

“We don’t feel like we are part of the project”: An analysis of tensions in the development and implementation of a public sector innovation project in Norway

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Abstract

Some of the extant literature on collaborative public sector innovation seems to assume that collaboration per se implies a positive outcome. Recent research, however, has demonstrated that innovation processes may take different shapes and trajectories depending on, for example, the collaborating actors’ diverging (or converging) perceptions of the given situation. In this article, we seek to contribute to understanding the nature of potential challenges in public sector innovation processes. We interviewed seven key actors involved in developing and implementing a new introduction programme for refugees in a municipality in Norway. The interviews explored how the innovation process evolved and how the different actors experienced their participation in the process. In this article, we use the classic four ‘moments of translation’ approach proposed by Callon (1986) to shed light on the main tensions that arose for the project team in the 18 months after the project was launched. These challenges related to why the innovation was realised, how such an innovation should be operationalised, for whom the innovation was targeted and whose innovation project the project was initially. In conclusion, we argue that to address the tensions that may arise in any collaborative project, innovation leaders must establish a ‘structure for collaboration’ that includes a space in which to acknowledge and potentially solve emerging challenges.

Keywords: Public service innovation, collaborative innovation, actor-network theory, social enterprise

Introduction

Collaborative perspectives have long been central in public sector innovation studies (Sørensen & Torfing, 2011). These studies have typically explored how collaboration across different perspectives, experiences, knowledge bases and competencies drives innovation (Sørensen & Torfing, 2011). Some of the extant literature on collaborative public sector innovation portrays collaboration as harmonious and appears to assume that collaboration per se implies a positive outcome. Contrary to this assumption, it has been argued that the collaborative innovation literature overlooks individual actors' significance and that new perspectives are needed to understand how some actors, but not others, manage to translate innovative visions into new practices in specific contexts (Meijer, 2014; Windrum, 2008). Drawing on translation theory, Røvik (2007) introduced the concept of the 'capable translator'. A capable translator is an actor with detailed knowledge of a new idea, of the context from which the idea is exported and of the context in which the idea seeks realisation. The 'capable translator' must possess specific personal traits, knowledge bases and skills that he or she employs to convince others of his or her understanding of the novel idea (Røvik, 2007). In applying translation approaches to public sector innovation processes, research has demonstrated that innovation processes may take different shapes and trajectories depending on the collaborating actors' diverging (or converging) perceptions of what the problem actually is and how it should best be solved (e.g., Gray & Ren, 2014; Magnussen, 2016; Myklebø, 2019).

In this article, we seek to further understand the nature of the potential challenges facing public sector innovation processes. Methodologically, we interviewed seven key actors involved in developing and implementing a new introduction programme for refugees in a municipality in Norway. The interviews explored how the innovation process evolved and how the different actors experienced their participation in it. The initiative was defined as a collaborative innovation project and obtained funding from the County Administration and Norwegian Directorate of Diversity and Integration (IMDi). In this article, we neither explore this new introduction programme's content nor the participants' experiences. Rather, using the classic four 'moments of translation' approach proposed by Callon (1986), we analyse the experiences

of the key actors involved in developing and implementing the programme to shed light on the main tensions that arose in the project team in the first 18 months after the project's launch. In particular, we discuss tensions related to *why* innovation was realised, *how* such innovation should be operationalised, *for whom* the innovation was targeted and *whose* innovation project the project was initially. In conclusion, we argue that to address the tensions that may arise in any collaborative project, it is crucial to establish a 'structure for collaboration' that includes a communicative space in which to acknowledge and potentially solve emerging challenges and oppositional views among the collaborating actors.

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows: first, the background and context for the new introduction programme under investigation are described. The theoretical framework is then outlined, as are the methodological choices and considerations. The main findings are presented next, followed by the discussion and concluding remarks.

Background and Context

For nearly 20 years, the introduction programme for refugees has been offered in Norway as an integrative initiative aimed at enabling refugees to quickly find work or enter education or training (Djuve & Kavli, 2015, 2018). According to the Introduction Act (2005), participants should be offered Norwegian language and social studies classes and on-the-job training or other working life preparations. Participation in the introduction programme is both a right and a duty for refugees, who receive an introduction benefit¹ while taking part in the programme. The introduction programme is offered in the municipality in which the refugee is settled and is a collaborative effort, normally between two public sector organisations: the Refugee Integration Office and the Adult Education Centre (Myklebø, 2019). The Refugee Integration Office generally assumes responsibility for refugees' working life preparations and overall learning ambitions during their participation in the introduction programme, while the Adult Education Centre is responsible for delivering Norwegian language and social studies classes. Due to disappointing introduction programme results in many parts of the country

¹ An income support payment

(e.g., Bredal & Orupabo, 2014; Djuve & Kavli, 2015; Kavli et al., 2007), various initiatives have been encouraged recently, including new introduction programmes, developed by the municipalities at the urging of the IMDi. In policy papers, the government has also called for innovation in the introduction programmes, especially for women with no formal qualifications, such as through social entrepreneurship (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019).

The project under scrutiny is being carried out in the 'Seaside Municipality', a medium-sized municipality of 25,000–40,000 inhabitants. The Head of this municipality's Refugee Integration Office and her colleagues remarked that the introduction programmes for refugees in the area had had disappointing results in terms of both participants' relatively low scores on the Norwegian exams and too few participants obtaining paid work after completing the programme. In 2018, the Head and the municipal business advisor contacted a group of researchers² to discuss how to address this problem. A decision was reached to apply for funding to develop and implement a new introduction programme for refugee women. This new introduction programme was to have two core principles: *empowerment*, to highlight the participants as 'competent and skilled persons', and *communicative language teaching*, to position linguistic interaction as both a means and a goal. To operationalise these principles, the project proposed establishing a social enterprise in which participants could learn language and work-related knowledge while practising a task in which they already had expertise: cooking.

Funding to run a pilot project was obtained from the IMDi and the County Administration. The main target group for the pilot project was refugee women with little or no formal qualifications and an interest in cooking. The leader of the Refugee Integration Office became the project leader for the pilot. In the fall of 2018, the project leader recruited a programme coordinator (a chef), two Norwegian language teachers and 10–12 participants, including both literate and illiterate refugee women. In January 2019, even before the new programme coordinator had started, the programme was launched by the project leader. Cooking took place within a public sector social enterprise established alongside the new introduction programme. This social enterprise's aim was to provide a training context for the introduction

² Researchers from the research institutions NORCE and Western Norway University of Applied Sciences.

programme participants and potentially a future workplace for some of them. Customers were made aware of the enterprise via social media marketing, and they supported it by ordering food for various occasions. During the first year of the pilot, the programme coordinator and the language teachers received some training from an invited Danish expert on how to implement a communicative teaching approach. At the time of writing this article, the pilot project had been running for two years.

The project was initiated by the project leader, who travelled to other municipalities for inspiration and learning, established contact with researchers, contributed to writing the applications and was formally listed as the project leader in these applications. However, the respective roles of the collaborating organisations and their employees were neither defined prior to nor during the implementation of the project. As will be illustrated in the analysis, this caused some challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Innovation refers to the development and implementation of novel ideas that deviate from established and habitual practices (Hartley et al., 2013; Osborne & Brown, 2011). Innovation is not only about inventing 'something new' but also about developing and implementing this 'new' element such that it becomes accepted in a given context (Fuglesang, 2010). While private sector innovation has long received scholarly attention, research on public sector innovation only emerged in the 1990s (Kattel et al., 2013). Public sector innovation can be defined as efforts or processes that enhance the capacity of public sector organisations to address social or societal problems, such as by improving the content or organisation of services (Damanpour & Schneider, 2009).

By applying a translation perspective to our analysis, we can explore how and why tensions emerge in the innovation process and how different key actors manage them. According to the actor-network approach (ANT), any diffusion of innovation depends on the mobilisation of support for an idea or practice in a network. This mobilisation is done by building relevant alliances to realise the innovation (Callon, 1986). However, conflicting interests may emerge, placing the realisation of the innovation at risk by impeding the 'capable translator' from creating necessary alliances. Thus, a 'capable translator' must possess some degree of power. However, this can foster power asymmetries, which may prevent certain actors from voicing their opinions or bringing new

ideas to the table (Torfing et al., 2009). As Torfing argues (2016, p. 133), entering 'a dialogue of the deaf' in which leaders cannot hear others' voices can be detrimental to the collaborative process.

To understand the tensions described by the key actors in the innovation project under investigation in this article and why they came about, we employ Callon's (1986) four 'moments of translation'. Callon's first phase is *problematization*, which refers to a 'translator' defining an observed social problem. The translator must convince others that his or her solution is the most appropriate for addressing the problem. It is important for the translator to establish a system of alliances and to render him or herself a natural facilitator within this system to continuously influence translation. The second phase, *interessement*, entails a set of actions by which the translator imposes his or her views on the actors involved in translation. To do so, the translator will seek to prevent others from defining the problem or the solution to the problem differently, such as by preventing competing definitions from being voiced (Callon, 1986). The third phase, *enrolment*, involves assigning roles to the collaborating partners in the translation process and ensuring their willingness to accept their roles when the translator's definition has become the prevailing definition for the initiative. The final phase, *mobilisation*, concerns the degree to which the collaborating actors play their roles as defined during *enrolment* and the degree to which innovation is carried out as defined during *problematization*, thereby making the innovation incontestable and credible (Callon, 1986). However, dissidence is prone to arise. While dissidence may in some instances spur unintended and innovative solutions, in other instances, as will be illustrated in this article, it may constitute a bottleneck.

Research Design and Methods

To answer our research questions, we used a qualitative design. We interviewed all relevant actors involved in developing and implementing the introduction programme in the 'Seaside Municipality', including the project owner, the project leader and the programme coordinator, who were all employed by the Refugee Integration Office, and the Norwegian language teachers and principal, who were employed by the Adult Education Centre (see Table 1). The interviews focused on the informants' experiences of their involvement in the project, focusing on aspects such as collaboration, tensions, roles and changes.

The data for this article were collected over a period of six months. The main source of data, in addition to reading project proposals, was in-depth interviews conducted with the key actors of this project. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in 'Seaside Municipality' in 2019 and via Zoom or Microsoft Teams in 2020 due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The recordings lasted from one to one-and-a-half hours. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The interviewees' names and the name of the municipality and social enterprise have been anonymised.

Table 1 Professions and Functions of the Informants

Informant	Profession	Function
1	Director of Municipal Welfare Services	Project owner
2	Leader of Refugee Integration Services *	Project leader
3	Project coordinator*	Coordinator of cooking training, manager of the social enterprise, coordinator of the introduction programme
4	Principal of the Adult Education Centre	Leader of the teachers, mediator between the Adult Education Centre and Refugee Integration Office
5	Language teacher	Norwegian language teacher (chose to quit at an early stage)
6	Language teacher	Norwegian language teacher
7	Language teacher	Norwegian language teacher

* *These informants were interviewed twice, first separately and then, some months later, together.*

Permissions and Ethical Considerations

We obtained permission to perform this study from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (project number omitted). It should be noted that the second author assisted the project leader and her team in writing the applications for funding. While financial support to develop and implement the programme was obtained from IMDi and the County Administration, the municipality also received funding from the Regional Research Council to conduct a follow-up study of the first semester of developing and implementing this new introduction programme. The second author was part of the team undertaking that follow-up study and a co-author of the report resulting from this project. The report did not lead to any major changes to the development and implementation of the new introduction programme.

We applied a thematic analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019). After completing their initial analysis independently, the authors met for a two-day analysis workshop in spring 2020. On the first day of the workshop, we discussed the preliminary findings by identifying any issues that the actors of the collaboration project had agreed upon and any that had caused tensions. We found that all informants agreed on the overarching goal of the introduction programme, but that the employees of the Refugee Integration Office and Adult Education Centre entered the project with diverging expectations about how the new introduction programme should be developed. On the second day of the workshop, a more theoretically informed analysis was performed to identify tensions among the different actors involved in the project related to why innovation was realised, how such innovation should be operationalised, for whom the innovation was targeted, and whose innovation project the project was. Callon's moments of translation was found to be a fruitful analytical framework for understanding and explaining our findings.

Main Findings

Our findings suggest that the actors involved in the project shared the overarching goal of the new introduction programme; that is, supporting the participants to learn more Norwegian and eventually find paid work. Despite this agreement on the goal, throughout the development and implementation period, four central tensions arose that seemed to threaten the entire initiative. These tensions arose during the *problematization*, *interessement* and *enrolment*

phases identified by Callon (1986), potentially preventing advancement to the crucial *mobilisation* phase.

Problematisation: Why Should We Do This Project in the First Place?

According to Callon (1986), *problematisation* involves the translator observing a social problem and striving to gain support for his or her solution to the problem. The translator must reinforce the importance of translation and establish a network of alliances, becoming a natural facilitator in this network. The data show diverging perceptions of the problem among the employees at the Adult Education Centre and the employees at the Refugee Integration Office. That is, they differed in their understandings of why the innovation project had been developed. According to the Refugee Integration Office employees, the alternative introduction programme was launched in response to a 'crisis'. As the project owner, the Director of Municipal Welfare Services, said:

We faced a great challenge in including [refugees] in the labour market [...]. The [language] results were not that good either. [...] We were not that pleased with [the Adult Education Centre], and they [the Adult Education Centre] were probably not so pleased with us either. [...] We realised that things needed to be done differently [...] to not have an entire generation that would depend on welfare benefits. (1)

On the other hand, the Adult Education Centre employees, including the principal and the Norwegian language teachers, did not agree that there had been a 'crisis'. Nevertheless, they considered the new introduction programme 'valuable' and an 'important alternative' for the defined target group. This view is clearly expressed in the following quote:

I believe that [the new introduction programme] is important, especially for women with families [...] and with little or no education who are about to embark on a long educational journey [in Norway] and eventually get a permanent job. [...] It is important that there is an alternative introduction programme for them where they can carry out practical work while at the same time being trained not only in the Norwegian language. (4)

A possible explanation for these diverging perceptions was raised by the project leader, as expressed in the following quote:

I have always felt a strong commitment [to the project] myself, but have I been able to convey this commitment or ownership to the whole team? Why is everybody not as enthusiastic about the new introduction programme as I am?
(2)

The data suggest that over the first 14–16 months of the innovation project, the project leader struggled to establish a common understanding of *why* the innovation was being implemented. From the start, the Refugee Integration Office was strongly motivated to improve the existing introduction programme due to poor results. The solution, according to the project leader, was to develop a new introduction programme building on the participants' qualifications (empowerment) and a new pedagogical model (communicative language teaching) to be implemented in a social enterprise that would provide the opportunity for refugee women to prepare food for real customers. However, the Adult Education Centre employees did not perceive the situation in the same way. They felt the quality of the programmes already offered was good and that the steps being taken in the new introduction programme were not particularly 'innovative' because, they said, similar steps had already been attempted. Importantly, as the project leader herself suggested, the *why* of the project was not adequately conveyed to all actors involved in the implementation of the new introduction programme. According to the project leader, because she thought the need for this new initiative was 'obvious', she had initially taken for granted that the other actors involved would share her enthusiasm.

Interessement 1: How Can the Communicative Teaching Approach be Operationalised?

Callon (1986) characterised *interessement* as a set of actions by which the translator imposes his or her viewpoint on the actors that were united in the *problematization* phase. The second tension identified in the data relates to *how* communicative teaching was to be operationalised. This issue, according to our informants, was heavily debated during the first 18 months of implementation and involved professional disagreement between the employees of the Refugee Integration Office and the Adult Education Centre. The Refugee Integration Office employees, although they had no formal education in how to teach Norwegian as a foreign language, voiced the importance of following the conservative communicative teaching approach

proposed by the Danish expert³. The core idea was that language teaching should be directly related to cooking practices. The Norwegian language teachers were thus expected to teach the participants the language (e.g., words, phrases and grammar) for cooking (e.g., following and writing recipes) and for selling food to customers (e.g., taking and delivering orders). This represented a move away from traditional blackboard teaching using formal textbooks to a task-oriented 'learning-by-doing' approach.

From the perspective of the language teachers, this communicative teaching approach was too time consuming. They said they would prefer to use a textbook at least some of the time but that none of the existing textbooks were considered 'communicative enough' by the Danish expert. Therefore, the language teachers had to spend considerable time developing 'tasks' (i.e., communicative exercises that the participants would complete and then glue into their notebooks). A language teacher explained:

We have to prepare different tasks so that the participants can cut and glue them together in their notebooks. [The participants] are dead tired of it, right? They are tired of cutting and pasting instead of having a real book. (5)

Despite the strong reluctance on the part of the language teachers to follow the advice of the Danish expert, the issue of how they could practice the communicative approach in a meaningful way and ensure they had enough time to prepare their classes was, according to the language teachers, never really discussed between the Refugee Integration Office and the Adult Education Centre. Instead, for more than a year, the project leader and project owner remained determined that the 'pure' form of the communicative approach should be implemented. By the time of the follow-up interview in the spring of 2020, however, the project leader had begun to reconsider her position on this topic. She said:

From the very start, we were quite clear about the fact that we wanted to implement this [communicative teaching] method in the project. (...). This was mentioned in the project description. The training offered by the Danish expert was supposed to create the basis for how the Norwegian teaching was to be

³ An expert from the Roskilde University with prior experience with consulting on similar innovation projects.

done in this programme. As the project leader, I feel responsible for making sure that we do what we wrote in the project description and for executing the project in the best possible way. So, I think that we should give it [communicative teaching] a try. But there is this resistance from the language teachers. I feel that they have been reluctant to change, reluctant to try something new and make it work... (2)

In the same interview, the project leader reflected on her initial haste bringing in the communicative teaching approach without first carefully evaluating whether the Danish expert's version of the method would fit the introduction programme or discussing it with the language teachers:

Despite it being one of the most important things about this introduction programme, we had not really thought through how to do the communicative Norwegian teaching [...]. We knew very well that (teaching Norwegian) is not our profession, not our competency [...], but we really fell in love with the Danish expert. [...] However, we had not reflected on whether the language teachers would be allowed by him to use books. Actually, we did not know about that at all. (2)

Finally, the teachers' resistance was being taken into consideration by the project leader, and the whole project team could start to discuss how to operationalise the communicative approach in a way that better suited the teachers' experiences and needs.

It should be noted here that neither the principal of the Adult Education Centre nor the Norwegian language teachers were against communicative teaching. They were just concerned that the method conveyed by the Danish expert was too time consuming and that it was ill-suited for the mixed group of participants in this introduction programme. This leads us to another tension identified during the *interessement* phase.

Interessement 2: Who Should Be the Target Group for the New Introduction Programme?

From the start, the project leader argued that the new introduction programme should be available for any refugee woman with an interest in cooking, regardless of her proficiency in Norwegian language and regardless of whether or not she was literate (acquainted with the Latin alphabet). This mix of participants was seen as a problem by the Norwegian teachers because, according to them, their teaching would either be too elementary for the

women with the highest educational level or much too complicated for those who were illiterate. Worse, the teachers argued that with these broad inclusion criteria, any illiterate women would remain illiterate, as there would not be enough time to teach them the basics. The principal of the Adult Education Centre described this problem as follows:

I tried to explain this early on [...], but my objections were overruled: There should have been specific criteria for being eligible for the programme [...] But everyone can join, everyone from the highly skilled to the illiterate. You know, that is a strange lumping together. The language teachers found this too tough, right? Because there are [participants] who do not speak Norwegian at all and others who speak Norwegian quite well. Some are educated, while others have never touched a pencil! (4)

In line with this, one of the language teachers explained as follows:

When you put illiterate individuals who have not learned the alphabet [together with participants who are literate], then you deprive them of their rights, right? I feel that we are preventing some of the participants from excelling. I have tried to confront [the Refugee Integration Office] with this. Well, we all have [...] We found that the participants did not get what they were entitled to. That was our biggest frustration. (6)

Despite this feedback from the Adult Education Centre employees, the project leader, even in the second interview in spring 2020, insisted that it was crucial to continue to include illiterate and literate women in the same class:

Yes, we have faced resistance from the language teachers and even from the Danish expert and the researchers regarding whether we should include illiterate women in classes. However, to include illiterate women is important to us [the Refugee Integration Office], and we will not give up on this. (2)

This position on the part of the project leader made it difficult for the Adult Education Centre to contribute to redefining the *how* of the innovation project.

Enrolment: Whose Project Is It Anyway?

According to Callon (1986), *enrolment* entails the clear identification and assignment of a set of interdependent roles to actors who accept them. For the innovation project under scrutiny, this process was not completed. Moreover, the project leader did not establish a common understanding of *whose* project the new introduction programme was: Was the project a joint

collaborative project between the Refugee Integration Office and the Adult Education Centre as equal partners (egalitarian) or was it solely a Refugee Integration Office project to which the Adult Education Centre should be happy to contribute (hierarchical)? This tension existed from the very beginning of the project. The principal of the Adult Education Centre explained:

So much was already developed before we were involved in this. That is not good. It would have been better to involve the Adult Education Centre from the very start [...] I mean, some of us have been in this game for quite some time, and we have a lot of experience from different projects, so had we been listened to from the very start, it would have facilitated implementation, and we could have taken ownership of the project, which would have been important. (4)

This perception of the Adult Education Centre employees that they were not truly accepted by the Refugee Integration Office as equal partners in the project was echoed by the language teachers. Seemingly, all the involved Adult Education Centre employees had an egalitarian understanding of the collaboration project's structure. As one of them explained:

We, the teachers, don't feel like we are part of the project. We show up, we carry out our job, and then we leave again. If we had been invited to the project team at an earlier stage, it could have been different because then we could have developed this whole thing together. [...] It is so obvious that this is a 'Refugee Integration Office Project'. It is the Refugee Integration Office that owns it, and this is what will be written in the history books. (6)

These views were to a large extent confirmed by the project leader, as illustrated by the following quote:

The Adult Education Centre was invited on board at an early phase, but it is obvious that we (the Refugee Integration Office) were in the driver's seat. Like, we wrote the applications, we got the funding [...]. So, well, in that sense, we were never really equal partners, right? In a way, we were the ones leading the project. (2)

The project leader added that the project idea had been launched in her organisation and that, before sending the applications for funding, it was discussed several times whether to invite the Adult Education Centre to join as a partner. The project owner positioned the Refugee Integration Office as the lead partner in the project and stated that they could have chosen to

collaborate with another education centre. The Refugee Integration Office thus saw the project as hierarchically structured. They saw themselves as leading the project and considered the Adult Education Centre a client rather than an equal partner. The project owner said:

In a way, we were in a client–supplier relationship with them, and we could make specific demands regarding Norwegian education. We were never obliged to purchase [the teaching of Norwegian language] from them. (1)

As far as we can tell from our analysis of the interviews, the Adult Education Centre and the Refugee Integration Office had diverging logics related to what being involved in this ‘collaboration project’ entailed. Thus, the Refugee Integration Office viewed the collaboration process as hierarchical and positioned themselves as the main driver with *de facto* decision-making power. The Adult Education Centre, on the other hand, thought the collaboration project should have been egalitarian between ‘equal partners’ and tried to act accordingly.

Discussion

While extant research tends to cast collaboration as harmonious (i.e., that collaboration *per se* often leads to positive outcomes), as this article highlights, in addition to requiring engagement in collaboration and a shared overarching goal, innovation projects need all relevant actors to have a mutual understanding of the project logic; that is, whether collaboration should be hierarchical or egalitarian. Without this, tensions are likely to arise.

Callon (1986) characterises innovation processes as having four phases: *problematization*, *interessement*, *enrolment* and *mobilisation*. *Problematization* involves the translator defining a problem, proposing a solution and striving to create alliances in which she or he becomes the natural facilitator. In the project under scrutiny, according to the project leader, the problem was the poor results of the traditional introduction programme and the solution was to develop a new introduction programme building on the participants’ qualifications (empowerment), a new pedagogical model (communicative teaching approach) and a social enterprise that could provide real-life work experience. The project leader recruited supporters within her own organisation, motivated a team of researchers to join the process, obtained funding to finance the pilot project from various sources and enrolled the Adult Education Centre to deliver the language component of the programme.

However, the project leader failed to ensure that the Adult Education Centre employees shared her understanding of what the problem was; that is, why the new introduction programme was necessary in the first place. Therefore, although the Adult Education Centre and the Refugee Integration Office shared a common understanding of the overarching goal of the new introduction programme, the Adult Education Centre did not agree with the problem as defined by the project leader.

Second, to succeed with *interessement*, the project leader had to convince the actors in the network of her viewpoints (Callon, 1986). However, while the project leader established her problematisation of *how* to realise the project, she did not invite the employees of the Adult Education Centre to voice their opinions. Thus, the Refugee Integration Office alone conducted the preplanning and application process, with few meetings organised between the project leader, programme coordinator and Norwegian language teachers in the first 18 months of the introduction programme. Consequently, there were a lack of opportunities for the implementing actors to discuss emerging issues, such as suitable criteria for participant selection and how to shape the teaching approach and programme content. No forum through which dissidence could be acknowledged and potentially solved was ever established. As a result of the lack of structures for collaboration, the Refugee Integration Office avoided critical input and reinforced a power imbalance. Thus, while it was well known that the Adult Education Centre teachers and principal had reservations about the teaching approach (the *how*) and target group (*for whom*), at no time over the course of this study were these issues openly discussed. The resulting situation was considered so challenging for the first set of language teachers that they decided to leave the project after one year. A new set of language teachers was subsequently recruited, but still no structure for collaboration was established. It was only later, with the intervention of the COVID-19 pandemic, that the disagreements between the Refugee Integration Office and Adult Education Centre began to be openly discussed in digital meetings.

Callon's (1986) *enrolment* phase refers to the assignment of defined and interdependent roles to actors of an innovation project. Importantly, these actors must also accept these roles. As our data suggest, however, enrolment was not truly carried out in the project under scrutiny. First, it was not specified whether the new introduction programme was an egalitarian collaboration project or a Refugee Integration Office-led project. In the applications, the

project was represented as a collaboration between two public sector organisations. In reality, however, the project was run predominantly as a Refugee Integration Office project. These challenges prevented the process from reaching the *mobilisation* phase.

A Lack of Structures for Collaboration

Our data demonstrate that the development and implementation of the new introduction programme lacked clear *structures for collaboration*. This may partly explain why the tensions presented and analysed in this article persisted over time. As suggested in the extant literature, structures for collaboration should be developed to enable the collaborating partners to agree on important issues, such as *why* the project is being implemented, what roles each actor plays, what knowledge and skills they can bring to the table and how to manage dissidence among the collaborating partners (Torfing, 2016). The role of the leader is crucial to address potential barriers and disagreements. As has been illustrated, if these are not addressed, they may foster challenges.

The lack of structures for collaboration and continued inattention to Adult Education Centre employees' concerns regarding the teaching approach and target-group composition (a mix of illiterate and literate participants in the same class) led to the withdrawal of the first two Norwegian language teachers from the project. Despite this, the project leader remained enthusiastic about the initial project ideas; however, for this project, being an 'enthusiastic leader' (Magnussen, 2016) was not enough to create and sustain a strong collaborative innovation environment.

As the project leader explained, her conviction that the *why, how, for whom* and *by whom* were 'obvious' meant she did not discuss these with the Adult Education Centre employees. In addition, the project owner talked about the Adult Education Centre as a 'service provider' that could be exchanged with another partner if necessary. The two public sector organisations involved in this innovation project thus held different project logics. The Refugee Integration Office regarded and implemented the project as a hierarchical collaboration, with them in the driver's seat. Conversely, the Adult Education Centre assumed they would be equal partners in the project with the Refugee Integration Office. According to our informants, these diverging understandings and their implications were never openly discussed. It should be noted, however, that the principal of the Adult Education Centre did not

initiate any meetings between the leader of the Refugee Integration Office and herself to address these issues.

We would like to note that we do not view Callon's theoretical model as the only relevant theoretical framework that can shed light on our data. Additionally, we have not used his framework in a normative way (e.g., to suggest that following his model ensures success). Rather, Callon's perspectives have been used in this article as a useful tool to highlight the possible opportunities and pitfalls of the innovation project under scrutiny.

What Happened to the Social Enterprise?

The 'International Cuisine' social enterprise was one area on which all collaborating partners could agree. Its intentions were to empower participants by offering real-life experience, create value for the community by educating future workers for a local labour market and, ideally, reduce the share of refugees depending (entirely) on welfare benefits. While our data suggest the social enterprise operated primarily as a catering firm in which the participants prepared food while using their mother tongues or body language, all involved partners, including the participants, agreed that the social enterprise served as a meaningful arena for language and practice education.

Conclusion

This study highlights that although collaborative innovations are often portrayed as harmonious, sharing the overarching goal of an innovation project is not sufficient to prevent tensions from arising. The innovation project studied in this article included an 'International Cuisine' social enterprise. Although representing a form of organisational hybridity, the social enterprise was never a source of tension for the key actors of this project. However, as elaborated, a number of other tensions did emerge.

Our results indicate that it is important for the innovation process to openly discuss and agree on what 'collaboration' means in a project. Moreover, to realise an innovation project and deal with emerging tensions, it is crucial to address and clarify *why* innovation is being realised, *how* to operationalise such innovation, *for whom* the innovation is targeted and *whose* innovation project the project is. Additionally, it could be useful to conceptualise the innovation process as including the phases defined by Callon (1986); that is,

problematisation, interessement and enrolment. Should disagreements arise, our findings highlight the importance of an engaged project leader who can create and implement clear structures for collaboration through which existing and potential tensions can be identified, discussed and overcome. Finally, it is important to include all relevant actors in important decisions, which here included the teaching approach to be used and the composition of the target group.

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