Supervision as transport through the use of self
Systemic and narrative ideas in practice

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Abstract

This dissertation addresses a theme of working with the transport metaphor in supervision through the use of self. I am analysing literature and my own practice to create reflections to develop my future development as a systemic supervisor. By using the transport metaphor the emphasis is put on the personal movement or transport by an experience in supervision. To talk from an I position could be one pathway to avoid the colonization of personal and professional norms. The use of transport metaphor offers a structure which helps me as a supervisor in the cocreation of a scaffolding learning process. The personal response repositions relationships in the process and helps the involved to focus on the relational aspects, which to me is the essence of a supervisory process.

Introduction

How can I use the transport metaphor in supervision through the use of self and how can systemic and narrative ideas inform my reflections and actions?

This is the question which I am going to respond to in this dissertation, which is submitted as part of the M A Systemic Supervision and Training at KCC Foundation/University of Bedfordshire Gothenburg course.

My task in this dissertation is to review and demonstrate my familiarity with a wide range of literature relating to systemic training and supervision, analysing and evaluating relevant literature and illustrate a chosen theme with examples from my own supervisory practice: and demonstrate creativity through exploring pathways to improving systemic supervision and identifying goals for my future development of self organised practice as a systemic supervisor. (Course handbook, 2009)
As a supervisor I am working with individual and group supervision in many different contexts – social services, schools, psychiatry, health care, family counselling services and in training contexts.

Sometimes I find myself being part of conversations about clients where s/he, present or not present, implicitly is valued through the way we talk. In group supervision I have been working a lot with reflecting teams which I find being a useful frame. But this structure can, from my experience, sometimes have the effect that the team members are talking in an appreciative way about a client’s or a professional’s way of thinking and acting. From a power perspective this may be due to a "privileged reflecting group" defining what is worth appreciation, confirmation or applause. As a supervisor, I end up in the same position – to be a confirmatory appreciative supervisor implicitly means that my standards may govern what are good thoughts or good behaviour.

My intention is thus to address issues of professional privilege and dominance in supervision. It is then crucial how we view knowledge. What we call professional knowledge is ultimately nothing but our own experiences or experiential knowledge, which becomes elevated and valued as privileged knowledge in supervision. Here I am curious about how I, together with supervisees, can cocreate a structure in supervision which repositions what we call professional knowledge into subjective, experiential knowledge and thus deal with knowledge as personal experiences within the frame of supervision. This dissertation is a way to show how I am coordinating a structure in supervision settings where supervisees’ personal experiences are used in the process - to talk from an I position could be one pathway to avoid the colonization of my own norms I act out through descriptions, which implicitly become prescriptions of people’s ways of living.

The core of supervision, as I see it, is the co-evolution of practitioners’ professional development and actions, which in turn hopefully will have an effect on their relations to clients – to be useful towards clients they meet in their agencies. The professional “I position” that acknowledges the personal experience, redefines the relationship in a different way. And to be target focused in supervision is, from my perspective, to put emphasis on the relation/s between the supervisee and the client and how the supervisee can approach the client’s way of thinking about his or her life. This makes it
possible to invite the supervisees about the focus in supervision, which is how they reflect on the relationship between them and the client they are talking about. I have often used the question; *where are you now in this conversation?* Or similar kinds of questions like: *what were you drawn to? What is this conversation bringing you into?* These questions are useful questions to me in my practice and I am curious how I can understand this *Relational position* where there implicitly is an *I position* as well.

The word *Transport* (sometimes named Katharsis) is used in the narrative field and this concept is part of the definitional ceremony or an outsider witness response. The basic idea is that conversations always influence or transports us in different directions – it makes us think of new things in our lives, it gives us a certain feeling, it reminds us of something and helps us in other ways. And these thoughts, where we talk from an *I position*, could be used in the supervision process, as one way to respond to people´s stories or other phenomena which are being raised in supervision. In this dissertation I am going to show and reflect on how I can use the transport metaphor, as one way to work with personal experiences in supervision.

Some experiences which were guiding me into my question and my personal themes

A psychology student, on placement at our working place, asked me some months ago, after being part of some supervision sessions with me:

“What makes you continue to work with what you do? What is your driving force?”

“I don’t know... I replied...but I think it has something to do with politics...”

“That was the answer I expected,” he commented with a smile...

I replied to him in a slatternly way but I think this was really something that came from my heart. For me supervision is something which has to do with emancipation of some kind. When supervisees feel touched, inspired, feel free or find something which is important to them I feel I have done a good piece of work. And this, I think comes from my background.

I grew up in a context where taking a position for the weak and fighting for people’s rights was important and this was one of the reasons I decided to become a social worker, psychotherapist and later on ... supervisor.
This little piece of a conversation between me and the student addresses one theme of my own personal and professional values and how they connect with my principles and commitments in my work as a supervisor. What drives me in my work?

I remember the first time I received supervision. I was part of a professional group that was working together very closely. The supervisor came, took control over the situation, and seemed to have all answers to the questions we were asking. Supervision was a serious matter. Laughter was not really allowed and the clients were interpreted in a very thoroughly and diagnostic way. And we, as professionals, were interpreted in different ways as well, through his comments about our comments.

This little experience, followed by other similar experiences, had an effect on my own supervisory practice. During that period of time, I thought this was the way supervision should be, but later on I have visited and evaluated this in many ways. Whose experiences are in focus in the supervision room, what language is used, whose experiences are privileged in a certain conversation? My intention is to take a decantered position as a supervisor and to reflect on and develop my own use of myself and other’s selves in the supervision room. During some decades I have experienced supervision as a supervisee in many different ways – within frames of psychodynamic, structural and gestalt methods of supervision. But I think; more important to me than the theoretical frame, was the relationship I was invited into as a supervisee and the relationship created between me and the supervisor? How was s/he connecting to me and helping me/us to go on in different situations? Very often I felt supervision was something magic. I couldn’t really put words on what was going on in the supervision room but something happened to me and, between the supervision sessions, with the clients I was working with. The forming of the relationship with the supervisor, my colleagues in the group and with the clients, became the most important part of supervision. Today I would talk about relationships as the big issue in creating a context for supervision.

This story addresses the supervision relationship in my experience of the “supervisor as an expert” and issues of “power” and “position of the supervisor”.
During the past 15 years, I have been working in the areas of teaching and supervision, as well as with therapy using a systemic approach. In the beginning I felt I was in a situation where I, as a Swedish oracle of Delphi asked questions and nodded to all their ways of expressing themselves. I never gave any answers to all their questions. Gradually, after receiving feedback from different groups I found a way of expressing myself by giving “I messages” – *If I were in your situation, I would...* or... *I get some thoughts relating to what you are talking about but I don´t know how this fits for you...* This was my way to keep what I now call a de-centered position and at the same time putting in myself into the process. In a supervision process I think so many things are happening at the same time, on different contextual levels, and most of it we don’t bring into language. As a supervisor, many times I have a gut feeling I just can’t ignore to express, because I think it is useful for the supervisees.

The systemic training influenced me in many ways and helped me to meet clients in a way where I continually questioned my own truths, beliefs, ideas and thoughts, in order to meet the client’s world and experiences in a respectful way without judging and moralising their way of living, but to help them to find their own ways in life. Translated to the world of supervision; how can I, as a supervisor, respond to professionals’ stories about clients and about themselves as professionals – problem stories where it is difficult to know, to know how - to know how to go on? These stories are connecting my own personal and professional stories. What stories do I bring into a conversation? What informs my way to respond and what actions do I take based on these beliefs and assumptions? What can I learn from the feedback, the response from the supervisees or the clients?

During my way of working with supervision, I think I have been more and more focused on the personal *and* professional domain. To me, it is impossible to separate the personal and professional from each other, even though my focus is the professional identity, professional thinking and actions.

3 years ago I finished an international narrative training at Dulwich Centre, Australia, which influenced me a lot. I do not think it was another world of ideas. Systemic and narrative ideas are, as I see it, linked to each other in many ways. The professional languages are in some ways different used and you put emphasis on different aspects in the work with the people you meet. In the narrative world I have experienced working
with Definitional ceremonies, where the telling of an outsider witness group is part and I remember many of these occasions where professionals were witnessing, peoples’ vulnerable and valuable experiences. It was done with an attitude that we are all human beings and share different aspects of life. The world is not divided between persons and professionals.

I remember a situation in Australia when I was a member of a witness group in a definitional ceremony setting. I listened to an interview with an aboriginal woman who described, in a very touching way, different episodes of oppression towards the aboriginal community in South Australia. How could I honour her vulnerable experiences? My witness response ended up in, through the question of transport, an expression of feeling ashamed of being a white middle class man in this context.

*These stories leads me into my reflections on my journey through supervision as both a supervisee and then later a supervisor where I moved to the “oracle” position, then trying to include my self but also being decentred. How can I develop my use of self in supervision practice?*

Another story is a more private story about my daughter Matilda, now 18 years old, who loves singing. All her life she has spent plenty of time with her big interest, music. She is now studying music in a school here in Sweden together with 15 young people. Singing in public is one important step. She told me about the day she entered the stage in order to sing a solo song. She had cried days before and the big day her legs were shaking. She was in the crowd of 20 people and started to sing, stopped up, started to cry but continued to sing after a while and the small, but appreciative crowd focused on how she overcame a challenge to pursue something which was important to her. She did it! I, her father, asked her:

*What made this possible? Why didn’t you give up?*

*Oh, I wanted it so much …*

*What else,* I said.

She looked at me: *the people in the choir supported me when I was just about to give up…*

To me this might be a picture of what supervision could be. Supervision is about encouraging people to find what is important to them, link people’s lives and honour the steps they are taking.
This story addresses how a group can encourage persons to find what is important to them; use of the group in supporting people's development

Another picture I have in mind is a school here in Gothenburg, working with children who in different ways have been marginalized in their ordinary schools. The team working with these children says they are working with children not performing according to their own skills and abilities. To me this is a wonderful expression, showing an attitude in relation to people. The skills are there, but perhaps hidden, both for the child and the persons in the context around them. When I meet supervision groups I’ve often been working with supervisees’ skills and abilities – they have a sense of personal failure when they are talking about their works with clients. How can I, as a supervisor, respond to their stories about clients and about themselves as professionals – problem stories where it is difficult to know, to know how - to know how to go on?

This story describes my wish to enable people to reclaim and develop their personal / professional abilities.

Aims and purposes

- Find ways to use movements or transports in the supervision process
- Deepen my understanding of supervision relationships through the connection to expert knowledge, experiential knowledge and use of self in supervision practice
- Consider how theories of adult learning and systemic/narrative threads of theory about supervision can be useful in developing ways of including new professional experiences in supervision
- Address the possibilities of developing systemic supervision

My question which is guiding me through this dissertation is:

How can I use the transport metaphor in supervision through the use of self and how can systemic and narrative ideas inform my reflections and actions?
Ethics

My intention is to reflect on social differences and the experiences of privileged and non-privileged positions. To me the concept of GRAACCCES (Burnham, 1992) including social differences as gender, race, religion, abilities, age, culture, colour, class, ethnicity and sexual orientation is a basis to understand, consider and reflect on individual and social-present and future-consequences of actions.

My intention is to select critique and reflect on theoretical ideas and their ethical consequences.

I have decoded all personal data in the cases or conversations I am referring to.

Method

I am going to explore my question through:

- Providing an overview of literature of supervision and adult learning theory linking to perspectives of power, use of self and transport metaphor

- Engaging with examples from supervisory experience and through reflections pay attentions to intentions, effects, positions and repositioning together with learning points

- Identify in what way new supervision practices/ideas the connections between practice and theory is orientating my looking

Literature review

In this part of the dissertation my intention is to make a systemic and narrative literature review connecting to the keywords in my question – supervision, systemic and narrative practice, transport and use of self. In the review I am going to include aspects of power and ethics, view of knowledge and adult learning to deepen my understanding.
of supervision relationships. My intention is to put in pieces of examples and share my reflections between theory and practice.

The theoretical orientation for this dissertation is Social Constructionism, which is part of a postmodern view of reality which turned away from the idea that there were fixed values, absolute truths and objectivity. Social Constructionism emphasizes there is no objective knowledge and knowing. What we call knowledge and knowing are constructed socially between people, through language. (Gergen K. J., 1999) and through the beliefs we have about the world (Hoffman 1990). Our understanding of reality is thus constructed in the social contexts and in those discourses that we are part of. Social and cultural norms formed in these contexts and discourses get, as Payne expresses it, "truth status for individuals, subgroups and communities...and we...continually construct our reality through these norms" (Payne, 2006, p. 31) He continues by saying that the focus for social constructionist practitioners therefore is not “…theories of deficit, inner damage or pathology, but on the social and cultural processes through which we gain our views of the world, and how those views in turn influence our actions and relationships” (p 31)

Gregory Bateson describes how we as human beings are searching to understand and create meaning, organise and label our experiences into categories, in language (Bateson 1972). All our experiences are embedded in language. There is a linguistic system between reality and a person’s experience and all knowing is an act of interpretation. Language not just informs us – it has the power to create reality, form the way we look at ourselves and our experiences. The world is thus created based on how we are “languaging” (Pearce 1994) As McAdam et al. (Mc Adam & Lang, 2009) puts it “Language has the power to move us to laughter, to bring us to tears, to lead us to feel with others in their lives...” (p. 7)

An important aspect of this is about power and ethics because if everything we bring into language grows, then we have a responsibility – What kind of reality would we like to create? The way we talk about our lives and about the world is not just informing us, it is forming our reality. And the way we speak, what we choose to express has the power to create, form and transform. Once, I listened to Tom Anderson (Andersen, 2005) talking about ”how our expressions form our lives and bewitch our intellect”
Language, or expressions in his vocabulary, has the power to form our understanding and create our actions.

**Supervision**

There are a lot of different perspectives on supervision and it is not possible to cover them all, Here I am going to think of the some aims of supervisory work and would like to make some comparisons to therapy, part of the exploration of the use of self and transport metaphor in supervision

There is no single etymologic definition of the word supervision. In literature there is a multitude of descriptions and definitions of what supervision is. And perhaps this is not strange, because supervision is practiced in diverse contexts with different purposes (Lauvås & Handal, 2001)

Supervision has existed as a field of mental health practices during one century, as long as psychotherapy has existed... Starting with psychoanalytic supervision the field has developed into a variety of supervision forms, very much related to the present historical dominant themes in psychotherapy – and in society. (Schilling, 1997).

Scaife (Scaife, 2004, p. 70) says “it seems to me that there is a limited amount of theory that has been constructed specifically to explain the processes of supervision” and describes how theory and methods in supervision are developed in other disciplines and then introduced into the supervision field.

One distinction between supervision and therapy is the focus. The practitioner’s personal and professional reality is highlighted in the supervision process (Lauvås & Handal, 2001) based on what the supervisee brings into the supervision room, while in therapy the professional reality is not the primary focus. In therapy there is an isolated wish to change in one or another direction while in supervision the change or development is connected to the professional situation in one way or another – because the primary purposes of supervision is, as Caroll (Caroll, 1996) points out, cited by Scaife: “… ensuring the welfare of clients and enhancing the development of the supervisee in work.” (Scaife, 2004, p. 2) The supervisor’s task is therefore, through an interaction between supervisor and supervisee, to assist the practitioner in a way where s/he can learn from the experience in supervision in order to ensure good service to the client. I am coming back to the concept of learning, but from my view learning is a very
important concept in supervision but not a concept which differentiates therapy and supervision from each other or as Scaife puts it “there is a clear distinction between therapy and supervision in terms of a focus on learning for life as distinct from learning for work” (Scaife, 2004, p. 11) I think it is easy to question his idea but I think the point is not the effect of learning – it is still the focus which is part of the contracting between the supervisor, the supervisee(s) and the agency, where the supervisor is commissioned. When the client is present in the room, it is still part of a supervision contract (Lauvås & Handal, 2001, p. 53) Some authors acknowledge the therapeutic skills in the work of supervision (Scaife, 2004) (Lauvås & Handal, 2001) and the process in supervision could be seen as a parallel to a therapeutic process, but points out the focus is still different from therapy.

To me the following example illustrates the distinction, the different focuses, between therapy and supervision
One teacher, who was a member of the supervision group, had been the victim of a violent incident in the school. Two teenagers had attacked him from behind. There is no reason to describe this situation further in this context but the impact on the teacher who had been exposed was large. The group asked me for additional supervision and together we had a dialogue around the event. It became clear this event had a huge impact on the violated teacher, in a personal way. For him, it was very difficult to remember what had happened the day before during the violent episode, and it became clear this resonated other events in his private life that now came to the surface of his memory. I felt I was in a very difficult balancing act between the personal and the professional levels and I decided not to ask him, or the others, questions about the episode and its effects on him. I intended to protect him from telling too much and tried to stick to the professional level and issues about support and protection in the work context - and how to deal with the coming situation in school. I advised him as a person to seek therapy the next day...

To me the distinction between the private personal level contra the personal professional level were two different focus. I had to make choices in the room. And an important choice was about ethics deriving from my normative function (exploring this a bit in the next part). If we developed the story, I had to consider the implications on him as well as on the other supervisees in the room. I didn´t want to expose him on a private level because this could have an effect on the professional level.
This is an example of how I view the different focus in therapy and supervision. The highest context marker was the professional aspect and to hold on to that focus was to hold on to my professional and ethical responsibility.

**Purpose of supervision**

The example leads me into thoughts of the purpose (es) and the contracting process of supervision. Many authors come back to personal and professional learning (from experiences), development (of skills), achievement of knowledge, and the effect supervision should give on the client system, as important themes. (Scaife, 2004)

Scaife (Scaife, 2004) refers to Inskipp’s and protector’s (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993) three categories of purposes in supervision; *formative* when the supervisee’s learning and development is in focus, *normative* when “the function of supervision derives from the supervisor’s managerial and ethical responsibilities” and *restorative* function which “acknowledges the emotional effects on the individual of work”. (Scaife, 2004, pp. 71-72). I see these categories as a way to position myself as a supervisor in the supervision process in relation to the aims of supervision.

Schilling says one purpose in supervision is to assist a practitioner in what s/he brings into supervision through an exploration of those descriptions, constructions of meaning or stories that are important for that episode or theme which is in focus. These descriptions could be hidden (not yet told) or open (brought into language) (Schilling, 1997)

Talking about the purpose of supervision I would like to acknowledge there are different forms of supervision and different commissions – different purposes. To me it is important to make one distinction between the retrospective form and the prospective form of supervision. In the *retrospective form*: the supervisee describes, based on his/her own values, a client situation. In the *prospective form* an observation is the starting point which gives the supervisor possibilities in getting first-hand impression. The supervisor can interrupt the supervisee during the process and have a dialogue about the process between the supervisee and the client in the room. (Schilling, 1997)
Contracting the relations in supervision

In supervision the word contracting is one way to define the relations and the relationships in supervision - which is seen as an interpersonal context (Scaife, 2004, pp. 52-69). The word contracting seems to be close to, and part of, the word context which is the, from an observer’s perspective, identified frame in which behaviours, situations and experiences gets its meaning. The framework consists of the words and the linguistic expressions that the observer uses. The naming of a context also function to orient the observer in a certain direction, making him ready for different tasks, to link the present with the past and to organize his behaviour in a functional way. A context includes the present relationships in a particular situation but also the relationships that are linked to these relationships and situations. At the same time context determines how behaviours are linked together in a social organisation. To define a context involves defining what kind of relationship you have or what relationship you expect. (Bateson 1972) (Olson & Petitt, 1999) (Hedges 2005). How the context of supervision is understood by the supervisees, the supervisor and the clients creates different activities. So what meaning, what understanding do people have from the context of supervision? In supervision, as well in all other contexts, everybody is acting out from a unique set of contexts and acting into a context. (Pearce W. B., 1994) Here the word contracting comes in: to co-create a new unique context with the supervisees in the context of supervision. The purpose is to clarify the different expectations, relations, in order to create a common framework to structure and understand the supervision process (Scaife, 2004)

In a supervision process, many levels of the helping system are present in the dialogue between e.g. a supervisee and a client; from a cultural level to different levels of the system of clients, colleagues and other persons in the work context (Scaife, 2004, p. 30 ff). Pearce (Pearce W., 1994) emphasizes the coordination of meaning in all speech acts and how many contextual levels are present in all conversations and how these in turn are influencing the different present contextual levels in a conversation. Besides, the way we talk are forming the relationships through a reflexive process and the relationships are forming the way we talk (Pearce W. B., 1994) So, thinking of the
relations in a supervisory context there is an ongoing cocreation of all relations and contexts embedded in the conversation.

Example:
Supervisor: *How can I help you?*
Supervisee: *I don’t know...*

These two sentences immediately create a relation between these two persons through the meaning created between them. And when the supervisor asks this question s/he is doing it with a whole chain of understandings of him/herself, the relationships and the context s/he is acting out from. And the position s/he takes and how s/he is acting out will both inform and form, not just the two persons but all embedded contextual levels in the conversation.

Contracting, from this perspective is an ongoing process and in supervision the relationship can be defined by elevating these issues in the conversation, through relational reflexivity. The question I referred to in the introduction; *where are we now in the conversation, is this useful for you?* is an invitation to create something else together, create space for different choices. This question redefines at the same time the relationship.

In the hard work of the cocreation of a useful relationship, Burnham (Burnham, 2005) has developed *relational reflexivity* as a practical conceptual tool within therapy, as well as in other contexts (p. 15). This is a tool that helps to check how the person we meet is experiencing the conversation. And it is a way to coordinate the relation which can help to “orient the therapist to use those abilities that will be most familiar to clients (not too different) and in negotiating when and how to use therapist abilities that may be interventive for clients (useful difference)” (p. 15) To ask questions as “where are you now in the conversation” is thus a way to create a useful relation between persons in the supervisory context. Scott Miller and his colleagues Duncan and Spark (Duncan & Sparks, 2007) give support for the significance of the relationships in their huge research on what is effective in therapy or in work where change is the purpose. The *alliance* or the partnership between the client and helper “predicated on an agreement of the goals and tasks of therapy” (p. 9) is accounting for 60% of change or the outcome, in other words how the therapist is connecting to the client's expectation or the
engagement - relationship factors. Technical factors, the way I do, have minimal (1%) influence. The important focus, in relation to research, is the relation between the client and the supervisee – not the techniques, methods or the thoughts about the client(s). It is how the supervisee reflects on the relation between him and the client and uses those reflections as a way to coordinate the relation in relation to the preferred outcome. Duncan and Sparks (Duncan & Sparks, 2007) draw out some conclusions relating to supervision, based on their research in the therapeutic field, to make the client’s voice central to supervision, to be able to target focus and the significance of the relationship, in what is called client-directed supervision. The asking for the client’s feedback, the incorporation of the feedback in supervision and the utilization of feedback direct to therapy will define the client as the “super supervisor” in helping us keeping connected. From this perspective I find the connection to power because whose knowledge and whose experiences is acknowledged within supervisory relations?

**Power and relations**

I think it is impossible to talk about the relations within supervision without emphasizing the power aspect. Michael White (White M., 1997, p. 148 ff) highlights that supervision often involves a hierarchical relation between the supervisor and the supervisee - that the supervisor per definition knows better, is more experienced than the supervisee who then becomes the passive receiver of the wisdom of the supervisor. He states the term supervision “…evokes a hierarchical relationship in which one party’s knowledge are assigned a supervision status, and in which the other party is subject to this super-vision in matters of work and therapist identity” (p. 148) He plays with the word co-vision to emphasize ”… an egalitarian account of the relationship between therapists seeking consultation about their work and consultants who provide this consultation…”(p148) but for him this word is problematic because it”…obscures the power relation that is established by this privilege, a power relation that significantly influences the outcome of the consultation” (p. 149) Others in literature, as well, are looking for other words than supervision to describe their intention to avoid putting themselves into a hierarchical or expert role as consultation; as Thomas (Thomas F., 1994) cited by Bobele et al. (Boebele, Gardner, & Biever, 1995) and Bird (Bird, 2006, p. VIII) used the word consultation and extra vision. Bobele et al. (Boebele, Gardner, &
Biever, 1995) are critiquing this saying “supervisors cannot decide unilaterally that their roles are non-hierarchical on non-expert. Since there are at least two people defining roles in such relationships (the supervisor and supervisee), the supervisor cannot control the meaning attributed to the relationship by others…. A supervisee generally perceives the supervisor as being more expert, more experienced and as having professional gate keeping functions” (p16). By deciding to consult rather than supervise the supervisor is “…still adopting the hierarchical position by deciding which role to take and... the supervisor must make evaluations or recommendations...(p17)

Many times in supervision, there might be an implicit or explicit expectation I am going to tell what’s best to do in a certain situation. I can’t just decide unilaterally that I don’t see myself as that kind of expert. I see these expectations as being part of a contracting process – as invitations in the definition of relationships in the supervision process. And power is, implicitly or explicitly, embedded in all these relations, which directs me into Bateson’s ideas about power.

Gregory Bateson (Bateson G., 1972) sees power as an epistemological mistake because one single person cannot have the power over another person, because people are always part of a relation, and in that sense unilateral power is impossible. To Bateson power was a linear idea which couldn’t handle the systemic nature of the world. By using the word power we see the world through that idea or myth, and ”that idea corrupts” (p. 494) because it moves us away from seeing the world within a systemic perspective. Despite this, Bateson and Foucault seems not to be that close from each other because Bateson’s definition of epistemology and Foucault’s view of discourses have similar meaning (Lundby, 2009) which I soon am coming back to

The French philosopher Michael Foucault has made a great contribution to the field of systemic and narrative practice in his analysis of the power mechanisms in society and for Foucault power is something which is inevitable. It exists in all relations and is shown in all daily life praxis, in the construction of identities and knowledge. The word discourse is the central word for Foucault and they are “practices which form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49) cited by Burr (Burr, 2003, p. 64). Burr continues in her analysis of Foucault by saying that “a discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events” (p. 64) Foucault is analyzing
what he calls modern power, a power built on normalizing judgments. Foucault doesn’t view power as a form of possession, which some people have and others don’t. For Foucault power is linked closely to knowledge. As Burr (Burr, 2003) puts it “…when we define or represent something in a particular way we are producing a particular form of knowledge, which brings power with it” (p. 68)

To Foucault, the link between knowledge and power are thus inseparable because knowledge is about control – those who control the discourse are controlling knowledge. (Freedman & Combs, 2002, p. 15) and these constructions of knowledge have a normalising and/or marginalizing and disqualifying effect on persons and groups through the operations of modern power. Skillicorn (Skillicorn, 2009) says “the word discourse is here a power metaphor. Contexts and stories are defined by discourses, which are those beliefs and practices which shape our sense of who we are and how we should be. We are born into dominant social, political and cultural discourses and they shape how we view the world” (p. 23)

Both Foucault and Bateson are thus, independent of their different views of power, emphasizing the relational part of power, on different levels - everything exists in relation, from a cultural level to the interpersonal level and the values or norms are forming our (professional) lives and identities.

Example: I asked one supervisee in a supervision session, when she was describing her plans to make a journey to South Africa if her husband would be part of the journey? She then described she was lesbian and lived together with a woman. The heterosexual norms in society influenced my actions. What effect could that have on her, on me and on the others in the room?

Example: A supervisee is blaming herself, experiencing personal failure in relation to a client who committed suicide. From my point of view she is speaking from an individualistic discourse. What difference would a relational discourse create?

**Power and knowledge**

Knowledge and how this is linked to the concept of power seems to be a crucial point when I think of how to view and value experiences. As I mentioned before, to Foucault
power and knowledge are inseparable which leads me into the issue of knowledge and specifically *professional knowledge* and *experiential knowledge*. Knowing about knowing is the focus in epistemology. For Bateson (Bateson G., 1972) the underlying beliefs are the basic level of what we call knowledge. And knowledge is, according to this, nothing but our own experiences. This, I think, connects with Foucault’s idea about the beliefs that are constructing the discourses in our culture. So in this sense professional and experiential knowledge are at the same level, but the important question, as I see it is how different kinds of beliefs or knowledge is valued in society and in the context of supervision? Sticking on to the assumption the world as we see it is constructed socially between people the answer to this is the claim of what is knowledge; professional knowledge has the claim to be objective and general while the experiential knowledge is valued differently. Payne (Payne, 2006) is making his conclusion by saying “postmodern writers do not venerate experiential/local knowledge, or sentimentalize it as folk wisdom. The modernist mistake had been to elevate scientism and recent thinking above other forms of knowledge, and postmodernism attempts to avoid making the same error in reverse.” (p. 25) So talking about modernist and postmodernist view of knowledge is not to be understood as the creation of a new dichotomy – it is not either or. It is both and; because, as Skillicorn points out, referring to her understanding of Michael White, “a focus on the egalitarian holds the risk of obscuring the power inherent in the relationship which in turn allows for less of a monitoring of that power and its effects” (Skillicorn, 2009, p. 20)

So the clarification of how professionals and clients are influenced by discourses within supervision is part of my normative, ethical responsibility (Scaife, 2004, pp. 71-72). In the hard work of the cocreation of a useful relationship it is crucial how I value my own and others´ experiences in supervision. What discourses are influencing me to make decisions in supervision, based on professional knowledge or theories about e.g. child development? A supervisee asked me when we were into a conversation about an 8 year old boy: is this a normal behaviour? This “knowledge” could be a help in informing my thinking but when - and in relation to whom – is it useful?
Learning as transport development and change

In this part I am going to explore useful ideas in adult learning theory that could be helpful in my thinking and my practicing of the transport metaphor through the use of self. In this overview I have searched for keywords as development, change and collaboration which I see as embedded in the transport metaphor.

In literature, there is a huge amount of thoughts and ideas and models about learning. What is it to learn something? One definition expresses it as “the cognitive process of acquiring skill or knowledge” (WorldNet) and another one says “Learning...refers to concerted activity that increases the capacity and willingness of individuals, groups, organizations and communities to acquire and productively apply new knowledge and skills, to grow and mature and to adapt successfully to changes and challenges” (pacificorpfoundation, 2010)

So, learning is, in most definitions, part of change or development in some sense. And it is about achieving something - learning is the process that is leading to acquirement of skills and knowledge. From a postmodern perspective, Anderson et.al (Anderson & Swim, 1995, p. 2) defines supervision as “a mutual-learning context where the supervisor and the supervisees relate to each other in language and the goal is the co-development of a context for co-evolving new meaning, and thus learning and change” and they see supervision as a space where “generative conversation in which learning or the acquisition of knowledge” is created socially (p5). In language we have the ability to respond in a way that creates new meaning which creates learning...and development.

Later on in this dissertation I am going to describe the transport metaphor based on the idea, conversations and experiences touch us, influence us in different ways. These influences make us think in another way, understand new things, become reminded of some aspects of life or it help us in some other aspect. And in this sense learning is part of the transport and vice versa transport is learning.
Many authors talk about learning activity as the essence of supervision (Scaife, 2004) – as part of the supervisees’ personal and professional development. Schilling says the task of the supervisor is to focus on the different descriptions, told or not yet told and how these descriptions are forming the situation the supervisee is working with and the effects on the client and other involved. (Schilling, 1997) And from a learning perspective these new descriptions and how they are forming a new situation could be identified as new experiences. People are learning from their experiences – this seems to be an assumption in what is called experiential learning. Kolb’s theory is built on theories, earlier developed by Piaget, Lewis and Dewey and Bruner. In his famous experiential learning circle he involves concrete experience followed by observation and reflection followed by creation of abstract concepts followed by testing in new situations in an ongoing circle (Scaife, 2004)

Reflections: In this theory two different aspects are emerging. One is about how we receive information, which can take a variety of ways on the scale between concrete experiences and abstract thinking. The second aspect describes what we do with the information we get. How we process it, which also can take different forms, ranging from reflection and observation to active experimentation. I think it is important to see there is a whole chain of activities in what we think is learning, part of Kolb’s contribution is to think of learning as a learning process.

To be critical Kolb’s view in the experiential learning circle seems to be a modernist and individualistic view of the self. It seems to ignore the postmodern view that experience and knowledge is created through social processes, between people and through the discourses we live in. And here feedback processes between people is essential. Keeney (Keeney, 1983) says “All simple and complex regulation as well as learning involve feedback. Contexts of learning and change are ... principally concerned with altering or establishing feedback” (p. 67) so for Keeney learning is a relational process where feedback from others makes a difference. Keeny was inspired by Bateson who emphasizes the link between our beliefs and our actions. To Bateson (Bateson G., 1972) we repeat patterns in interaction because there are restraints of redundancy (which I understand as information on a basic level).

Example: if I have a dominant story about myself as
"I am a looser", then I act from that information (based on my experiences) about myself. I give people I meet this message (or response) I provoke feedback through my actions, my behaviour. I get response, feedback, based on these actions which are confirming me. I continue to repeat the story “I am a looser”

Restraints of redundancy lead to a restriction of people’s internal worlds – their beliefs and assumptions. Learning and development is, thus, to give (from my perspective) new information, new feedback or responses into a person or a system and incorporate (from the receiver’s perspective) new information, which will break the circular feedback of events. The concept of Circularity, which often in literature is the opposite of linear, is, in Bateson’s perspective, how a person chooses to describe, act or in other ways is active in the system. This will have an effect on all relations, processes and persons in the system, on all different levels. If a relation in the system is changing, there will be an effect on all other relations in the system, more or less. Keeping to Bateson, this dynamic power is present in all learning systems. (Bateson G., 1972)

So, going back to the “looser example” if people get new experiences or other experiences are highlighted of being a “winner” a different learning process is started which will influence the person’s forming of identity which will influence his/her actions which in turn will influence the feedback process and this will in turn influence his description of him/herself as well as others descriptions of the person which in a circular way will change the involved relations.

Another example could be the “personal failure” example I described on the former page – through experiences of actions based on a relational discourse something new is cocreated.

Donald Schön’s (Schön, 1997) way of thinking of knowledge and reflections are connected to the ideas of putting in new ideas. Knowing and action are closely connected to each other, through reflections. Schön describes two types of reflection: reflection in action and reflection on action. Reflection in action helps us when we are in the middle of e.g. a conversation. It is that process that allows us to reshape what we are working on, while we are working on it. It is part of an ongoing experimentation which helps us to find ways in the middle of something and “we reflect on action, thinking back
on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome” (p. 26)

So how can I as a supervisor participate in context for, coming back to Anderson et al (Anderson & Swim, 1995) “the co-evolving of new meaning, and thus learning and change” (p. 2) The ideas of social collaboration, learning and development are connected to the work of the Russian psychologist, Lev Vygotskyj, who had a special interest in early childhood learning. In his work he found that, in many cases, development is founded on learning. Many of his ideas have been a contribution to the systemic and narrative practice

Vygotskyj emphasized that learning was an accomplishment of social collaboration. In this social collaboration, he observed that adults structure children’s learning in ways that make it possible for them to move from what is known and familiar to them to what is possible to know and to achieve. This he described as a movement across a zone of learning which he named as the “zone of proximal development”. This is a zone that is consisting of the distance between what the child can know and achieve in collaboration with others. Learning and development does just not happen – it is a result of our actions. Vygotskyj thinks it is through the performing how we learn and develop that we create new performances. In relation to Vygotskis thoughts, the self is developed through both manual and verbal skills (1986 in Shotter 1995)

Vygotskyj’s concept of the Zone of proximal development(zpd) is a map to understand development in the sense of self as new learning. Vygotsky saw both process and result as one entity. In western world we often tend to “…see, experience and respond to people as products(identities, labels) rather than as ongoing processes” each one of us is, at every moment, both being and becoming” (Holzman, 2001, p. 8). The development of the self and the work with the process of creating new descriptions is a process-result outcome or development; “performing a head taller than you are”. (p. 8)

Included to this is the position or the power of the supportive person because Vygotskyj stresses that the one who asks questions also controls the other person’s mind and therefore has the responsibility for the questions s/he asks. Vygotskyj’s work has been introduced in adult learning theories as well and practiced therapy, teaching and training, and supervision. Michael White (2007) uses Vygotskyj’s ideas in his praxis of
reauthoring conversations where you connect *landscape of actions* to the *landscape of identity*, or what he in some articles calls landscape of consciousness and the scaffolding between these levels where you help a person to proceed in manageable steps connecting experiences in life to her/his thinking about her/himself – what s/he values in life (White M., 1997).

Vygotskyj claimed that instruction or support is foregoing development. It means that development takes place in the social environment and continues into the person. Support is how the supportive person structure the learning in a way that makes it possible for the person to go from what is known to what is possible to know (White M., 2007) or, differently expressed what you can do on your own and what you possibly can do in collaboration with others. (Holzman, 2001)

Vygotskyj believed that language is one of the most central tools and claimed that we have to take responsibility for the question we ask as we control peoples’ minds through the question we ask. And through language we find the point where the person wants some kind of help, the zone where the person needs help and through language we build a scaffold. This scaffold or structure for learning is a scaffold giving support for the supporter and the person in focus. (Holzman, 2001)

Example: In one supervision session, a supervisee mentioned his difficulties in working with bigger groups. Next week he was going to work with an extended family. Seven persons had been invited to a consultation and he felt worried about the management of this. As the supervisor, I asked him to tell me about good experiences of meeting a bigger group. He then told us a story where he had used a certain structure (action), which had been helpful. Through a scaffolding conversation (White M., 2007) I asked him what he could take with him from that situation (known and familiar ---> possible to know, creating new descriptions) and interviewed him about the future consultation and his different possible steps (future action) in that situation, zigzagging between his descriptions and actions.

In this conversation, it was not the goal or the task which was decisive for the learning. It was the use of means that explain and organise thinking through the structure we used, (questions and reflections) and gives us a force and meaning to go forward. So the method or process should be seen as tools *and* results.
Congruent to the theory, most writers within the field of Social Constructionism recognize the collaborative stance in their work but still there seems to be a difference in what we mean by the word support or facilitating change. As I said in the beginning there are many ways to achieve development and change and there is not enough space in this dissertation to enter the toolboxes or what it is to facilitate change. As I understand Anderson (Anderson H. , 2002). The supervisor is not to be seen as an expert agent of change; that is, a therapist or a supervisor does not change another person. Rather, the therapist’s expertise is in creating a space and facilitating a process for dialogical conversations and collaborative relationships. When involved in this kind of process, both supervisee and supervisor as well as the client, indirect or direct, are shaped and reshaped—transformed—through the process when they are working together (Anderson H. , 2002)

To Bateson it is important to frame everything we think and act into a communication frame. And therefore, change and learning are only words or concepts which are only guides in our own landscape (he is naming it territory). He denotes “…Learning is change, it’s a motion...And change denotes process. But processes are themselves subject to “change”. The process may accelerate, it may slow down, or it may undergo other types of change that we shall say that it is now a “different” process.”(Bateson 1972 p 283) In one of his most important papers, The Logical Categories of Learning and Communication, Bateson (Bateson 1972) discusses learning levels, based on Bertrand Russell’s theory of Logical Types where he discusses different levels of abstractions in language. Here I think learning as change is a key aspect. This is a way of looking at personal and interpersonal development and, in other words, learning to learn - And here is, as I see it, there is a link between the scaffolding idea by Vygotskyj as well as collaborative learning developed e.g. by Anderson. Learning is in this sense a space for learning

**Systemic and Narrative**

Here I want to give a brief description of the words systemic and narrative and call attention to some important themes in these theories that are informing my actions.
Systemic and as well as narrative theory has their roots in the field of family therapy which developed strongly during the middle of the twentieth century with the intention to address people on a relational level. Early forms of systemic therapy had its foundation in cybernetics (study and control of complex technical systems). In the 70’s the understanding of systems theory was central to the structural (Minuchin) and Strategic (Haley) schools of family therapy. These schools would later develop into a systemic therapy. During the end of the 70’s there was an important shift. Family systems therapy or later systemic therapy was developed in the Milan school in Italy. There was a strong influence through the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto and especially the work of Gregory Bateson and Margret Mead. Questions about objectivity and the notion that it is possible to control systems became important discussions in the field, partly as a result of the influence of postmodernism. Second order cybernetics became an important shift in the field of practice – it is not possible to exclude the observer or the subject from what is observed - put the emphasis more on the therapist than the client. The focus of systemic therapy moved thus from the 80’s and forward away from a more modernist way of thinking – with linear causality and reality as something which is objective to a more postmodern understanding of reality, constructed socially in contexts and within the language we use. Narrative therapy emerged in the field of (postmodern) systemic therapy, and was initially developed during the 70’s by Michael White, Australia, and David Epston, New Zealand. Others have developed these ideas in different ways. The terms systemic and narrative (theories or practices) can be viewed as, not as fixed models, but paraphrasing Bateson, “a contemporary ecology of ideas” (Bateson G., 1972, p. 467), or to use Payne’s expression (Payne, 2006) a “synthesizes of ideas” and must therefore be seen in their own context of ideas in society. They are, in themselves, part of ecology of ideas, beliefs or norms, more or less dominant in our cultures. It is difficult to differentiate between systemic and narrative because they are so intertwined with each other and it depends on what different authors emphasize in their theory and. You can view systemic and narrative practices, which I would prefer to say, as socially constructed. And Social Constructionism is likewise a principle in both systemic and narrative theoretical ideas (Pearce W. B., 1994) (White M., 1995, pp. 14-15) (White M., 2004) (Monk, Winslade, Crocket, & Epston, 1997, p. 124).
For Bateson, everything in the mind is metaphors. We can’t have a secure information about reality. The best we can do is to search the best metaphors possible – metaphors that are useful in different contexts and within communication. (Bateson G., 1979)

Holding on to that idea: what are useful metaphors in my practice? One is the story metaphor, which is important in both systemic and narrative practice. (Gergen K. J., 1999) (Lang & Elspeth, 1994) (Bird, 2006) (White M., 2007)

Some authors (Gergen K. J., 1999) (Bird, 2006) in literature are using the word narrative and some are using the word story (Pearce W. B., 1994) (White M., 2007) which becomes confusing. Based on my understanding the meanings of the words are similar, even though Payne (Payne, 2006) is defining some differences but ending up by saying he prefers the word narrative but it is impossible to abandon the word story because it is used so frequently by narrative authors as White and Epston. In this dissertation I am not making any distinction between story and narrative.

As human beings we tend to organize our experiences in story form to make sense of our lives. The story can be defined as a “unit of meaning that provide a frame for lived experiences” (Olson & Petitt, 1999, pp. 127, my translation). It is through these stories that lived experience is interpreted. We enter into stories, we are entered into stories by others and we live our lives through these stories...enable persons to link aspects of their experience through the dimension of time (Epston & White, 1992) E Bruner says “we create the units of experience and meaning from the continuity of life. Every telling is an arbitrary imposition of meaning on the flow of memory, in that we highlight some causes and discount others; that is, every telling is interpretive (E Bruner 1986 p7) from (Epston & White, 1992, p. 80)

Alice Morgan (Morgan, 2000) is saying stories consist of 1.events 2. linked in sequence, 3. across time and 4. according to a plot. Harlene Anderson (Anderson H., 2002), referring to Gergen (Gergen M., 1994) defines a narrative as those stories serving as shared sources for people in ongoing relations (p. 124). For Anderson a narrative is more than a metaphor for telling. It is a reflexive, discursive two-way process; it is constructing our experiences but is also used to understand our experience. (Anderson H., 2002) The narrative and systemic approach emphasizes that we as human beings ongoing are creating meaning in our lives through the stories we create for ourselves and others. In that light focus is moved from problematic stories to more desired and
richer stories about the person’s skills, intentions, values and dreams (White M., 2007) (Pearce W. B., 1994)

As professionals we are thus interested in how the story is created, constituted. It doesn’t really matter if there is a “true” story or not. My emphasis is rather what operational impact this story is having on a person, on relations, on people’s realities

Narrative and systemic practice involves, in different ways, a process of deconstruction and meaning making, achieved through questioning and collaboration with clients or supervisees

Accordingly, focus is put on the interaction patterns that are maintained by persons (limited) stories and narratives and the discourses that influence how people give meaning to their experiences. Therapist / supervisor’s work consists of talking to people in such a way as to have the opportunity to change their values and stories. (Burr, 2003)

In the late 1990s, Michael White began to present some thoughts linked to Jacques Derrida (White, 2000). The notion of the "absent but implicit" is based on Derrida’s ideas about how we make sense of things, about how we create the meanings that we derive from texts depend on the distinctions we make between what is presented to us (privileged meaning) and what is "left out" (subjugated meaning). When McAdam and Lang say “Problems are frustrated dreams” (Mc Adam & Lang, 2009, p. 10) it is basically the same idea – The dream comes first (based on some experiences in life) and the problem is created because there is a relation between the problem and the dream.

Example: If a person says "the last years I have become more and more isolated" it is a story s/he is telling about life. And this story is built on some experiences or events (of feeling isolated) which are linked together in a sequence, across time (the last years) according to a plot (isolation). And this is one story in that person´s life. Embedded in that sentence is probably an intention to “be together with people” because the person is valuing something (fellowship). And implicitly the person has some experiences from life of the preferred way of living (the spirit of togetherness)

So as a professional I always have choices how I respond to people. When people tell me a problem story they implicitly want to change their life, their stories. Bird (Bird, 2006) describes the supervision room as “lined with mirrors” which to me seems to be a relevant picture of what supervision is – to mirror or respond to people´s different
stories, beliefs and expressions. And as a professional – playing with words - how can I develop my respons-ability?

If I reflect on the sentence “the last years I have become more and more isolated” one way could be directly asked questions about “experiences of togetherness” - to expand these experiences/stories in a person´s life. Another way could be to deal with the dilemma (e.g. isolation) through an externalising conversation where you separate persons from attributes negative or positive.

Externalisation helps people to consider their relationships with problems, or phenomena and evaluate the effects on the person´s identity or self. As said before, people internalise beliefs and norms and create stories about themselves and others based on these norms and are judging themselves and others, based on these norms. Externalising conversations offer a way to speak which separates the person from the problem. , “The person is not the problem, the problem is the problem” (Morgan, 2000, p. 87). The relation to the problem and the impact of a problem on a person´s life become important in these conversations. One idea with externalizing conversations is to highlight a person´s preferred or intentional identity. What is it a person is valuing, what intentions, what principles in life are implicit in the story a person is telling? And through scaffolding questions, derived from the work of Vygotskyj, the preferred identity is strengthened through questions - loitering between the two landscapes – the landscape of identity and the landscape of actions. (White M., 2007).

The purpose of externalisation is to strengthen the preferred or intentional identity. Attributes of different kinds are in this view labelling people and they are used from a power position, independent of if they are problem attributes or attributes of skills (Morgan, 2000). A third way could be to enter the dream – to ask questions about the preferred life. But whatever I do I have the intention to expand other experiences and stories based on what the person is valuing in life. A fourth way is of course to ask questions as “how do you feel about that” which from my perspective would be of less use for the person.

The word response, which is a word very much connected to the narrative field of practice could, as I understand it, be translated to the word feedback. Feedback, in this
sense, is about information. Bateson is defining feedback as an expression of correcting actions, based on differences linked to his view of information defined by him as “any difference which makes a difference in some later event” (Bateson G., 1972, p. 381). Following Gregory Bateson it is important the supervisor positions himself as an observer in relation to the system to be able to observe the punctuations and what they are creating in relations between people. But inspired by Bertrand Russell’s theory about logical types (with the assumption that a member of a system cannot observe or describe the system which s/he him/herself is part of) Bateson’s thinking was, at the same time, there is no pattern to describe because you describe these patterns based on your own experiences of or beliefs about the world as we see it. (Bateson G., 1972) So when talking about experiences, learning and development I am including myself in this process which is an idea supported by Anderson et al. (Anderson & Swim, 1995) and their thinking of the supervisor’s position as being in a collaborative relationship – that I can’t exclude myself in the “generative process of expanding and creating meaning and action” (Anderson & Swim, 1995, p. 59) – knowledge is created in the learning process, through reflections.

So responding is about creating differences. Reflections - as well as questions or other utterances - are distinctions I make from the distinctions which are highlighted by me as a supervisor in a conversation. In other words – in supervision many stories are told as a way to describe something. I as the supervisor make distinctions from this story; I am highlighting some elements from what is described and giving back reflections, asking questions etc. And, as supervisor, I have the normative or ethical responsibility as well as the formative responsibility (Inskipp & Proctor, 1993) to co-create development and learning.

**The Self**

Holding on to the assumption an objective view of the world isn’t available to us (Gergen K. J., 2001) and as Michael White stresses: “life is a social phenomenon...life and identities are socially negotiated in communities of people...” (White, 2004 p98) and all descriptions is self referential (Keeney, 1983) it is crucial how we view the self. Through our selves we are in an ongoing process of cocreating realities together. To me it is useful to think through the different perspectives of the self in literature, because it will
have an effect on how I use my own self in the process – It will have an effect on my actions in relation to the supervisees – how I respond, the questions I am asking and what I think is the general preferred outcome of supervision.

Briefly I am intending to give an overview of the concept of self and different perspectives of the self. Thoughts about the use of the self is embedded in other parts of this dissertation as in the parts where I am talking about power, adult learning, systemic and narrative practice and transport.

The concept of Self

Over the door to the Delphian Oracle in Appollon temple in Delphi there is an inscription from ancient Greece; “gnoti sauton” (know thyself). But the concept of self seems to be, in the western world, a quite modern phenomenon. As an example the term self was first used in English in 1595, according to Oxford English dictionary (Pearce W., 1994). The concept of self has been discussed in theology, philosophy and later on in disciplines as sociology, anthropology and psychology. It is one of the most explored concepts in the social sciences and, as Lindwall (Lindwall, 2004) puts it “in the last 30 years there has been, compared to research in general... a threefold increase in the research on the self”. (p. 4)

Self is broadly defined, in one way or another as the essential qualities that make a person distinct from all others. In philosophy there is an ongoing discussion about what these qualities are, and throughout history there have been many different ways of looking at the self (Hartman, 2004) (Singer, 1975) Some of the key themes in these discussions trying to define these qualities seems to be consciousness of some kind, the responsible agent for thoughts and actions and a substance which endures through time (Lubcke, 1988) How we view the self is part of our cultural history and historical context. In literature, the concept of self is highlighted from many different perspectives and traditions and it is such a broad question, nearly connected to the question of what a human being is. (Lindwall, 2004)

Different perspectives on the ideas of the self

In ancient times, the idea of the self was paired with the concept of soul, the essence of humans. Many religions saw the soul as something that guided and controlled both
physical and mental processes in humans. Judaism, Christianity and Islam see the soul as an independent part of the body, and the soul coming from God. The idea of immortality was connected with the idea of an earthly body and a new body in the life after this. (Hartman, 2004) Ancient philosophers as Plato believed in the immortality of the soul but Aristotle defined the soul, in his later work, as a center for animal and rational functions, inseparable from the body. (Baldwin, 2000). There has been many ways of creating different kinds of dualisms and dichotomies concerning the concept of self but perhaps the most wellknown is the cartesian dualism from the 17th century; that our thinking and our emotions are non physical, separated from the body, the self was defined as a thinking thing(( lat. Res cogitans) (Hartman, 2004).

In eastern traditions as in Buddhism the self, atman, is often conceived as an individual impermanent within all human beings; eternal, changeless and pure. The human being is often conceived as an illusion of individual existence. In Buddhism there is no concept of an integrated self. Buddha rejects the idea of a durable substance behind sensations, ideas and feelings and their constant flow. An example of this view is a dialogue between the philosopher Nagasena and King Milinda - The king has come to their meeting in his carriage; he gets the question if he can explain what the carriage is? He answered: the word carriage is a name, which includes trailer, drawbar and axle, wheels and springs and the yoke. Nagasena answers: Well, great king, then you knows what a carriage is. And thus are also covered my hair, my skin and my bones, physicality, sensations, attitudes and awareness in the name Nagasena. Buddhist philosophical literature criticized the concept of substance with the same rigor as in our most sophisticated empiricists as Hume and Mach (Aspelin, 1977).

In the western world there has been innumerable discussions about the concept of self, in philosophy since the 17th century (Lubcke, 1988). Gergen describes The romantic, modernist and post-modern discourses of the self; The romantic and modernist discourse views the self as a fixed entity. The romantic perspective during the 18th and 19th century talks about depths, mystery, passion as a protest against the reduction of human experience to rationality. The modernist view of the self during the 18th century, talks about the inner self, genuinity, stability and rationality and sees the self as a fixed and knowable entity This view of the self can be seen as a result of the enlightenment period (Gergen K., 1991).
In psychology there has been different views of the self as well. In psychoanalysis Freud’s thesis was that human beings “carry the seeds of their construction as well as their destruction within them” (Baldwin, 2000, p. 17) which was a radical idea that dominated the field of mental health during many years, and influenced the creation of many therapeutic models after the 1940’s. In psychoanalysis the analyst is trying to build transference and through this the patient relates with the analyst on the basis of early childhood issues. The result for the patient is resolution of the patient’s neurosis. Counter-transferences, where early experiences of the analyst is shown in the psychoanalysis, should be avoided because it makes the treatment more complicated and prolongs the treatment. A distanced position and to reveal as little as possible are important intentions for the analyst. The self of the analyst should be as neutral as possible. This position was “inherited” by different family therapists in the early field of family therapy eventhough there were different arguments about how to value personal experiences in professional work and if the therapist should work with his/her own personal experiences. Virgina Satir, as an example, saw work of the self of the therapist as something which could make the therapist more congruent while Hailey saw work by the therapist as a waste of time, perhaps as a reaction against the psychoanalytic view, the therapist should work on his/her own early experiences in order to be distanced to the patient. (Baldwin, 2000)

During the postmodern shift in family therapy 2nd order cybernetics became dominant in the field of family therapy. Now it was no longer possible to exclude the therapist’s self in a co-creational conversation. The emphasis was put on the therapist and self reflexivity became an important tool for the professional, reflecting on beliefs and values and how these influenced the questions and actions of the therapist. (Skillicorn, 2009) (Baldwin, 2000)

**The self in a postmodern aspect**

Gregory Bateson’s view of the self is connecting to his idea about mind; “Mind is social” (Bateson, 1972) McAdam et al (Mc Adam & Lang, 2009) say “Mind is in the pathways between us. We exist in those networks of pathways between us and everything has some connection to greater networks of connection”. Social Constructionism doesn’t see the self, or the identity as something fixed - the self is changing in different
contexts, relations or interactions. (Gergen K., 1991) Gergen’s idea about a socially constructed “Relational self” is going beyond the individual view of the self. The self is not a result of individual actions that make us social. It is vice versa. Social process are realised on the personal level. (Gergen K., 1991). The concept of power is difficult to avoid, because self is not just constructed socially but dominant discourses have marginalizing and disqualifying effect on individuals and groups in society and in therapy, or supervision. The focus is laid on how these discourses and values, norms are constituting person’s understanding of themselves. (White M., 1997)

So from this perspective, what is it to have a sense of self? The continuity of the self is an illusion based on the generally consistent and repeated social patterns within which most people live. (Gergen K. J., 2001) (Burr, 2003). From a postmodern view these repetitive interactions between people provide stability and a sense of continuity. Harré (Harré, 1998) says “To have a sense of self is to have a sense of one’s location, as a person, in each of several arrays of other, beings, relevant to personhood. It is to have a sense of one’s point of view, at any moment a location in space from which one perceives and acts upon the world, including that part which lies within one’s own skin. But the phrase “a sense of self” is also used for the sense one has of oneself as possessing a unique set of attributes which, though they change, nevertheless remain as a whole distinctive of just the one person. These attributes include one’s beliefs about one’s attributes. The self, in this sense, is not an entity…it is the collected attributes of a person. The word self has also been used for the impression of his or her personal characteristics that one person makes on another…we seem to have three aspects of personhood in focus at the same time. Though none of these are really entities…we have forged a way of speaking about them using nouns, the very grammatical form that entity talk takes, in our several uses of the expression ‘the self’” (p. 4)

The modernist position tends to emphasize the primacy of the rational mind over the body and the emotions and the mind’s capacity to integrate experience in order to take up a singular non-contradictory position. Postmodern theorising about the self, conversely emphasizes the significance of the multiply positioned subject. People’s lives are complex and composed of multiple indentifications and subject positions that are offered to them. Our experiences of life are always richer than our ways of retelling these experiences. (Winslade & Monk, 2000) Accordingly, focus is put on the interaction
patterns that are maintained by persons (limited) stories and narratives and the discourses that influence how people give meaning to their experiences. Therapist / supervisor’s work consists of talking to people in such a way as to have the opportunity to change their values and stories. (Gergen K. J., 1999)

So the sense of self is based on repetitive patterns and the sense of possessing attributes about the self. They are grounded in, or constituted by the beliefs - part of the discourses and the stories we are living in. Often this sense of the self is preferred because these relational patterns create harmony but when the repetitive patterns conflict, it becomes problematic. (Winslade & Monk, 2000)

So this could be a point where a therapist or a supervisor is invited to explore and create new understandings of the self – create a context where new interactions and new descriptions can be developed. To give an example from my own practice in supervision: In this interview we are structuring the session with inspiration from Bird’s et al. (Bird, 2006) prismatic dialogue, interviewing the supervisee as if s/he was the client in focus. As supervisor, I was interviewing one supervisee as the father of a 17 years old guy. The father, as well as the son, are using drugs. The father is talking about himself as “not being a good father” “not such a model” “it is difficult to take part” but later on in the interview he says he’s coming to the meeting because he wants to respond to his son...

**Father:** If he asks me for something, it is important

**Interviewer:** What sort of father is that...if something is important for your son, it’s important to you...?

**Father:** I guess it’s what one is supposed to do, the situation is so unusual

**Interviewer:** Responding as a father is what you are supposed to do...I would like to hear more about this. You are saying it’s unusual. Is it important to talk about that?

**Father:** Yes...

**Interviewer:** What is useful? Responding to your son, is that a phrase that fits?

**Father:** Of course I don’t want my son to take drugs; if this helps of course I want to...

**Interviewer:** We could stop her, hearing thoughts from the others

In the team there was a discussion about the father’s different views of himself, as a father. His perspective of himself is contradictory:” ...not being a good father...not such a model...it
is difficult to take part”. But he also says”...If he asks me for something it’s important...Wanting to help...Want to take part” which we were exploring more in the next part of the interview to “create new repetitive patterns”

Reflections: To me, the relational self is a useful metaphor. The self is thus constructed socially in the relations we are part of. To me this professional attitude of the self is a more dynamic or vivid view. My interest and focus is moved to the interactions between people and how the self is formed through these relationships - in the different contexts we are part of. The way we talk and what experiences we are cocreating in the supervisory context will have an influence of how our (professional) selves are created.

The transport metaphor

When people, not familiar with systemic and narrative practice, ask me about the theme of my dissertation, I tell them I write about Transport or Katharsis. When they want to know more, I usually say: Imagine you have seen a movie which has touched you... Similarly, conversations affect us in different ways...and how can I use that as a leader of a conversation? Sounds very interesting they often respond...

The basic idea, in using the transport metaphor, is that all experiences touch us, influence us in different ways. We are always affected in some way or another – it makes us think in another way, understand new things, we become reminded of some aspects of life or it help us in some other aspect. Narrative practitioners sometimes describe the therapeutic process as a movement – a journey or rite of passage (White M., 2004) (Epston & White, 1992) White is using the journey metaphor in different contexts such as therapy, community work and teaching – different journeys where he finds himself being nourished and touched in the sharing of different experiences in life. (White M., 2004)
White is talking about the people who are consulting him as “fellow travellers” (White M., 1997) to emphasize their contributions to his own life. In literature he is talking about the journey as a shared experience, a shared activity where there are mutual contributions to each one’s life. The narrative literature is referring to different journey metaphors;

*Rites of passage metaphor* is one journey metaphor brought from the work of Tuner (Tuner 1969) referred to by White (White M., 2004) and used as a metaphor for transitions in life – a journey from one identity to another. The rites are composed by 3 phases; the separation phase, the luminal or between phase and the re-incorporation phase. It’s a metaphor describing an identity journey from something which is familiar, to something you don’t really know anything about. In between there is a phase where you a struggling with who you are. You are going from something familiar to something pretty unknown. So this metaphor is used as a way to acknowledge and strengthen a person’s steps in going from one way of living to another, or different expressed; going from dominant stories about one’s life to a preferred story (White & Denborough, 1998).

*Transport or Katharsis* is referring, not to the concept of Catharsis associated with notion of release, but, to a more classical definition of Katharsis - how we are influenced or moved by an experience. The metaphor is taken from the witnessing of the performance of a classical tragedy and how we are influenced through these experiences. The word *resonance* is here used – to describe how expressions and actions touch the surfaces of earlier experiences in life and how these are evoked or resonated. In narrative literature the Katharsis metaphor is mainly described in the frame of definitional ceremony. Michael White challenged himself to create a praxis of a reflecting team, a structure to acknowledge, re-grade and honour people’s lives rather than judging people’s actions and expressions through appreciations and what often is conceptualized as positive feedback. Implicitly a person’s actions and expressions are judgments based on norms and beliefs about life and are in this way linked to dominant discourses. Michael White was here influenced by Michael Foucault and his analysis of modern power. All forms of “applauses” are given from a position of power and for Michael White it was important to avoid what Foucault describes as normalizing judgments. (Lundby, 2009, p. 60) (White M., 2004)
Michael White is describing his way of introducing and developing the *definitional ceremony* in different articles (White M., 1995) (White M., 1997) (White M., 2004) (White M., 2007). In the development of the praxis of definitional ceremony, Michael White was inspired by the social anthropologist Barbara Meyerhof's work. She used the metaphor of definitional ceremony in her work with elderly Jewish people in Los Angeles, U.S., where many of them had lost their extended families in Holocaust. Experiencing the group was neglected by the surrounding society and lived relatively isolated, disqualifying themselves in relation to the wider context her intention in the project was to “gain an increased sense of identity within their own community” (Myerhof 1986) from (Payne, 2006, p. 133). Barbara Myerhof says (Myerhof 1986 p267) in (White M., 1995) “Definitional ceremonies deal with the problems of invisibility and marginality; they are strategies that provide opportunities for being seen and in one’s own terms, garnering witnesses to one’s worth vitality and being” (p. 178)

Michael White introduced definitional ceremony into the therapeutic world; the following steps came to be included in the structure:

1. Telling where the person in focus tells his/her story in a conversation with an interviewer
2. The next step is the retelling of the tellings where the outsider witnesses give their responses according to a certain structure.
3. The third step is the retelling of the retelling which could be seen as a response to the witnesses’ responses. What was the person in focus drawn through the witnesses’ retellings?

During the 2nd step, the retellings of the telling, the witnesses are often interviewed according to the following questions and all four questions are asked to each person in the witness group: as a witness response:

1. What **stood out** for you? The person is here expected to repeat words, phrases and other used by the person in focus
2. What images or pictures are these words and phrases evoking for you – what seems to be important for the person in focus; purposes, values hope and commitments and principles in life?
3. Still thinking of the word, phrases and other expressions – how are they **resonated** in your own life – what personal experiences are they connected with?
4. How are you influenced by the conversation, how are you moved or transported? It could be something which is helpful for the witness, learning achieved, an emotion etc.

In this narrative practice or conversation, outsider witnesses are invited listeners to a consultation. Often they are friends of the consulting person or past clients of the therapist who have their own knowledge and experience of the problem present in their own lives. And it could be professionals. But as a witness you are invited to give a response from your own personal life, the focus is not sharing believed professional knowledge (White M., 1995) in terms of interpretations or hypothesizes. Instead the aim is to acknowledge a person´s identity in a story to “provoke people´s ... more neglected aspects of their lives” (White M., 1995, p. 180). Having responsive audiences bring powerful additional dimensions to the process of the redefinition or transformation of stories. (White M., 2007)

Part of the witnessing is the decentred position; the experiences and the knowledge of the person in focus are highlighted and just strengthened through the responses. The aim is to “bring in real life into the ...room” (White M., 1997, p. 94). In literature there are some examples of the use of transport metaphor in supervision and teaching contexts. Michael White gives examples of using the definitional ceremony in consultations within a training context as a process of what he calls co-research (White M., 1997, p. 172 ff) and Fox et al. (Fox, Tench, & Marie, 2003) describe their experience of using outsider witness ceremony in supervision. The first two stages of the definitional ceremony were relatively easy for a supervision group to grasp and enact, the third stage was harder and the fourth stage relatively rarely achieved.

I think it is important to mention Reflecting team (Anderson T., 1991) as a resource in therapy and supervision. - Where multiple perspectives in front of a client are explored, which the client can respond to - and comment. It seems to be a more open way to give responses and is primarily thought of as a professional way to organise reflections in the therapy/supervision room (Hedges, 2010) As said before Michael Whites development of Barbara Meyerhof´s metaphor of definitional ceremony in his own practice was a way to develop the reflecting team practice. When White (White M., 1995) is referring to Tom Anderson´s reflecting team (Andersen, Reflekterande processer, 1991) he is doing it with a lot of respect and acknowledgements. From his point of view Anderson´s work
contributed in many ways to the field of family therapy – where words as collaboration and transparency became important in the work with people.

I have used the definitional ceremony in supervision, which to me sometimes is a helpful and powerful resource in supervision, but not as a general ritual. As I see it there is often a need in supervision to reflect on how to understand a certain phenomena, reflect on the relation/s to the client/s or other issues in the supervision process. And then the definitional ceremony becomes a restraint rather than a resource. What resources we cocreate are linked to the preferred outcome of a session, part of the contracting.

In the following practice examples, I am going to focus on the transport and its use in supervision. My interest in this dissertation is not primarily the use of a definitional ceremony, or reflecting team structure but to focus on the idea of the third step of the witness's response. Through the expression of transport, implicitly there is a resonance, based on something which caught the interest. To me the sharing of the transport is part of reflexivity.

Hedges (Hedges, 2010) says “Reflexivity is a stance that we take towards the patterns we are co-creating when we communicate as well as being a set of practical skills and abilities that we can use” (p. 3) so from my understanding, supported by Hedges (Hedges, 2010) reflexivity is the overall concept of using reflections in practical work where concepts as reflections on action and reflections in action (Schön, 2007), earlier explored in this dissertation, are included. For Schön reflections in action are representing an ability associated with professional artistry (Schön, 1997). From the supervisors perspective the initiative of using transport in supervision becomes then part of this artistry as it is a way to intervene in a conversation with reflections on action where Schön’s concept of knowing in action “a kind of intelligence that begins by being tacit and spontaneous” (Schön, 1997, p. 25) is used as a starting point. The telling of the transport is one way to express reflections on action and one stance we can “take towards the patterns we are co-creating” (Hedges, 2010, p. 3).

As I talked about in the adult learning chapter transport could be seen as process of learning, development and change (Keeney, 1983) (Bateson G., 1972) (Anderson & Swim, 1995) (Holzman, 2001)
Summary of points from literature - referring to transport

Some thoughts I have achieved so far, through literature analysis and reflections:

1. The use of an I position is one way to avoid normalising judgements in the supervision process – to give space for the person/s in the centre to give space for, and strengthen their preferred way of living – the preferred personal and professional self

2. To talk from an I position could be a way to acknowledge a person’s story or expressions

3. All experiences in supervision are resonated in our own personal (and professional) lives and through these resonances we are transported, moved in conversations.

1. These “transport tellings” could be a useful resource in supervision:

a. All stories or processes could be a contribution to the participants’ own lives and experiences, or different expressed, personal and professional selves. We learn something from the entity in supervision; from others’ expressions and from the supervision process

b. Through the sharing of I experiences we contribute to other present persons’ lives

c. Transport of a process. When I ask the question “How were you transported through a process”, it is a way to catch the persons’ selves in a supervision session, to reflect on the cocreated patterns, from a personal and relational horizon.

d. To create space for transport is a way for me as a supervisor to catch where the supervisees are in their process. My interest as a supervisor is the development of the supervisee. The transport can be used as reflection on action which becomes part of a learning process
Two examples of using the transport metaphor in supervision

I want to show examples from my practice responding to my question:

*How can I use the transport metaphor in supervision through the use of self and how can systemic and narrative ideas inform my reflections and actions?*

I am going to show how I use the transport metaphor through two different examples:

In the first example I use the transport metaphor by inviting supervisees to speak from an I position, how they were moved or transported in relation to a client.

In the 2nd example I am using the transport metaphor to look at a supervision process as a transport

Through reflections I will pay attention to intentions, effects, positions and repositioning together with learning points in relation to transport and the use of self

I am going to use reflexivity as a stance (Hedges, 2010) towards what is co-created in these examples and use different ways of *reflections on actions* and link back to ideas from the literature review. All ideas and references I am referring to, have been showed and analysed earlier in this dissertation.

The words position and repositioning are for me technical terms. I can take a position to knowledge, to a story, to a person, to myself and my own beliefs etc and depending on what position I take, this will have certain consequences in what is co-created in the context.

**To be transported by the client as the ”Super-supervisor”**

This example is a piece of live group supervision i.e. I met a group of four professionals within a systemic training context. They were going to give a consultation to one client and two therapists, working within family counselling service. I, as the supervisor and the supervision group met one client together with two therapists (figure 1)
The client and the therapists had been working together for about 2.5 years and now they came to us for a consultation where they wanted to reflect on their collaboration between each other. The therapists wanted to understand more of what had been helpful for the mother in their collaboration and what they could learn from this. The client was mother of eight children and was divorced from the fathers of the children. She said she came to us to see if she could be to any help for the therapists, to help them in their work. The group I was supervising was organising themselves into one reflecting team and one person interviewing the people who came to visit us. The choreography was set up as shown in the diagram, figure 1:

```
Reflecting team                      Interview                          Supervisor
                                      
                                      Client
                                      
                                      Interviewer
                                      
                                      Therapists
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In the interview, the therapists talked about their experiences as professionals and were giving positive feedback to the mother, through the questions which were asked to them by the interviewer. The mother was appreciating the therapists’ ways of meeting her in her different life situations. She talked about the situation 1, 5 years ago when she wanted the therapists to give her answer and solutions and wanted them to take care of, for her, difficult meetings in school. Now she was feeling self confidence enough in managing those situations herself, as part of the outcome of the therapeutic collaboration.

The purpose of this setting was to see the client as the source of (experiential) knowledge in taking feedback about what had been helpful in the professional actions. The structure of this should enable a respectful exploration of the client’s and the
therapists’ experiences. My intention was to empower the trainees and respect their (professional) knowledge. Learning was the overall aim – learning for the supervisees’ and the therapists.

I think it was a privilege to be part of this conversation – to listen to the mother’s story about her journey and how she felt herself being supported through the work of the therapists in finding and making use of her own skills and abilities. In the interview the therapists gave back a lot of appreciative comments about her strengths and courage to create new ways of living.

After the team reflection, where the team members reflected on what the mother had achieved and the changes she had been going through, I invited the interviewer to ask questions to the 2 therapists about their own learning in their personal lives and professional lives. How and where were they transported through the conversations with the mother?

Here I am imposing an idea as a supervisor; that the interviewer should ask questions about movement and transport. What was my intention in this situation? How come I wanted the interviewer to ask this question?

In this sequence it was not really conscious to me why I was doing this. But I had a feeling something was missing, I now could name as my transport in the session. I, as the responsible supervisor in this situation recognized the interviewer asked a lot of fantastic questions and the team really reflected on the woman’s skills and abilities. Still I had a sense in the room that there was a gap between the professionals in the room and the mother who, in a generous way was sharing her own experiences in life. Part of my struggle was about my own position, how to respond to the mother: I wanted to acknowledge her experiences and knowledge and, at the same time, cocreate learning for all the professionals which was the task that we had been contracting.

In this situation we were asking for the client’s feedback and we wanted to incorporate this feedback into our learning as professionals and use that learning in our future collaborations with clients. I think my perspective, when I entered this conversation, was a view of egalitarian relations, that the mother could share her experience from a "user perspective" and afterwards we could reflect and think of the learning achieved. But the sense I had something was missing.
Reflecting on the gap I wanted the mother’s new experiences to be named, not through appreciative normative expressions, but in a way where her story was acknowledged in a more mutual way. As professionals we were all in privileged positions in relation to the mother through the professional positions and through other social differences that were obvious in the room – e.g. gender, class and (professional) language. And social differences are, supported by Bateson (Bateson G., 1972) and Foucault, linked to how we view knowledge, which is basically nothing but valued experiences which in turn become “practices which form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49) cited by Burr (Burr, 2003, p. 64) From an ethical perspective, I saw my responsibility to reposition my self in the frame of being the supporter for “learning new experiences” connected to Kolb’s learning circle (Scaife, 2004) and Vygotskyj’s (White M., 2007) scaffolding idea. Another intention in this context was to create a collaborative mutual-learning context (Anderson & Swim, 1995). In which way could we organize the incorporation of feedback into our learning? Vygotskyj’s ideas (Holzman, 2001, p. 8) informed me in these reflections; the process and the result are part of the same entity. The therapists wanted to learn from their collaboration with the mother and the supervisee’s intention was to learn something from the supervision session. I am using the scaffolding idea and positioned myself by inviting the interviewer to ask questions (performance) and the therapists on how they were transported through the woman’s story. I acted from this tacit and spontaneous “knowing in action”, (Schön, 1997, p. 25).

The interview went on after the interviewer paid forward the question to the therapists:
The persons in the interview are the
Client (M) Therapist1 (Th1) Therapist 2 (Th2) and the Interviewer (I).
The team is sitting besides, in the room and I am sitting in the corner of the room, with a distance from everybody.

Th1: It is exciting to be part of this, to listen. What I understand more and more is the importance of having someone supporting me. M’s experiences have taught me this.
I: And professionally?
Th1: I have learnt I don’t always have to do such complicated things...
I: so what do you take from this for future meetings with others?
**Th1:** it is difficult to put words on... I meet a lot of people... M shows a lot of strength ... I feel I am trusting her strength, that she will manage things... I don’t have to do such complicated things...

I: What about you L? What is the effect on your personal life? What do you take with you from these conversations with M - where do they take you in your life?

**Th2:** I think ... I think it is a kind of humility. M and I could have changed chairs... I am not better ... or worse... we are all human beings. I think my relation with M has called my attention to these things...

I: and professionally?

**Th2:** I am working as a special pedagogue in schools and the things I have got from M is worth a lot to me. Parents who have difficulties in asserting themselves – I can understand them in a different way – and when I am supervising teachers I will be able to widen the conversations through questions. I can ask them to think of how they could invite parents and their experiences into their contexts...

Here I am thinking of the effect of the questions about transport. Th1 talks about the excitement and how M’s experiences have transported him to understand the importance of support in his own life and, as I understand it, he is linking the word support to M’s strength. I see this as a repositioning in the room. In the beginning the professionals were defining or describing M, and now the focus is transported to Th1’s own life, which redefines the relationships (Pearce W. B., 1994). It would be really interesting to listen more to the stories behind these expressions but the interviewer stops here and the question is now asked to Th 2 who answers by talking about the egalitarian view of life and how her attention is drawn to that belief, which she then connects to professional ideas - she sees the possibilities to ask questions and invite parents and listen to their experiences. Probably many experiences have influenced her to say this but the conversation is reminding her about the importance of something she is valuing and what effects that could have in practice in her professional life - which challenges Scaife’s (Scaife, 2004, p. 11) distinction between therapy and supervision, “learning for life as distinct from learning for work”. Through the “transport questions” she’s zigzagging between personal and professional experiences, personal/professional values and future professional actions which I see as a scaffolding conversation- through these questions her personal and professional intentional identity is strengthened (White M., 2007) and by, implicitly, seeing the client as the “super supervisor” we are
keeping connected to the relationships to clients (Duncan & Sparks, 2007) in the supervision process.

The scaffolding conversation goes on for a while...

When the reflecting team enters the conversation they continued to talk about their appreciation of M and what her experiences meant to Th1 and Th2.

One team member started to say:

*It is really interesting to listen to this, how M: s experiences are useful for L and P, what they have learnt...*

**Here, I, as the supervisor, put in a question in their reflections...**

I asked them to think about how this conversation has influenced their personal and professional lives – if they could reflect on this in their reflections?

Voices from the reflecting team:

- *I am thinking of the importance of listening to clients, it is important to think through how I am influenced through the relations with clients.*

- *Absolutely, you learn from each meeting...*

- *It is very interesting to listen to this...I get a lot of thoughts...*

- *

Here I as the supervisor invited the reflecting team to explore their own transport. The first person talked about what they (Th1 and Th2) had learnt. Through my following question I wanted them to think through their own transport. An effect was the movement to the I position now on a general level. In the conversation it became clear they were benefiting from M: s story. How it made contributions to their own personal and professional lives. They did not talk specifically about themselves and their own experiences. Their thoughts were transported through the conversation but they did not express it explicitly, which I think would have been a different learning experience. Now they were conceptualizing their “implicit transports” My understanding of this situation
is the importance of “supportive learning” and what “different learning experiences” would come out from that kind of structure - if I, or somebody in the team, had interviewed the team members. How can I as a supervisor learn from how to create structures? What in this situation was “possible to know”? I think another point here is the contracting (Scaife, 2004) process. I had not taken an initiative to clarify the different expectations in relation to learning. So far, my initiative was based on my own expectation (Pearce W. B., 1994) without, in practice, seeing it as a collaborative mutual-learning context (Anderson & Swim, 1995). And this is a critique to my self; how do I learn from the process? As I discussed before this process involves experiences - part of a learning process - which in turn will influence all involved persons´ future actions.

After this team reflection, the conversation between M, P and L continued:

**Th1:** I think it is very good to hear – they were touched by our conversations... giving thoughts.

**Th2:** Very good reflections – what we do are influencing other people...

**I:** What do you take with you from this conversation?

**Th2:** It feels very stimulating, I feel proud because of this collaboration between us ...

**I:** (turning to P): What do you take with you from this conversation?

**Th1:** I didn´t know what I expected ...but now I am thinking ...it was a good feeling to think of my personal level and I am really happy M listened to this.

**I:** (turning to M): What has this given you?

**M:** I liked to share my experiences of our collaboration – that has meant a lot to me...and enjoyed listen to how my experiences helped other persons...

**I:** (turning to L): and you, where does it take you?

**Th2:** I think this talking about my work...

I think this starts to become a picture of how stories and identities are cocreated through repetetive interactions (Winslade & Monk, 2000) Through different experiences in the room new stories emerge, through this “retelling of a retelling of a telling” (White M., Maps, 2007). In the interview M and Th1 and Th2 feel acknowledged and they share experiences of having contributed to others, which in turn, become contributions to themselves. This connects to Myerhof´ s picture (Meyerhof 1986 p267) in (White M.,
1995) of “garnering witnesses to one´s worth vitality and being... seen ... in one´s own terms.” (p. 178)

After a while, the interview is finished and the interviewer, the reflecting team and I, as the supervisor, are meeting to share reflections and the learning which came out from this supervision session. They were sharing thoughts about the influence the talking about the personal level and how it had influenced them. Some voices from the conversation:

*When we got there, something happened in the interview...*

*Yes...it was really interesting – before the questions about how the conversation had influenced the therapist ...it was like...I had a feeling ...people didn’t meet each other in the room...*

*After those reflections something was shared in the room...*

*It's something with power ...I felt we were so privileged ...all these professionals...and what could she (the client) get out of this? She was very generous ...I think our reflections about ourselves strengthened her a lot...*

We were also sharing some reflections about the differences between the private, personal and professional areas in a person’s life.

I think it is important not to see the outcome of supervision as a result because I think primarily the process is the outcome – i.e. how we create processes for learning on a personal level and find ways to get closer to people’s intentions in the conversations. I think what happened in the session was interesting and a lot of learning came out. Through the questions about transport, personally and professionally, something different happened in the conversation which I could describe as a re-storying process, which both constructed and helped us to understand these learning experiences as a reflexive two-way process (Anderson H., 2002)
Acknowledging personal transport

In this example I am using the transport metaphor to look at a supervision process as a transport. The conversation is co-constructed as an externalising conversation (Morgan, 2000) In this process I had not decided in forehand how to handle this situation. It was co-created spontaneously in the episodes, through collaboration. My intention in this setting, which is emerging in the context, is to guide the supervisees to “different places” which transports them as individuals to other areas in their own thinking and their own actions.

In this session I am meeting a group of 3 school counsellors. We have been working together in supervision for about 2 years. They wanted to talk about the societal context around schools. In Sweden there is currently a privatization trend that has major effects on the schools. In connection with the mergers of various district administrations to put down the various local public schools - those schools are bought up by various private organizations.

They wanted to understand this situation. All energy was spent on the various changes that were taking place (the leader of the school will lose their jobs, projects put on ice, the focus is no longer working with the children, etc.) They described it as a real tough situation.

Linked to the changed situation in the schools I invited the group to talk about the effects of the “situation” on them and their work:

The school counsellors in the group felt very worried about the impact this had on the situation of children in school, and especially on children with special needs, children of families who come from other cultures, etc. The conversation was very much about society’s responsibility for children and youth in society. They felt very worried about how the various changes were going to affect their work, because there are no legal obligations for private schools to provide student welfare resources e.g. social workers.
and psychologists. As a response to my questions we explored the different consequences, effects on them and on the children and the families they were working with. They responded to this by describing sense of lost enthusiasm, lost energy in their work and how these emotions were influencing themselves and their work.

Reflections: I had to consider a really tough situation when I met this group of 3 school counsellors. “The situation” was influencing them a lot. I experienced them being deceived by the situation which, from my perspective, was restraining them. When I invited them to talk about the effect of the situation my intention was to support development in their work with children and families, which were their tasks as school counsellors, through the preferred sense of their selves. I wanted to strengthen different experiences which could transport them to different “places in their lives”.

So an externalising conversation was formed - to explore the consequences of the situation, on them and their relations. Thinking of operations of modern power (Freedman & Combs, 2002) (Morgan, 2000) I wanted them to separate, as individuals, from the situation and enter a conversation about the relation to the dilemma, separating the sense of hopelessness from them. Generally, in these situations my experience is, it is common the dilemmas become internalised in themselves and if I am not structuring the conversation we “fall in love” with the dilemma, “privileged meaning” which would be unethical and have a conservative effect.

Through the experience of the “situation” they were transported (White M., 2004) (Epston & White, 1992) to a sense of lost enthusiasm, lost energy in their work, which resonated different experiences in their earlier (professional) lives. They were using quite similar descriptions of the situation but to me it didn’t matter because I saw my task to give them a different experience and help them to find their preferred “sense of their selves” (Harré, 1998) and the first step was the separation from the situation and consider the effects on them and the different interactions they were part of.

In the next part I invited them to talk about the opposite, using the idea of the “absent but implicit” (White M., 2007) going from the privileged meaning to what is "left out”, the subjugated meaning.
I wanted them, as individuals, to think of and reflect on a situation at work where they felt energy...

When they had found that kind of situation, I asked them to think of:

**What, in these situations, created energy? What did they value in the situation they were thinking of?**

Reflections: My intention here was to guide them between the landscape of action and the landscape of identity (Holzman, 2001) (Morgan, 2000) Through the absent but implicit I wanted to strengthen their preferred personal experience and draw out personal and professional values commitments, and principles from that situation – as a way to strengthen their preferred sense of their selves.

**The persons responded in the following ways – thinking of a specific situation and what they as persons valued in that situation:**

**Person 1** then talked about, thinking of a specific situation:

When she found a space where she could **reflect**, she felt energy.

When she received **feedback** and response **from the kids** at school

**Person 2** said that when she felt that she was **working on something that was difficult enough** it created energy. She valued the **fight, the challenge**.

**Person 3** said that when she got **input about alternative ways of thinking and working** - it created energy. She also talked about when she was acting as a leader in a group of young girls she noticed that **her conduct** in e.g. the work of the group **created** some sort of change or **movement** - it created energy

Reflections: In this scaffolding conversation I see myself as the facilitator of learning, or the supportive person. So far I have separated the problem from them and the next step was to support them in finding experiences where they could find something they are valuing.

**I asked them to consider any initiative that could be taken, based on what they valued**
Person 1 shared she was going to **set boundaries**, especially in relation to all negative conversations among professionals in school, because she did not want to be too involved in these discussions. She wanted to **create a space of reflection** for herself and the children she was working with.

Person 2 was talking about a challenge - taking an initiative suggesting a teacher, she was collaborating with, to work together with 4 children, having difficulties in the class. Person 3 talked about taking an initiative in relation to some professionals at school to discuss different important themes and to focus more on the work with the children.

Reflections: Here I wanted them to go to future practices and actions. What were they intending to do in the landscape of action? I saw this as part of the process in strengthening the intentional self and take initiatives based on that.

After that we talked about the supervision process – the journey - how we went from problem to the effect of the situation on them and their work to the absent but implicit – experiences and situations of energy and how to use these situations to understand drives, intentions principles to reflections about what steps they could take based on what they gave value to.

They talked about how the conversation had created a movement, a transport, in the supervision room, through the searching of new tracks...

A few comments that I noticed:

*It becomes very clear what I need to do, I am going for things which is essential for me in my work,*

*It becomes clear that I am alone at work,*

*Now I see other possibilities – I got new pairs of lenses that I can use to look at my work.*

To me it was fascinating to consider the transport or movement these experiences in supervision had created. Their comments about transport are saying: **finding what’s essential, clear I am alone** (absent but implicit would be longing for spirit of togetherness) and **seeing possibilities**. To summarise the conversation about transport they came closer to and were strengthened in their preferred senses of their selves. And
from my position I was informed by them – what to go on with in the supervisory process together.

In the next step I invited them to reflect on what theory could be connected to the process, which could inform our actions. I introduced and they added different ideas they came to think of. We created a mind map together, where we wrote down the different ideas. We talked about externalisation, Landscape of identity and action, prismatic dialogues, “problems as frustrated dreams” and the power of language. Part of this was a sequence when I wanted them to take a reflexive position to the theory – what stood out for them in these ideas and how were they transported by these ideas? Some comments were connections between the earlier comments finding what’s essential, clear I am alone and seeing possibilities. The theoretical threads were moving them in different directions as well; essential became connected to ideas of personal agency, loneliness was connected to the idea that problems have a tendency to isolate people from each other and seeing possibilities was connected to the ideas of landscape of identity and action.

Reflections: I asked questions about theory and where it had transported them. To me this was a learning point, a new experience in pedagogic situations - the transport of presented theory. Theory is moving people in different directions. And by using the transport metaphor I can come closer to participant’s worlds - familiar and known /possible to know.

After this, I asked questions about how the process affected them in the room. I wanted them to think of the process as a transport. Where had it taken them in their learning? What had they noticed or acknowledged?

Comments I was noticing:
Good to be reminded of how I think about myself
Now I know what I appreciate when I lose energy, or the drive...

Reflections: Here I opened up for their comments about where this journey had taken them in their thinking of themselves. They are commenting themselves and seem to be close to personal agency – this process made them think of what they value in life. And
implicitly they are referring to “the situation” which is taken me back to the task we were working with. Through these shared experiences new perspectives and learning was co-developed.

After this, an interview took place, where one person was interviewed about a case she was working with. She was then sharing experiences of how the previous supervision process affected her way of thinking in relation to the theme she wanted to be interviewed about. – I asked the interviewer to ask questions about this...

Reflections: This interview was not part of the foregoing process but it is interesting to see how that person was transported into the next part of the supervision. Unfortunately there is not enough space here to explore this further on...but reflecting on “learning to learn” (Bateson G. , 1972) I got thoughts about how influential supervision can be...

**Returning to the experiences which were guiding me into my question**

In the first part of this dissertation I described some experiences which were guiding me into my question and which have influenced me in seeking the answers to this question.

In the first fragment I described how a psychology student, on placement at our working place, asked me about my driving force in my work which made me think of my personal and professional values. In the practice example, when I reflected on the gap I experienced between the professionals in the room and the mother, who was sharing her personal experiences; my own values were highlighted in my memory. The mother helped me to understand how my values were connecting to my way of responding to an interview.

In the second fragment I described my first experience of receiving supervision and how that experience helped me to emphasize the supervision relationships and how the position we take influence the relationships. In the team reflection in the end of the session the team members shared experiences of “meeting” and “sharing” in the process
and it became clear to me how relationships are formed through beliefs and how new experiences develop supervision relationships.

In the third fragment I described my journey through supervision and how wanted to develop my use of self in supervision practice, being decentered and including my self in process. When I have reflected on my actions in the different examples it’s clear to me it is impossible not to use my self, it is more a question of how – in an ethical frame. To me it is crucial, how I can stay connected in relation and, within that frame, develop a feedback culture in supervision where I give possibilities to question my self and my own actions.

In the fourth fragment I addressed how a supervision group can encourage persons to find what is important to them and supporting people’s development. In practice example 2, I wanted the supervisees, after an externalising conversation, to think of and reflect on a situation at work where they felt energy and how they, based on these values, found examples in their practices where they had experienced these preferred situations. Their stories made me think of valuable experiences in my own practice and how I can strengthen these experiences in the developments of new directions in work.

In the fifth fragment I addressed my appreciation and wish to enable people to reclaim and develop their personal / professional abilities and I think, through this dissertation, I was transported in my thinking. When I was reflecting on the different examples of praxis I strongly realize my own power in the cocreation of abilities. Now I see clearer I want to acknowledge the systemic view of seeing skills and abilities as relational abilities.

**Discussion**

As I have discussed literature and my practice earlier in the dissertation I will here have a short discussion about my process under the headings Critique and Appreciation – before I present my conclusions about my future practice. This discussion is responding to my question and to my aims.

To me the use of the transport metaphor opens up possibilities in my development as a supervisor, as it offers an ethical frame where personal experiences can be used as resources. Referring to Bateson all descriptions is self-referential and this dissertation
is my story about my development as a supervisor. Looking back through this process I would like to highlight some learning points.

I should have started with the story “to be transported by the client as the supervisor”. This was the story I had in mind from the beginning and I could have made that more explicit.

In my two practice examples, I should have created a feedback culture where the participants could critique my way of acting as a supervisor. This could be a way to reflect on my own self - my own reflections and actions - to get a richer understanding of my part in the co-evolution of meaning and actions - to see supervisees and clients as my super –supervisors. The project of writing this dissertation could be seen as a co-search instead of an I-search which is a learning point for me.

In my selection of theory it had been interesting to explore the concept of resonances. Another interesting theme connected to transport would be professional boundaries, connected to Bateson´s thoughts of the necessity of being an observer in relation to a system, to be able to be helpful

Looking at my own experiences and how they influenced me was really a good learning experience for me. It became very clear how they informed the way I selected theory and how I reflected on my practice. This process has helped me to understand my supervisory “drives”.

The exploration of adult learning theory and how this field of ideas can inform my actions in my practice gave me a new perspective on my work and enriched my understanding of the transport metaphor

I appreciated my way of being in practice when I wrote this dissertation, which helped me to emphasize the issues of power, ethics and experiential learning in relation to professional discourses and knowledge. This has deepened my understanding of supervision relationships
Conclusions about future systemic practice

Returning to my question and the aims; what pathways have I found to improve systemic supervision and what goals have I identified for my future development as a systemic supervisor?

All experiences in supervision are resonated in our own personal (and professional) lives and through these resonances we are transported, moved in conversations. By using the transport metaphor the emphasis is put on the movement or transport by an experience in supervision - which could be both the sharing of a personal response or receiving a personal response.

To talk from an I position, sharing of a response, could be one pathway to avoid the colonization of own norms. The transport metaphor offers a structure which gives the supervisee and the client (if present) space to develop own preferred thoughts and actions, based on personal principles and values in life.

Having responsive audiences brings powerful additional dimensions to the process of cocreating new stories. It is a way to bring in “real life into the supervision room”.

The use of the transport metaphor is a way to exploit stories from the involved as resources in a supervision process. All "I tellings" are contributions to each one’s own personal/professional life and by expressing these contributions people are linked, related to each other in different ways.

Putting words on an experience through the transport metaphor could be seen as a conceptualization of new experiences and thus new learning. In this learning process, the position of the supervisor, or another supportive person, is important in the scaffolding learning process - to create scaffolds for experiences which strengthens the preferred self - which in turn creates learning for all involved.

In my position as a systemic supervisor I have a responsibility to create structures in supervision based on my formative and normative responsibility.
Part of this responsibility is to view all knowledge as experiential knowledge, different valued in our culture, where the professional culture could be an agent for those norms. My responsibility is to use reflexivity as a stance in supervision – to reflect on those values and beliefs that are forming our selves and the interactions we are part of.

To use experiential knowledge by seeing the client as the super-supervisor helps me as a supervisor in contracting the inclusion of clients voices in the supervision process and develop the collaborative and relational aspect of professionalism.

Using the transport metaphor helps me to keep target focused in the supervision process. By acknowledging the supervisees own thoughts and actions, and their implicit beliefs and values - a space for reflexive conversations about the development of the professional relationships to clients could be co-created.

To create space for transport is a way for me as a supervisor to catch where the supervisees are in their process. My interest as a supervisor is the development of the supervisees. The transport can be used as reflection on action which becomes part of a learning process.

When I ask the question “How were you transported through a process”, it is a way to catch the persons’ selves in the supervision session, to reflect on the cocreated patterns, from a personal and relational horizon. Using the transport metaphor is a help for me as a supervisor to keep connected to the supervisees’ expectations and engagement - relationship factors – and use tellings as a way to coordinate the relationship(s) in relation to the preferred outcome.

The use of transport is part of an entity in supervision – content, structure and process. It is important to emphasize we learn something from this unit in supervision; Learning and development derived from the use of transport are related to this wholeness. In the forming of a learning structure within supervision it is important the supportive person acknowledges, through questions and reflections, this entity. And one way to do this is to look for the personal response, the transport, as a way to share reflections and learning experiences.
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