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Cultural Historical Activity Theory-related research

My interest in, and my involvement with, activity theory flourished during the time I was a member of CSAT (Centre for Sociocultural and Activity Theory) led by Harry Daniels, then at the University of Bath, UK. Whilst my research draws on discursive psychology, I became more engaged with the Activity Theory perspective, which can be applied to phenomena such as social remembering and reconciliation practices. It gave me a practical tool with which to focus on multiple contradictions that research participants engaged in and the various ways they sought solutions related to the problematic practice. My involvement in the Activity Theory research deepened further when I supervised a PhD research on the lecturer's use of learning technology (or lack of) in an Irish university (McSweeney, 2015) from 2007 till 2015. The PhD research demonstrated the efficacy of the Developmental Workshop Research approach (hereafter, DWR) (e.g., Daniels & Warmington, 2007; Leadbetter et al, 2007). I am grateful to Prof Daniels' leadership of the centre and his influence on my work, which led me to subsequent

opportunities during my time at the University of Copenhagen and with my current appointment, the University of Westminster.

Working with then-colleagues Mariane Hedegaard and Seth Chaiklin in the UK and Denmark helped to further my theoretical understanding. CHAT and sociocultural theory tradition was well established, leading to my being invited to an edited book project with Alex Levant, producing a fascinating compilation of works by authors prominent in the CHAT and sociocultural theory tradition (Levant, Murakami, & McSweeney, 2024a). As a co-editor of the book, I was privileged to communicate with those esteemed authors and have gained greater depths and understanding of the wider historical context of activity theory and CHAT research produced around the world. I recently held a launch of the book, which invigorated discussions by chapter authors and international and interdisciplinary reviewers (Levant, Murakami, & McSweeney, 2024b).

My latest involvement with activity theory related research is two-fold. I am currently working with climate change social scientists, artists and inhabitants in at-risk areas for disaster recovery, risk reduction and adaptation to new environments. Secondly, I am exploring how the future of higher education is impacted by AI. I am in dialogue with stakeholders in these two project settings and am exploring how the DWR approach may strengthen the theoretical and methodological underpinning, as these initiatives are developed as funding applications, and ideally funded research projects.

References

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