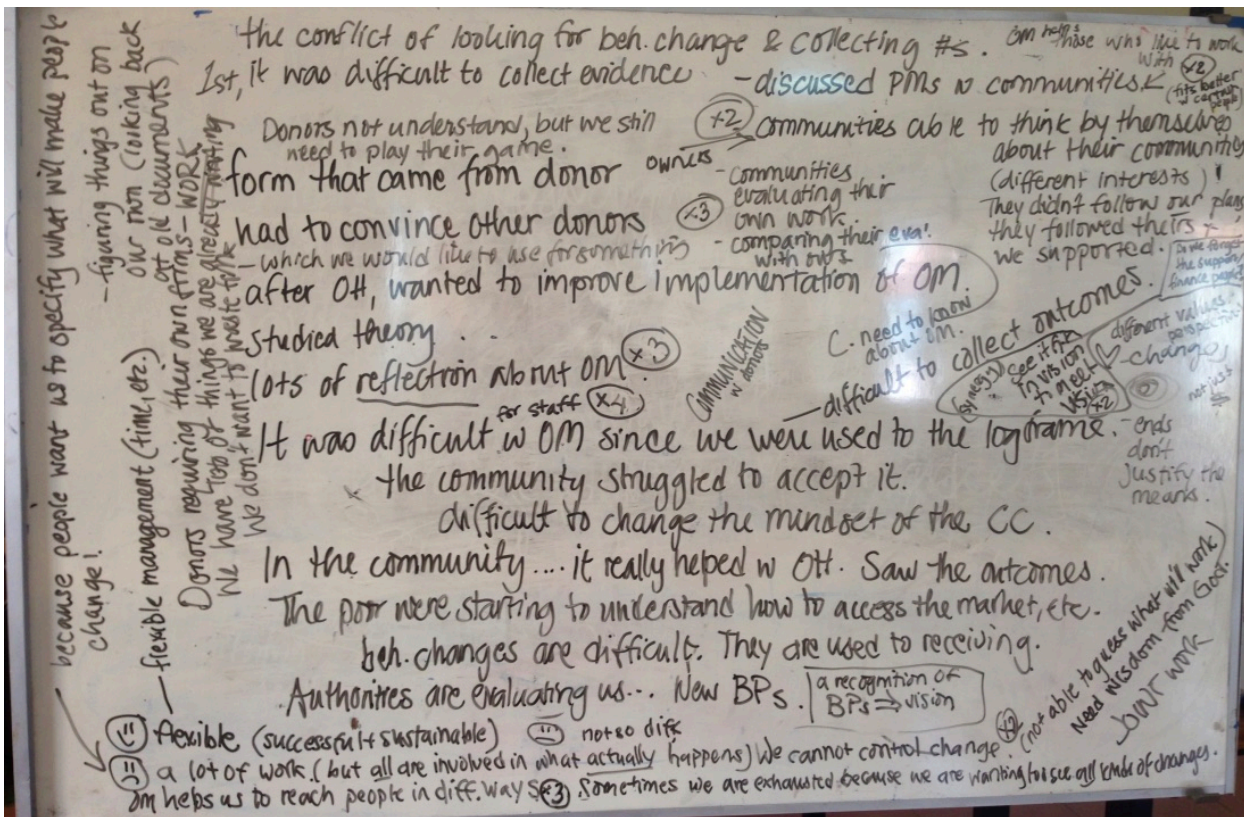
Figure 10: The board where I collected themes with the participants in the focus group discussion. Discussion was held in Khmer, although the participants understood and could read my English notes on the board.

what I subjectively perceived as themes coming out of their stories and discussion as can be viewed in Figure 10.

The participants then chose to speak and draw pictures about the issues which were brought up, as a spin off from the issues I had written up and telling stories to illustrate them. One of these pictures illustrated communicative practices in relation to communities being able to own and work towards their own plans. See Figure 11. This provided a level of collaborative analysis in the study which made the experience politically useful for the participants (Agar, 2006). In speaking, we make a variety of objects present and produce something, accumulating meaning and experience (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This process of framing things, has already brought about cultural change, making analysis an embedded and necessary iterative process, a natural part of the whole experience. We created data on the field, and in doing that, I was a political and pedagogical actor where it is difficult to have a clear distinction between emic and etic (Agar, 2008). Yet, systematically seeing things from a participant perspective while taking time to distance oneself from the inside perspective, ensured that I looked at material in different ways (Agar, 2008). Times for personal reflection in between the concrete times 'on the field' creating data, were very valuable. I collected, compared and contrasted data in a systematic way (Agar, 2006). During this process, I was involved in an online community which similarly provided

Figure 11: Pictures used to illustrate what one person felt happened in the change to complexity-appropriate approaches in their context. The people on the left are the various members of the communities creating their own groups to work towards community visions.

distance and new data. In the whole process of data creation and analysis, I was aware of purposefully neglecting some things while focusing on others (Agar, 2008). In one sense, the focus group discussion as a whole, in which several CO1 and CO2 projects were involved, had brought clarity on the themes, helping to link the parts to the whole. This discussion served as a summary of many experiences and contexts.

Returning to Sweden after such intense field work, the physical distance of returning to Sweden helped to provide a more etic experience. It was not only the matter of physical distance, because I could still create data by being part of the Outcome Mapping Learning Community and have interviews and conversations with others in the same area of interest. At times I had to read further literature, draw pictures of what I was thinking, or even leave my data for a while, in order to see the data in new ways. When the patterns occurred enough times and I started to become confident in a rich picture of the culture of the group in their contexts, I started to structure these and wrote up the main themes I saw occurring.

I listened to sound recordings of the Group Discussion, taking rough notes on themes of what I heard. I then went back to my rich points, adjusting, comparing. I started to feel like I had the bulk of my data when there were no new dimensions coming up, which can be seen as the saturation of data (Patton, 2015). I then, felt that it could be useful to have the in-depth interview which I had planned to have with an international consultant. With his wider experience of other NGOs and his use of complexity-appropriate approaches, he could confirm or question my themes. Besides taking notes during the conversation, I listened to the sound recording a couple times taking notes and I transcribed interesting sections. During the same time, the Outcome Mapping Learning Community had a discussion on systems and perspectives, especially from a 'systems thinking' perspective, which provided insight and challenged members of the

community to realise the fluidity of perspectives and boundaries. The international consultant had mainly used two project locations to tell his stories and examples and helped to arrange so that I could have conversations over Skype with the directors of these two projects in India and Afghanistan. In between these two conversations I went back over my notes and data, listening to sound recordings of the focus group discussion again, checked with the themes and rich points I had taken note of. After that, I did the same process with the directors of organisations in India and Afghanistan, transcribing sections of high interest, comparing with the themes already identified and finding telling examples of these patterns, while showing when the pattern did not apply (Geertz, 1973). I looked over all of my data deciding to write detailed transcriptions of more of the focus group description due to the complexity and the rich nuances that were described there. At this point I conducted an Outcome Harvesting Workshop in Sweden with a donor. Although I am not using details of this experience, it gave me confidence in my themes and analysis of the donor-NGO situation. I then finished my data creation experience with a person working for the Swedish back donor who had read the final report from a project working with Outcome Mapping and whose evaluation was conducted through an Outcome Harvest.
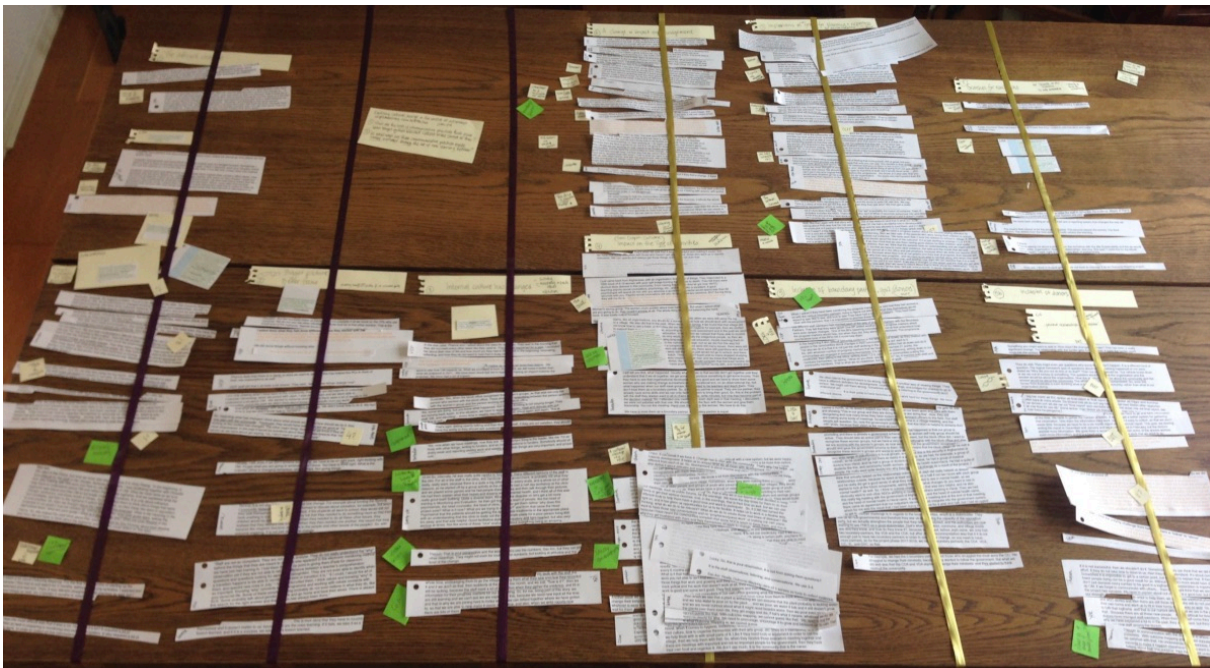
Figure 12: Telling examples were placed under themes, where I also could connect certain aspects to theory and use to illustrate significant tensions and show complexity.

At this point I started to play around with titles for my thesis, which helped me explore main themes coming out and key words became visible in a different way. I also explored the connections of themes and key words which helped me start seeing a structure in how I could represent the data, but I was overwhelmed with the amount of data and felt that I needed to look back over lectures on ethnography methodology and printed out the parts of my data that I had noted were very rich. Spending a few days physically structuring and organising my story with my telling examples enabled me to revisit themes and write a first draft of my results section. See Figure 12 for how I placed telling examples in a thematic structure. In the endeavour to

produce a written a report that would align with the requirements envisaged within the frame of my master thesis, I now have a relatively 'thick' description (Geertz, 1973) of NGO practices in regards to their adaptation to the use of complexity-appropriate approaches. By thick description I mean an elaborate description of a sense-making process of social discourse in a context (Geertz, 1973). Although I am unable to claim definite links to a larger order, I provide an understanding of organisational learning for these types of contexts to make it available for further research. As Marcus (1986) claims can be the role of ethnography, I provide my story in an open-ended and uncertain way for further analysis by the reader in new contexts and developments.

2.5 Reliability, validity, and research ethics

For any research within pedagogy it is important to be clear about the purpose of the study, to gain informed consent of those involved and to ensure that all are respected for their cultures and ensured confidentiality (Patton, 2015). With all my work relationships, I have been explicit and inclusive about the research I conducted, keeping confidentiality, and seeking permissions as appropriate. I believe research conducted with high respect for people and culture, has the potential to take us beyond a status quo of 'no/little damage done' to being of use to the group, either for therapeutical or practical purposes for their work. Some key issues for my own research are discussed in the following sections and related to relationships, participation and the claims of my research.

Recognition of participation/authorship in research

One of the key ethical choices in my research was to allow the group studied to feel comfortable with the research, from initial contact to analysis and reporting. I needed to portray the organisations and their communicative practices in a way that felt honest and useful and I could feel responsible for, without putting anyone at risk. I understood that the participants in my research had the same need. In a development context where the voices of the non-Western have historically not been heard, it was especially important to be careful of exclusively Western analysis and interpretation. Ethnography, with its focus on people, and its openness in methods allowed space for true participation. I tried to avoid setting boundaries and frames too early, or defining problems in advance at the expense of not seeing 'the elephant in the room'. Today, with the world being connected, the people I studied, as well as their 'enemies', will be able to read what I have written. This has required a strong sense of responsibility, but can increase the authority of my research (Agar, 2008). Recognising their crucial involvement and in a sense, co-authorship, is ethically important and has been important to this research (Patton, 2015).

'Validity' of data as related to trust relationships

While being careful with analysis and interpretation, I am explicit with the reader about my own values, theories, and positions which have formed the creation and analysis of data. Likewise, I have been explicit about these with the participants in my study. The 'baggage' and social categories/identities I carried with me to the ethnographic experience (Agar, 2008) framed the

research in one sense, but it has also built necessary trust relationships which have been essential for those involved in order to share honestly. I shared an insider view having worked in the context with similar tasks, and shared various aspects of life with several of them for many years. I still needed to be careful about the dominance there might be from association with a Masters program, needing to stress my genuine interest for learning from the start. Along with the advantages of my personal relationships and shared history with participants, there are likely to be negative ways that this has affected both data creation and analysis. The choices to include various perspectives and to study a topic of common interest have most likely prevented some of the possible disadvantages. Likewise, my current role as a consultant with some of the participants of this study may have negatively affected the results of the study, as a consultant role can be presumed to be a role providing knowledge and expertise in terms of 'right answers'. The choice to work on the organisations' own terms as much as possible was therefore essential for the validity of this research as well as the validity of my own consultancy role. It is important that any evaluation work, such as my own consultancy work, is useful to the organisation (Patton, 2011). The consultancy role comes with some advantages of neutrality, although total 'neutrality' is neither achievable or desirable.

According to Agar (2008), ethnography is always political, and it was therefore important to understand the complexity of decisions and actors for any change. I understood that decisions made by staff required negotiations between many relationships including those of the grassroots, other organisations, and the donors in which the actors carry various identities. With an ethnography which tried to portray many perspectives and the willingness of actors, I had the opportunity to listen to reasons for when there was no change or less desirable change. Without an attention to values, relationships and trust, I would not have had the grounds for validity in the sense that the study was studying what it intended to look at. Neither would I have had reliability, in the sense that I took steps to be careful in the process and careful in the selection of sources (Bergström & Boréus, 2012). As an ethnographer I exposed power relations which take place between NGOs and those they are in contact with in context and through the hierarchical chain of donors. This can have good effects which can bring about positive change, but it also has the potential to lock subjects into trenches of power struggles or leave the dominated and marginalised in further vulnerability. In my study, I have therefore considered the risks of exposing institutional power and showing their realities and systems as exotic. Instead, I desired to show the humane and reasonable sides of the various groups and locales, avoiding a portrayal of the dominant cultures as caricatures (Marcus, 1986; Freire, 1972). This, I hope, lays grounds for an awareness of the need for dialogue and further negotiations to ultimately provide better support to the countries in the political South.

Representing a group to the 'dominant'/Western cultures

For the sake of building local capacity and sustainability in international development work, representatives from the political North/West are moving off the "field" and responsibilities have shifted to organisations in the South. A strive for efficiency combined with this lack of physical proximity creates a risk that relationships are replaced with paperwork, and the role of a cultural 'translator' is lost. According to Wenger (1998), in order to negotiate and create knowledge together, there needs to be a shared community of practice. Sharing and negotiation needs to take

place at some point, whether it be in the developing context, the donor context, in cyber-space, or somewhere in between. Application forms, e-mails, and written reports might be a difficult place for this. Ethnographers being on a group's 'home turf' allows the group of participants in the research to be more comfortable (Agar, 2008). Language learning is rarely prioritised by donor organisations and creates barriers for communication with the actors in the South (Hinton & Groves, 2004). In my research, I believe that with my cultural understanding and experience on the field, I had an ethical responsibility to communicate with and engage with the donor context, both in the research process and as a written product. Although usefulness for the donor context in the North is one of my aims, I am aware that people will assume that they can generalise any findings for similar groups. Ethnography is normally able to point to a pattern, but not necessarily how well it is distributed (Agar, 2008, p. 134). To address this, I have paid attention to who is part of the ethnography in the first place and checked my findings beyond the group I observed, which can contribute to the relevance and usefulness of the data, especially if the research is to influence policy makers to take any action (Agar, 2008).

PART 3: RESULTS

At this point, the reader may need a reminder that the results of the study have the NGOs as its main object of inquiry for learning about the cultural change. The communicative practices therein are firstly explored *within* the NGO, starting with an overview of key factors in their dynamic internal change processes. The first theme (A difficult change) is described while also providing the context of the range of communicative practices. The next theme (A different way of seeing) looks closer at the affect on the NGO staff's own perceptions and perspectives, as well as examples of cultural changes taking place in their internal communicative practices, including the impact on management. The next themes focus on the NGO's communicative practices with others and have the following headings: Impact on the type of NGO activities, Inclusion of 'boundary partners'[16] including the government, and Inclusion of donors. Finally, the impact on planning and reporting forms and the searches for new ways forward are explored in further detail.

A difficult change

To change from a logframe approach to a complexity-appropriate approach is no easy endeavour for the NGO staff. Difficulties occur at several stages of the journey, two of them which will be described further in later sections stand out as particularly difficult, namely the processes of negotiation with donors and the integration of an outcome-focused approach into the way of working. Staff of local organisations, including their leaders, tell stories of the process of learning about Outcome Mapping taking months to understand, pointing out key factors in making the process a significant and difficult change.

The first factor can be summarised as a pattern of perceived demands to produce results within a positivist, linear, economic-related framework. The international discourse has a long history of control systems similar to that of industries, and a linear view of social change (Boni et al., 2014; Lacayo, Obregón & Singhal, 2008). Being part of this sociocultural environment, makes it difficult for agents to change their actions without having the support of other cultural tools and frameworks for taking action (Wertsch, 1998). During a Saturday conversation over lunch, a country director of education in a large NGO described her context through a recent experience she had at a large education conference where the value of early childhood education efforts were only phrased in economic terms. The benefits of less violence and more stability, for example, were described in economic terms. She summarised the experience, "It felt like we had become post-human." The pressure is on the NGOs working in the development context to give value for money and to prove their worth in terms of what they can do with the money (Boni et al., 2014). Pok, in a leadership role within a project working with indigenous people and a firm believer of the Outcome Mapping approach, feels that some donors will count the number and monetary value of changes to justify their funding of projects. Instead, he points out that "if the staff have worked really hard but all that they see is just one change, then we need to see what

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[16] 'Boundary partners' are, using Outcome Mapping terminology, the actors which the organisation choses to monitor change in, those that are important in achieving the vision. Target communities can be boundary partners if that is who the organisation works directly with them.

value that one change has". In the focus group discussion, he expressed further how significant changes take time to see and challenges the assumption that human change can be easily valued in economic terms. Pok exposes the influence of capitalism and neoliberalism on the discourse about development. He also challenges the idea that change can be controlled by the NGO, an assumption that is deeply rooted among those who have worked with NGOs without complexity-appropriate approaches where assumptions of control through linear logic has been the norm (Fujita, 2010). In the workshops conducted on the complexity-appropriate approaches with the Cambodian partner organisations of SOB, participants showed a mixture of discomfort and amusement at the lack of clarity when I questioned meanings and definitions and refused to provide singular and generalised solutions to their questions. One of the regional representative for SOB, a Cambodian national himself, who attended this workshops, said,

> Throughout the week they tried to get you to summarise, meaning 'can you give me the right answer'. You kept on telling them throughout the week that every situation is different and that it depends. You would not give them a set of rules about how to write good progress markers. You would not tell them the right use of Outcome Mapping, or Outcome Harvesting, or how to make an action plan. I understand what you mean and I think it was important for them. (translation from Khmer)

For the staff, the shift from a positivist assumption (in terms of 'giving the right answer') to an approach that values complexity seems to get at the core of the NGO staff's difficulties. Several times during the workshops and in the NGO staff's stories of changing approaches, they themselves exclaimed how completely new and different this way of thinking was. One of the main ways in which this was made visible was during the staff's discussions about activities in the workshops. There were strong reactions among several groups of NGOs when they realised that they may need to change strategies and activities. Activities were seen as core to the purpose of the NGO, as something central to the organisations' identity. When I facilitated workshops to help the NGOs see activities as flexible ingredients in order to support the organisation's vision for societal change, two NGOs expressed that this would be impossible. When we explored these feelings further, they felt that donors are mostly interested in projects sticking to their plans in greatest detail, and others said that they struggled to see how work could be managed. *Results* were expressed in terms of the fulfilment of a large number of activities as the tangible results of these, e.g. the outputs. In an outcome-focused, complexity-appropriate approach, however, the focus shifts from things and money to people and relations, a difficult cognitive change to make, as described by Khushi, the director of the NGO in India:

> Actually, the biggest problem I found is the thinking of the staff. According to Outcome Mapping, we should focus on changed thinking, behaviour, and relationships, but still my staff have problems. We have done Outcome Mapping now for 6 years, but now we are starting a second year [phase?], but still they love to make toilets, they love the income generating projects. […] Because changing the behaviour, the thinking, and attitudes, need more efforts, and more time, and they want to see fast results. […] You know the previous work was very easy. This many toilet, this many, this, this, this. How many immunisations, how many JNC, PNC, etc. Numbers, numbers.

The ease of the logframe was one factor mentioned by several persons. Definitions and change processes were in a sense sterilised or removed from their complexity to fit a form represented by a number as a compliant response, whereas complexity-appropriate approaches require actual stories or mini-stories, requiring all staff to be involved in meaning-making and learning. The

logframe, in a sense, served as a cultural tool for several purposes (Wertsch, 1998), perhaps mainly for management. For Outcome Mapping, it also requires a lot of effort in actually setting up the design and planning system, as mentioned by several organisations in the data.

The second factor contributing to the difficulty of the change is the staff's difficulty to pay attention to outcomes in the first place and how they needed support to see this issue. Deep cultural and systemic change which can have an impact on the long-term, requires changes in behaviour, attitudes, and relationships, in other words changes in outcomes as defined by the outcome-focused approaches (Earl et al., 2001). When these take longer time to see in fruition, project staff have to be observant for the *smaller* changes, the first signs of behavioural change, which in a logframe mindset are seen as subjectivist, insignificant, and difficult to count. Khushi describes the difficulty in valuing the small changes and how a form in itself does not enable the staff to see changes.

> I'm not expert in Outcome Mapping, but it is important to have some person that understands who can help the staff by saying 'no, this activity is like output'. The big problem we are facing is that the staff only want to see big changes, they don't even count the small change, but Outcome Mapping is about *any* small change, any positive change. That is when they have a big problem. That column 'Who did what new behaviour?' is empty most of the time. So, they have to think, 'What is the new behaviour?' When they report, then it looks like a new behaviour is coming. Then, we should appreciate that person and listen to that person how they achieved this. We would then say, maybe we should use the same strategy for other things?

Khushi believes that talking through the process within the staff is key, a meaning-making process essential for learning. Another organisation, CO2, had actually been asked to use Outcome Mapping by a donor who later stopped funding them. The design process was not integrated in project practice and the approach was not understood or used by the staff for monitoring and evaluation during the whole project cycle of three years. The staff claim that it was first in the learning process that took place through an Outcome Harvesting evaluation that they were able to see the outcomes in the first place. This was a learning process in which the staff were involved, physically walking around to gather stories of change. During a two-week period, the evaluators, including myself, were physically engaged with them in conversations with people to collect the outcomes. Every evening the stories were discussed in the field, constantly reflecting on the stories and making meaning. After the Outcome Harvest, CO2 took the initiative to meet CO1 to learn from their experience of Outcome Mapping. This example pointed to a pattern of organisations valuing the ability to have someone who walked them through a practical process of seeing outcomes and discussing values, a process including tacit knowledge and being part of a sociocultural learning experience that supported the learning, which can be understood as the need for proximity in Vygotskian terms and a process of legitimate peripheral learning (Wertsch, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Vygotsky stressed that the human mind could be re-organised by participation in social activities (Mäkitalo, 2012). Kimseng, from CO2, describes a key moment and the supportive role of the consultant in being able to see the changes.

> First, we saw that among the poor families, there were some families who were understanding how to do farming in a good and relevant way. They were able to do it and they were able to benefit from it. They knew how to purchase, access the market, and seek markets, and get involved in work in the society. They even

knew how to organise themselves to advocate for their needs, which is one reason we got involved in Outcome Mapping. Joining with Samuel [Name of the Consultant], we started to understand that there were results regarding farming, but we didn't know how to note these changes. (translation from Khmer)

Thira, working for the same NGO in Cambodia describes a similar internal process which Khushi in India felt was important. Thira says,

When we needed to start using Outcome Mapping, the staff really struggled to receive it, but later, as Sakoeun said, we started to talk about it with one another in every meeting. We have started to feel personally comfortable with it. (translation from Khmer)

A project manager in another organisation, Chanthon, similarly emphasises the relational support needed in being able to see the changes.

We used Outcome Mapping in the [Name] project, but now we have also started to use it in [Name] province. In the beginning, it was difficult for the staff in the change, because it was new. I was facilitating together with [Name] who was helping with this work and how to use the steps of Outcome Mapping. What we have done so far is to help them to understand about progress markers and compare that with the logframe. And we explained what the logframe was about and that Outcome Mapping is not busily involved in numbers. It is only about influence, change, behaviour, and those kinds of things. So, we helped them to think about things that were not countable, but then in the logframe it asked for numbers, so then these two were in opposition to one another. So, then we thought about the meaning of the proposal. What is the meaning in the proposal in our goals? And we divided up, asking each sector what their goals were, asking the agriculture team, what are your goals? What is it you want to see? What are your dreams in the future? So, this helped the staff think about this—and they could be free thinking about their dreams, and they did not have to think about the logframe and then we could reflect on this later. (translation from Khmer)

Chanton's story shows the importance of validating the meaning-making process. He links to the personal values of the staff and is clear about his own struggles with the logframe as a boundary object or a cultural tool which became obstructive to their ability to think about vision (Wertsch, 1998, Star & Griesemer, 1989). Mäkitalo (2012) helps us understand that the language categories of our tools used in institutions will powerfully impact our perspectives. The shift is from a compliance-orientated reason for staff activities to a relational, personal drive towards changes anchored in one's own values and beliefs. Similar stories of how the approach focused on human behaviour and relations required a relational support to the learning process of the staff was described over and over again. Socheat, a key leader in CO1, working in the programme with indigenous people, hints at it being more than a cognitive process of learning:

We have to learn a lot about Outcome Mapping. For the first three months of starting up the [Name of Programme] I first had to just watch for 3 months, without doing any activities. I watched and learned and watched and learned. (translation from Khmer)

Again, this illustrates the pattern found in many stories, where the organisations saw the importance of being able to follow what someone else was doing in practice and letting that take time. This support, talking and working with outcomes without the pressure of responsibility, extends beyond the cognitive domain and can likewise be understood by the concept of legitimate peripheral learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The time that it takes for the learning of

outcome-focused approaches makes sense when the approach is understood as a professional craftsmanship. The approach is much more than filling in a form, and simple clear steps to follow. The outcome-focused approaches require on-going work throughout the implementation of a development project whilst also requiring a deep personal commitment to risk. Samuel, describes a recent consulting experience in Afghanistan, where a project had become locked into safe ways of counting results and how a potential change from an Outcome Harvest had implications on how staff work.

> A consult in a mental hospital is a discrete thing, how many consults do we do in a day, but meeting muslim mullas in a violence torn city in Afghanistan—how long is that going to take? Well, I don't know! What are they going to say at the end of it? Well, I don't know! You know what is going to happen at the end of a consult, probably a diagnosis, and possibly a prescription, and a treatment plan. You kind of know that, but you don't know what is going to happen when you say you are going to talk with mullas!

It is possible that the drive to see deeper change has been latent among the staff even before the change and that this drive has only been restricted by the use of the logframe. Whatever reason for the change in the organisation's practice, actions stemming from personal and organisational identity become validated and part of the organisation culture. In a conversation with a former NGO staff member (see Table 3) about the workshops I was facilitating in Cambodia, he asked me questions about my own expectations and underlying values and perspectives. It was evident that the complexity-appropriate approaches had caused a change with implications beyond a method and his work with the NGO. Further on in our conversation, he shared about his own volunteer forest protection work, and how he worked with an outcome-focused approach, although not recording evidence in extensive ways for communication to funders. I observed several occurrences of these long-lasting changes and commitments to a different way of thinking and working. This can be understood as the cultural tools becoming appropriated by the agent, they had become part of himself (Wertsch, 1998).

A different way of seeing

As part of understanding the cultural change, one of the clear themes which emerged from the analysis of the data was that Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting help organisations to focus 'downward', to the communities or the people an organisation is hoping to see change in. Several persons expressed that they were now able to have a better *focus*. For example, prior to an Outcome Harvest in their project location, one organisation working in the slums with children was worried about the findings of the experience, but expressed spontaneously afterwards that it was very meaningful and that they had never looked at their work from such a *wide* perspective before. This may seem like a conflicting description of both a focus and a wide perspective, but a helpful metaphor might be a *lens* to assist the sight in looking at the world. Sakoeun, one of the leaders of the CO2, compares the new way of 'seeing' with the old:

> But the numbers make us focus on… For example, if all we focus on is the 70% who use compost, then we do not see the other information. All we look for is the other number. That is the weakness of the logframe—the narrow focus. (translation from Khmer)

According to Sakoeun, tools that focus on numbers will affect the ways in which the NGO is able to observe change. In the October workshop with CO1's community development project (see Table 4), designing their learning systems, one of the tools helped the staff to see the connection of relationships and boundaries: the exercise of interviewing one of the staff members on her own personal interactions and what she felt were her informal communities of practice. We talked about change processes and the role of brokering on the boundaries of some of the relationships between various communities (see Figure 13). I had introduced the term 'community of practice' earlier in the workshop, and the staff member herself was surprised by
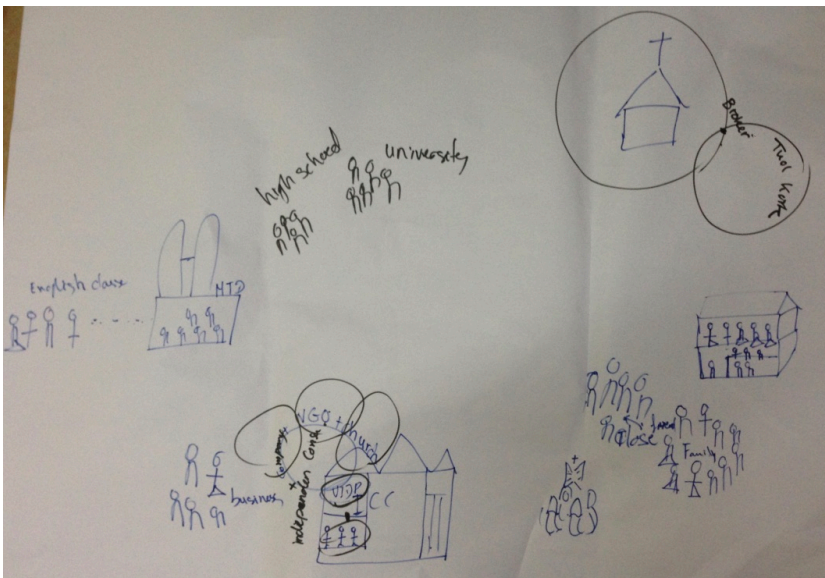
Figure 13: The group listened as I interviewed and the participant drew the various informal communities of practice that she felt she was a part of.

the number of communities of practice she was a part of. She felt that such an understanding of the relationships and boundaries in relation to the project's target group was important. Helping the staff themselves to see the relationships and be aware of the implications of these for their work is one way of changing the view of their work. Another way is through the actual tools or *boundary objects* themselves (Wertsch, 1998; Star & Griesemer, 1989; Star, 2010). An example of this comes from an observation that took place during CO2's collection of Most Significant Change stories. Prior to the field visit, they were confident in the use of the tool, but when we arrived on the field, they felt that there were no people they could talk with for the purpose of gathering stories. As I started to converse with a variety of persons, including children and older persons in the community, CO2 staff started to do the same. Later on, back in the office, the staff could reflect on the stories they had heard to discover their relevance and identify further questions which could help them understand the stories better. During workshops with each of the Cambodian organisations, I used photos to support them asking questions about outcomes. It took time for them to ask questions on behaviours and relationships rather than questions on facts that could be measured. This can be understood through Wertsch's (1998) acknowledgment of the role of the agent as well as the cultural tool being important for the cognitive change. The international consultant, Samuel, describes the danger of a goal shift, of becoming what you measure. The organisation in Afghanistan had, through their implementation and measuring of

results, produced an impressive institution, but in the process lost their vision.

> I just came back from Afghanistan with an organisation doing a lot of things. They responded to a 1995 issue of 6–10 women with poor self image burning themselves to death. They felt there was obvious deep distress in this community. From having this to what they've got now—teaching psycho-social counsellors, psychology, etc., and the quality is excellent. A good psychologist will spend 45 min with you whereas a government hospital would spend less than 60 seconds with you. Psychosocial counsellors will also do group therapy sessions, BUT the big thing they ask me for is, "We think we have lost it. We saw deep distress in the community and what we've got is a mental hospital. They became what they were monitoring and it's all quite impressive. Number of teaching sessions, 3600 patients last year, etc.

The boundary object itself, the logframe, had made the staff measure what was possible to count in numbers, but had lost the original vision to support the women in distress. Thus, the reasons why the staff act in certain ways are often linked to a pre-set plan, or, possibly, responses to the evolving but unreflected changes taking place in a project location. From the conversation with the education director of a large NGO in Cambodia which is not using outcome-focused approaches, it was clear that she felt that her staff were not rooted in *why* they were doing their activities. She sensed a lack of skills in analysis, something that is essential and an integrated part of the complexity-appropriate approaches and tools.

In contrast to many activities that can easily be measured in outputs, Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting start with a focus on the community. Socheat, one of the leaders who works for the project with the Indigenous People, describes a shift in focus from the staff needing to gather credit and proof of achievement, to the story of the community as something that they see themselves being a part of:
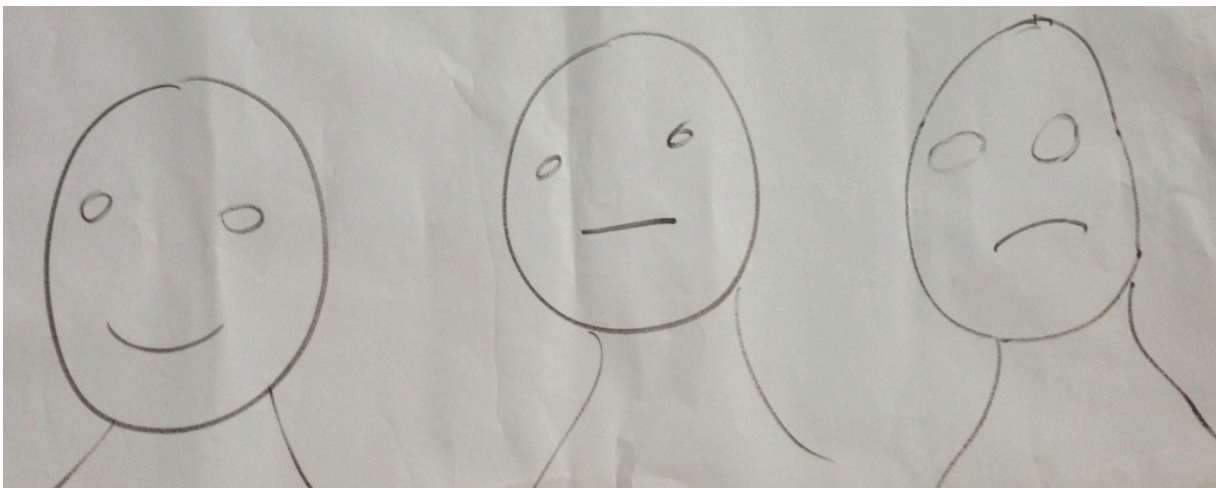
Figure 14: The picture that Socheat referred to. Another participant had drawn it to illustrate what he felt happened in the change to complexity-appropriate approaches. The illustrator's story explained the joy that started in using Outcome Mapping, but his current struggle with donor demands for extra information in their own formats.

> Success and failure is dependent on the community. They are the ones that make something succeed. In general, when I see this picture (a sad face which another participant had drawn to illustrate how he felt about

the donors additional demands, earlier in the Focus Group Discussion, see Figure 14),) […] here I have a feeling that we as staff can feel disappointed, but as community members we do not have to feel disappointed, because this is the story of the community, this is their story that they have to receive themselves and it doesn't matter to us, because we are the ones learning. If it fails, we take it as a lesson learned, and if it is a success, we take it as a lesson learned. (translation from Khmer)

In contrast to being locked to the logic of a logframe, Socheat shifts the focus from the perspective of the organisation's needs to the needs and the agency of the community. Socheat, with his many years of work with community development, feels that discussion with the communities is a very important source of knowledge which strongly affects how the organisation works. Using a picture of a plant (see Figure 15), he describes the dangers of coming with a logframe approach with its pre-determined activities.
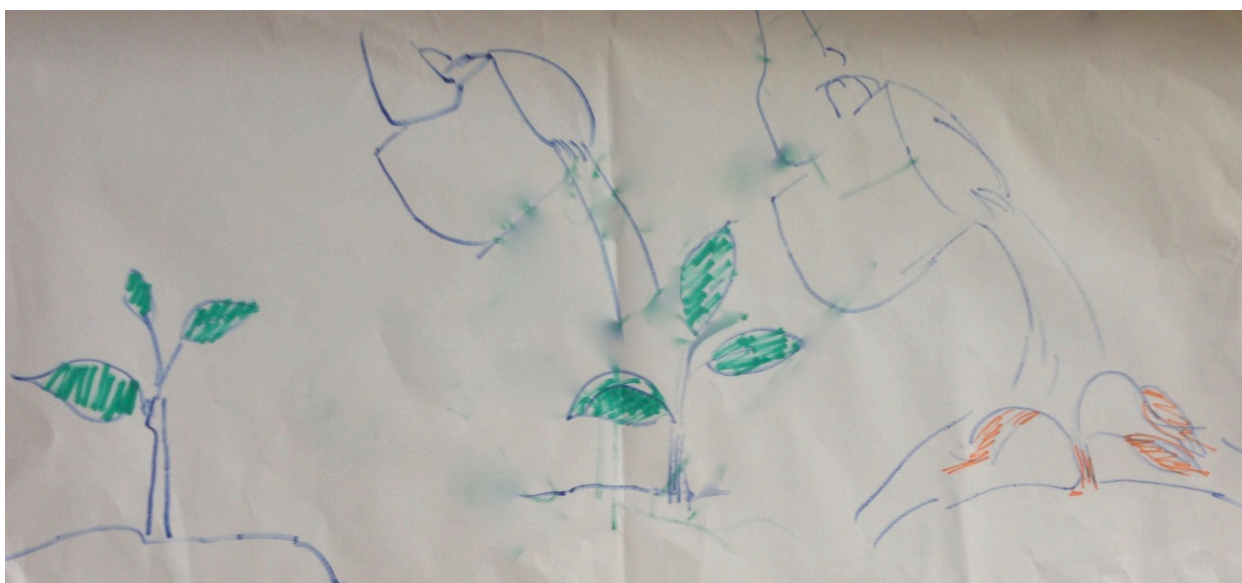
Figure 15: The picture that Socheat himself drew to explain what happens when an organisation follows pre-defined activities, unable to see beyond those.

When we see that a plant [the target community] is withering we can assume that the plant probably is lacking water and we take water to pour [do activities] on to the plant…. and we pour, we water lots of it and it still doesn't grow and we are never curious about what it might need besides water. Then we pour even more so that the plants over there even die; they get soggy and die. That's what it means, whatever we do, we cannot guess like that. With outcome mapping, we cannot guess like that. We need to find the reasons clearly for why. We need to encourage, encourage it to grow and blossom on its own. That is what Outcome Mapping is, we cannot guess. (translation from Khmer)

His colleague, Pok, explains that a distant, professional-looking 'guesswork' from an office location is not difficult to fulfil, but it has ethical implications which cause stress.

That's when we saw that it [Outcome Mapping] was very helpful, making it easier for us to be flexible in our methods, but we have met some difficulties with those [donors] who haven't yet understood, those who want us to specify indicators. We can specify and always get those things, but it's still not sure that… For example, 20 students have finished their primary education and have continued their studies into secondary education. We can specify like that but what if they don't want to, and that can be a failure, but what if they work hard to continue on their own level with what they want, then there is not so much stress for us, when we do not try to do everything in some kind of preset order and instead follow the flow of things, but it has to do with

reality—we cannot just sit in the office and monitor them and prophecy about them. (translation from Khmer)

Pok, instead, with values rooted in empowering the communities to see their own value, advocates for listening to the community's desires, and sees the NGO's role as one needing to follow a flow of activities which cannot be determined in advance. This is in contrast to the requirements by donors who do not yet understand the effect of the logframe guesswork. Related to the same issue, Socheat explains a related issue regarding the pressure from donors and management to see a large number of changes. He gives an example from their work with the indigenous communities to show the significance of single changes, which in many ways are multi-faceted and part of a larger story.

> It is not about learning only about *one* change. For example about forming the Bunong Community Network. Even if it was first formed to discuss about education, for example, but when they saw themselves that without the forest, if the students all went to school, they would still not have anything to eat, that is when they felt that they needed to do something more so that their children would be able to go to school. When they needed to do all these other issues, they realised that they needed one another. When they then needed one another, this meant that they became like magnets [became attractive to the people and other issues of their own people]! So, with outcome mapping, it is not just about one change. (translation from Khmer)

The community development project in CO1 described how, after their Outcome Mapping design and planning workshop, they had taken information from the logframe and compared it to the progress markers they had written during the Outcome Mapping workshop. From this comparison, they decided that they needed to *add* some activities if they were going to see progress in line with their progress markers. Also, as they wanted to focus on capacity building, they felt that they needed to *stop* doing some things. Phearom, the project manager, described what she had done differently during the next few months after the workshop.

> We have restructured our work plan and taken away strategies and activities which we felt really didn't give us any outcomes. We have instead added others which we believe will help us to reach our vision. We noticed that some things were not helping us and that we did some things without knowing why. We see where we want to go now, and we know how we want to focus. (translation from Khmer)

The whole team of staff that Phearom works with feels that their work is clearer for them now. The complexity-appropriate approaches had provided the "lenses" needed to discuss and plan according to their vision. The planning seems to have the effect of them also being able to observe the changes. They said, "We *can* see things change now." Kimseng, working for CO2, feels that

> Even if we are not experts of collecting Outcome Harvesting, when we joined with Samuel, I was one of them and we were able to understand a lot about Outcome Mapping. We started to observe and saw that there were a lot of results in the communities, but in the past we didn't think about those being results from our work! But after we walked and harvested results/outcomes with the evaluators, then we saw there were lots of outcomes. (translation from Khmer)

Once the change has taken place and the NGO has adopted a complexity-appropriate approach, there is a strong commitment and drive with this focus on the community, and in a sense, an

accountability to the community. This can be understood through the idea of communities of practice where this becomes part of their identity and their joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998). In contrast, the compliance commonly required of the logframe, has implications on relations to levels above those working with the community, whether it is country office staff in higher levels or donor organisations. When staff working at a local level are accountable to the community and donors also focus their attention on the community level, higher level management need to re-evaluate their role in the accountability and learning systems. This will be explored further under a separate theme focused on management.

The change of internal practices

Reflection as a necessary component of a complexity-appropriate approach is one theme that emerged through the data. It may seem like an obvious point, but it was something that emerged clearly through the data as a visible cultural change. This pattern can be understood by the special attention to reflective practices required by organisations working in changing environments (Schön, 1991). The complex environments "suggest action, and continuous reflection on action to be at the heart of what it means to make sense of one's interventions with others" (Mowles, et al., p. 816). Although it may seem like an obvious need, it is not a well-established practice (Beaulieu, Diouf & Jobbins, 2016). In working with CO1's community development project, one of the things that became evident through the historical scan was that with the growth of their project, they had lost some of their reflective practices and creative processes as a team and possibly even some of the closer contact with the target communities. This highlighted the importance of looking closer at their learning systems. A representative of the Australian donor agency provides his perspective, as someone looking for behavioural change. He describes CO1's project working with Indigenous People as exemplary.

> I like the [Name of the Indigenous Peoples] project model. It is the project that implements the purest development approach that I have seen […] I don't count the number of wells, and there aren't changes in infrastructure BUT there is confidence and better relationships with the local authorities.[…]The [Name of the Indigenous Peoples project] is one of the best placed projects to learn from reflection—an integral part of what they do. All projects talk about action-reflection, but CO1 *does* action-reflection.

Several projects mentioned how Outcome Mapping makes space for and requires meeting together for reflection. Prior to their workshops on Outcome Mapping, one of the projects working with community development had no regular meetings for reflection. They had only met for practical planning purposes. They expressed that they used to work and work without looking back to reflect what happened. The international consultant, Samuel, describes the change in the Indian NGO where Khushi is the leader, an organisation working with empowering women, youth, and children.

> So, regarding what has changed I think about 'what should we do and how should we do it', they now start with the community. Previously, they would have said, 'What are we good at?' The way of looking at the context has changed. The other major thing: 'How would we know if they are getting more empowered?' In the past it would be questions about their activities towards that.

Rather than starting with staff expertise, the discussion is drawn to the community and what is happening there. This can be understood as change in the target community becoming the

common enterprise of the organisation as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The organisations are constantly discussing activities in relation to their vision and the evidence they are gathering from the boundary partners as to what signs there are that they are getting closer to the vision. Khushi, the director of this Indian NGO felt that the staff need to have a clear vision, and they need to meet again, and again for discussion. This discussion is necessary in the Outcome Mapping approach, as meaning needs to be created around the progress markers for staff to be able to log evidence and plan further activities. Khushi describes that the staff are now meeting together in a manner that fosters cooperation.

> There should be networking between the person working with the women's group and the person working with the block office. […] Sitting openly talking and then the other staff, if they are not satisfied, they should have the ability to, they should ask questions. Not that my colleague… no. 'This strategy is not good, because my block people are like this one' […] Now they are [meeting like this in a cooperating manner]. The important thing is the leader, like me. I'm so busy with other things, writing to funders, and so many questions to funders. Somebody should sit every week and reporting weekly work and weekly plan. Both things are very important, and proper one.

Khushi's organisation is making space for learning. According to Stacey (2007), conversations are essential for organisational change, which affirms the importance of making space for dialogue. Sophiep, the associate director of an CO1 in Cambodia which has several projects using Outcome Mapping, contributed to the focus group discussion on Outcome Mapping by constantly urging other participants in the focus group discussion to realise that there are multiple perspectives and that there are different meanings and definitions. This same urge to colleagues, was what he also felt was important in development generally.

> Change has to start with the community. That is why Outcome Mapping helps towards development. It helps us to unravel what we all mean with development. This will be different from each of us. So, development is about income and other physical things, but we may also define it about attitudes and relationships. (translation from Khmer)

Sophiep's description of multiple perspectives and his holding of a more gentle approach with people was evident in the manner that the discussion was held in the focus group discussion. Participants migrated down to sitting comfortably on the floor, drawing pictures and explaining their thinking on paper, questioning one another, and asking for clarification, something that is not common practice in NGO settings. Socheat, a leader in CO1's project among Indigenous People, similarly engaged in conversation with a sense of honesty about the situation. He felt continual observation and documentation of changes was necessary for reporting.

> We work with the staff the whole time, encouraging them to go the village, asking them what they saw and how they recorded it and if we don't do that, then suddenly at the end of the month, and we ask, 'What is the situation like?', then we will be lacking, because the staff meet a lot of difficulties when they gather the evidence, and fill in information for their progress markers for our monitoring. So, for me, being part of this story, we are still learning and we can't see we are experts on this, because we need new input all the time and that is why we are joining here to today so that we can reflect together where we have gotten to, so that we are able to help make it easier in practice, and also, when we write reports now, there are lots of them. (translation from Khmer)

Here, Socheat describes the communicative practices of the NGO staff which have shifted to an accountability system which includes and takes pride in story telling rather than using a discourse of compliance. The ability to tell the story of the target community in the reports, is a driver in this learning process, a process and a story which he sees himself as being part of. Trying to understand the story, requires a listening culture which in itself seems to enable change. This listening culture is integrated at all levels, and made visible and exemplified in evaluation processes using outcome-focused approaches. Caroline, one of the directors working for an organisation in Afghanistan described the role of the consultant and his interaction with the staff in communicative practices during an Outcome Harvest. This interaction took place in workshops and in conversations with the staff, where he spent a significant amount of time listening to different opinions of staff members and encouraging them to define the purpose of the project. The consultant showing interest in personal values and their stories, helped the staff to have a deeper understanding of people's perspectives.

As described so far, the process of bringing this focus and wider vision, or using the different lenses, gives clarity to the NGO in and through the communicative practices. The conversation changes, a conversation that is not only linked to processes of logic, but it is also linked to staff values and allowing emotions to be part of the conversation. In Schön's (1991) writings about reflection in action, he reacts to a technical rationalism in which he feels practice had little status and was rejected by positivism. During the Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting workshop with SOB and their partners in Cambodia, I took note that the workshop participants who had not yet been using the complexity-appropriate approaches, struggled to talk about feelings. When I, as a facilitator, encouraged the participants to talk about feelings after an Outcome Harvest in the communities, they responded with facts, as if at first they did not believe that feelings could be part of their NGO world. Only after continuing to ask about feelings, did they start to mention them. I suspected that the conversation would start to approach some more analysis beyond the visible facts. Through the mention of feelings, the conversation came to a deeper level. The Indian Director, Khushi, also feels that it is more than a cognitive process.

> First, the staff should have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. What kind of change do they want in society? In the boundary Partner? In the vision? Even in the organisation? What kind of change do they want? The staff need to be dreamers. That is the main thing. Oh, yeah, we will try this. They need to have that kind of excitement.

The data shows a pattern of staff taking on a more engaged and personal attitude towards the work. Wenger (2009) also recognises the involvement of more than the cognitive, rational, part of humans, "It is a whole person, with a body, a heart, a brain, relationships, aspirations, all the aspects of human experience, all involved in the negotiation of meaning" (p. 2). Likewise, Patton (2011; 2015) stresses the importance of the personal aspects of learning and evaluation.

Impact on the type of NGO activities

The NGO staff do not only have an internal change process, but probably of most importance, there is a clear shift from an activity focus to an outcome focus which has an impact on the *type*

of activities that the NGO staff engage in. This can be seen as a cultural change which extends beyond the NGO staff. Somewhere in the process of learning about Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting, NGO staff (and especially their leaders) get agitated and in one way or another exclaim, 'No, don't make us abandon our activities!' This was even the case for CO1's community development project which was already organised in relation to 'boundary partners'. Their workshop on Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change caused them, they said, to start to discuss with their 'boundary partners', an example which will be explored further in the next thematic area on the inclusion of boundary partners (See Figure 6). With a positivistic world view of being able to control the various variables in a project, it makes sense to have a theory of change including NGO activities and that the NGO sticks to that theory and its activities with fidelity (Patton, 2011). Program planning and the development of theories of change (Funnel & Rogers, 2011) can be time consuming, but useful tools, which often only take place at the start of a programme. Socheat tells his own experience with setting up projects among the indigenous people in Cambodia and its limited use during project implementation in his complex setting.

> Generally, when we were still using the logframe, like all organisations, you would do a survey to know how we should work with development in a village. We also did that in the past. When we did that survey, if we found that that village did not know how to use a toilet, or that they did not have good hygiene for example, then we started to support them in regards to hygiene, according to our needs assessment and in the past we used to do needs assessments regarding education. In Mondulkiri we noticed that those able to receive an education were very few, they were very weak, especially the indigenous people, so then we started to help them with education using language, bilingual education, mostly teaching them in the mother tongue and crossing over to the national language, but as we did that this was not enough. The issues were integrated in a complex way, there were still many issues, there were still people who did not go to learn, there were still different risks, there were still guardians who did not send their children to school, and there were still those who just would not go to school, and there were still teachers who would not go to teach. They wouldn't teach and so many stopped studying. There were many different factors that were created that we met, and we knew that things were changing. Why did we know that? Sometimes, the teacher would complain that because he/she did not have anything to eat, and he/she did not have anything to feed his/her family with, he/she was not able to teach. (translation from Khmer)

Socheat describes here how the designed activities would be seen as their own formulas to success, within the logframe approach. Recognising the complexity of the problems and the different relations to people was what drove the project staff to seek an outcome-focused approach. To illustrate this further, in the workshop on complexity-appropriate approaches with SOB's partner organisations, it was observed that participants from organisations that were new to the approaches, were surprised at my questions about what activities they might try to use to reach outcomes. What seemed to unlock their thinking from seeing activities as set formulas was a focus on the actors, and helping them to see that even if the organisation worked to see the disadvantaged people empowered, those disadvantaged people themselves could be seen as boundary partners and not just victims. Organisations at several levels struggled to see this issue and reacted by saying things like, "I don't understand, how can the people we ultimately want to affect be boundary partners. Aren't they the beneficiaries?" A common perception was that, for example, children or trafficking victims could not be seen as actors, as 'boundary partners'. Seeing them more as objects can have consequences in how staff work with them when they work directly with them. Consultant Samuel describes the project working on empowering women and children in India before they started with Outcome Mapping, portraying what happens at the level of the target community when they are not seen as actors.

> They had a very activity focused, output focused programme. For example their women's saving group. The women could answer about their bank book, but when I asked, 'What are you going to do?', they couldn't answer at all. The whole thing was about balancing the bank book. It was totally output focused. That's when we tried to move from activity to outcome focus.

Samuel describes the more mechanistic interaction with the target group prior to the change. There was little dialogue about meaning. Khushi, the director of the same Indian organisation, tells the story of how communicative practices changed between the staff and the women changed.

> […]but what happened when our staff met groups, is that they wanted to be teachers and teach them. They didn't treat them as a boundary partner. A boundary partner is equal; they are our partner, they already have some skills and we can only facilitate them to bring about their good. So, this is the problem with the staff; they always wanted to sit in chairs and write, write minutes, but now they become part of the decision making. […] We should sit on the floor with the women and give them leadership [and say,] 'you run the meeting'. Hand over the stick to the women. We have to do this. We have to treat them as a boundary partner. A boundary partner is equal. […] that is the challenge, how to make them feel that we are all equal. We have to make that environment that they can ask questions, when they can feel comfortable to talk. That is the challenge! That is the work. That needs thinking. Then they have to think what strategy do I have to choose, what strategy do I have to do.

Khushi's NGO did not become non-relational in the process of holding back their power and wanting to see the women empowered. On the contrary they joined the women, physically and relationally showing how they were equal. This is where it is possible for dialogue to take place in a real setting. The concept of communities of practice help us to understand that the inclusion of women in practice was essential for the women to become less marginalised. NGOs who recognise complexity have their theories of change, but when a focus is kept on what actually creates change in practice, these espoused theories, or theories *claimed* by the organisation (Schön, 1991), can more easily be reviewed. Discovering *theories in use* need a process of recognising human change as being more than a cognitive change. According to McTaggart (1994), "…people are most likely to change themselves in social contexts which they find warmly supportive first, and then interesting and challenging" (p. 322) which is insightful in practices seeking social change. An outcome-focused approach as described by practitioners in this study, envisions theories to emerge and evolve in the complexity of interactions, relations and dialogue in practices like the ones described in this study. Khushi's NGO discovered that development work could be done differently and more experientially, in a way that challenges power relations, and that includes dialogue. Samuel describes their way of working further:

> Anyway, the woman [a member of staff], who does the health, she has mothers and their children. The Indian government has these child care centres and they've got nurses and midwives and doctors. Previously, she would go to the village and say, "We're going to run an immunisation camp/session here, and she would probably talk to the local nurse and say 'organise this' and then she would turn up and immunise a whole lot of kids. Now her work involves both going up and down, but it is a much broader way of working. She goes to the local district hospital and talks to the doctor there, talks to the local government office, the district councillor 20 km away, talks to the person in the government office the secretary of health, and she has that kind of relationships. She also directly relates with mothers and local midwives, and with child care centres and the local nurses that the centres have, so the breadth of her work is much wider […]

Samuel's description is of a practice infused with constant talking. According to Stacey (2007), conversations are the primary means for organisational change, implying that the increased amount of relations with conversations must also increase the ability of the organisation to have an impact. Voeun, who works for the project among Indigenous People in Cambodia, paints a rich picture of how their organisation with an outcome-focused approach, uses conversation and other more casual forms of interaction to support processes of change. In support of communities, the staff become less visible, but instead, the target communities feel confident and gain increased ownership of their own development, a process which can be seen as public pedagogy and public deliberation (Freire, 1972).

> The […] project started since 2013, and it was difficult with a new system, but we were happy, because the project was helping the community to think a lot themselves a lot more than before, not just giving them lists of things to do, but when we had experienced what it was like to have conversations with them, this made them participate a lot and think about the issues that they are meeting in their communities. So[they would think about], what is it that they want? What is happening in the village? And in reflecting on this, they would see things themselves and make their own plans, so they were happy. Sometimes, when they were making these plans there were groups of older people and groups of youth who joined together and in other villages, they would divide themselves up. They would have a group of older people and a separate group of youth. They would take on different responsibilities in developing their village according to their own desires. So there it would be different. The youth would think about agriculture and savings groups while the older people would think about the general development of the village. They would build a bridge or think about the hygiene of the whole village, for example. So, we saw that was good. The majority are able to implement the plans that they made. They were able to make a bridge, clean up their village, and they were able to cooperate so that they could all benefit from it, and learn from it together [See Figure 11 for Voeun's drawing related to this story]. (translation from Khmer)

Voeun describes how the change in type of activity enabled the community members to make their own plans based on their own realities and that these plans would look very different. There was a change in the role of the 'oppressed', in which the oppressed are seen as agents and humanised through a process of reflection (Freire, 1972). The actions that they took involved a variety of people and a variety of issues. Voeun felt strongly that their ability to cooperate towards positive change was a positive thing. He continues his story clarifying the role of the organisation:

> In our work, we do have clear plans, but we have visited them a lot, so that they can pay attention to their lives, about the issues they face such as drug abuse, and they are able to reflect in meetings that they have together, in workshops, and when there are awareness-raising activities. When they understand, then they make their own plans. It is not our credit/duty. Had we worked towards a logframe it would have been our credit/duty to walk along a certain path, you have to follow this and that, but [now] we just work in whatever way possible so that they are able to meet their own goals. That is what we do. They can do whatever they do, as long as they can reach their goals. That's what we do. They can travel in twos or threes, take contact with whoever they want, but the most important is that they are able to meet their goals. We just help them from behind. When they want to ask us questions, they ask us and we give them advice. When they are able to do it on their own, they do it on their own and all we do is to follow up and to look at their results. So, they work well, and then they reflect. Some groups do it every 3 months and others every 6 months and they use the River of Life tool, just as we do in the office. We do it with them: What is it that has happened in your community this year? What were you able to do and what were you not able to do? And even if they are not able to read and write, they put colours and those things that work and growing well they mark green and those things that don't work well they mark yellow and the work that doesn't work at all, they mark red. Then we talk about why some work is good and some isn't good. They find reasons and then they solve it on their own. We don't type, putting numbers on our computers in our own office guessing what the results are. We compare the two, our own information and the descriptions that have come from them to think about where we have truly come to. (translation from Khmer)

Voeun makes clear that he believes that the change of role was enabled by not using the logframe. It set the staff free to work with flexibility in a wide variety of ways. Dialogue became a central part of their work. Voeun continues the story further pointing out the change that was enabled:

> Also, just recently, in good communities, there are many other villages who ask to come and do study visits because in Kamaen village, for example, they have formed their own development committee leading the village. They have done this themselves, and we, [Name of Organisation], have just been helping them to type their names, and things like that. They have decided themselves who is the leader, deputy leader, etc. So, in 2017 now, they have received good recognition from the government as 100% successful when they have been evaluated, as the cleanest and nicest, when it comes to hygiene, leadership, and other points as well. They know how to keep their culture, how to organise themselves with their arts group, etc. They do it themselves, and all we help them with is with small parts of it. Like if they need tools or equipment in order to call the village, then we help them with that. So, when they receive those evaluators and they meet together and there are meetings with important and not so important people for the government, then they have their own food and organise it. We don't use much [resources]. It is the community that is the owner. (translation from Khmer)

The story from Voeun illustrates the importance of linking practices and learning to a dynamic activity with a variety of people. The NGO acknowledges that knowledge, and therefore activities, are not able to be generalised across project locations. In the same discussion, Voeun's colleague confirms the need for the NGO to 'walk many different paths' to be suitable for the variety of people who are among those that the NGO want to see changes in. Voeun's story in itself illustrates how outcome-focused approaches can foster communicative practices in terms of public engagement and public deliberation (Freire, 1972) which are relevant and responsive to the target communities, but it also illustrates the difficulty of predicting and describing in advance how these communicative practices would take place, which can have implications on relationships with the government. Voeun describes further how this can be a struggle.

> We join the planning for district integration together with them, and the government asks regarding the community, for example, 'how many toilets will you guarantee?' and we say, we don't know because it is not our responsibility. First, it is important that they [the communities] understand and then it is the communities that need to decide if they should be done.
>
> They [the government] need the number of wells, the number of times there is awareness-raising, how many times the teacher has been visited, if we spread information about gender, it is the number of topics and how many times. So, we struggle to put these numbers in, because it is only through conversations we will know their needs and we can respond to them and that is why it is difficult to give them numbers. (translation from Khmer)

The struggle to provide clarity in numbers to the government illustrates the commitment of the NGO to be accountable to the community and not just to those who require the planning and reporting. Changing to activities which recognise the disempowered target groups as important actors is not always seen as a good change. CO2 shares that the poor at first did not like their new way of working; they preferred being on the receiving end.

> […] and since then [since the Outcome Harvest] we have started to work with the community in that way, and for them it has had good points and not good points. When we started to become flexible with them, the communities didn't really accept it. We wanted it, but we had acted differently in the past and we found it difficult to facilitate them as well. What was most difficult, was for them to change their mindsets. Especially the local authorities, on the village and commune levels- they really want to follow the government instead

and we were trying to help them think about the communities and that was very difficult! (translation from Khmer)

Having communicative practices which both *include* the disadvantaged target groups and *focus* on them, have implications on power relationships which requires navigation and relational wisdom. The problem with the commitment to pre-determined activities, however, is that NGO staff instead force their activities onto people, something that Pok, a leader in the project working with Indigenous People, finds concerning.

> So, that is why we in our teams of staff decided to keep our meetings, such as public forums, for the evenings. We leave the day times for them to do their farms or get their various incomes. And, in the evenings, that is their time as well, but we can use different tools to help them have a good time and want to participate. So, it [Outcome Mapping] has turned the light on, and it has given us opportunities for us to be flexible. It helps us to work in a flexible way, thinking, what do we do to be relevant? What do we do to create those real times of dialogue? We want to have those real conversations and no 'prophecies/guess work' or making our own plans, because I have heard the communities complain that some NGOs seem to force them, and this is why they get frustrated with them and they themselves struggle to change. (translation from Khmer)

Even if NGOs do not consciously want to force the communities to do something, this is inevitably the consequence, when NGOs need to fulfil the activities and their numbers required in a logframe.

Inclusion of the boundary partners, including government agencies

When NGOs design their Outcome Mapping planning, one challenge is for organisations to analyse their own relationships and boundaries in questions such as, 'Who are we able to have an influence on in order to see the vision take place?' and 'Who is a crucial actor in order to see the vision take place?' This process may mean that the NGO starts to have new relationships and boundaries, and the boundaries will move when new persons or groups of people become part of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). This was discussed thoroughly online in the Outcome Mapping Learning Community in March, with a large contribution from Bob Williams[17] and systems thinking. Besides extending boundaries, organisations change their communicative practices to become more inclusive of the boundary partners. They start to work on a more equal level and in a more relational way with a desire to understand their values, hopes, and expectations, seeing them as agents rather than victims (Wertsch, 1998; Freire, 1972). At the border of various communities of practice, there can at least be reflection, making room for an understanding of perspectives, or points of disruption or confrontation which can lead to transformation (Star, 2010). As already mentioned briefly, following their Outcome Mapping design workshop, CO1's community development project changed their communicative practices by being transparent with their boundary partners, by sharing about their own visions and monitoring methods and listening to their ideas. They started to use the same methods that they had experienced as a group of NGO staff, exploring expect to see, like to see, and love to see with their boundary partners. One of the boundary partners did not at first understand how the *progress markers* would help them, but when they did, they were very interested and even added a progress marker which was included in the project's monitoring system. Outcome

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[17] See http://www.bobwilliams.co.nz for more information on systems thinking.

Mapping's progress markers function as a boundary object in which NGO staff and boundary partners could make meaning and through which they could negotiate meaning (Star & Griesemer, 1989). Sophiep, associate director for CO1 describe negotiation as unpacking meaning. Taking concepts which may have been reified in their various contexts, such as the word 'development' allows reflection and understanding between boundary partners who 'cross roads' (Wenger, 1998). Being able to have points of *boundary crossing* (Akkerman & Bakker 2011), can be a challenge but is essential in gaining trust, maybe especially with government staff who may seem to have ways of working in conflict with those of the NGO. Khushi shares experiences regarding this in his context in India:

> So, what happened is that our group is promoting and there is already a government scheme that the women self-help group should be active. They should take an active part in their own development, but the block office didn't want to recognise these women groups, but we have a very good relationship with the block office and also we are working with the women's groups, so now we found that the government recognised two groups and gave the government scheme to them. So, that means that the block office is ready to recognise these women's groups and wants to work with them.[…]
>
> He [the government officer] gets 50 000 rupees a month, so he didn't respect our NGO worker, but our team went there and talked with them and showed 'This is our group and they are doing this, they are doing this'. Now, they are recognising this and now, many times, they have invited the government officers to the field. Our staff are making some kinds of meetings. Government officers come to a village meeting, and the people ask question. So, now the government understands that this NGO is helpful to achieve their own goals, because their vision is the same as ours.

This organisation, using Outcome Mapping, did not see advocacy work and recognition of rights as an antagonistic process against the government. The government was instead included in the work, allowing the crossing of boundaries by building relationships with different boundary partners, inviting the government into a context where meaning could be made around a common enterprise. It was not about distancing themselves, but including them in a much broader way, which created trust and trust is essential for learning (Filstad, 2012). A similar merge of interests came about in the process of doing an Outcome Harvest in Afghanistan, which created room for communication. Caroline described how the consultant listened to a wide variety of stakeholders and how this changed relationships.

> What I really appreciated about Samuel was that he didn't go with an evaluation style of a very preset fixed questionnaire. For some evaluations, I really like it, but it can really bind you in, so he met a very wide range of stakeholders in focus groups, and part of this is the security in Afghanistan is rubbish, so he could not go out there so easily in a safe way. So we had, for example, a group of doctors from Herat, and he had a group of doctors outside Herat, he had a group of medical students like this, and community health workers, community health supervisors. He had quite a variety of people. He really went quite deeply into why they had seen a change as a result of the project. I think that actually helped us with the relationships outside. What Samuel did really helped us have deeper relationships outside, because he spent at least an hour and a half if not two hours with each group and he really did get a good sense of what they really wanted to see in mental health, so we started to look at the future components, asking them 'So, what changes do you want to see in mental health?' as well. So, I think to outside relationships, that was very helpful, and he also obviously went to visit other NGOs working in health, and others working in Herat. Then we had this really big meeting with the government of Afghanistan, and the head of mental health came, and the head of mental health in Herat came. It was a three hour meeting and at the end of that meeting, there came an agreement that our outpatient services would integrate into the government system, which for me was the result that I had been trying to achieve for a year and half, but I had struggled to get to.

The Outcome Harvest in Afghanistan allowed closer relationships to be built with the government. Likewise, Outcome Mapping was used by CO2 as a key for building trust with boundary partners. Kimseng shared about their challenge with the local authorities whom they saw as an important stakeholder.

> They [the local authorities] saw us as non-governmental and therefore they saw us as building the capacity of the opposition party, but we actually strengthen the people that they had abandoned, and the authorities are now starting to see CO2 as a good stakeholder. That's what the district, commune, and village levels see and they know, and how do they know it? Because in the past, before Samuel came, we only had two boundary partners, the VDA and the CDA, but after Samuel's recommendation was that it it is not enough just to have two boundary partners in order to see bigger change, so you need to have more partners, so for the project phase 2017–2019, we have 5 boundary partners, the CDA, VDA, CC [commune council], VL [village leadership], and SSC, so five. (translation from Khmer)

Including the local authorities, in the form of Commune Council and village leadership, created trust. Kimseng's colleague Thira, explained that the local authorities used to only be concerned about following the government, but that they now have started to think more of the community. Defining outcomes in terms of relationships, attitudes, and behaviour seemed to allow the government officials to also think beyond their duty to comply. The pattern of seeing partners participating in more meaningful ways with trust can be understood by Wenger's (2009) description, "Without a shared history of learning, boundaries are places of potential misunderstanding arising from different enterprises, commitments, values, repertoires, and perspectives" (p. 4).

Inclusion of donors

While the NGOs in this study see closer relationships and meaning-making as a result of including boundary partners in communicative practices, the data shows a mixture of types of relationships with donors as part of the cultural change taking place. Some donors have close relationships with the NGOs and encourage complexity-appropriate approaches and others do not. The participants in the data expressed how they try to affect those donors who do not support or understand the approaches and therefore demand additional tasks for monitoring to be done. What these demands mean in practice on project level may not be understood by the donor when there is a lack of personal relationships and trust. In conversation with donors, personal relationships in the political North can even be perceived as a clearly negative factor in the accountability discourse, especially in regards to corruption. Yet, Karl, working as a desk officer in a Swedish back donor organisation, confesses that the use of Outcome Mapping and his personal relationships with various levels 'below' him are what provided a basis for trust for the project working with Indigenous People in Cambodia. Project documentation alone does not provide what is needed to be able to build that trust. He finds *informal* communication essential and recognises the limitations of the more formal methods.

> This may sound a bit nerdy but the fact that you had Outcome mapping and your thinking about methods… There needs to be an external person who can take in all this and adapt it to the context. Of course I don't know how the staff have taken it and if they own Outcome Mapping, but it's cool how you tested ideas and did evaluations and that you then tried to make it bigger in Ratanakiri. To dare to do the pilot and evaluate. That requires someone, like an expatriate, who can talk about it a lot. You have to discuss a lot. We rely

excessively on workshops and that we can send people to them, but you need to adapt. Many are stuck in the LFA [logframe] swamp.

[…] You know I had the chance to travel to the project so early. [Name of project] had just started—to make that journey so early helped me and I could then read a bit more carefully. To travel and to meet people is unrivaled. The words then have a totally different meaning. I can put the words into a context. It is boring just to read. It becomes a totally different conversation and you have a common foundation to stand on in the background. Otherwise everything becomes so impersonal. It is difficult to get a feeling for where it [the project] is heading. Many who are writing, do not know which information we want to have. It's obvious when you have a good member agency. They then function as a bridge. You know we got the first draft in 2009 and I really didn't understand anything and I was critical. That is where [Name of person working in the member agency] worked really hard to explain and to defend. He, as you know, made sure that you got it down on paper in a way that we could understand. Communication is important. It is the relationship that is central. The chain is a chain of trust and it is amazing that it works the way it does! (translation from Swedish)

Karl continues to share how he perceives the local context in the South as much more complex than his work in the Swedish organisation. His experience is echoed by the representative from the donor in Australia who supports the same project among the Indigenous People in Cambodia, as well as the organisation in India. He feels that the time on the field is invaluable. Throughout the interview and as told through different stories by different projects, this donor organisation does not stress compliance, but communication. The process of learning about Outcome Mapping is what he mentioned in the interview about his own learning and he reflects on the communicative practice with them as a result of Outcome Mapping:

I have learned about Outcome Mapping. That is one of the great things I have been able to learn and still learn. It is great to look for behaviour change. It is difficult to report on. And the project staff are doing an enormous amount of effort. When they are summarised something is lost. The graphs would be more helpful if they would have more of an explanation of why. I visited Bu Nhao [the village with the most progress] and wanted to know why that was doing well. For someone like me, to see a couple examples of villages of positive change and why is important. I understand I cannot get a detailed understanding of every village, but getting an understanding of 2–3 villages, that gives faith in the graphs as well. That would be good in future reports—a detailed story of one or two villages, and why the staff feel that is importance.

The use of complexity-appropriate approaches can be instrumental in changing relationships between the donor and the NGO. This relationship is described well by the international consultant Samuel who feels that Outcome Mapping changes the funder and brings them into a deeper relationship with the NGO and pulls them into the context.

They do visit. They might even ask questions why some things don't happen. It is a different kind of question. The logical framework type of questions about why something happened or not were stated as 'Why did you not do this or do that?' Then our answer would be, 'our vehicle broke down' or 'we ran out of money' or something. The question would be about the organisation and the answer would be about the organisation. Now the question would be about the community and the answer would be about the community. The whole thing is kind of compressed. So, even the funder from Australia is even thinking what is happening in the community, rather than what is our organisation doing.

Both Karl and Samuel's descriptions illustrate the dramatic change in the *content* of the communication that takes place with an outcome focus, but Samuel also recognises the huge barrier that funding can be in the relationship. The common donor discourse is that they fund 'partners', but according to Samuel they are never a partner and Samuel puts the responsibility on the donor. He explains, "It's a big power relationship who has the money. The donor can tell the partner what they should do, but the partner can never tell the donor what to do."

Anna, working in the regional office for SOA, complained to me that CO1 does not understand that the final report is not final. She understands the report to be a means of dialogue, but the NGO staff only perceive further questions as more work. There is an expectation from donors that NGOs can engage in dialogue around a report as a form of communicative practice. Steve, an expatriate advisor to CO1, sheds some light on his perspective of the situation, again pointing to the inadequacies of the reporting mechanism and what this results in in the local context.

> I help them create a report. I think that Outcome Mapping is a very good tool, because I have seen the communities understand it. They understand what it is they want to do and how to measure progress, but all the donors struggle to understand, because it is a new tool. They do not want this information. They want other information. We need to play their game, we need to gather the information that they want and which they request. Nowadays we have to go and fetch information all the time. We have to gather the number of toilets. If we can get a better system for gathering that information. Give them the information they want, but make it easy to collect, *so that we don't waste time*. Because we have to do a six month report and an annual report. This year, we started writing the report in December and January and we were finished in February, but the donors wanted more information. We gave them a second report, but then some of the donors wanted even more information, and it is a head ache. We want to do the work that we want to do.

Steve seems to have a desire to make a better reporting system and an expectation that this is possible. The negotiation of boundary objects and cultural tools as reports is important, but it is possible that all reporting systems will be flawed or constrained and require an increased willingness on behalf of the NGO to engage in more dialogue, a different legitimate role of the NGO staff. Changing the legitimate role of a person through the use of cultural tools can increase learning (Wertsch, 1998). The associate director of the same NGO, CO1, Sophiep, points out that results can be perceived differently by the donors compared to the NGO. If the project uses Outcome Mapping, he means it is essential to communicate about the contribution of the NGO.

> Sometimes donors can think that we did not make an effort. If they do not take time to listen to us, then they don't understand. It's about communication. Sometimes it is impossible to get to a certain point, but we need to explain that. If there is a flood, fewer people dying can be a good result for us. Without the NGO more would have died. Donors don't just demand every number to be good in a logframe, the explanation is important! When we do Outcome Mapping, if we forget to communicate with others… then they might think that we are lazy, and that the project has excuses. We have to explain about our effort. It is a good tool, but it needs to show our strength […] (translation from Khmer)

He explains this tension further.

> In communication with the donor that is where we have conflict… We want to protect ourselves. With outcome mapping you can see success with just one small thing happening and be satisfied with that. He understands that is success, but he wants to see how you use that success to make it happen elsewhere! Do you want to see more than that, or? When we keep talking about that one success, then they do not understand us. (translation from Khmer)

I interpret Sophiep to mean that multiplication of results is important in order for donors to perceive the work as 'cost-effective', one of the 'buzz' words of international development discourse. Being able to easily multiply successful concepts fits well within a positivist, mechanical view of change. With an understanding of situated learning, however, projects may not be able to 'multiply' measurable results (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Pok, who instead measures

results in terms of behavioural changes among the indigenous minorities takes a lot of effort to communicate on the terms of the donors.

> In order to help them, we add those additional photos and output tracking and MSC stories and then there are still those donors who still do not understand. They then send their own forms and want us to fill in their forms in their way as well! So, sometimes we just want to fulfil that logframe [instead] and that is our current difficulty and we are in the process of trying to solve that. Because there are all these new people… it is not difficult for those that understand, but the donors have changed staff members. When their new staff come they "pull" in their way. Those who we have explained a lot to in the past, they understand, but they have stopped working and there are new staff among the donors. (translation from Khmer)

In Pok's words, it is possible to interpret a lack of seeing donors as relationships and a view of learning in this situation as a process of acquisition (Sfard, 1998), sending reports as packages of knowledge to the donor instead of engaging in a personal relationship. The project has, however, tried to *explain* to the donors, but the donor organisations constantly change their staff which complicates this relationship. The meaning-making seems to struggle to be an equal process. Negotiations require mutual trust relationships and time, which can be hard to achieve when there is political pressure (Shutt, 2016). The relationship struggles to have good dialogue when there is an added element of funding, yet Samuel shares the near-perfect donor relationship which has developed between the Indian organisation and one of their donors.

> So we did Outcome Mapping and sent the proposal off. Then I was sitting in the office with Khushi when an e-mail with the subject, 'Your proposal' comes in. It said, 'Thank you for you proposal. It sounded very interesting.' (Which is always a dangerous word!) And then it said, 'When we look at the proposal and we look at your reporting and monitoring, it doesn't fit with anything we have had in this office before!' Khushi turned to me and said, 'we'll have to look for another funder', but we read on in the e-mail and the next sentence is the key sentence in this whole funding relationship, 'But we trust you.'. (Wow) 'We really trust you, so we will give you the funding and we'll come and visit you after 6 months.' So, they asked us to set aside two days for the Indian Director and I to sit and talk through with them about Outcome Mapping: what it is and how it works. Now, we've got a funder who is engaged and will accept narrative as reporting. Only, this is a dream story, but it can actually happen. […] I think the unifying challenge from here and there is 'below' to 'above'. Are you prepared to go from 'cut and dried' to 'human and messy'? If the answer is Yes, like with [the name of the donor], then you get the fusion of horizons, but if the answer is no, then you get a more formalised and often more numerical, a technical kind of relationship, and less human relationship.

In a communicative practice, something beyond words is communicated when a donor is willing to accept the forms of communication from the NGOs. Something regarding the power relation is also communicated when the donor does *not* accept the form. The realisation that these are personal relationships is important on both parts if learning is to be viewed as participation and not just as acquisition (Sfard, 1998)!

A change with impact on management

When NGOs choose to work with a complexity-appropriate approach, it has an impact on personnel and the type of people who can work with the approach. Pheak, the human resource manager located in the head office of CO1 questions Pok about the reliability of the work with an complexity-appropriate approach and Pok, as he did many times during the discussion, does not claim that the complexity-appropriate approach can guarantee success in all aspects. Instead he points to principles and values.

Pheak: But what if the changes that happen are always made with contribution from someone else and that is what we learn from the stories of change.

Pok: Well, I think it is about values. That is why it is important with the whole hearted attitude and the commitment of the staff. If staff would look at that work and say, "oh, this is easy, I don't have to work hard at all, it's enough with just one", but then that is just an excuse. Then the staff are not working whole heartedly wanting to see real change. (translation from Khmer)

Here the assumptions of needing control and order are questioned by NGOs using the complexity-appropriate approach, calling for an attention to human values. The tension between *management* when distanced from the local context of the project, and the project staff using the complexity-appropriate approach still surface in the communication. These tensions can be understood by the difference between vertical and horizontal structures for accountability. Numbers function well as a tool within a vertical structure, whereas conservations function well within horizontal structures (Wenger, 1998).   .

The associate director of the same organisation, Sophiep, feels that complexity-appropriate approaches are more or less suitable for different people.

[…]and we need to think if the staff really are ready for the tool or not. Because some people can work if you give them all the steps. Some complain and feel that they have already done something, or think that we should do it. Others only need an idea and they can get going to organise themselves and work towards it and if you give them details they really complain. Others, you tell them about a workshop and you think about organising a car for them and they have already made a way to come. So we are all different, and what is important is that whatever the tool is, you have to be ready. If the tool is good, but you are not ready, then you won't reach the goal.

Sophiep keeps the door open for different tools depending on the staff. Yet, consultant Samuel means that there is no option to have a relationally detached, technically-orientated, way of working.

We didn't come to development just to be technical people. When it comes to [name of staff member], for her, she would rather just work technically, so it hasn't been a great shift for her, but she does it, and she is fine. Everyone else is really into the new way of working and Khushi would tell you…

As already mentioned in a previous section, Khushi feels that staff need to be dreamers and have excitement. What came up in conversations several times is that the values of working whole-heartedly is more important than coming with technical expertise. These values among the NGO staff are reified in the way that they organise their work. Several organisations working with an complexity-appropriate approach have divided up their work according to their boundary partners rather than sectors. Sakoeun, a leader of CO2 explains clearly why they changed from a sector-based structure where work is organised according to technical expertise and links it to the approach.

In the past, we used to work sector based. After the Outcome Harvest, we wanted the issue to become the issue of the community. It [the issue] is not 'health'. Whatever the real issue of the community, is what we should be busy with. Get rid of the health sector. So that we are not the drivers.[…] Sector-based can help us

in a logframe kind of way. It is focused on each sector. I'm not saying it isn't good, but it has a different focus. We used to work in sectors until 2016. In a way, working focused like that had its benefits. In Outcome Mapping, if we don't need sectors we are freer to work in response to their issues. We help them to think on their own and act on their own issues. (translation from Khmer)

In the same discussion, this was challenged by Sophiep, the associate director of CO1, who feels that technical expertise is important to help the target communities at a deeper level.

What is the challenge? We need to have a heart and how do we make it even bigger. We can't just know about stories and not do anything about it? Then in the end, it will just cause stress. (translation from Khmer)

Sakoeun responds to this in different ways, pointing to the role of the NGO staff as having a more intermediary role towards sustainability, supporting the boundary partners to be able to function in society and access help on their own. If there is accountability to the target group in providing relevant support, drawing boundaries in a different way may lead to different and more helpful communicative practices. This accountability to the target group requires a different type of relationship in regards to management and planning in a complex environment compared to a management which is only accountable to the donor through the logframe. As Samuel shares a description about this issue from the context in Afghanistan.

I am not saying it is easy, but it is relatively clear what you have to do to run a mental health clinic. You organise this and organise that, and it is all relatively cut and dried, but now you are talking about getting out into a world of social determinants. How do we actually do it? Organise our staff? All becomes very much more fuzzy. I think that is part and parcel of moving from an activity focus to a people focus. An activity focus can be much more discrete. A consult in a mental hospital is a discrete thing, how many consults do we do in a day, but meeting muslim mullas in a violence torn city in Afghanistan— how long is that going to take, well I don't know. What are they going to say at the end of it, well, I don't know! You know what is going to happen at the end of a consult, probably a diagnosis, and possibly a prescription, and a treatment plan. You kind of know that, but you don't know what is going to happen when you say you are going to talk with mullas! It also demands that organisations can be more nimble.

What Samuel shows is that the question of management and internal organising is not a neutral question. It is a form of reification of values which the organisation holds (Wenger, 1998). For teams working on the level of the community, the complexity-appropriate approach demands flexible management which Pok argues for.

The staff have to work in direct contact with the communities that are our target, so that is why we have to use a lot of staff, and it requires flexibility. If we do Outcome Mapping, and we don't know how to be flexible and we just think of our own work starting at 7:30 and finishing 12, then working at 1:30 again until 5. Then, that doesn't work! Because then the time is good for us, but it is not good for those in the target community! That's why Outcome Mapping like we are working on now, needs to be flexible according to the times of the communities, and we want the communities to have change, and we want them for example to eat good food and enough food, but that day that we call for them to meet, what time do they then have left to develop their own work? That is what we need to think about! And there are meetings with us, with other NGOs, and with the government, with political parties, and other things, and that is why eventually the village chief's wife will be angry, saying 'Darling, there are meetings every single day. When will you have time to help me with some of the work?' (translation from Khmer)

Flexibility for Pok is something that communicates accountability both to the commitment to see change (the project proposal) and towards the community in that it has to be meaningful to them.

Pok shows in this account that the many exterior demands on the target communities due to hierarchical management systems can be counter-productive. As mentioned in conversation by leaders using Outcome Mapping, the outcome-focused approaches require less hierarchy and a joint monitoring system that engages all the staff. It requires a support of risk taking and a celebration of small changes in the communities towards the bigger behavioural changes. This commitment to risk and small change for the sake of the community, can cause conflict with management roles who are used to systems of control. Donors continuously ask questions about the finance systems and anti-corruption where clear systems are seen as an important way to prevent corruption. An idea that relationships, less hierarchy, and more human focused approaches actually prevent corruption is not yet part of the common development discourse. Pheak, the human resource manager of one organisation might be caught in the middle between two accountability systems when donors demand both perfect accountability systems which look organised and planned, while also looking for outcomes.

> People sometimes look down on the Head Office and the internal functions, the field staff suffering in difficult circumstances. It's not easy to fulfil all the demands for it linking with donors, with policy, to have some order—synergy! (translation from Khmer)

The focus on the community and the donor being pulled into the context seems to create a role deficiency/confusion among middle management/country level management when the people who are monitoring and analysing are closer to the change. A conversation between Pheak, the human resource manager and two leaders working with Outcome Mapping in the same organisation as Pheak, CO1, illustrates this tension:

> Chanthon: Really, Outcome Mapping uses all five senses as tools to collect evidence.
>
> Pheak: But have you studied it? How do you know that the result comes from your input to them or how do you know that they have changed the behaviour and are taking their children to school because of your work or is it just that they now have a motorbike?
>
> Pok: I don't dare to guarantee that it came from us.
>
> Pheak: What percentage do you think that it comes from you? How much is your contribution?
>
> Pok: That's when we explain that we have spread information about the topic and we can say that they maybe changed their behaviour because of that, but they probably received input from other NGOs as well, and from other places. What is important to us is that we see them change and there are many different strategies to see that change take place. Sometimes we give advice, sometimes we do awareness raising, sometimes we visit in the houses, sometimes we listen to the radio, sometimes they watch small videoclips, and other things. We don't know which one will be the exact right one to connect to their heart… (translation from Khmer)

This conversation shows how Pheak is attempting to translate what is happening through his perceptions of demands for accountability, an assumption that you can control and measure the project's contribution to change. It also hints at a need to rely on more objective or formal tools to collect evidence than staff observations and relationships with the boundary partners. The finance manager of the same organisation shared similar feelings, that any fault in the finances would affect the whole organisation. There is here an assumption that project documentation and the completion of all the paper work will create trust.

> Field workers are amazing, but if no one takes care of documentation, then then the whole thing falls! They need to have grounds for their trust from our documentations! When we [the organisation] see needs in the villages, that's when we can ask for more funds! Our documents need to be complete for them, so it is not a lie. (translation from Khmer)

The human resource person and the finance manager of this organisation are not against outcome-focused approaches, but seem to have been left out of the sense of community. Their comments and even their wish to be part of a discussion on Outcome Mapping seem to be more a request to be part of the community rather than a conflict of interest. An outcome-focused approach seems to require a changed conversation from 'Who has control?' to 'Let's truly work on this together'. Wenger (2009) provides some insight to understanding this as an expected 'dance' that needs to take place in practice, "In each moment of professional service, he or she has to resolve the question of where to be accountable. This is quite a dance of the self, especially where there are conflicts at boundaries in the landscape" (p. 7).

Implications on forms for planning and reporting

This theme digs deeper into the communicative practices that take place for the purpose of accountability and learning between NGOs and donors. Data shows that communicative practices of planning and reporting are affected or need to be affected by an NGO's change to an outcome-focused approach. Just as management structures and practices are reifications of a group of people or a community of practice, so are also their forms and formats for reports and planning (Wenger, 1998). The forms and formats of planning and reporting represent value systems which can, through their questions and sections, be more or less positivistic and linear about change processes. They constitute boundary objects over which several communities of practices communicate and negotiate (Star & Griesemer, 1989). When working with CO1's community development project, the team of staff felt unsettled about their number of reports they were writing. Each team leader was involved in writing both visit reports and monthly reports. They expressed a loss of energy in their facial expressions and body language which can be interpreted as a result of a time-consuming task without much meaning for them[18]. Here the question came up whether the written monthly reports from each team were needed at all, and they chose to instead take turns writing the joint monthly report to help grasp the bigger picture and communicate to the Head Office those things that might be interesting for them to learn about and to include in reports to donors. Here the format was in itself not perceived as a demand from the Head Office or from a donor. They had a type of communicative practice that could negotiate format. Notes from a discussion on reporting show this:

> Phearom [the project manager] felt that [the head office functions of] CO1 has changed and that there is no problem with CO1 anymore when it comes to reports. "We can talk with them. They want us just to think. It is not important that we fill in everything. We can discuss what will work for us." (translation from Khmer)

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[18] I feel very confident in "Cambodian" culture, and more specifically, Cambodian NGO culture; any observations included are those that I feel confident about.

For the written communication that does need to take place, the format may cause additional work, but it may also constitute a symbol of a power relationship. Samuel provides his own take on this:

> Yes, can you imagine if you have a partner relationship that sends you a River of Life [a historical scan, see also Figure 5] and they say, 'We'll jump into the River of Life with you', that kind of relationship is going to be different forever, but if you say, 'That was a very nice River of Life, but we can't take that, can you please give us some numbers?', that's also changing the relationship. The people who sent the River of Life will say, a lot of the things that we feel are important to us—we can't bring that into our work here! We can't bring that into this relationship.

The communicative practices are a chain of relationships all relating to the format as a boundary object. When the format is decided on the 'highest' level, at the level of the government in the North, for example, this has implications on whether an NGO can work with Outcome Mapping. For example, on hearing about a workshop on Outcome Mapping, a representative of a Finnish donor in the region, shared his concern for projects already using Outcome Mapping. The Finnish government recently chose to make their own new reporting format which all projects have to use and conform to. In reality, this may mean that the Finnish organisation can continue supporting projects using Outcome Mapping, but that in the end the communication needs to get into the format of the Finnish government.

There are different perspectives on how much a logframe can be used while adopting an Outcome Mapping perspective. In working with CO1's community development project, they felt confident in using the old reporting format with a logframe because they could report activities into broad categories. Likewise, for the organisation in Afghanistan, using the logframe is a pragmatic means of actually getting funding. Caroline explained their situation:

> [...]obviously all of our donors are completely enmeshed (married) to the rigid logframe method, so whatever we do in terms of outcome planning, outcome mapping, there is going to have to be a logframe. I can't secure funding, apart from really small funding, I can't get the bigger donors without a seriously detailed logframe and a gant chart, but Samuel reckons he has worked with other people before—for whom a logframe is essential and it is possible for him to go from outcome mapping to a logframe.

In a workshop in Cambodia with SOB's partner organisations present, several leaders of these organisations reacted strongly to the idea of changing activities. This was clearly linked to their commitment to their proposals and logframes and a reflection of their relationship through the logframe as a boundary object. Notes from the workshop show the connection and the perception of the donors' rigidly holding onto a project plan:

> When I mentioned the need to scrap strategies when the environment and the outcomes we see show that there is a need to change them, [Name of leader]: 'No way! That's impossible. No.' (Lots of emotion) 'We have some projects that have 3–4 donors. Some are really difficult and they will never allow us to change them. They don't even let us spend money for activities only slightly different than what was planned for.' (quotes translated from Khmer)

There is a sense of willingness on behalf of NGOs and their projects to work extra hard to make things fit into a logframe as it secures funding and communicates the language of those in power.

Yet, it has consequences on the organisation, which Samuel shares about, using the mental health project and its purpose in Afghanistan.

> […] It's like these huge social determinants of mental health out in the community, which is what the organisation was trying to respond to initially, and then by hook and a crook, and possibly by being forced to write a whole lot of nice logical frameworks, it's ended up with a very nice, but controllable clinic that doesn't touch any of that. And the monitoring questions that they ask—they only see the patients that they see. They never see the woman who is locked in the compound whose husband never lets her out. SO, they don't get the feedback from there saying, 'She is the woman that burnt herself and is probably still burning herself.' So, kind of somehow for you [for Mariam in this conversation about my data] a comment that I would make is possibly a logical framework may even push an organisation away from its original purpose. That's a really clear story for me of that happening. This was a really fascinating evaluation—the kind of feeling that looking back, this is great, but you have suddenly locked yourself into this little space that only you can see. You monitor in that space and it looks quite good in that space, but there is massive distress out there in the community!

According to Samuel, the logframe can lock you into small spaces which might only convey one perspective. This is in conflict to a complexity-appropriate approach which acknowledges complexity with its changing perspectives and relationships (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003; Conlin & Stirrat, 2008; O'Donnell, 2016; Carden & Earl, 2007). Samuel continues to explain the impossibility of predicting an outcome-focused approach in terms of its activities in the first place, which will have implications on Caroline and those who are in leadership, attempting to straddle the two approaches.

> […] Doing things we never thought of doing before, and I think that whole thing of going from cut and dry to human and messy. We should be more open to that kind of stuff, but it would never—ever…, you can't put it into your logical framework before the programme. You know, a 3 year plan that you would have a disabled girl be a secretary for an organisation… You know you can't predict that! It's something that happens on the way and then you do it.

The data from the stories and conversations of staff combined with an analysis of reports from the NGOs provide a picture of innovation and relevance being hampered by the logframe's planning and reporting formats. The logframe formats may even be counteractive to the purpose of an organisation/project. Another way to look at it, is that it may rob the donor of the opportunity to be part of a dialogue, to be part of a community of practice. Samuel depicts the difference between a logframe report and a more narrative form of reporting which is used by the Indian organisation.

> The logical framework. The funder just looks at that and ticks the box. We now have a much more narrative form of reporting and the donor is quite OK with this. We say, 'here is a story of how this girl did this and this'. When they then ask why, we then get a really interesting conversation which is really cool!

The analysis of Samuel's account shows that the donors generally are satisfied with ticking the boxes. This is not the case from analysis of conversations with donors and back donors. One of the members of SOB was curious as to why there was so much reporting on activities and not more on outcomes as she needs to report about actors and the ability to influence and not just on indicators. Of course the donors need a simplified reality, since the whole experience and context needs to be represented in some form across language, culture, and often at some point, across

distance. Something that complicates the issue is that projects in the South feel that they have to prove their worth through activities. Here, a more narrative form may better portray complexity. In a discussion with Samuel about communities being proud of and owning their own development and in consequently not even thinking about giving credit to the NGO for the change (which is the type of community ownership and agency an NGO is hoping to see), Samuel points out the difficulty of drawing a clear boundary between staff and target community.

> And when they say, 'We did it!', then the 'we' is probably the fusion of horizons. Then, it probably includes the NGO. That's so beautiful, isn't it! When it becomes subsumed into who they think they are and they have done something, and you have been part of it and it doesn't matter who exactly did what.

This difficulty of pointing out the boundary can be an indicator that there is real participation in civil society, that the disadvantaged people are able to be part of the community. This type of situation shows a merge of stories and a merge of contribution. The narrative form as a means of accountability is shared in Pok's account within the Indigenous People's project. In this case various persons are involved in telling the stories of change.

> We do it ourselves, our own skills, but we have another tool to help the communities reflect on progress, the River of Life. But when they go, they need to keep their eyes open to see how those 3–4 families have changed. If we have a progress marker about the parents paying attention to their children's learning, then we take note of the parents who were taking their children to school and that becomes our evidence, 'We have seen that X took the children to school in village X. After that we need to decide about the level of the outcome' If it is just starting to emerge (1) or if it is growing (2). If we then think that we see them having good visions for their children, and really support their children, then we think that the parents have an understanding and we might put the number 2 or 3, but first we have to have clear evidence, the date and the month that we saw something. We cannot sit in the office and just prophecy, because when we write our reports, then it is just correct. Because when they look at our graphs and they look at progress, then people will want to know why there was progress, and we have to be able to tell that story, and when one staff person sees something, and another one, and another one, then we can assume that it is a real change and we can put it in our report. If we see a changes on the graph and the staff are not able to tell the story very well, then we need to reflect about that to think about the information. This is what we have to monitor all the time. Not just once a month. It needs checking every week. [Other participants in the room confirm spontaneously]
>
> Chanthon: right, it needs a story. (translation from Khmer)

It is possible to understand this account as the stories providing some kind of horizontal accountability as well as vertical accountability with the support of some numbers.

In search of new forms for learning and accountability

As already mentioned, forms and formats come in the way of reaching the goals of the organisation, they can be impossible to fulfil, uninspiring, and cause additional work. For those using outcome-focused approaches, many projects have to supplement a more narrative report with other forms of data, such as indicators, and output tracking. Completing these extra data-collection and reporting processes for the donors belongs to a different understanding of what is scaleable—the *result* or the *process*. One way to see a way forward, may be the suggestion that a different form of accountability is developed, one in which employees are "rewarded for their

ability to interpret and respond to the circumstances that they meet in their day-to-day work with others, their ability to improvise" (Mowles, et al., 2008, p. 817).

Pok has hinted at the tension of neat and tidy reports produced in offices verses the messy stories of change in the community. It is a movement from chopped up 'states' and broad definitions (as is common in vision statements and logframes) to many stories and the outcome-focused approaches' unpacking of definitions in which they make values and meanings explicit. While stories provide a better picture of change processes, the vast amount of stories is difficult for projects to handle. The Australian donor suggests providing a couple stories of change in greater detail. A Swedish back donor desk officer, Christine, mentioned that her relationship with the projects comes only through the report format. When she read the final report and evaluation reports of CO1's project with Indigenous People, she was excited to read a report in 'colour'. The greater understanding that comes from the narrative forms used in the reports can be understood by Wertsch's (1998) perspectives of narratives as a cultural tool. These were the first reports that Christine had read from projects using Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting and she said they provided a much more vivid picture. It gave her a better sense of trust, something she felt that numbers could not do in the same way. Her colleagues all wanted to read the report, demonstrating the growing interest that the donor world is starting to have in these alternative methods and approaches. The conversation with Christine also highlighted the difference that these approaches make to her donor context. She appreciated the experience but had to creatively negotiate the formats for her own reporting.

During the workshop with SOB's partner organisations in Cambodia (see Table 5) where three out of four partner organisations were new to outcome-focused approaches, they continually asked for guidelines, rules, and detailed questions for their work with monitoring. In preparation for an Outcome Harvest together, the participants struggled with the basic nature of the questions. The key to finally unlock their confidence was when I said, 'Take off your NGO staff hat, get down on the level of the person you are meeting and listen and share.' It was as if the identity as an NGO staff member got in the way of being relational at an equal level with the target community. Organisations involved in this more unobtrusive and dialogical approach to 'monitoring' continue to search forms of reification to support them in their ability to see and remember things. The Outcome Mapping design in itself provides a framework for this, as already mentioned in the section about the bigger picture and better focus. Phearom and her colleagues from CO1's community development project felt that they wanted to print out the progress markers in the beginning, to remember to collect the evidence. They had also created a work plan and reporting format where they have the following columns in this order from left to right: Outcome Mapping progress marker, activities, details on the field visit, and learning. During a casual conversation over lunch, she also showed a photo of words that I had used in a previous workshop to guide reflection over sustainability (Vision, Skills, Organisation, Relationships, Finances, and Learning). She asked me what the tool was and I said that it was no developed tool as such, but in our conversation she expressed that it would help her for the format she uses in reporting to the donor. These words, too, might be a support in communicating complexity to the donors in a way that they are able to make meaning. Every sample I showed in workshops on outcome-focused approaches was highly sought after, whether

it was examples of progress markers or budgets. The outcome-focused approaches has an effect on how budgets are organised as the organisation needs to be flexible enough to be responsive to complexity while still showing reason for their numbers and categories. We discussed keeping categories broad enough for flexibility while still providing a framework to support discussion, again another boundary object.

According to the analysis of the data, tools or forms cannot provide the solution on their own. The director of the large NGO in Cambodia shared the story about her organisation's local offices all having beautiful 'River of Life' tools (see Figure 5) meant for reflection over their practice on their office walls, but the staff in every place she visited were unable to tell the story. Forms can function more as a mechanical function of compliance, even when the tool is meant to encourage reflection. Yet, tools that provide frameworks for dialogue *in combination* with a relational approach is evident throughout an organisation's work and in their interactions with others. Khushi, for example, shared the importance of discussions around weekly reports in order to support staff who do not understand the nature of outcome-focused work (Schön, 1991). The projects of CO6 use Outcome Mapping as a tool, but the reports share very few stories of outcomes and mostly about their own activities. Here the problem may be NGO perceptions that the donors needs to trust them based on the activities conducted, it may be the reporting format in itself, or the lack of reflective practices around the tool. Finding spaces and forums for negotiation over boundary objects seems to include the appropriateness of the boundary object as well as the communicative practices created around these. This search for new forms seems to be a continuous process among the organisations that constitute data in this research and comes out from the data as a field of further exploration, an unfinished story. This search is found as well in current reports on international development, recognising how there is little room for learning in current processes of evaluation, even when they are meant to support learning (Reinertsen, Bjørkdahl, & McNeill, 2017).
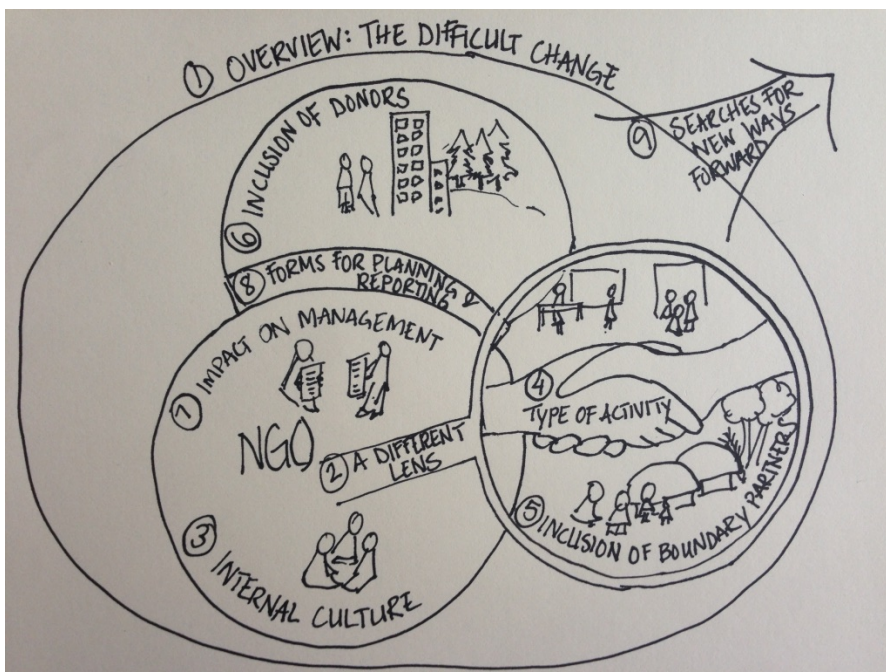

Figure 16: An overview of the results and the order that they have been presented.

In summary

Figure 16 provides an overview of the results. The numbers in the picture are the order in which the reader has taken part of the results, a journey that has taken the reader to the world of the NGOs in Cambodia and ventured into the larger context of international development. As can been seen in Figure 16, communicative practices among NGOs cannot be seen in isolation from the context of boundary partners and donors. I come from an understanding of development work as a pedagogical process, especially if we see pedagogy as the dynamic process of thinking about what kind of society we want to have and how we can help people to get there. From a sociocultural perspective, a human being is understood as more than a brain isolated from body and context and that individual knowledge and skills are connected to the environment, including the people that are part of it. The results show that people will not necessarily change with more information and tools. Understanding this has implications for the type of activities that are envisaged as 'helping people change'. Furthermore, the results show how processes of change in communicative practices between people (government officials, donors, NGO staff, and community members) need to have a supportive environment to promote that change. This supportive environment is created through communicative practices that encourage people to meet and work together towards a common interest. Here, the complexity-appropriate tools are important cultural tools for this change. Dialogue becomes crucial in the communicative practices which can be framed as emerging communities of practice because of the growing sense of working and negotiating towards a common enterprise. Being part of such communities of practice provides alternative roles for people, and gives them dignity. The latter allows vulnerable persons and people in the margins, NGO development workers, donors, and 'oppressors' to take and be granted different, alternative roles. They are no longer merely recipients of knowledge, but rather constitutive agents in a process of meaning-making. This enables learning to occur and empowers participants to act differently and to become part of a different story.

PART 4: DISCUSSION

4.1 Discussion on methods

All too often, learning systems are caught up in power relations, with underlying control mechanisms for compliance and accountability. The hope I have is that those who can relate to this study (whether part of an NGO, donor organisations, or any reader) can ask better questions, provide justification for their systems and approaches, and adapt their systems for learning so that they take human relations into account. The aim of this study was to show the cultural changes that take place in adoption and implementation of complexity-appropriate approaches to learning. In a similar way to the complexity-appropriate approaches themselves, the ethnographic approach looked at what was said and done differently (Agar, 2008). This provided a description of the organisations' learning and use of the approaches in their contexts, making visible the affordances and constraints of the cultural tools (Wertsch, 1998). The study was able to illustrate how people could move beyond questions of compliance to ask whether they did the right thing *for* people and *with* people in their particular contexts. Rather than holding a positivistic world view where someone owns a 'correct' view of the world, organisations were starting to see different valid perspectives. The results also show the struggles, or the set of constraints, that the various communities of practice were facing with the change of cultural tools. The combined picture of results show some "messy realities of working on complex problems" which might challenge those donor communities which seek "zero tolerance for waste or failure" and expect the use of simple indicators for success (O' Donnell, 2016, p. 24). A description of messy realities was made possible due to my understanding of languages and cultures in the various settings. One of the interview situations could have been even better, however, had I known the preferred Indian language of the director in the Indian organisation. His English language skills were good and we had a meaningful conversation, but with a greater understanding of cultures and languages in his setting, we could have had a richer conversation.

Although Outcome Mapping, for example, might be supportive of positive concepts such as participation, trust relationships, adaptive management, and learning in complexity, any approach used in a community of practice and their forms of reification will continuously need to be part of a dynamic process. It is important to acknowledge that the complexity-appropriate approaches were not studied in isolation. They were part of a set of other cultural tools used by a variety of people in certain settings and all the factors affecting the situation could not be described. I attempted to present the ethnography as a coherent whole while including many voices. This choice of method, or cultural tool, remains constrained in its form and its allegiance to a narrative-based account and to the characters that have been included to play a part in it. I was not, for example, able to create data with large NGOs which is an important limitation to the usefulness of this study for such organisations. Power dynamics, however, might not be too different and again I argue that it may provide relevant questions to be asked also for large NGOs. Another constraint, is that in this form, there are loose boundaries between methods, analysis, and results. Representing the data is in itself an interpretive process. It can be seen as a process of restructuring the experience or providing a cultural translation to those that will read it (Tyler, 1986). In this process of representation, I used a pedagogical theoretical lens which in a

sense merged the academic worlds of pedagogy and development with the risk of being too elaborate for some readers and too basic for others. Being concise was not an easy endeavour!

As mentioned throughout this paper, taking context seriously is important in order to portray the dynamics of the messy realities in which the NGOs are a part. Describing a specific context with its people in association with a learning system is important for anyone else to be able to learn from it or possibly develop even better ones, which was an advantage in the choice of ethnography. With more time, and especially more time on the field, the results of this thesis could have been even stronger. It could have allowed greater involvement by participants in further analysis, to strengthen the non-Western perspective even more. The limited amount of time, however, provided a convenient limitation to the large amounts of data which I had available. A future study could focus more on what takes place in interaction with boundary partners, for example, providing rich descriptions of the changes that take place in those particular contexts. Hopefully, what was able to be created within these limitations can serve the purpose of helping others to ask better questions and to work in more effective ways in their dynamic contexts. Each context will have its own set of factors and with the emergence and adaptation of the complexity-appropriate approaches themselves, other perspectives will, in time, provide multiple stories of the effect of changing cultural tools.

4.1 Discussion on results

Inclusive communicative practices

Before working with NGOs in Cambodia, I spent two months travelling around Asia visiting projects and asking practitioners for their best wisdom regarding literacy projects. The one advice I will never forget is, "Make sure the 'bad' people benefit in some way as well." I chose to interpret that through a set of questions: 'Who else can be involved?', 'Are there really people who want to be bad and do we reach our goals while excluding them?', and 'Where do I/we currently draw the line and why?' The results of this study on cultural change in organisations seem to follow along the same line of questions. In response to the first question of the study regarding the kinds of communicative practices that arise, the results show that the complexity-appropriate approaches have the potential to create more inclusive communicative practices. The process of changing to these approaches in itself encourages inclusion of actors in a process of negotiation around the cultural tools. The new approaches provide other ways of organising thinking and acting which are able to create spaces for participation of a variety of people in different ways. These cultural tools are products of a different view of power, and a view of complexity as being embedded in a set of complex relationships between people (Earl et al., 2001). As opposed to the commonly used logframe, where the predefined formulas for success shape communicative practices and provide barriers to the forms of dialogical communicative practices focused upon here, the three complexity-appropriate approaches described in this study support a way of thinking and acting which take a humanistic perspective into account. They encourage dialogue and participation at all levels of the organisational systems and with those outside the boundaries of the organisations formally involved (see Figure 16). The results of the study describe these various organisations as not only negotiating tools themselves, but engaging

in conversation and reflection, which are crucial factors in promoting organisational change (Stacey, 2007; Schön, 1991). Dialogue and reflection are not used as means of control, but rather to understand and promote change. When reflecting on the cultural tools for learning in an organisation, each level of an organisation's hierarchy will continuously need to pay attention to "Who did the acting, and who was acted upon?" (Wertsch, 1998, p. 92). These two questions are important in terms of seeing learning as participation and in order to question whether the cultural tools used in organisations are supporting inclusion. They are important in humanising both those who have been oppressed and the oppressor (Freire, 1972). Based on the results of this study, the complexity-appropriate approaches are found to foster reflective practices and when these approaches are situated in reflective practices, they can enable the people on the bottom of the hierarchy, such as the vulnerable persons in developing communities, to be involved in society to a greater extent, crossing boundaries which had previously been barriers created and maintained by other cultural tools (Wertsch, 1998, Star, 2010). See Table 6 for my analysis of the constraints and affordances of the complexity-appropriate approaches as cultural tools, based on the results of this study. Yet, no matter the significant affordances of the cultural tools, they cannot on their own determine action; they are always dependent on the agents involved in practice and their personal reflection, attitudes, and behaviours (Hinton & Groves, 2004; Chambers & Hinton, 2004).

Table 6: Some constraints and affordances based on the results of this study (also continued on the next page)

Affordances	Constraints
Complexity-appropriate approaches…	
are appropriate to complexity and attempt to **illustrate complexity**	do not in themselves provide a summary of an intervention for easy access for those not present in the context
engage with people in their current context in narrative which increases the ability of an organisation to provide **relevant** and **flexible** support	do not fit many of the current reporting structures and formats have the consequence that NGO workers can no longer pretend that they are in control (or provide the illusion of control)
are conducive for reflection cycles, providing opportunities for **learning and meaning making**	require changes in management to allow reflection and other ways to manage accountability systems
support/develop **dedicated**, engaged staff	require time and the engagement of staff (as it is not just a matter of compliance and carrying out given plans)
distribute **power,** or **ownership,** to involve those closer to the chain	do not fit donors who want power may cause some donors to require 'additional information' to remain interested in funding
focus on behavioural change among partners (in other words, culture), which support an organisation's types of activities to work towards **sustainability**	may not be valued by donors who are uninterested in first signs of behavioural changes (or, cultural changes) and need quicker and more concrete 'results' for political reasons
assume **adaptive capacity** and **adaptive management,** with consequences of eroding hierarchies and space for flexibility	require negotiation with others in the funding change to also be adaptive and to value relevance over planned outputs create a loss of control which demand new ways of managing risk

Affordances	Constraints
support **trust relations** with those who value perspectives and tensions in the context	put the financial systems at risk when the contract is not a fixed detailed plan and compliance to a plan; a risk needing to be justified require new ways of communicating
demand organisations and others in the funding chain to be more **part of the context**, due to its awareness of actors as *partners*	demand other ways of organising budgets and staff roles whether in the NGO or elsewhere in the funding chain due to its demands for proximity and partnerships

One question which can be discussed from the results of this research is, 'Where does the analysis need to happen?' The three approaches encourage subjectivity and being explicit about values, making these cultural tools possible of belonging to more than the most powerful in the system. Encouraging analysis at all levels allows gaps between identities and meaning-making which enable learning (Wenger, 1998). Without analysis, organisations and communities on the grassroots level try to guess what the highest level of the funding chain wants, which robs all levels in the chain from these opportunities for learning. For example, the donor may have specific needs to provide evidence of scale. Here it is important for all involved to define whether scale should be seen in terms of process or in terms of results. An NGO might, for example, want to be innovative. Here it may be important to explore what the term innovation will mean in terms of communicative practices with those they are trying to affect and if the communicative practices actually hinder innovation. Schön (1991) points out that, "in general, the more an organization depends for its survival innovation and adaptation to a changing environment, the more essential its interest in organizational learning" (s. 327). When an actor takes complexity into account, the relevance of situated learning needs to be understood (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Situated learning emphasises the understanding that practitioners function in sociocultural practices in which they move towards being able to fully participate in those practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Generalisations then become problematic. Some types of outcome or impact stories can probably be counted numerically and others not. In whatever case, learning will have its own dynamics of people and relationships. The discourse in the international development world has been affected by a mechanical, technical, industrial world view employing words such as targets, outputs, goals, monitoring, and impact, in a one-directional, clear-cut, and dualistic way (Van Ongevalle et al., 2012). If we are to work in pedagogical ways and recognise the human, relational aspect, our discourse and cultural tools need to change to be reflective of our values. International discourse currently talks about mutual accountability and includes beneficiaries as actors, but often the cultural tools of the organisations constrain their own ability to be inclusive, thus missing the whole point with developmental work! Systems of power often stay intact. Complexity-appropriate approaches, on the other hand, as shown in this study, create a broader invitation to participate around vision. These learning approaches actively shape the organisation's practice and create higher agency in society, and thus, I argue, social justice.

Communication beyond the cognitive

In looking further at the kinds of communicative practices that arise, the results show that they are not focused on abstraction and the purely cognitive processes. Organisations adopting complexity-appropriate approaches are taking very practical measures to include various actors in the communicative practices, giving them other roles and reflecting on what happens in practice. This is in contrast to the common isolation of cognitive processes and the view of abstract rationality as the best way of solving the problems of the world (Wertsch, 1998). Viewing cognitive processes as part of sociocultural contexts helps the organisation to see the tensions of mediated action placed within the relationship between the agent and the cultural tools. A key to understanding such a tension seems to be, again, the insight which Bakhtin has emphasised, that words belong to someone, and that there is a complexity of "multivoicedness" that is taking place in these relationships (Wertsch, 1998). Words that we depend on in organisations' communicative practices are words that have different meanings in each context, in each condition, a reality which forms the basis for the need for dialogue (Wertsch, 1998). This helps us to understand the reason why a perspective which only looks at the transmittance of information, as is commonly the case in the logframe, will miss the significance of what is happening in participation. As the results of this study show, and as Wertsch points out, there is something significant in the *role* that a person is given in a social context. The complexity-appropriate approaches allow for other actors who have previously not been involved, to be involved in new and meaningful ways, something also recognised by Freire (1972) in creating a different kind of pedagogy, liberating those who previously did not have roles in reflection and decision making.

Communicative practices with practical consequences on management

The response to the second question of the study, on what ways the communicative practices are made visible or enabled through the use of the new learning approaches, it is clear that the communicative practices create space for dialogue and systematic ways of discussing perspectives. These spaces and systematic ways of discussing perspectives require new processes of working together and negotiating with one another which prove to be difficult change processes for all involved. The approaches, as new cultural tools, make power relations visible, demanding negotiation of other tools to fulfil the demands of accountability and learning in those contexts. They make visible tensions between accountability and learning, a tension with contradictions increasingly recognised in the international aid community (Reinertsen, Bjørkdahl, & McNeill, 2017). The focus on accountability, can actually hamper the ability to learn in the organisations. There are striking similarities between Wertsch's (1998) accounts of test questions being ineffective in fostering academic achievement, yet serving a function of maintaining order in the classroom. In the classroom, test questions serve to create and maintain power relationships in the same way as international development organisations use accountability and learning systems to create and maintain power relations. The tensions of the new tools make visible that the new learning approaches and tools cannot be taught as a skill at a theoretical level or in isolation. The approaches need to attend to practical issues, to discuss and act on time management, decision-making, what forms are used and what are replaced, and what languages are used. For all of these questions an underlying question is whose story is the most important. Several of the cultural tools for management and accountability purposes may need to

be reflected on to ensure that they do not stifle learning, a learning seen as an inclusion of people in meaning-making processes.

Vertical and horizontal communicative practices

A theme explored in the results of the study was the desire to find better ways to communicate effectively with donors. This was confirmed in a more recent field study experience in Myanmar, where this became a topic of discussion. In this discussion, I encouraged making values and subjectivity clear. Pure intersubjectively is probably not possible as identities constantly change and are negotiated (Wenger, 1998) and words and thoughts are borrowed, making them one's own (Wertsch, 1998). Attempting to understanding stories with their 'multivoicedness', can, however, be a basis for more fruitful interaction with partners and donors. This process assumes a dialogical process, where humans, according to Bakhtin, have no sovereign territory; they are placed at a boundary, unable to find themselves without finding themselves in the other (Wertsch, 1998). One way to see movement forward is through strengthening communities of practices around common enterprises such as the social changes in community, something that the complexity-appropriate tools are well placed to support. Wenger (2009) suggests that international development cultivate "horizontal communities of practice" as an alternative to the vertical transmissions which have been common practice between the political North and the political South (p. 7). This is echoed by the challenge of Mowles, Stacey, and Griffin (2008) to radically engage with one another and "reintroducing the political" (p. 818). Wenger (1998) means that well-functioning communities of practice are ideal settings for leading-edge learning as they can pay attention to particular experiences where they can enable knowledge creation. Initiatives for seeing these communities of practice grow are already taking place, such as in the creation of Doing Development Differently (DDD)[19] and the Big Push Forward (Shutt, 2016).

One of the best ways to make values and complexity visible, is through narratives, something which all three complexity-appropriate approaches have as part of their tools. Story telling is a natural part of being human and can enable understanding, including many different relationships as a single whole (Wertsch, 1998). This story telling will involve the construction of main characters, in which we can see whose story it is and who is responsible for events (Wertsch, 1998). The narratives have their constraints and affordances. One of these constraints may be the deception of the beauty of its coherence. Presenting a number of perspectives or even a number of stories may be necessary to understand action and to show complexity in terms of tensions, contradictions, and relationships (Wertsch, 1998). When the actors of the narrative become visible, organisations can gain insight as to who is part of the various communities of practice. The dynamic inclusion of people in communities of practice will with time move boundaries and change cultural tools, including the narrative itself. These dynamic processes also include processes of reification, the need to constantly create and adapt the more concrete artefacts or boundary objects in each international development context (Wenger, 1998). Can, for example, a form with mini-stories (with ideas drawn from both Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change) be helpful in explaining significance from various perspectives and creating more dialogue with donors? See Table 5.

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[19] See http://doingdevelopmentdifferently.com

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Table 5: A form which might encourage sharing of perspectives

Time frame and location	Story of outcome or impact	Significance for the NGO (including perspectives of boundary partners)	Possible contributions to the change (whether by the NGO or by others)	Significance for donor

A table such as this might enable various staff members to be involved in a learning process using interviews explored by Carden and Earl (2007).

Both the idea of strengthening communities of practice and the idea of increasing the use of narrative, assume that language and cultural barriers can be crossed. Brokering between communities of practice which are often physically distant is something that needs to be explored further. The Swedish desk officer, Karl, through his story, drew a clear picture of the important role of the broker. This study was designed and conducted with the complexity-appropriate approaches and their tools in focus while keeping the *agents*, strongly in mind. The brokering roles among the agents could be an equally interesting narrative of how cultural change takes place in an organisation. A sober reminder from Wenger (2009) for organisations in their efforts to shape practice is that

> A practice has a life of its own. It cannot be subsumed by a design, an institution, or another practice such as management or research. When these structuring elements are present, practice is never simply their output or implementation: it is a response to them—based on active negotiation of meaning. It is in this sense that learning produces a social system and that a practice can be said to be the property of a community (p. 2).

In shaping communicative practices to become appropriate for learning in complex settings, some further questions worth discussing and negotiating are: Are the forms for monitoring and reporting allowing different perspectives to be shared? How can organisations make use of cultural and language 'brokers' who can enable complexity to be shared through stories? Are there more effective ways for superiors in an organisation or donors to learn than through the written form? What are practices used by NGOs and donors which are in conflict with human-focused perspectives? In short, whose stories are these?

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PART 6: ANNEXES

Annex 1: Focus group discussion plan

(General comments are in italics)

1. Quick introductions (Many of us already know each other) (10 min)

2. I quickly introduce why I arranged the meeting: that I am seeking to understand what happens in our story of OM/OH/MSC and that this is part of my research. I communicate that each of them present will have a very important story to tell which I believe can help all of us to get a really interesting discussion and that our stories will help us understand relationships, boundaries, and perspectives as being part of complexity. We therefore need everyone's story to make our joint story really interesting.

3. Each participant who wants to share their story, tells their story to the group. I write key words from the stories of change.

4. The big group adds other challenges and benefits of using OM. Is there anything among this we want to discuss?

The stories were rich already. There was plenty to discuss in them.

5. We will also write down additional questions that we have about Outcome Mapping and topics we want to discuss. (30 min)

My suggestions:

What happens in communication with the donor?

What happens in communication within our own organisation?

What happens with the people who are our target groups?

What happens with ourselves?

All of these aspects were part of the story. Had we had more time, it would have been interesting to analyse the stories using these questions.

5. Big group discussion summarising our conversations at the tables. This can also be a time for raising specific questions that anyone would like discuss or want help with. (40 min)

We had a big group discussion which covered both big and small questions, but did not really come to conclusions. The conversations had the potential to jointly create a summary of the bigger picture of systems and issues, which it had great potential to do, but not enough time for.

Writing down main themes on the board, however, made visible common themes and patterns, and communicated to them what I heard in case they wanted to add more things important to them.

I can help with theories on the following if appropriate:

Complexity (unpredictability) Snowden. Actor-focused (their stories) Our own activities are not the centre, so they need to be adjusted.

Learning: How do people change behaviour (can we control it)? Situated learning (the story and the environment is important) and communities of practice (how it is in conversation we learn, in the gaps of understandings and experiences).

International Development (these terms have no one right answer): Quality, mutual accountability, cost effectiveness. How do we define these terms?

We touched all of these. I also challenged them to see donors as people we need to have relationships with.

Annex 2: Interview questions for field study in the Spring of 2016

What have you learned from [Name of Project]? How do you believe that you learned that?

How have you shared what you have learned?

What do you think might hinder some learning?

What do you believe are the biggest challenges the project is currently facing? What changes might be needed in order to handle these challenges?

What are two important questions that you have asked [Name of Project] during the past six months?

What do you feel that you would need to learn about [Name of Project] and how do you plan to learn that? (A question to the back donor and head office)