BOUNDARY CROSSING AND EXPANSIVE LEARNING IN EXPERT ORGANIZATIONS

EXAMPLES FROM THREE CHANGE LABORATORIES

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INTRODUCTION

- Organizational boundaries are a theoretically rich and much-studied phenomenon (e.g., Santos & Eisenhardt, 2005; Tuunainen, 2005; Ringel, Hiller & Zietsma, 2018), also in CHAT (Kerosuo, 2006; Kerosuo & Toivianen, 2011)
- Projects using the Change Laboratory method have been little studied from the point of view of organizational boundaries and their crossing
- Our study increases understanding of the possibilities of crossing organizational boundaries in the expansive learning processes of work communities
- The three expert organizations of our study are 1) a teacher training school, 2) university hospital's outpatient clinics and 3) a universities' entrepreneurship community

BOUNDARIES AND EXPANSIVE LEARNING IN CHANGE LABORATORIES

Organizational boundaries:

- socially, culturally and historically constructed and developed (Engeström et al., 1995; Kerosuo, 2006)
- socially defined and thus constantly evolving
- appearing between and within activity systems

Boundary crossing can be an expansive learning process, during which boundaries can be preserved, strengthened or changed.

The CL method as a tool for boundary crossing – boundaries as spaces of learning.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) What boundaries within and between activity systems were identified in the CLs?

2) How was the expansive learning process associated with identifying and crossing boundaries?

METHODS

Research contexts & data collection:

 Change Laboratory 1: Teacher training school (2015)

 Change Laboratory 2: University hospital's outpatient clinics (2016)

 Change Laboratory 3: Universities' entrepreneurship community (2016)

Analysis:

- Starting point: 3rd generation activity theory (e.g., Engeström & Sannino, 2010)

- Composite narrative approach (Willis, 2019) enables the presentation of complex events from different contexts in a concise and chronologically progressing form, reflecting the viewpoints of multiple participants.

FINDINGS: CL 1 – TEACHER TRAINING SCHOOL

Boundaries emerging from the analysis of the work activity:

1. Need for cooperation and teamwork was recognized, but hindered by the differences in teachers' ways of thinking and disbelief in the possibility of change
2. Reliance on traditional leadership thinking and organizational hierarchy → desire for "stronger instructional leadership"

Earlier boundary-crossing solutions:
teams for particular small-scale tasks (Christmas celebrations, swimming education or specific projects)

Leadership and administration (principal)

Instruction (teacher)
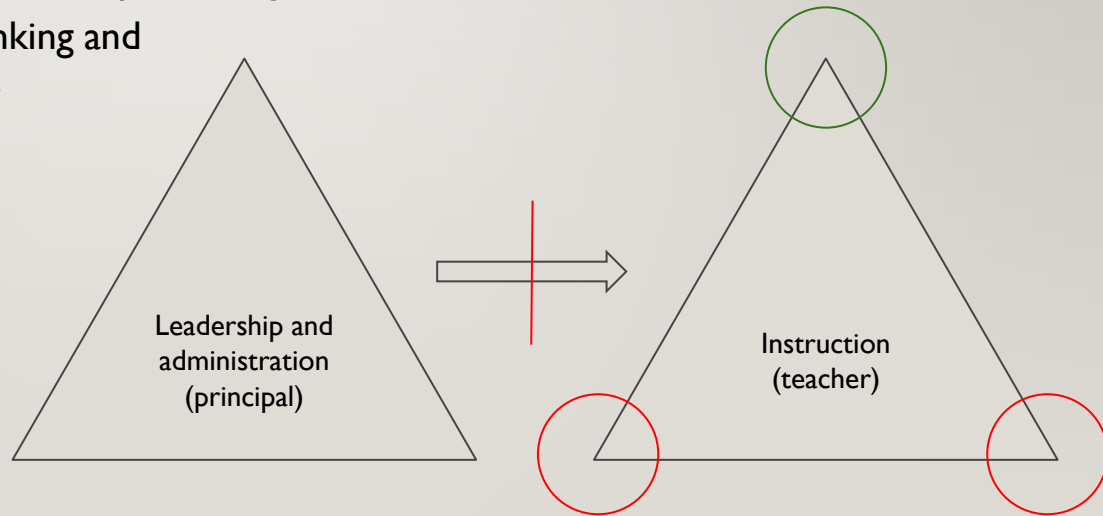
FINDINGS: CL 1 – TEACHER TRAINING SCHOOL

Analysing the activity – identifying boundaries

"Compass model": a tool for boundary-crossing was modelled during the expansive learning process

- Compass metaphor for distributing leadership across the organization
- Duties, responsibilities and division of labour between
  1) principals,
  2) instructional steering group,
  3) autonomous teacher teams (grade-level and task-based), and
  4) the general teachers' meeting
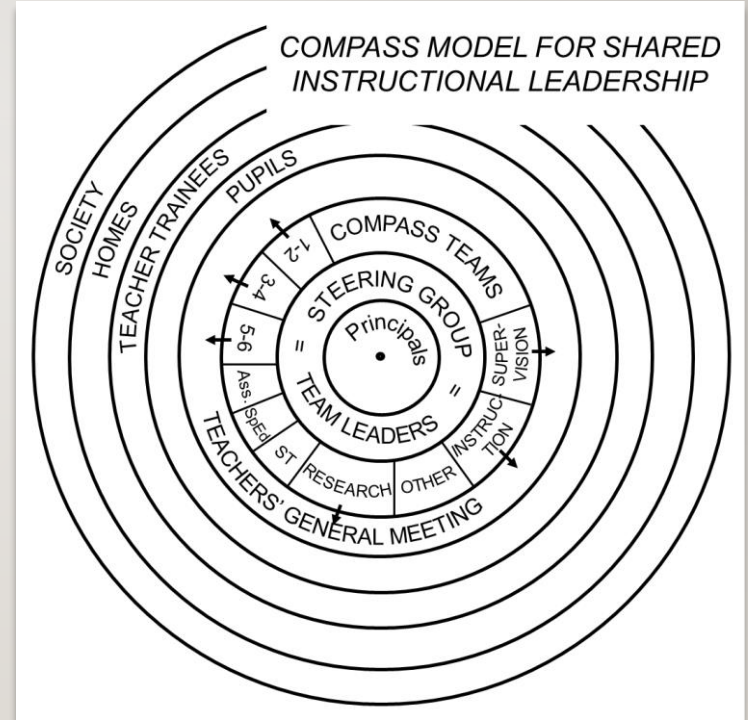
FINDINGS: CL 2 – HOSPITAL'S OUTPATIENT CLINICS

- Background: a need to merge the hospital's eleven outpatient clinics into a new children's and women's hospital
- Three distinct but connected activity systems
- Eleven highly specialized outpatient clinics
- Recognised key boundaries:
  - Distinct objects of activity of professional groups
  - Specialization of clinics and their cooperation in the future organization
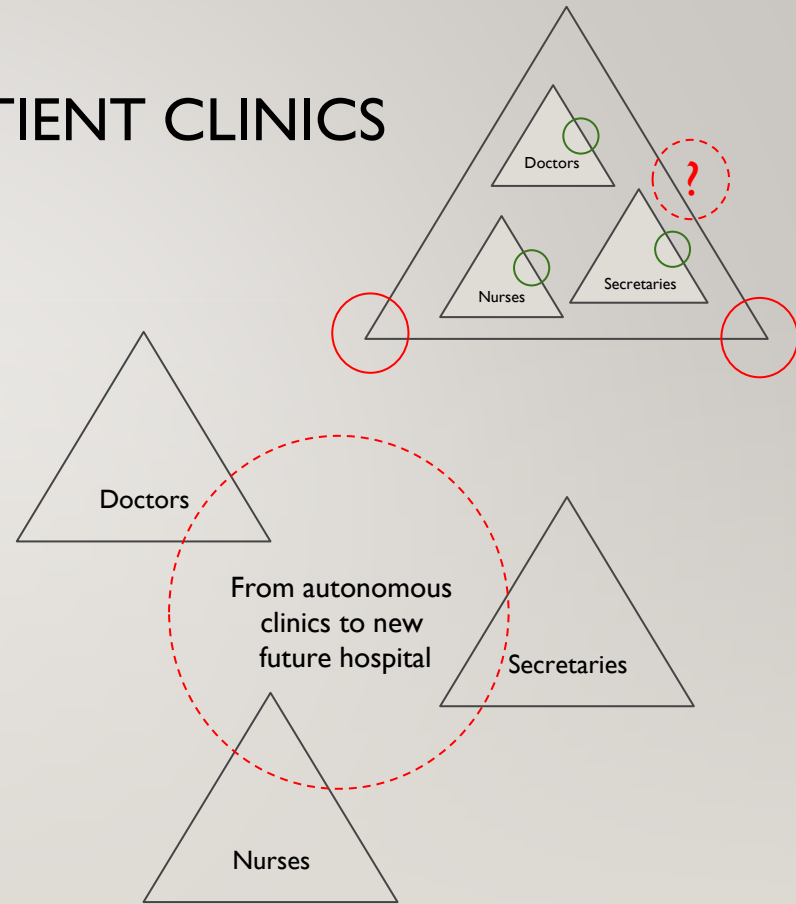
FINDINGS: CL 2 – HOSPITAL'S OUTPATIENT CLINICS

- An activity map draft presented by a doctor was edited together to model a new way of working

- The activity map mediated crossing boundaries between organizational units and professional specializations

Lasten pkl:n vastaanotot toiminnallisena mallina 2016

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8	inf L		reu L **iso**	reu L **iso**	reu L		reu L	reu L	reu H	reu L	dia L
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FINDINGS: CL 3 – UNIVERSITIES' ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMUNITY

- Project's EU funding was ending → need to redefine the community's mission

- Boundaries emerging from analysis of the cooperation:
  - Between the community's parent organizations: very different historically developed objects of activity and expertise (research – supporting business)

  - Operating logic of the community vs. operating logic of each parent organization

  - How the community connects to each parent organization and how is the community's purpose viewed → problematic object of activity

University of applied sciences

Entre-preneurship community ?

Research university

Municipal business services
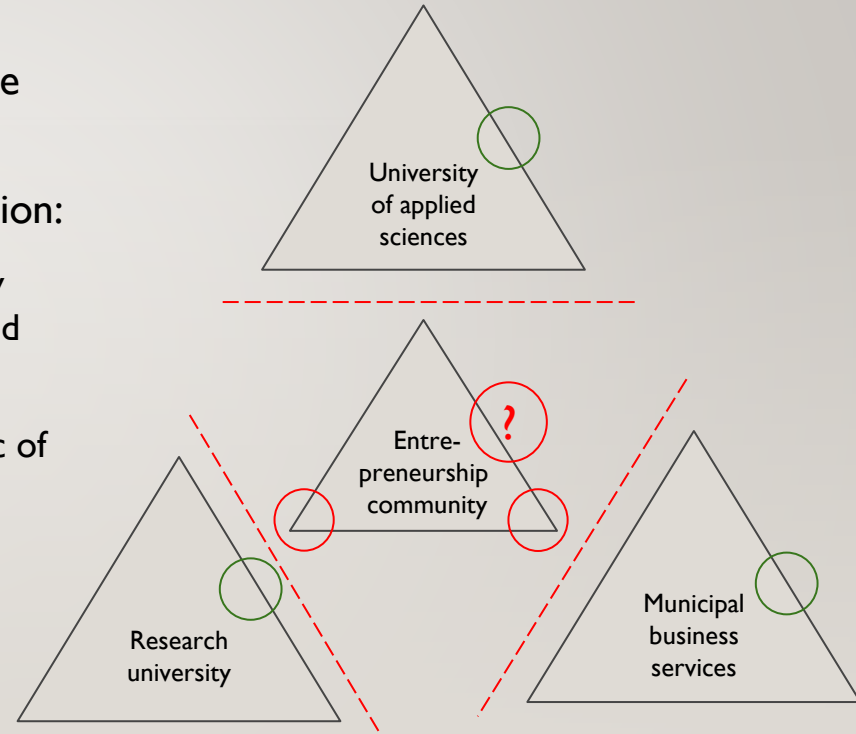
FINDINGS: CL 3 – UNIVERSITIES' ENTREPRENEURSHIP COMMUNITY

- Boundary-crossing began when it was recognized that the community did not have a shared object of activity

- A visual concept model was produced to communicate the purpose of the community's activities both internally and to the public

CO-CREATION PLATFORM FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
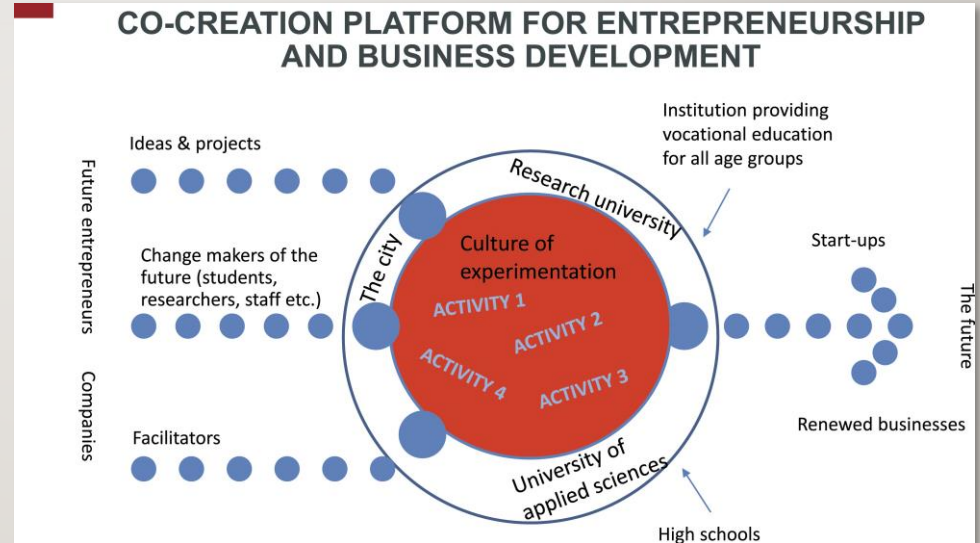
WHERE WERE BOUNDARIES IDENTIFIED?

- Between activity systems
  - how activity systems relate to each other
  - how activity systems relate to a (partially) shared object
- Within activity systems
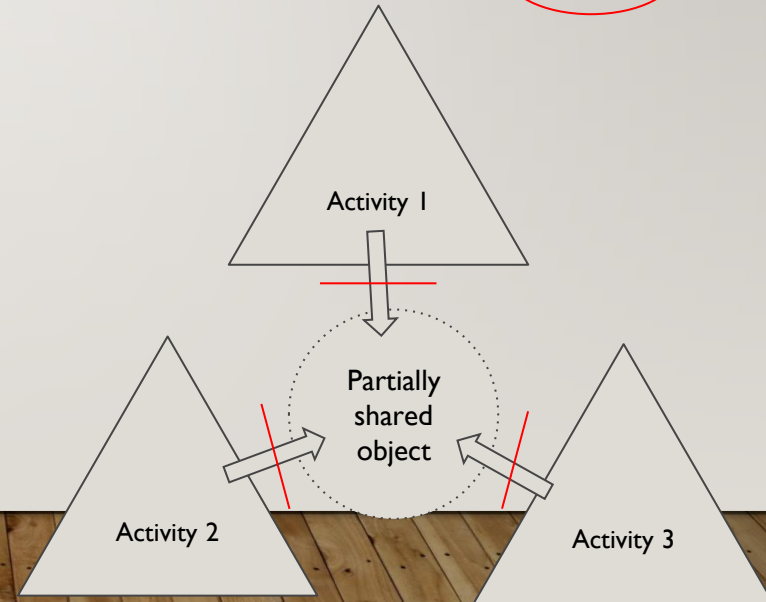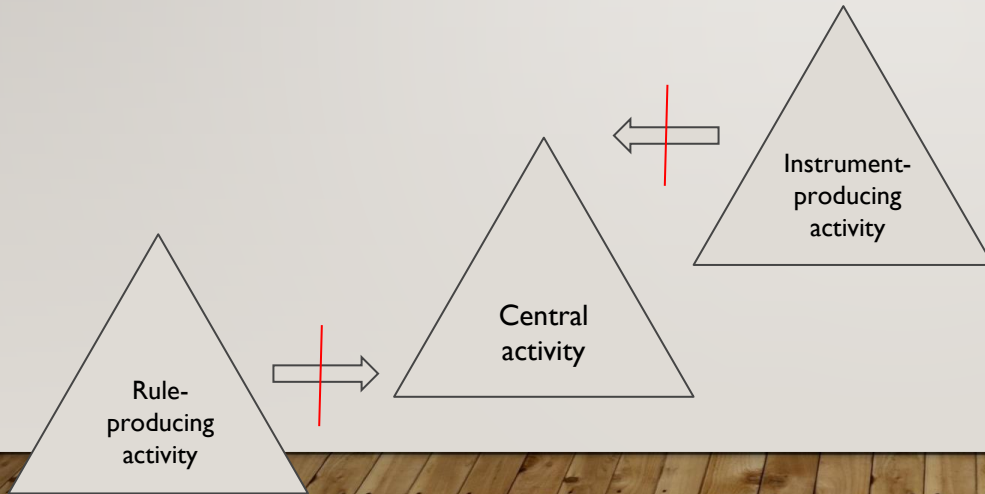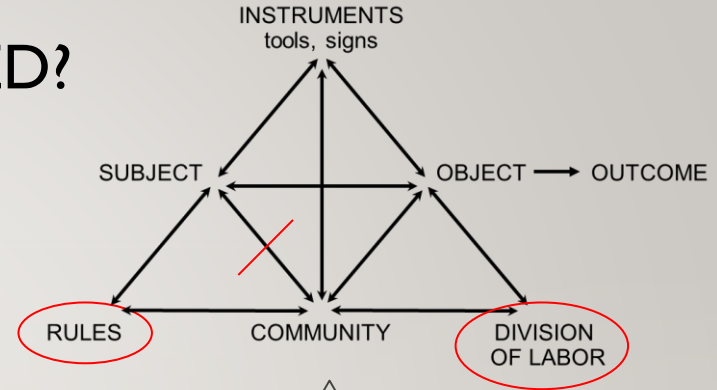
HOW DID THE MODELS ENABLE BOUNDARY-CROSSING?

Change Laboratory 1 – Teacher training school

- Compass model became a means for crossing boundaries between individual teachers in the teacher community and between leadership hierarchies

Change Laboratory 2 – University hospital's outpatient clinics

- Activity map helped streamline diverse care processes by crossing boundaries between the multiple outpatient clinics

Change Laboratory 3 – Entrepreneurship community

- Model helped in realizing a common object and began to guide the future cooperation of the universities and the municipality regarding entrepreneurship activities

TO CONCLUDE

- As working life becomes more networked and complicated, there is growing need for formative interventions concerning multiple organizations, experts and activity systems (also, Kerosuo & Toivianen, 2011; Toikka, Miettinen & Tuunainen, 2016; Sannino, 2020)
- Increasing profits-oriented management and cost control tends to raise and strengthen boundaries within and between organizations
- Boundaries and boundary-crossing should be considered when conducting Change Laboratories
- Our results illustrate the potential of CL for renewing social practices and promoting inclusiveness by helping practitioners create new ways to interact around and across organizational boundaries

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