COGITATIO

Social Inclusion (ISSN: 2183–2803)
2019, Volume 7, Issue 1, Pages 218–227
DOI: 10.17645/si.v7i1.1820

Article

Blend Gaps through Papers and Meetings? Collaboration between the Social Services and Jobcentres

Renita Thedvall

Score-Stockholm Centre for Organizational Research, Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden;
E-Mail: renita.thedvall@score.su.se

Submitted: 9 November 2018 | Accepted: 4 January 2019 | Published: 28 February 2018

Abstract
The policy word "collaboration" is a political buzzword omnipresent within human service organisations in Sweden and other countries. Collaboration stands for services working together toward a common goal. It is understood as the solution for a multitude of problems, putting the client at the centre and involving the services needed for making them financially self-sufficient. Public service collaboration assumes gaps between entities, whether they are organisations or professionals holding a particular kind of knowledge or available resources. Gaps are seen as omissions and pitfalls in activities which should be removed. My thesis is that putting the gap at the centre reveals not only the disjuncture of the gaps but also the productiveness of the gap in collaborative projects between organisations. The article demonstrates how documents and meetings work both as makers and blenders of gaps between social services and jobcentres. If gaps are productive spaces, what does it denote for collaboration between organisations? The article is placed ethnographically in documents and meetings set to enable collaboration between social workers and job coaches. I will focus on the gap, the space between documents and organisations, as productive spaces in collaborative projects.

Keywords
documents; gaps; jobcentre; public service collaboration; social services

Issue
This article is part of the issue "'Producing People' in Documents and Meetings in Human Service Organizations", edited by Malin Åkerström (Lund University, Sweden) and Katarina Jacobsson (Lund University, Sweden).

1. Introduction

> We need to speak the same language so that clients understand that it is the same investigation. (Lena, social worker)

It was Lena, one of the social workers in the assessment-instrument network at the municipality, that pointed out that they had to start talking about numbering the documents used to show the sequence, the flow, that they were meant to represent. She was referring to the documental instrument used to investigate the right to social assistance benefits, the investigation of the capacity to work, and the plan for change. The instrument was divided into four documents: number 1, the "telephone-interview assessment" made by the social services; number 2, the "job plan" made by the jobcentre in the municipality; number 3, the "assessment during the client's first visit" at the social services; and number 4, the "plan for change", preferably made by the social services and the jobcentre together, but most often performed by the social services with the client. The documents were seldom referred to in daily practice as 1, 2, 3, and 4, but instead by their other name: "job plan" or "plan for change". An in-house study had also shown that the clients did not understand that all four documents were part of the same investigation. The four documents mirrored four different parts in the work process producing four different "documentary persons" (Hull, 2012) while simultaneously aiming to create one.

It was not just the clients that did not think of it as one investigation. The organisation of the municipality

and the organisation of work made the documents appear to be separate for both the social workers and the job coaches, even though they were both set to make clients financially self-sufficient, preferably by getting a job. The social services office and the social workers belonged to the social services administration in the municipality and the jobcentre, and the job coaches were part of the labour market administration in the municipality and even though they were part of the same municipality they were two different organisations located in different places, and as such they were not organised as a one-stop shop as was the case in some other municipalities in Sweden (Minas, 2014). In order for the documents and the work performed through them to appear as one work process, there was a need for collaboration between the social services and the jobcentres. The social services, particularly the social assistance benefits' offices, celebrated collaboration by necessity. Their clients often had several social problems that were not solvable by one actor. Clients may suffer from one or more diagnosis such as posttraumatic stress disorder, mental impairments (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, autism, etc.), physical impairment, depression, or addiction problems that make their ability to financially support themselves challenging. In an effort to make the clients self-reliant, there was a need for collaboration between different professions in other organisations such as the job coaches in the jobcentres. To enable the collaboration between the social assistance benefits offices and the jobcentres, the assessment-instrument network comprising of social workers and job coaches was established, the assessment-instrument documents were designed, and the sequence was determined by the document numbering.

Collaboration between organisations assumes gaps between entities. Gaps are often seen as omissions and pitfalls in organisational activities which should be removed (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). They should be blended to overlap knowledge and resources across organisational and professional boundaries (Huxham & Vangen, 2005). In anthropology, gaps between entities, positions, and ideas have been perceived as a productive, even magical, space. Gap-thinking has long pervaded anthropology, by, for example, Turner (1966/1995), who focused on the liminal phase in ritual, a betwixt and between position of either or. This position of in-betweenness opens up a space between the actual and the potential. Povinelli (2011) refers to moments in the life of alternative social projects when a social project is neither something or nothing, working as this indeterminate oscillation, creating moments for alternative directions. In this way, gaps work both as productive spaces and show disjuncture between entities.

My thesis is that putting the gap at the centre reveals not only the disjuncture of the gaps but also the productiveness of the gap in collaborative projects between organisations. The article demonstrates how documents and meetings work both as makers and blenders of gaps between the social services and jobcentres and how this reveals the gap as a productive space. The article is placed ethnographically in the four documents themselves and in the assessment-instrument network meetings of social workers and job coaches.

The policy word "collaboration" is a political buzzword which is omnipresent within human service organisations in Sweden and other countries (Germundsson, Hillborg, & Danermark, 2011; Huxham & Vangen, 2005). Collaboration stands for services working together towards a common goal (Germundsson et al., 2011). It is understood as the solution for a multitude of problems putting the client at the centre and involving the services needed for making, in this case, clients financially self-sufficient. It is known that collaboration between professionals from different organisations can be tiresome, difficult, and complicated (Widmark, Sandahl, Piuva, & Bergman, 2016). There is even a term, "partnership fatigue" (Huxham & Vangen, 2005, p. 40), that alludes to this phenomenon.

The literature on collaboration mainly focuses on how to make collaboration possible by closing and bridging gaps. How successful this is is determined by different factors. In their review article, Martin-Rodriguez, Beaulieu, Amour and Ferrada-Videla (2005) point towards systemic determinates—outside the organisation—such as social, cultural, professional systems; organisational determinates, such as structure and philosophy, team resources and administrative support; and finally interactional determinates, such as interpersonal relationships, willingness to collaborate, and the existence of mutual trust, respect, and communication. Territorial behaviour among professionals and organisations is also seen as a hindrance (Axelsson & Axelsson, 2009). Mutual trust, respect, altruism (Axelsson & Axelsson, 2009), communication (Widmark et al., 2016), supporting organisational rules and structure, and a common goal and shared vision (Germundsson et al., 2011) are tools for blending the gaps between organisations and professionals. In this article, I instead focus on the gap, the space between documents and organisations, as productive spaces in collaborative projects. If gaps are productive spaces what does it denote for collaboration between organisations?

In the following section I present my analytical framework through the notions of the documentary person and the meetings as both makers and blenders of gaps between organisations. Then, in Section 3, I present the background and the setting of the assessment-instruments documents, and network meetings. In Section 4 I report on my methods. In the empirical part, Section 5, I first address the "documentary persons" (Hull, 2012) produced through the documents and the gaps they create. In Section 6 I present the assessment-instrument network as a meeting set to make gaps between documents and organisations blend, while at the same time being the gap between organisations. In conclusion, I elaborate on how gaps between documents and organisations are productive spaces.

2. Gaps, Documents, and Meetings

In order to analyse gaps as productive spaces between organisations, I draw on bodies of literature concerned with documents and meetings, as I understand them as makers and blenders of gaps between organisations.

Documents are part of bureaucratic life where the file makes up the bureau/the office (Weber, Gerth, & Mills, 1946). In Weber's ideal bureaucracy, documentation is a way of making the workings of bureaucracy transparent. The ability of documents to produce and create has been well documented, and not just following the Weberian idea that documents produce and create order and coordination, working as a means for management coordination and control, by building fixed and shared meanings in organizations (Harper, 1998). Documents also produce affective energies (Navaro-Yashin, 2007) and entities such as property, technology, or infrastructure, and particular subjects (Hull, 2012).

Documents as producers of particular subjects build on Foucauldian ideas of how the papering of classifications and categorisations in documents make up people through the registering of births, deaths, diseases, literacy, crimes, occupations, and the like (Foucault, 1988; Hacking, 1986). It is in bureaucratic processes that the separation between the "documentary person" and other aspects of personhood is produced (Hull, 2012). The notion of the documentary person draws on the fact that bureaucratic documents and documentation produce a particular kind of personhood that is based only on the information created through documentation. It is a kind of personhood that is partly withdrawn from other aspects of personhood living a life of its own in the files of the office. As such, the documents and the documentary person gain material qualities. Documents have a thingified, material quality (Riles, 2006) and social lives (Brenneis, 2006). They mobilise people, practices, and perspectives such as the "immutable mobile" map, or graph, in Latour's reading (Latour, 1986). As artefacts, they are not neutral, but politically saturated (Navaro-Yashin, 2007). They offer certain "affordances" (Gibson, 1977) that point the direction to how they should and could be used, what human action can be taken.

Understanding bureaucratic and political documents as objects connotes that they have aesthetic qualities, including particular paragraphs, words, heading, typesets, and boxes to fill in (Riles, 2006). These words, headings, typesetting, and the size of the boxes to fill in are part of creating the documentary person. As Riles (2006, p. 20) has noted, the space in such forms contain "within themselves all the terms for analysis one would need to understand or complete them". The writer may not understand exactly what is needed, but the form—what Riles calls a "self-contextualised entity"—provides answers. The size of the space in the form provides information about the expected amount of text needed to explain what the writer should explain. Through the formation of the document and then production of the documentary person for the file, the edges towards other documents and documentary persons are created. The gap appears in the break between these edges.

Meetings, like documents, enact on-going political and bureaucratic life and they often work as nodes in the on-going affairs in and between organisations. They interrupt the time/space continuum of the work processes in—and between organisations and create a space, a moment, for work processes of the organisation to move in another direction. Meetings are "architecture", "practices of circulation", and "makers" (Sandler & Thedvall, 2017). Meetings as spatial, architectural constructs constrain and enable, and they structure and configure policy practices, documents, words, decision-making processes, and subjects and subjectivities. Meetings are not simply the containers through which these things move, but they are themselves practices of circulation, whereby policy takes form and is worked out. Meetings also operate as makers of governance and management. Meetings are both the architecture and the architect. Irrespective of intention, meetings make certain processes possible and close the door to other directions of development. To understand meetings as nodes that interrupt the time/space continuum in on-going work processes in—and between organisations makes it possible to understand them as gaps between organisations.

3. Background: In-between and among Job Coaches and Social Workers

In Sweden, social work is the legal responsibility of the municipalities and is governed by Swedish law under the Social Services Act (Swedish Code of Statutes, 2001). Some social work may be outsourced to private firms, but the investigation and assessment of clients, the so-called exercise of authority, which is the case in relation to social assistance benefits, has to be performed within the realms of the public sector. The social workers in the social assistance benefits office work to determine if clients are eligible for social assistance. If they are, the social workers should work with the client to get them financially self-sufficient. "Financially self-sufficient" could, in this case, mean to receive an early pension or social insurance, but the ideal is to get a job. The Swedish welfare state is firmly rooted in the idea of employment as the norm. In this model, those living off the state through social assistance should be the exception. In later years, since a conservative-liberalist government took office in 2006, the norm of employment has been further emphasised to also include those who are considered to be 'far from' the labour market—the sick, the physically and mentally disabled, the recovering addicts—who should be investigated and tested to determine if they are able to work, at least part-time.

This work is organised through the municipal jobcentres. These are placed at the municipal level, while the Swedish public employment agency is a state agency which organises employment agencies through-

out Sweden. The Swedish public employment agency has, apart from job placement, counselling, work-related rehabilitation, and the directing of people to labour market programmes, the role of ensuring that people receiving unemployment benefits are at the disposal of the labour market. The municipal jobcentres, as opposed to the Swedish public employment service, work solely with the unemployed with social problems and/or people receiving social assistance benefits. These jobcentres have been in place since 1998 but became a general standard in 2008. At the jobcentres, the clients are assigned a job coach and a job matcher to find work that is suitable for the client. In order to do so, they map and assess the client's ability to work and they have a number of measures at their disposal that are specifically catered to them.

Many, if not most, of the clients on social assistance should be referred to the jobcentres. The end goal of both the social services and the jobcentres is for the client to become financially self-reliant, preferably through work. This necessarily involves collaboration between the social assistance office and the jobcentres. In the municipality where I did fieldwork, the social services and jobcentres are not organised as a one-stop shop (Minas, 2014), but belonged to the social services administration and the labour market administration respectively, and the work organisation did not support working together. Collaboration between the organisations instead had to be performed through routines. The assessment-instrument by the four documents that was described at the beginning of the article was part of realising collaboration and the main purpose of the assessment-instrument network meetings was to support the use of the four documents, thereby establishing collaboration.

The four documents mirrored how the work was organised in the social assistance office and between the social assistance office and the jobcentres. The social assistance benefits offices are often divided into two units: the intake unit and the social assistance unit. The intake unit makes the initial assessment of whether the person should be handled by the social services or not, and they use document number 1 to do the vetting. They then send the client to the jobcentre, where the job coach uses document number 2. In the social services office where I did fieldwork, the intake unit also handled document number 3, though in other offices this might be done by the social assistance unit. The social assistance unit takes over if a client has long-term problems and needs more resources to become financially self-reliant. The social assistance unit should then use document number 4, the plan for change, together with the jobcentre.

4. Methods: Meetings, Networks, and Documents

The article is based on data from an on-going ethnographic study, performed with Lovisa Näslund Stockholm University, of the Swedish Social Services, more specifically social assistance benefits within a municipality in Sweden. The research is based on participant observation, interviews, and document studies. During the autumn of 2016, spring and autumn of 2017, and autumn of 2018, we have performed participant observation, sometimes together, sometimes separately, doing "meeting ethnography" (Sandler & Thedvall, 2017) in different practitioners' networks meetings: fourteen hours in the assessment-instrument network meetings; twelve hours in the Head of Unit network meetings; fifteen hours in the method network meetings; six hours in the application (in Swedish: *tillämpning*) network; and two hours in the Lex Sarah network meeting.

We have also performed participant observation in different workplace education meetings within the municipality: three hours in the introduction to assessment meetings; fourteen hours in the orientation days for new hires meeting; seven hours on the orientation day for new hires for social assistance meetings; three hours in the Head of Unit introduction to assessment meetings; and seven hours in motivational interviewing (in relation to the assessment-instrument) meetings. Finally, we have attended a variety of meetings in a social assistance benefits office such as case managing meetings, motivational interviewing group meetings, unit meeting; morning meetings and workplace meetings.

During the meetings, we took field notes of what was said and to which we have afterwards added notes on the atmosphere of the room, the seating, attendees, and informal conversations during breaks, beginnings and ends. We have also performed participant observation of the everyday workings of the social assistance benefits office from which we also have field notes. Furthermore, we have interviewed, together and separately, nine (9) people within the administration and thirty (30) social workers from different social assistance benefits offices for about one to one and a half hours each, asking about work processes and instruments. This fieldwork has been performed in order to understand the social services sector in general and social work within social assistance in particular. It is part of a larger project where we investigate the use of different knowledge models and instruments and how it affects the working environment in the social services. One of these instruments was the assessment documents that are in focus in this article. This fieldwork serves as a necessary background for my understanding of the collaboration between the social services and the jobcentres in the municipality.

Through this fieldwork, I developed an interest in the collaboration between the social services and the jobcentres in the municipality. As mentioned in the introduction, the social assistance benefits offices celebrated collaboration by necessity. Their clients often had several social problems that were not solvable by the social services alone. The jobcentre was such an actor, and by performing participant observation in the different networks and workplace education meetings that were jointly run by the social services administration and the

labour market administration in the municipality, I was able to study collaboration in situ through meetings. Of the meetings mentioned above, the collaborative meetings included the assessment-instrument-network meetings, the introduction-to-the-assessment-instrument meeting, Head-of-Unit-introduction-to-assessment-instrument meetings, and the motivational-interviewing-in-relation-to-the-assessment-instrument meeting (altogether twenty-seven hours, ninety-two pages of field notes). In these meetings, the main purpose was to establish collaboration between the social assistance benefit offices and the jobcentres, and the main tool worked on in the meetings to continue this collaboration outside of the meeting rooms was the assessment-instrument of the four documents. The municipality, the social assistance benefits office, the jobcentre, and the people that appear in the article are anonymous.

I came to understand the meetings I attended as gaps in the everyday work processes of social workers and job coaches. It was a space that halted on-going work and where they were set to collaborate and find ways to continue this collaboration outside of the meeting rooms. I use the gap as an analytical tool to understand these collaborator meetings as productive spaces where work processes are halted and uncertain. One of the instruments discussed and worked on in order to make collaboration a standard way of working between the social services and the jobcentres was the assessment-instrument documents in its four parts: the "telephone-interview assessment", document number 1 (six pages); the "job plan", document number 2 (seven pages); the "assessment during the client's first visit", document number 3 (five pages); and the "plan for change", document number 4 (two pages). I have examined these four documents, analysing the information the documents produce about the persons through its questions, in order to understand the gaps and bridges in the content of the four documents. I have done so by using the notion of the documentary person (Hull, 2012). In this analytical work, I have also used the user manual for the assessment-instrument developed by the municipality (twenty-six pages) to understand the intent of the documents.

I have also analysed the documents as material objects in their own right, and what it signifies for them to be divided into four different documents when, in reality, they should be combined into one and the same.

5. Producing Documentary Person(s)

The four documents were set to produce one documentary person that was mapped and assessed and through the process should be turned into a financially self-reliant person. If the social services establish that a person was in need of, and entitled to, social assistance benefits then they should refer the client to the jobcentre for a job coach to map the client's work experience, health, education, previous interventions, and ability to work. The client should then return to the social services, which would continue to investigate the client to understand if there were any social hindrances for getting a job. Finally, the job coach and the social worker should make a plan for change with the client. All this should be performed in a sequence using assessment documents number 1 to number 4.

Assessment document number 1, "telephone-interview assessment", is used in the first meeting with the client. Document number 1 includes questions such as the name, identification number, civil status, living conditions, residence permit, reasons for applying, children, employment situation, possible health insurance, and financial situation of the household to determine if the person is entitled to social assistance benefits. Issues that need to be investigated are whether the person has the right to be in Sweden if the person belongs to the municipality s/he is applying to, efforts to find other ways to support herself/himself, other benefits, and assets and debt. The documentary person that is produced through document number 1 is the financial situation's person. It is a mapping of the person's household, her/his financial situation, and efforts to find support in other ways. It is a survey of efforts and means.

Assessment document number 2, "job plan", is used by the jobcentre and includes the name, identification number, education, previous work experience, ability to work, hindrances (such as convicted of a felony), and whether the client has a CV. The client is also asked to do a self-assessment of his/her possibilities of getting a job. Again, the client is asked about living conditions and family situation as in document number 1, but this time in relation to how it affects their ability to work. What needs to be investigated is what languages are spoken and if Swedish is among them, if the person has a driver's licence, if he/she reports to the regular employment agency, upholds some kind of employment benefits, if the person's mental and physical health will affect their ability to work. The person also needs to determine what needs to be done to improve her/his chances to find a job. The documentary person produced in document number 2 is the working person: the ability to work and the qualifications for doing so. It is a survey of the education, work experience, and ability to work.

Assessment document number 3, "assessment at the client's first visit", is used by the social services at the client's first visit to the social services. If document number 1 is used to quickly assess whether the person is eligible during an on-going crisis, document number 3 is used to dig further into the possible reasons for the need for social assistance benefits and investigate whether assets have been sold, such as a car or house that could be used to support the client. It again includes questions to investigate the financial situation of the household and the living conditions. It also includes similar questions as in document number 2 regarding education, previous employment, internships, or work training. Furthermore, the client needs to make a self-assessment of physical and mental health and if it affects his/her ability to work.

There are questions asked about possible addiction issues, access to a social network and family, children, possible violence and threats in close relations, legal situation, social situation, and short-term and long-term goals. The documentary person produced is the social problem person: the ability to work is documented through physical and mental health, social networks, addiction, violence, and legal situation. It is a survey of social abilities, social problems, and the continued right to receive social assistance benefits.

Assessment document number 4, the "plan for change", should preferably be completed with the job coach in a three-party meeting with the client, but most often it is used by the social services alone when investigating clients that have been more than three months within the social services. Document number 4 focuses on change and on what the client wants to achieve. The client has to find the answer to questions such as what the benefits would be for her/him to become financially self-sufficient, what needs to be done to reach the goals that were defined, the steps to take, and possible hindrances, as well as the time plan and monitoring. The client also has to make a self-assessment of the ability to be self-supporting within three months. Finally, the client needs to agree to make certain efforts towards becoming self-supporting. If these efforts are not made, then the client might lose the right to social assistance benefits. The documentary person produced is the changing, motivated, empowered person working towards self-support. It is a survey of the ability to change, the support needed to change, and the actions required to make a change.

The four documents mirrored four different parts in the work process, producing four different "documentary persons": the efforts and means person; the ability and experience necessary to work person; the social abilities and social problem person; and finally the changing person. There are some bridges between the documentary persons that have to do with living conditions and family situation, and previous working experiences focusing on the ability to work. The four documents also, by their separation, form movable material entities where the edges between documents form a gap. Documents enact on-going political and bureaucratic life which also make the gaps in work processes and organisation visible. Though there were some bridges between the documents, the documentary persons were not blending, but rather emphasised the separation between them because clients had to repeat answers to the same questions. The only aspect that actually indicated that it was part of the same process was the numbers. Work was needed to make the four documents blend into one work process. This work was partly performed in meetings.

6. Meetings as Smoothing Machines

One of the three-hour assessment-instrument network meetings took place in the spring of 2017. Those able to attend these meetings were representatives from the jobcentres and the social assistance offices in the municipality. Not all came to each meeting, but there were about twenty people in the room on the four occasions when they held the meetings during the year (2017; we did fieldwork in all four). The people in the room were experienced job coaches and social workers.

We were sitting in a meeting room in the labour market administration in the municipality. The room was filled with social workers and job coaches seated along the u-shaped table. Ada and Gunilla, who were administrators from the social services administration and the labour market administration respectively, were chairing the meeting. Gunilla explained that a study of the assessment documents had shown that the four documents worked as separate documents. She emphasised that they should work as *one* routine. This was one and a half years ago, she said, and since then we have been working to make it operational. Gunilla continued and reminded them that they had been working on the information transfer between the different documents.

In the digital systems of the jobcentre, they had now created a space which both the job coaches and social workers could access. After document number 1 was completed by the social services through the telephone interview, the client would be remitted to the jobcentre through the space created in the digital system. Through discussions in a former meeting, they had agreed on what information was needed. The transferred information should be of importance for the job coach, such as the need for an interpreter, whether the client was on part-time sick leave, or if the client was waiting for a decision from the unemployment benefits fund.

When the jobcentre had their first meeting with the client and completed document number 2, the social workers and job coaches in the network agreed that the information that needed to be transferred should relate to the ability to work. It might be the case that the client does not have full-time childcare, or other difficulties impeding them from taking on a job and following the planned course of action. The information transfer from document number 3 should feed into document number 4, but the jobcentre should also be informed through the digital system regarding social issues that affect the client's planning at the jobcentre. One must assess whether there is, for example, an addiction problem or need for support that affects the client's ability to find and keep a job.

The social workers and the job coaches had worked on what information needed to be transferred in the network meeting, but they had also worked towards being able to share the information through the digital system. In and around the meetings was one of the few spaces where they had the time to think about the process and how it would be best performed, so a great deal of work was actually done in the meeting through breakout sessions, working in small groups. The sharing of information in the digital system was a result of such work.

Gunilla informed us that this was now implemented. The information could be transferred within the shared space of the digital system. In this way, the assessment-instrument network meetings worked as a "smoothing machine", (Bogard, 2000) blending and smoothing the gaps between documents, turning separate work processes into one by contributing to forming routines for working in collaboration through the digital system.

The meetings also worked as liminal, productive spaces where issues could be brought up that might set off the process in another direction. One illustration was given when one of the representatives of a social services office asked about the Secrecy Act: "What can we actually write in the information transfer box in the digital system?" Gunilla stepped in and explained that there is a button in the digital system called the "consent-button", which meant that they had to ask the client if they could share the information with the jobcentre and this button made the information transfer possible. One of the social workers from another office objected and said that this button only ensured that the client agreed that the social worker could contact the jobcentre, not transfer the actual information. There was a discussion in the group regarding whether the information transfer that they set out to do was actually illegal. It might be that they would not be able to do this at all. At one point, the whole process seemed to be turned on its head. Ada, chairing the meeting, quickly contacted the lawyers within the municipality to ask about the Secrecy Act and consent. She returned with information. If clients agreed to contact between the social services and the jobcentre, they had also agreed that the information could be transferred. The meeting here became the gap, the liminal space, where how to work and what is needed to be done in order for the four documents to be understood as one routine was up for debate, not stabilised. The meeting became a productive space that opened up the work process and laid it bare for inspection and possible alterations.

6.1. The Information Transfer Box as a Productive Space

A half-year later the work process was laid bare for inspection again in the meeting, opening up a space for moving in another direction. Gunilla started the meeting by reminding the group that they had been working with information transfer between the social services and the jobcentre and it should work as routine. Then Gunilla said:

> But then I have understood that the routine has not become a routine. This isn't an interrogation. We would like to know how you work. Do your social workers transfer information to the jobcentre's digital system? Are you able to find the place where to put the information, technically, in the digital system? And you, who are working as job coaches: Do you transfer information to the social workers? It's important that you tell us what you need to make it work. The politicians think this is already implemented.

Gunilla and Ada encouraged everyone to share by going around the table. Karin from social services office Elm said that they had understood how to do it, but not many of the social workers were actually doing it. She continued and said that they, in fact, did not send that many to the jobcentre. The next in line, Malena from social services office Birch had the same story. Some of the social workers were transferring information through the digital system, especially if it was something important. She continued and said that she believed that the social workers responsible for document number 1 thought that it was enough to refer the client to the jobcentre and not transfer information. One problem she mentioned was that when the client came to her to do document number 3, they might not yet have been to the jobcentre. Similar stories were repeated around the room.

The documentary persons produced, and the materiality of the documents, created gaps between documents that were supposed to be blended through the writing of a summary of the documentary person. The information transfer box in the digital system worked the gap between the edges of the four documents. It became a productive space where moments for alternate directions where created. In this space, the obligation to write a summary of what had been discovered in their respective documents for the other department to see was treated with some ease. The network meetings worked as reminders to blend the gaps between the documents, turning the different work processes within the social services and the jobcentres into one.

6.2. The Sequence Disturbed

The fact that the jobcentre had not performed document number 2 before the social services initiated number 3 also had to do with work processes within the social services. As one representative from a social services office, Malin, said:

> It used to be that we did [document] number 1 then waited until the jobcentre had made [document] number 2, then [document] number 3. But we have changed our way of working. Now, we do number 1 and number 3 before we remit to the jobcentre. There is so much information we get when doing number 3 and sometimes this investigation shows that the client is not ready for the jobcentre.

The unit within the social services that worked with social assistance benefits was often divided into two units: the intake unit and the social assistance office. The intake unit made the initial assessment of whether the person should be handled by the social services or not, and they used document number 1 to do the vetting. In the social services office where I did fieldwork, the intake unit

also handled document number 3, though in other offices this might be done by the social assistance unit. The social assistance unit took over if a client has long-term problems and needed more resources to become financially independent. It might be clients with an addiction problem or mental disabilities, and the social assistance unit worked with the clients to try to encourage them to change and want to become financially self-reliant. The social assistance unit used document number 4, the plan for change. It should be performed together with the jobcentre, but it might also be the case that clients needed to complete a plan for change, document number 4, before they could be referred to the jobcentre. This was especially true for long-term clients dependent on social assistance benefits for several years, even decades.

In the office where I did fieldwork, they usually performed both documents number 1 and number 3, and even number 4 before they referred to the jobcentre. If that was the case, they referred directly to a three-party meeting because the clients had too many problems for the jobcentre to handle alone. In fact, some of the jobcentres did not accept clients if they had not been investigated according to number 3, because too many clients had been sent to the jobcentre who were not ready for a job coach or to find a job. This was the case for several other districts. Ebba from office Oak told us that they referred to the jobcentre after having performed both number 1 and number 3. Camilla from office Pine explained that almost all of their clients had multiple social problems. If they referred to the jobcentre, they had already performed documents number 1, number 3, and number 4, and they had also used another documentation instrument that dug deeper into the social situation of the client. In the meeting, it became obvious that the sequence between documents number 1 to number 4 was disturbed.

The gaps created by making them into four separate documents had been productively used to change the order in a way that suited the clients they had. The meeting became a productive space that opened up the work process and laid it bare for inspection and made visible how the documents were used in practice. The meeting provided alternatives to the official routine regarding the assessment documents. This, of course, had to move up the hierarchy to become a formal decision, but when I asked how the routine was now, a year later, when doing participant observation in a social assistance benefits office, performing number 1, number 3, and number 4 before referring to the jobcentre was now the routine. In other words, the meeting had made this way of working visible and, as a productive space, altered the official routine.

7. Conclusion: Gaps as Productive Spaces

In this article, I have investigated collaboration through the notion of gaps. The municipality had set up tools to encourage collaboration between the social services and the jobcentre to blend the gaps in the work process of turning social assistance benefits and jobcentre clients into financially self-reliant persons. The tools used were the four documents and the assessment-instrument meeting. By using the gap as an analytical tool, I have focused on the productiveness of the gap. I have understood gaps as an in-between position, a productive and liminal space, where different social worlds meet, creating moments for moving in alternate directions, creating alternative worlds.

The four documents were set to blend and smooth the gaps between the different worlds of social workers and job coaches to create a flow in the process of turning clients into financially self-reliant citizens by following the sequence in the documents from number 1 to number 4, viewing the client as one documentary person. The assessment-instrument network meetings were themselves a gap between organisations. They were reminders of the cut between the social services and the jobcentres while at the same time intended to work as a "smoothing machine" (Bogard, 2000) to cut and grind to cover, coat, and blend the gap between organisation and documents. The meeting itself also worked as a continuous reminder to smooth the gaps for them to disappear.

No smoothing can occur without a break, a separation (Bogard, 2000; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), and the four documents were each moveable, material entities with clear edges between documents, forming gaps. Their numbers did not only belong to a particular part of the work process and different organisations, but they also each produced four different documentary persons: the financial situation person, the working person, the social problem person, and the empowered person.

Social workers and job coaches continuously treated the documents separately. The document numbers and the information transfer box were meant to work as blenders between organisations, but as the sequence between the documents had been disturbed in practice due to changes in the work process, the blending of the gap between them was not realised.

During fieldwork, I saw how the professionals noted the gaps, but they also showed the productiveness of the gap between the documents, as the gaps made it possible to change the order. The social workers and the job coaches had collaborated in this process of changing the order. It was not the intended collaboration, but it grew out of pragmatism. The assessment-instrument network meeting worked as a productive space for this to happen. It laid the work processes bare for inspection, making it possible to move in another direction, making sure that the routine was not focused on the sequence, but instead on what was working in practice. The meeting became a liminal, productive space whereby practices circulated, policies took form, and policies were worked out. The gap could then be understood as a space where collaboration is played out and formed rather than the pitfall that should be blended and smoothed.

Acknowledgments

I would like to start by extending my sincere gratitude towards the social workers and the municipal administrators that welcomed us to conduct our fieldwork among them. I would also like to thank my colleague and collaborator on this project, Lovisa Näslund, with whom I have had many stimulating discussions, not just regarding this article but the project as a whole. My thanks also go to my meeting collaborator Jen Sandler for our discussions on meetings, which have contributed to the writings of this article. This article was first developed for a workshop called "Imbrications and Interstices Between Welfare Service Organisations" organised by Bagga Bjerge (at Aarhus University) and Tobias Eule (at the University of Bern) in November 2017, Aarhus University. I would like to thank those who participated in this very productive workshop. I am also grateful to Torbjörn Friberg, who made particularly helpful suggestions when I was finishing the article. I would like to thank the reviewers who gave me the opportunity to clarify my argument. And finally, I would like to thank AFA Insurance research grants, whose financial support for this project has been invaluable.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

References

Axelsson, S. B., & Axelsson, R. (2009). From territoriality to altruism in interprofessional collaboration and leadership. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, *23*(4), 320–330.

Bogard, W. (2000). Smoothing machines and the constitution of society. *Cultural Studies*, *14*(2), 269–294.

Brenneis, D. (2006). Reforming promise. In A. Riles (Ed.), *Documents: Artifacts of modern knowledge* (pp. 41–70). Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Foucault, M. (1988). The political technology of individuals. In L. H. Martin, H. Gutman, & P. H. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self. A seminar with Michel Foucault*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.

Germundsson, P., Hillborg, H., & Danermark, B. (2011). Interagency collaboration in vocational rehabilitation for persons with mental health problems: The perspective of the service users and the professionals. *Disability & Society*, *26*(6), 699–713.

Gibson, J. J. (1977). The theory of affordances. In R. Shaw & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Perceiving, acting, and knowing: Toward an ecological psychology*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hacking, I. (1986). Making up people. In T. C. Heller, M. Sosna, & D. E. Wellbery (Eds.), *Reconstructing individualism. Autonomy, individuality, and the self in western thought*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Harper, R. H. (1998). *Inside the IMF: An ethnography of documents, technology and organisational action*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Hull, M. S. (2012). Documents and bureaucracy. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *41*(1), 251–267.

Huxham, C., & Vangen, S. (2005). *Managing to collaborate: The theory and practice of collaborative advantage*. London: Routledge.

Latour, B. (1986). Visualisation and cognition. Drawing things together. In H. Kuklick & E. Long (Eds.), *Knowledge and society. Studies in the sociology of culture past and present* (pp. 1–40, Vol. 6). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Martin-Rodriguez, L. S., Beaulieu, M. D., Amour, D., & Ferrada-Videla, M. (2005). The determinants of successful collaboration: A review of theoretical and empirical studies. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, *19*(1), 132–147.

Minas, R. (2014). One-stop shops: Increasing employability and overcoming welfare state fragmentation? *International Journal of Social Welfare*, *23*(1), 40–53.

Navaro-Yashin, Y. (2007). Make-believe papers, legal forms and the counterfeit. *Anthropological Theory*, *7*(1), 79–98.

Povinelli, E. A. (2011). *Economies of abandonment. Social belonging and endurance in late liberalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Riles, A. (2006). *Documents: Artifacts of modern knowledge*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Sandler, J., & Thedvall, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Meeting ethnography. Meetings as key technologies of contemporary governance, development, and resistance*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Swedish Code of Statutes 2001 SFS 2001:453 (Sweden)

Turner, V. W. (1995). *The ritual process: Structure and anti-structure*. New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter. (Original work published 1966)

Weber, M., Gerth, H. H., & Mills, C. W. (1946). *From Max Weber: Essays in sociology*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Widmark, C., Sandahl, C., Piuva, K., & Bergman, D. (2016). What do we think about them and what do they think about us? Social representations of interprofessional and inter-organizational collaboration in the welfare sector. *Journal of Interprofessional Care*, *30*(1), 50–55.

About the Author

Renita Thedvall is an Associate Professor in Social Anthropology at Stockholm University. Her research is based on the field of policy and organisational anthropology, with a special focus on the anthropology of bureaucracy and the state. She has explored these issues on various field sites, from the EU to preschools and social services. She has a particular interest in meetings, a topic she has investigated with Jen Sandler through the edited volume *Meeting Ethnography* (2017, Routledge).