

The implicit position of the body in Appreciative Inquiry

Studies have concluded that the position of the body in relation to social constructionism is not reflected and explicit (Cromby & Nightingale 1999, Sampson 1998, Lindegaard & Bloch 2009). This is a problem because you need to recognize the multidimensional human person that sits in front of you in the dialogues and not just the language, stories and reflections of the person (Winther 2008). Some people who work within the frame of social constructionism criticise the theory for a static focus on language and relations. They recognize that the social constructionism has succeeded on many levels but tends to fail, on the question of giving validity to the bodily knowledge (Sampson 1998).

The same question was asked in the setting of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in the dissertation '*Appreciative Embodiment. A critical investigation and development of Appreciative Inquiry in a bodily perspective*' (Duvander 2009). A closer look at AI shows the same lack as in social constructionism. The body has an important position in carrying out the theory and methods of AI, but the questions of the body are implicit and not reflected; how can we talk about the body and how do we *do* bodies in relation to AI (Duvander 2009). The study has developed a model for how the body can be *understood* and *be done* in AI. Here it is useful to both discuss the position of the body in theory and in practise to *do* a certain understanding of the body. The development of AI with a bodily aspect is called *Appreciative Embodiment*, to recognize and acknowledge the huge value the body has when it comes to the *doing of appreciation* and a grounding of the appreciative energy in the body (Duvander 2009).

The body as context

The understanding of the body in AI is suggested as the metaphor of *the body as context*. The body is seen as the context of all interaction and communication. A main part of this understanding is that the body is not seen as something solid and permanent, but as fluent and changeable. Just like it is in a context. Another main point is the importance of the body *we do* (Mol & Law 2004). The point of focusing

on the body *we do* is to get away from the distinction within the dualisms in which we often understand the body, e.g. *inside/outside*, *the body we have/the body we are* and *body/mind*. This is inspired by the work of social constructionist Kenneth Gergen, whose main focus is to try to get away from the notion of the individual and instead talk about relational processes (Gergen 2008).

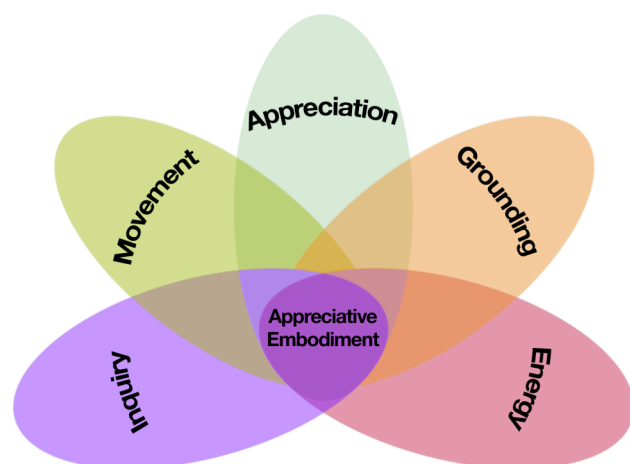
We create boundaries

When we look at the body the way we do, we see that this is how we continually relate to the world, by *doing* with the body all the time (Mol & Law 2004). And by doing so we remain and stabilize an experience of a self that is not a fixed stable whole but a complex configuration, which we have to keep doing to maintain the perception of a self. This continuous doing of the self also creates the experience of boundaries around the body. Because we keep doing that we create boundaries around the body and separation to others and to the world.

This leads to the final important point of the understanding of the body as a context, which is the inseparability that maintain between our bodies (Duvander 2009). We are not separated from each other or from the world. We are connected all the time. There are a fundamental inseparability between the body, the language and the space in which we carry out dialogues and interaction (Bloch & Lindegaard 2008). So when we feel separated and disembodied it is because we keep doing separation and in this way keep creating boundaries.

Appreciative Embodiment

The model of Appreciative Embodiment is called IMAGE and consist of five leafs that are connected to illustrate the connectedness between body, language and space. The five leaves each represent an aspect, which is



of vital importance of the notion of the body as context, especially in carrying out the theory in practice.

Inquiry is known from AI and is vital because of the resources of being curious and investigating, instead of judging (Cooperrider 2001). **M**ovement is a perspective on the lived body, which is important because it creates the option of bringing dynamic motion and playfulness into the process (Duvander 2009, Winther 2008).

Appreciation is also one of the central elements of AI and is useful because it gives the opportunity to find the life giving aspects instead of doing problem solving (Cooperrider 2001). **G**rounding is important in maintaining the appreciation and enthusiasm, which are often created through an AI process. Here is a chance to ground the energy in the body (Ray 2008). **E**nergy illustrates the importance of the bodily awareness where we have the possibility to be aware of the energy of the body, the interaction and the room (Kjær 2008).

Together these five core elements are important in practising the understanding of the *body as context*. With these five perspectives it becomes possible to carry out the great intentions of AI.

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