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## Experiencing with Identity: Paradoxical Government in Times of Resistance

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*Governance*  
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### Abstract

This article studies how a political organization begins to experiment with its identity. By use of an empirical case of the Danish Ministry of Education, I examine how a political organization supplements its identity of a legislating power with identities of a supervisor, beacon and facilitator of reflection processes. I analyse how the Danish Ministry of Education observes that its initial attempts to strengthen evaluation in the Danish public schools did not have the wanted effects because the values and professional norms of public school teachers constitute a resistance towards interference from outside the educational system. The Ministry thus faces a dilemma: the more it tries to control evaluation in the public school, the less likely it is to produce a desired effect. This paradox contains destructive potential but also causes the Ministry to reflect upon its own role in the development of evaluation in public schools. Out of a paralysis emerge new innovative strategies of governing, aimed at the schools' self-governing capacity. The identity of the political system thus emerges as oscillations between different roles of a legislating power and a supervising coach. The case study suggests that a society of experimentalism is emerging. Thus, the relevant object of study is no longer organizational identity, but the experiments with different identities that modern organizations are performing.

### Introduction

As in many countries, the Danish public school has in recent years been involved in a variety of assessments and international comparisons. Organisations such as the OECD, have conducted a number of PISA-investigations and reviews of specific subjects, either comparing national school systems or explaining factors in single countries. In a political as well as a broader public context, these assessments have resulted in a great deal of attention due to finding in Danish public schools a lack of culture of evaluation. In fact, the final conclusion of an OECD-review of 2004 stated that a culture of evaluation "is the one single factor that is most important to achieve if standards are to be raised." (OECD, 2004, p. 129)

This particular OECD-review became the explicit reason for a series of initiatives from the Danish Ministry of Education aimed at strengthening a culture of evaluation in the Danish public school. As is often the case these initiatives

were met with some scepticism, and even resistance, from schools and representatives of the teaching profession. The formation of resistance claimed new legislation was producing unnecessary bureaucracy since the schools were already conducting evaluations. Moreover, it was argued that the new initiatives were nothing but programs of surveillance and control from politicians and bureaucrats who did not respect highly enough the work done by school teachers (see Moos, 2007; Holm, 2007).

In this paper, I will examine how a political demand for a certain development in the education system over time is expressed in a growing number of symbolically generalised communication media. From a simple matter of measuring the capabilities of students, the concepts of a culture of evaluation emerge as; learning processes, scientific knowledge and personal development of teachers. Moreover, I will show how this multiplicity of translations of an initial demand cause a political organization to question whether or not their governing of Danish public schools can create the desired effects. For instance, when a culture of evaluation is defined as the inclination and desire of teachers to act in certain ways, the values and professional norms of public school teachers constitute an opposition that can potentially undermine political initiatives. The Danish Ministry of Education thus faces a dilemma: the more they try to control evaluation in public schools, the less likely they are to create the desired effects.

The Ministry represents an interesting case for a study of how a political organization begins to experiment with its identity. By use of the empirical case I will examine how the organization supplements its identity of a legislating power with identities of a supervisor, beacon and facilitator of reflection processes.

### Polyphony and paradoxes

I take a point of departure in Luhmann's thesis of a functionally differentiated society (see Luhmann, 2006, p. 42; Luhmann, 1982, p. 229-255). According to Luhmann, functional differentiation organizes communication processes around functions handled at a societal level, inferring society cannot be reduced to one system. Rather, society consists of numerous subsystems, each operating autologically by referring to its own distinctions (Luhmann, 1982, p. 236f). The economic system distinguishes between payments and non-payments, science between truth and non-truth (which is not untruth) and the political system between the existence and non-existence (absence) of superiority, etc. (Luhmann, 1990, p. 156; 1982, p. 204).

To describe the complexity of interpretations of the concept of a culture of evaluation in the communication of the Ministry of Education, I apply the concept of polyphony (Andersen, 2003a). Polyphony is used to empirically scrutinize how the concept of a culture of evaluation is interpreted by help of the different function systems in the studied communication. I do not mean to rule out that many decisions in an organization like a ministry may be made with reference to a political code. My study is limited to the specific process of how the Ministry begins to question its Eigen-logic interpretations of a culture of evaluation and begins to develop new strategies of governing and hence, a multi-referential identity. Thus, I could also have applied the concept of multi-reference suggested by Tacke (i.e. 2001) (For a discussion of the difference between the two concepts see Roth, 2010).

Social systems theory gives paradoxes a central position as a driver for social dynamics (see Luhmann, 1995; Teubner, 2006). When observing social conflicts, systems theory encourages a search for the paradoxes behind the conflict and, in doing so, the catalysis of solutions and new conflicts (Teubner, 2006, p. 44). Social conflicts are conceived as expressions of an underlying paradox: because there is a fundamental paradox involved in the practice of governing, conflicts or dilemmas are bound to occur from time to time. Conflicts within a political organization can thus be studied by unveiling the paradox of governing located behind the conflict. What becomes interesting is not so much the decision of choosing either side in a conflict or dilemma, but rather the paradoxical conditions that produce conflicts or dilemmas.

Let me first introduce the notion of a paradox. Paradoxes can emerge as contradictions (A equals not-A), but they also have a more complex structure as a situation where A is A exactly because it is not A (Luhmann, 1995, p. 46). Moreover, a paradox has a self-referential dimension (Teubner, 2006, p. 45), like in the example of the Liar's paradox. The self-referential dimension of a paradox can be clarified with the concept of a re-entry. A re-entry is a distinction that appears within a space created by a previous distinction (Spencer Brown, 1969; 69-76; Luhmann, 1993: 484). Spencer Brown argues that a re-entry is a source of "unresolvable indeterminacy". (Spencer Brown, 1969: 57) This indeterminacy stems from the fact that the re-entered distinction is both the same and different from the initial distinction. A re-entered distinction does not have a determinable value: there is no easy answer to the question of whether the space created by the re-entered distinction is the same or different from the space created with the initial distinction. In other words, the re-entry raises doubt regarding what side of the distinction one is located. In the case of a distinction between system and environment, the question becomes whether the space of 'environment', within the space of 'system', is the same (or not the same) as the environment created with the first distinction. The problem with a re-entry is thus the indeterminacy of

the question of whether the re-entered distinction is the same or different from the distinction into which it was re-entered. The problem is, in other words, the otherness in the same.

A paradox is therefore a situation that cannot be solved just by choosing either A or B, but a situation in which it is impossible to decide. Paradoxes prompt potentially eternal oscillation between either/or, since choosing either of the sides will only reboot the self-referential circle (Teubner, 2006, p. 45). Paradoxification causes paralysis because it experiences indeterminacy. However, at the same time paralysis may also lead to innovation:

Real paradoxes are highly ambivalent. They contain destructive, paralysing potentials but contain at the same time productive creative possibilities. The alternative is open: paralysis or provocation of structural innovation. (Teubner, 2006, p. 48)

If an organization is paralysed by paradoxical facts, the result may be innovation in the form of, for instance, new organizational identities and ways of observing. In other words, a paradox may be fruitful as a catalyser for more complex representations of the organization and its environment.

In this paper, I focus both on how the self-referential nature of paradoxes causes a political organization to discover itself as a part of the problem it is facing, as well as how this discovery triggers a need for experimentation with its own organizational identity. I thus argue that paradoxes facilitate the emergence of multiple identities.

However, deparadoxification is not the end of a paradox:

The quality of deparadoxification is also remarkably pathological. It promises no solution of the crisis, but at most its temporary postponement, concealment, invisibilisation, suppression, repression. It is only a matter of time before crisis breaks out again. (Teubner, 2006, p. 48)

The present analysis demonstrates that governing strategies arising from paralysis do not suppress the paradox, but postpone it instead, and in doing so defer the paradox to new (yet no less paradoxical) forms of communication.

## Methodology

The object of study is the Danish Ministry of Education and its attempts to strengthen the culture of evaluation in Danish primary schools. I will examine the Ministry's communications regarding evaluation from 2004 to 2008. I begin the analysis in 2004 since this was the year in which the OECD-review about the lack of evaluation in Danish public schools was published and the concept of a culture of evaluation became the focus of an intense struggle between politicians and school teachers.

The empirical material consists of different forms of documents (such as legislations, policy papers, reports, international investigations and newspaper articles), as well as a webpage that the Ministry has created as a hub for knowledge and information about evaluation. Clearly this empirical material has its limits. This study cannot teach us anything about what happens when administrative knowledge and information is confronted with the everyday life of schools. In other words, the present paper tells us something about the Eigen-logics of communication produced and reproduced in the Ministry of Education, while leaving open the opportunity for further empirical studies to investigate how this communication is negotiated and enacted at the local level (for such a study see Pors, 2011).

The analytical approach was to trace the word 'evaluation' in the various documents. The word 'evaluation' features in many different arguments and seems to signify many different things. I observed the concept of a culture of evaluation by help of Luhmann's concept of semantics. Semantics can be understood as a reservoir of meaning that communication can refer to and employ (Luhmann, 1995, p. 282). Semantics is an expression for the embedding of a particular meaning in a form (in this case concept of a culture of evaluation) at the expense of other meanings that could have been embedded in the form. These processes produce a semantic reservoir of meaning that creates the temporary terms and conditions of communicative sense-making (Luhmann, 1995, p. 163).

I employ this concept of semantics in my analytical strategy by making the difference between condensation (of meaning) and meaning the guide to my observations (Andersen, 2003b, p. 86f.). I attempt to capture the semantic diversity by analyzing how different meanings are associated with the concept of evaluation. This means that I do not assume that the word 'evaluation' has any pre-defined meaning, e.g. the testing of schoolchildren. Rather, I analyze how the Ministry of Education assigns meaning to the word. Based on my observations of how different meanings are associated with the concept of evaluation I proceed to develop a description of the strategies of governance employed by the Danish Ministry of Education.

Education policy and governing of educational institutions is in many ways a rather special area. Due to the traditional freedom of the methods of teachers, central policy actors are highly dependent upon the willingness of teachers to work to implement initiatives. Also, educational practitioners may be inclined to react with resistance to direct forms of power, such as evaluation. However, the phenomenon of government actors beginning to doubt the efficiency of conventional power and adapt more hybrid identities seems to emerge in other welfare areas such as; health politics (Henkel, 2012, Knudsen & Højlund, 2012), care for the homeless (Ratner & Villadsen, 2012), policy reforms in ministries of finance (Jensen, 2012), legal communication (Sand, 2012) and in voluntary organisations (la Cour, 2012).

## A culture of evaluation

In the following section I will examine how the political attempts to strengthen the culture of evaluation in the public school system changed after the OECD-report of 2004. The report's concluding remarks, that the culture of evaluation is the most important factor to improve standards in Danish public schools, attracted immense public attention. However, even though it was quite clear that a culture of evaluation was needed, there was hardly any common sense regarding suggestions of the kind of culture it should actually entail.

The previous Minister of Education, in her first comments on the OECD review, clearly expressed that, in her opinion, evaluation meant testing the pupils and that a stronger culture of evaluation therefore meant more tests and exams. She called for explicit standards of achievement that the school children could be tested against (The Danish Minister of Education, Ulla Tørnæs, 17. April 2004 in the Danish New Paper *Berlingske Tidende*). The report led to an enactment stating that tests in a number of subjects were now compulsory (The Danish Ministry of Education, 2006). The enactment was met with severe critique from educational professionals. Danish educational researchers supported the resistance by arguing that the introduction of compulsory tests was an expression of the Ministry's excessive micro-management and control of the educational system (see Moos, 2007; Holm, 2007).

The Ministry of Education's concept of testing as a means of establishing a stronger culture of evaluation was soon altered. The alteration can be traced to an assessment published by the Danish Institute of Evaluation dealing with the state of evaluation in Danish public schools. The report defined good practice of evaluation as teachers' ability to reflect upon their usage of evaluation and concluded that the Danish public schools failed to meet this standard of practice. The problem that politicians and bureaucrats were faced with was to produce solutions in accordance with the conclusions of the assessment, i.e. that evaluation was not a significant part of the everyday lives of the schools, that evaluation was detached from the practice of teaching, and that evaluation was only performed sporadically (The Danish Evaluation Institution, 2004, p. 57).

Following from the Danish Evaluation Institute's report, the concept of a culture of evaluation was open to new interpretations. In policy documents from the Danish Government and the Danish Ministry of Education, the concept emerged in many different forms. In July 2007, the Danish Ministry of Education introduced a webpage containing knowledge of evaluation and suggestions for how to develop a culture of evaluation, along with examples of good practice, concrete tools of self-reflection etc. ([www.evaluering.uvm.dk](http://www.evaluering.uvm.dk)). I will provide only a few examples of how the concept of a culture of evaluation emerges in a cacophony of rationalities on the webpage (for more thorough analyses of how the concept was spread and how the meaning of the concept differentiated, see Dahler-Larsen, 2006; Pors, 2009; Moos et al, 2007).

As expected, evaluation was articulated in an educational rationality with the central concern being learning processes. Perhaps more unexpectedly, the Danish Ministry of Education's communication of evaluation tended to focus on the learning processes of teachers rather than students (see Pors, 2009; Danish Ministry of Education, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). A school's capacity of evaluation emerged as the ability of teachers to acquire new knowledge and skills.

Moreover, evaluation was articulated in a scientific rationale, expressed was how a strengthening of the culture of evaluation in a school was all about raising the level of scientific knowledge among teachers and developing the skills of teachers to perform evaluation with the help of scientific methods (Danish Ministry of Education, 2007d; 2007e).

A culture of evaluation was also said to be an important part of how schools seek to improve the general level of health among Danish school children. Suggestions were given on how to apply evaluation to teach children how to measure their daily intake of calories, plan a healthy diet etc. (Danish Ministry of Education, 2007f).

Finally, a culture of evaluation emerged in a psychological language. The prime concern was to set the stage for conversations of supervision in which teachers could gain personal insights and recognition (Danish Ministry of Education, 2007g).

Good practice of evaluation was thereby understood as something quite different from setting standards and testing school children. With the polyphony of the semantics of evaluation, the ambition of politicians and bureaucrats changed

radically. The problem which politicians and bureaucrats now faced was whether the language and thoughts on evaluation was an integrated part of the teacher's everyday life, and if so, how teachers could work to implement the whole range of different initiatives. A culture of evaluation was even said to be the teacher's ever present interest in evaluation (The Danish Evaluation Institution, 2004; the Danish Ministry of Education, 2007d; 2007h). Evaluation no longer simply meant the testing of schoolchildren, but began to imply specific ways of thinking and acting on behalf of teachers.

This semantic change in the concept of culture of evaluation had consequences for how the Ministry of Education communicated implementation. The Ministry began to reflect on the possibility of a centralized institution affecting the everyday life of schools and the conduct of teachers. Because a successful strengthening of the culture of evaluation was by then considered to be based on the thoughts and conduct of teachers, the desired change was no longer so simple that the Ministry could depend on legislation alone. This can be seen in the more present communication of the Ministry:

If disciplines of evaluation like the individual or the team logbook are introduced by force it will be very difficult to produce fruitful effects because teachers will go as fast as possible through the reflection and registration. (The Danish Ministry of Education, 2007i)

“Disciplines of evaluation” refer to teachers writing down their observations and thoughts in a logbook. In the quotation, the Ministry concludes that forcing teachers to produce logbooks has negative results, since the act of force diminishes the quality of the desired affect: registration and reflection.

The interesting element of the quotation is that we are witness to a governing power beginning to observe the conditions of governing in general. Because the desired effects of governing are not just a certain action, but also a certain modus in which actions are performed, the Ministry questions the efficiency of force. By realizing that attempts to govern by force can produce resistance, the Ministry comprehends that a power relation is not only dependent on the power superior but also on the power inferior, as well as how they choose to relate to the communication of the power superior (Luhmann, 1990, p. 155).

We are witnessing a political organization that observes that its communication is of a second order. The governing communication will always be accompanied by the expectation that other (non-political) communication will use the governing communication as premises for further communication (Andersen & Thygesen, 2004, p. 25). The communication from the Ministry of Education can only achieve governing the conduct of teachers if teachers take it upon themselves to use the communication of the Ministry as guiding premises for their thoughts and actions.

The aforementioned OECD-review provides a similar description. The concept “culture of evaluation”, and not just “evaluation”, is used to assert the fact that though several initiatives have been made to strengthen evaluation in the public schools, they have not penetrated the everyday life of schools (Mortimore et al, 2004, p. 129). The review explains that even though government institutions can legislate, the desired effects in the schools will not emerge. The review states:

“Real change happens in the classroom, when the teachers themselves acknowledge that they are necessary and by their own urge work for change. More strict attempts to force the teachers to change their conducts will often be undermined ingeniously or even met with direct resistance. As other professionals, teachers react to hostile critique by setting up defenses, from where they can offer resistance to change.” (Mortimore et al., 2004, p. 130-131)

In this quotation, the authors of the OECD-review describe how a certain kind of governing can provoke resistance and render itself useless. If teachers observe attempts to govern as “hostile critique” they will build defences from where attempts to govern will be resisted.

The desired “real change” happens, according to the authors, only if teachers acknowledge change as necessary and commit themselves to producing it.

The political organization thus faces an internal conflict between seeking to strengthen the culture of evaluation in the schools by means of governing and realizing that this action creates resistance, thus undermining the whole intention of intervening.

The Ministry can observe that because they try to force teachers to perform evaluation, the possibility of actually having an effect is limited. Because the political organization is well aware that power is dependent on the communication of the power inferior, the desire to strengthen the culture of evaluation can reveal itself as paradoxical. We are dealing here with a situation of ‘non-A exactly because of A’ (Luhmann, 1995, p. 46). The Ministry observes that (exactly) because they apply means of governing, they fail to govern. The normal doxa of a political organization is questioned by a paradox when the Ministry realizes that attempts to govern leads to no governing at all.

Moreover, the situation is paradoxical in the sense that the conflict does not arise in the choice of either governing or not governing. Rather, the focus is on the conflict itself. As a true paradox, choosing either/or cannot solve the situation,



because in principle it is a situation of un-decidability. The change that the Ministry seeks can be brought about neither by governing nor by not governing. The problem is not deciding on one of the positions but the never-ending circle that arises from the paradox of governing itself, since choosing one of the sides will only set the circle off again (Teubner, 2006, p. 45).

The everyday rationality of a political organization entails choosing the inside of a distinction between governing and non-governing. This produces further possibilities for communication. If the Ministry chooses to attempt strengthening a culture of evaluation in the public schools, this points to new decisions of proposing new legislation, formalizing national standards and goals of reading skills etc. However, as soon as they start noticing the paradox that arises from observing both sides of the distinction, the Ministry becomes paralysed. Since splitting distinctions in two is a basic premise for observation, no possibilities for further communication emerge from trying to observe both sides of a distinction (Luhmann, 2002, p. 101). No decisions can relate to the paralysis of observing the paradox of governing itself. The paradox produces a conflict within the political organization because observations are not only from an outside perspective (for instance, from an educational perspective of a school) on how the attempts to govern are inexpedient. Such a critique should be quite normal for a political organization like the Ministry of Education and not an incident that would cause the Ministry to pause and reflect upon its own role. The paradox has a destructive potential because it is from the Ministry's own perspective – from the perspective of government – that problematizes governing.

Finally, the discovery of the paradoxical conditions of governing has a self-referential element. The Ministry sees itself as a part of the problem when it discovers that its role in the attempts to strengthen the culture of evaluation leads to teacher resistance. As stated in the OECD-review, by “setting up defences, from where they can offer resistance to change”. The governing actions hinder the efficacy of governing. The paralysis thus puts the very identity of a political organization at stake. The political organization begins to observe that if only it were not recognized as a governing power, it would not cause resistance and thereby no longer thwart its own operations. The ministry recognises that it has to somehow cancel itself as a power in order to function as a power. The desire to strengthen a culture of evaluation in the Danish public school system causes the political organization to desire a withdrawal of its own identity.

## Alternative strategies

As described earlier, paralysis may lead to innovation. In this case, the Danish Ministry of Education begins to develop alternative strategies of governing. Such alternative strategies are already mentioned in the OECD-review of 2004:

Therefore it is valuable with an alternative strategy that gives the teacher knowledge about his own conducts and connects this knowledge to suggestions from his colleagues (that themselves understand the conditions in a classroom) to how he can improve. (Mortimer et al., 2004, p. 130-131)

The authors of the OECD-review reflect here upon possible teacher resistance and state that in such situations alternative forms of governing can be valuable. The alternative strategy, self-evaluation, is a situation where teachers question each other about their teaching and possible ways to improve it (Mortimore et al., 2004, p. 130). The authors of the review state, “self-evaluation may sound as a soft strategy, but it would be wrong to write it off.” (Mortimore et al., 2004, p. 130)

After recognizing that governing may lead to resistance, the Danish Ministry of Education begins to employ an ideal of self-evaluation. In their communication of how to strengthen a culture of evaluation in the Danish public schools, the Ministry describes how teachers must be capable of performing as evaluators themselves:

“Instead of receiving an already caught fish, the actors of the schools shall learn to fish themselves.” (Ministry of Education, 2007f)

By using this well-known metaphor the Danish Ministry of Education invites both teachers and students to engage in evaluation processes so they can learn to evaluate themselves and become independent of external evaluators. The metaphor is linked to a concept of self-sustainability by which the Ministry means a development that leads to more development (the Ministry of Education, 2007f). Teachers are encouraged to develop their competence and behaviour so they can progressively develop themselves and their teaching practices further.

The common saying of ‘learning to fish’ can also be seen as a metaphor of self-governing. This change of strategy from governing to self-governance means teacher resistance can be outflanked. Students and teachers are no longer the objects of an evaluation performed by external experts, but are implored to become active subjects capable of performing processes of evaluation themselves.

For the Danish Ministry of Education, this alternative strategy means that governing is not a matter of implementing technologies of testing and monitoring students. Instead, governing becomes a matter of influencing the ways in which teachers, or other school actors, reflect upon performing evaluation:

The ready-made tools of evaluation do not suspend the didactic consideration of the teacher. It is an ongoing assignment for the teacher to find and give reasons for why he uses this material at this time in relation to these pupils. (The Ministry of Education, 2007j)

In this quotation, the Ministry communicates that teachers ought to consider, decide and state the reasons for choosing different tools of evaluation. The aim of governing is now to stage processes of reflection within teachers. It is even communicated that it is important for teachers to have a critical approach to the employment of tests and that they keep questioning the suitability of tests (Ministry of Education, 2007g).

In the new strategy, evaluation becomes a self-technology (Foucault, 1997):

... the team becomes a learning environment, where the individual teacher can confront himself with his own goals of development and competences – a possibility to reflect upon one's own practice. (The Danish Ministry of Education, 2007k)

The Ministry provides teachers with techniques designed to set the stage for self-reflection processes. A strengthening of the culture of evaluation in the schools becomes a matter of cultivating the capacity of schools and school actors to govern themselves. The role of the political organization has changed from introducing compulsory national testing to providing a setting for the self-reflection of schools and school actors.

### Multi-identity of governing

To govern via self-governing processes is an ambition permeated by a reflection ideal. The self-governing technologies are designed to train the capacity of school actors to carry out reflection and assessment processes (see The Ministry of Education, 2007d; 2007e; 2007f; 2007k). This form of governing through reflection processes of subsystems comes close to Helmut Willke's concept of a supervision state (Willke, 1997; 1993; 1992). According to Willke, supervision can be seen as attempts to educate decision-making actors to reflect critically upon their own actions and ways of handling tasks. Supervising forms of government can be seen as a reaction to the complexity that arises from functional differentiation. Instead of dictating decisions in subsystems whose rationalities and forms of knowledge are fundamentally different from those of a political organization, a supervising form of government seeks to educate local actors to reflect upon their everyday actions and decision-making processes (Willke, 1993, p. 2).

In the empirical case study, we saw that when a political organization operated solely through legislative communication the differences between educational and political rationalities caused schools to resist the political initiatives because they observed them as bureaucratic micro-management and political control. In order to make themselves more relevant to schools, the political organization supplemented its legislative communication with a campaign operating many different symbolically generalised communication media. The polyphony of the governing strategy in this case has an advantage; resistance is less likely to emerge, because - to educational organisations – pedagogical and psychological arguments may be more legitimate than power.

The alternative strategy of the Danish Ministry of Education can be described as supervision as it operates through the reflection processes of the governed. The campaign of evaluation offers school teachers methods to critically reflect upon their way of performing everyday teaching and evaluation. The campaign thus functions as governance by encouraging teachers to confront their everyday decision-making procedures with new questions and to reflect upon their capability to perform evaluation, as well as ways of improving it.

The shift to supervising governmental strategies has severe consequences for the identity of a political organization. In the empirical case study we saw how in order to produce reflection (and in order to avoid resistance) the Danish Ministry of Education came to desire an identity different from that of a state producing change through legislation. We are witnessing a political organization that is experimenting with identity by producing a campaign of language, values and concrete techniques that teachers are encouraged to apply in order to develop their competences.

When the Ministry presents methods of observing and assessing their own actions and decisions to school actors, the role of the Ministry emerges as a consultant and facilitator that can help schools to critically confront and assess their own operations and self-descriptions. For instance, when the Ministry offers different models and tools for reflective conversations to teachers and proposes basic "rules for conversation" with which teachers can engage each other (Danish

Ministry of Education, 2007f), the role of the Ministry emerges as the ‘stage manager’ of reflection processes. Finally, the role of the Ministry emerges as a promoter/communicator of educational knowledge whenever the Ministry passes on educational research or pedagogical philosophy to teachers via easily understandable essays and examples (like ‘best practice’).

We are thus witnessing a political organization that experiments with its own identity by acting as a ‘stage-setter’, ‘consultant’ or ‘communicator of educational knowledge’ rather than as an organization that produces collectively binding decisions.

Clearly, these experiments with new identities co-exist with the classical identity of a political organization operating in power and producing collectively binding decisions through legislation. But the fear of causing resistance and the use of supervising forms of government might conversely have the effect that politicians and bureaucrats cannot solely position themselves as power superior, but must oscillate between a legislative power and a supervising coach. Government emerges as a game in which there is a certain discomfort with unambiguous positions. An important part of the functioning of a political organization is to be able to oscillate between different identities and operate in different rationales. In order to maintain the self-governing processes in the organizations producing welfare, the communication from a ministry must entail a continuous experimentation with identity.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have sought to show how a political organization comes to recognize that their legislative governing has certain disadvantages, and therefore begins to experiment with different identities. I have analysed how a political demand for a stronger culture of evaluation in the Danish public school system leads to teacher resistance and how this resistance causes a paralysis in the political organization because it illustrates that governing initiatives may not govern at all. The everyday rationality of a political organization is questioned by the paradox: exactly by attempting to govern, the organization risks not having the desired effect.

In the empirical case study, this leads to innovation in the form of a campaign of knowledge, guidance and self-governing technologies launched by the Danish Ministry of Education. According to Teubner:

Here a historical rhythm of continually repeated destruction and reconstruction is beating: paradoxifications provoke the search for new socially adequate distinctions, which in turn, under particular conditions, are thrown back onto their paradoxes again. (Teubner, 2006, p. 52)

By following the rhythm of paralysis and innovation in the Danish Ministry of Education, I have argued that paradoxification leads the organization to question its own identity. In the case, the Danish Ministry of Education discovers that a univalent identity as a governing power is counterproductive in relation to having an effect on the everyday life of schools and actions of school teachers. The political organization then begins to supplement its identity as a governing power with an identity as a coaching supervisor, which is expressed in a campaign of evaluation. In the campaign, the Ministry emerges as a guiding supervisor that invites schools and schoolteachers to engage themselves in self-reflective inquiries.

Governing through a campaign does not propose a solution to the initial paradox of governing. Rather, the paradox is displaced and this causes new paradoxes to emerge. One of these is that the campaign presents a double encouragement to schools to become both governed and self-governing at the same time. Because the paradox of governing is insurmountable, the campaign is deemed to oscillate between describing itself as governing communication and as coaching and supervision, seeking to facilitate reflection within school actors.

Government becomes a game of certain discomfort with unambiguous positioning or ambivalent identity. Only by oscillating between identities and different methods of affecting the schools can the political organization hope to have any effect on the operations and rationalities of schools.

Perhaps we are observing here an emerging society of experimentalism. The relevant object of study is thus no longer organizational identity, but instead the experiments with different identities that modern organizations are performing.

Here, I am not only referring to the argument that organizations should be understood as systems conducting experiments simply because they make decisions under condition of uncertainty. As, for instance, in Achterbergh and Vries (2009), where the experimental nature of organizations is described as goal-orientation with continuous testing of whether the organization’s hypotheses about which manipulations will lead to which effects are true or not (15ff). Rather, I suggest that experimentalism may be understood a bit more radical as a tendency of contemporary organizations to seek to make use of destructive events and disappointment stemming from meetings with (self-constructed) environments. As shown in the case of the Danish Ministry of Education, out of paralysis emerges new government innovation. An



emergence of a society of experimentalism then means that the theoretical idea so familiar to systems theory as well as to deconstruction that the auto-poiesis of systems depend upon the dysfunction of gaining identity from an Other has a new empirical relevance. Paralyzing events are not just interrupting organizations but are also desired by them, since they draw their elan exactly from these disappointments (see Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2009, p. 44; see also Derrida & Ferraris, 2001, p. 4).

In order to capture the complexity of today's organizations, researchers may have to observe the organization's constant movements of distancing itself from unambiguous identity. As this article has shown, a political system cannot solely rest in the identity of a legislating power. Rather, multiple identities become necessary resources for organizations.

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