

2023 Interview on Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

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The interview with Professor Yrjö Engeström took place on March 15, 2023, at his home in Sipoo, Finland, with Katsuhiko Yamazumi (Professor, Faculty of Letters, Kansai University) as the interviewer.



Katsuhiko Yamazumi

Fifteen years ago, I and my brother, Katsutoshi, had an interview with you.¹ Fifteen years later, your statement in the 2007 interview has not faded at all. I believe that it is extremely stimulating and powerfully conveys the ethos of activity-theoretical research.

I think today's new interview is a compliment to the old interview.

First, I would like to ask about today's timely challenges of activity theory. Today, as you emphasized, we face general global threats and specific local

problems; contradictory, unstable, everchanging, and ill-answered issues caused by runaway capitalism. In such a state of paralysis, what do you think is the growing need for cultural-historical activity theory and expansive learning theory, as well as the spearhead potential and possibilities for the future?

Yrjö Engeström

It is a big question because 15 years ago when we did the previous interview, it was not so clear to people and to us—what is the gravity of the climate and environmental crises. More generally, what is the gravity of the consequences of runaway capitalism globally? The instability, at the moment, has multiple aspects. It's not just the climate crisis, which is bad enough, but it is intertwined with and interconnected to multiple other aspects. In this situation, it seems to me that, first of all, activity theory itself has to redefine its focus. It has been the strength of activity theory to conduct research at the local level with the grassroots where people actually work and do their everyday activities.

This is still valid, but it must be expanded so that we increasingly look at people's activities as they are related to these big fateful challenges or, as I would call them, fateful objects. This also means that we need to look at activities in their interconnections so that we are potentially looking for possibilities to create coalitions between various activities and actors and also across levels. Clearly, we cannot avoid also looking at politics, so also political decision-makers and the formation of policies at the national and even international level must be part of the research agenda of activity theory today.

If you think of, for example, the climate crisis, it is obviously not enough to just deal with it in local settings. Those local settings need to reach out horizontally to one another and also vertically to different levels of policy-making and decision-making. That puts a heavy emphasis on the creation of new types of coalitions, very heterogeneous coalitions, and they can be initiated by different parties.

I think that I would like to see, for example, schools become active in building such coalitions. Schools could become really coalition builders. But it is, of course, a new role for schools. It is not easy for schools to adopt such a role because it is traditional to think that the school must be neutral; the school must not take a political standpoint.

This cannot be so anymore. We must redefine what we mean by political. Political does not mean a party-political standpoint, but it means that you have to have the courage to say that this policy is leading to a disaster and must be changed. We need politics which is very concrete and focused on challenges that cannot be avoided. That type of political stance should not be something that the schools, for example, cannot endorse.

But the issue is how to get over that threshold, how to find that courage. That's where I think activity-theoretical intervention research can play a role in building that courage to start speaking up and building coalitions. The best examples of that come from the global south, from countries that have a long

history of fighting against colonialism and imperialism.

But these examples have not had much influence in the west and in the global north, in the most powerful and rich cultures which are actually also responsible for most of these problems. I think that the first challenge for activity theory is to redefine its object, to connect strongly to these fateful objects, fateful challenges at different levels by building heterogeneous coalitions.

The second challenge is to learn how to make visible and accessible concrete examples of these kinds of struggles and these kinds of alternatives wherever they are. In other words, as researchers, we need to start looking for examples of alternatives to capitalism or “enacted utopias,” as Annalisa Sannino calls them. It requires that wherever these examples are, we make them known, and we study them carefully so that they are systematically made accessible, preferably so that people can even visit, if not physically, at least virtually. At the moment a lot of people don’t even think that such alternatives can be accomplished.

There is a great lack of courage and optimism. This can be only built through concrete examples. Those examples exist, but they tend to be isolated because the dominant media do not display them. They are under the surface of public attention. Part of the challenge for activity theory is to create an alternative sphere of knowledge and information about alternatives to capitalism.

These alternatives do not have to be spectacular. They do not have to be revolutions. They can also happen in very mundane circumstances, for example, in different ways to reorganize schools or different ways to reorganize health-care. But they need to have alternative potential in that they deviate from the logic of capitalism, and this must be made transparent. That is demanding. Researchers are badly needed for this.

This is going beyond just social movements that are working for some important changes. This would mean that researchers, together with practitioners and communities, start building a different type of awareness and resources that can gradually be picked up and spread; that have this generative potential. This is how I see the big mission of activity-theoretical work in today’s world and in tomorrow’s world. It is not a quick way.

We might say that we do not have that much time because of what is happening on our planet in terms of climate change and environmental disasters. But in any case, it has to be done. This means that we need to actually actively exploit the global interconnections that we have and ground them in concrete local examples. This also requires new types of representation, new types of writing, and new types of making available what we have found. A classical scientific article is not a very efficient way to make these alternatives available. We need new ways of making these alternatives visible and accessible.

You can see how social media impacts people in powerful ways. But usually, it is extremely superficial. We need to find ways to convey quite demanding and deep ideas and complex alternatives. How to make them concrete so that people can say, oh, we could do that? It’s not the complexity and difficulty of a

scientific article, and it's not the superficiality and the short-term orientation of mainstream social media either. It must be something in between that is not yet quite there.

Sometimes we see, for instance, very well-made documentaries. We just read about David Attenborough, who has been the leading documentarist of nature in the UK. He is very old, and this is his last series of documentaries. The last episode of this new series that he produced—they don't want to show it on television because they fear that it is too political.²

This means that, for instance, documentaries may be one way of doing it. But because we probably cannot show them on mainstream television, you have to find alternative channels and ways to make them available. This is possible nowadays. But it also means that we have to engage in a debate about what social media is. Social media cannot be just X or TikTok and a few sentences in a short message. It must be understood as a possibility to make public very complex and deep ideas but make them so accessible that millions of people can find them and appropriate them.

This is urgent because if you look at the political development around the world, you see populist and nationalist ideas which only operate on people's prejudices and confrontations. Superficial confrontations are becoming so dominant and so prevalent that a different mode of serious inquiry, serious dialogue, is badly needed. There are ongoing efforts, small as they may be. For instance, Annalisa Sannino has organized international online discussions on activity-theoretical literature and recently a massive online course, or MOOC, on basic concepts of activity theory. These are important steps in that direction.

What we need to add is to put evidence, powerful, vivid examples in front of people so that people can examine them and discuss them and make use of them in their own activities. Paradoxically, the COVID pandemic has forced us to think about this. But all this must be based on research. It means that research has to be on the lookout for identifying and building these alternatives, so that people can join in.

As researchers, we're not used to that. Universities tend to be so self-sufficient, and especially now that there is a lot of pressure in universities, researchers seldom seem to have the time and energy to go out and start looking. But this is necessary. We just have to do it.

Katsuhiko Yamazumi

I agree with you. I am very interested in such a methodology based on activity theory emphasizing the concrete and the local and vivid examples of alternatives to capitalism. Activity theory should make such examples visible and available. When you built activity theory, at that time, you already had such a methodology or idea about the activity-theoretical approach to alternatives of capitalism?

Yrjö Engeström

That is a difficult question. I think that to some extent, yes, there was the idea that we need to build new forms of activity from the ground up. It was clear to me that activity theory is foundationally an interventionist theory. It is a theory that seeks ways to make the world better. This legacy comes from the very founders, from Vygotsky, Leont'ev, and all the others. They were always looking at research as a way to improve the human condition and human lives.

But of course, for instance, in the 1980s and 1990s, the face of capitalism was much less cruel. It looked like, okay, we build these nice, new forms of activity, and they will spread, and they will have an impact. It was, perhaps, naively optimistic, as the cruel face of capitalism and colonialism was a little bit hidden. Until the end of the 20th century, there was quite a lot of general optimism which was largely naive. It was optimism that maybe capitalism will just open up possibilities for alternatives and can be gradually transformed that way.

This naive optimism must have come from the fact that, first of all, in many western countries, welfare systems were still relatively strong. The openly colonialist regimes had largely disappeared. It looked like the colonies had become independent. Only gradually it became more and more clear that much of what used to be colonies are now under very difficult economic and political, and military constraints from the great capitalist powers and that colonialism has not ended. It just has changed its face.

Also in the 1960s and 1970s, we had a very powerful international student movement. It looked like it would be possible to mobilize people on a large scale. But right now, we don't have that mobilization. We underestimated the potential and the power of the capitalist regimes to renew themselves and find ways to eliminate popular protest.

Much of the research and work that we did in activity theory, ever since the early 1980s, perhaps, to the end of the century, and even a little bit during the 21st century, had very good intentions of building alternatives. But we did not realize the gravity and the degree of the effort that is needed. We did this in a specific school or in a specific workplace, and it worked fine: "Look, you can do the same." To some extent, people did. We have seen that the appropriation of activity theory has steadily increased. In terms of citations and publications, there has been a steady and quite impressive increase ever since the 1980s. We can see it just by studying Google Scholar.

But this has not yet translated into a force that would also have an impact on policies and really dangerous developments that are taking place. In this sense, we are now heading to a new era. It is also important that we do not think in terms of just opposition. These contradictions have also impact on policy makers at different levels. It is possible to find also policy makers and decision-makers who are willing to at least engage in dialogue.

This is an era when we cannot afford to be just black and white, the good people against the bad people. It is much more dialectical now. We need to be very careful not to close the doors and turn ourselves into a sectarian force.

The work that Annalisa Sannino and her research group, me included, have been doing with the homelessness policy in Finland has taught us that it is possible to have dialogue that leads to tangible results.

Katsuhiro Yamazumi

As you emphasize again and again, activity theory has a strong tradition of intervention that is methodologically grounded in activity theory over 50 years. Indeed, many activity theorists around the world have actively and strongly worked in global solidarity to develop rigorous research methodologies for such formative interventions based on activity theory. This activity-theoretical methodology has been developing for the past two decades. Among those who want to do interventionist research using a concrete method, the Change Laboratory has been implemented and conducted in various human activity sites.

In such a movement, Annalisa Sannino has proposed a new and crucial methodological model and conceptual framework for formative interventions, its conceptual framework of transformative agency by double stimulation, TADS. Based on this methodological rigor and innovations, you schematize the general design of formative interventional research based on activity theory and expansive learning theory. You sent me the preface³ to the Japanese translation⁴ of *Learning by Expanding* (2nd ed).⁵ In the preface, you put the diagram describing the crucial attributes of the Change Laboratory.

In the preface to the Japanese translations of *Learning by Expanding*, you said that the Change Laboratory is depicted horizontally adjacent and reciprocally connected to the analysis of focal data. “This means on the one hand that parts of the analysis are collaboratively conducted in the Change Laboratory sessions, and, on the other hand, that instruments and outcomes of data analysis are used in design efforts in the Change Laboratory” (a quote from the preface).

Yrjö Engeström

Correct.

Katsuhiro Yamazumi

“The inclusion of the Change Laboratory changes the dynamics of the research design. Practical and conceptual transformations generated in the intervention are implemented in real activity, generating new data that is fed into the analysis” (a quote from the preface).

I am very inspired by this understanding of the new way of conducting research possible in the Change Laboratory. I believe that this way of Change Laboratories will transform academic research and knowledge production in the social sciences in a Copernican way. For example, in the case of the Change Laboratory for schools and teachers, pedagogical research and pedagogical knowledge are generated not only by academic educational scholars but also by educational practitioners and diverse participants in the Change Laboratory.

What are your thoughts on the potential radical transformation of social

science academic research that the Change Laboratory has?

Yrjö Engeström

You actually described it very well. Indeed, Change Laboratory sessions are actually efforts of co-research where the participants become researchers, and the researchers become participants. Their roles become mixed. This also means that we researchers have to realize that our knowledge is not superior. We also have to realize that we, too, can present our own points of view. The researcher becomes a very active participant in a Change Laboratory. In many traditional intervention methods, the researcher feels that, hey, I just supervise and facilitate, but I am not really a true participant.

Of course, you have to be careful. The participants may be shy, maybe fearful, and not willing to engage fully if the research is too much dominant. But step by step, this must be overcome. It happens very much by building on the actual intellectual contributions that are coming from the participants, and that can also be turned and should in the future be more turned into ways of actually publishing together.

There are still a lot of hurdles, a lot of obstacles to that because often practitioners feel that academic writing is alien to them. How to overcome that? So far, we've been mostly doing this so that some specific individual participants rise to the occasion and become active partners in research. But to transform the way how social science is made, we need to take these collectives more as research partners in collective terms.



It requires a lot of experimentation and exchange of all of our experiences so that we find the most powerful and robust ways of doing that. In a recent Change Laboratory in a housing unit for formerly homeless youth, the staff there really took the lead in the analysis in many spots. But we have not shown powerfully enough that research is not only the job of the researchers. There is a gap between what actually happens in a Change Laboratory and how it is reported. In a research article, the powerful role of the participants in the

actual analysis easily becomes invisible. How to recognize the critical input of the participants? It is not easy.

Recently, Annalisa Sannino together with her student, Dimitrios Prokopis, published an article⁶ in which they analyzed who initiates learning actions in the Change Laboratory. The important finding was that it is not only the researcher but a lot is initiated by the participants. The distribution is very different from, let's say, traditional classroom teaching. In traditional classroom teaching, the teacher asks a question, the student answers, and the teacher then evaluates whether it is right or wrong.

In the Change Laboratory, this doesn't hold anymore. A lot of these actions are actually initiated by the participants. But we now have to move further and look at what is the scientific contribution of the participants in the actual analysis and in the actual design that is generated in the Change Laboratory. This is also a methodological challenge.

In research on children and youth, there is this concept of co-research, how to make children and youngsters kind of co-researchers. But it is often a bit naïve. Children are asked to interview one another or collect data in that sense. But we are talking here about the analysis and design. Of course, data collection is also important. In a Change Laboratory, when possible, the so-called mirror data should not only be collected by the researchers but it should also be brought in by the participants. In the Change Laboratory conducted in this unit for the formerly homeless youngsters, this was very visible when we constructed the history wall in which the participants actively brought in their own experiences, their own documents, and so on.

The issue is how you move from that to analysis and design. Those steps are much more poorly understood. We need to do careful re-analyses of Change Laboratories: how can the participants become co-researchers, and how can the very idea of research be transcended in that sense. When you conduct your Change Laboratory in Japan, you will have a chance to try that.

Katsuhiro Yamazumi

That's true. In addition to such emphasizing on initial achievement by participants, a similar crucial matter is pointed out by you. I am very inspired by your criticism of Leont'ev's and Davydov's pedagogical understanding that is rooted in the notion of teacher-leading student learning. Contrary to such a notion, you introduce the radical and crucial significance and role of deviating from instructional intentions for the emergence of expansive learning. In addition to such two main methodological principles of activity-theoretical formative intervention: ascending from the abstract to the concrete and double stimulation. Although it's not called a principle, you emphasize the third crucial matter, deviation from instructional intentions. It seems to be based on the criticism against pedagogical understanding by Leont'ev and Davydov.

Yrjö Engeström

Perhaps, to be fair, it is not Leont'ev and Davydov who invented this. There is a long tradition of challenging the age-old tradition that the teacher should control. In the work of Davydov, the role of the teacher is still not explicitly challenged. It is done implicitly, because when students gain a theoretical understanding of a germ cell principle in a subject, they will start generating their own questions. They don't only answer the questions posed by the teacher.

In Davydov's description of learning activity, there is a moment when the students start to generate tasks and questions, not only answering those of the teacher. But this is not formulated saying; you can also deviate; you can also say, no, I don't do that. I think it is more interesting and meaningful to do that. This idea of deviation from the instructional intentions also calls for the instructors or interventionists to be aware that one's own plans should actually be changed, that they should not go through exactly the way one initially designed them. A good process of learning changes the initial plans.

I think that this is in both Davydov and Leont'ev already as a sort of embryonic idea. It is just not formulated in such a clear way, perhaps, to avoid confrontation or maybe simply because the time was not yet ripe for that. But today, it is rather clear that students are questioning the authority of the school all the time.

In some schools, this is still not visible. But in many schools, it is. It is increasingly common that the teachers do not know what to do about it. That students are challenging their authority, and then, it becomes just an authority conflict. This energy or challenge should be channeled into something constructive, by saying, aha, so you think that what I am teaching is not useful. Tell me why. Let's figure out what would be more useful, or could this be approached in a different way. These deviations should be a starting point of something creative.

The deviations in typical school settings are largely happening as if behind the curtain. They are not really seen. A lot of potential energy is therefore not used. My opinion is that we should open up, put the trouble on the table, and face the fact that oftentimes students are bored. They feel that what they are learning is useless. I am not saying that they are right, but I am saying that they should be heard and that the dialogue should be started. If you just ignore it, you create alienation, and you create fake learning—that students are pretending to learn.

Katsuhiko Yamazumi

I would like to connect such a program of transformation of academic research in Change Laboratories to another issue, which is possibility knowledge as you call it. You are questioning how clients and professionals create and use representational instruments through collaborative negotiation. The representational instruments allow “the client and the professional to depict the client's possible

movement from his or her past and current position in which the client and the professional as well at times has a qualitatively different grasp of their activity” (Engeström, 2023, p. 294).⁷

The concept of activity, as you have consistently pursued, is “a theoretical bridge between the individual and the society, between the constructive potential of the human subject and the historically accumulated social constraints and cultural meanings mediating everything the subject does” (Engeström & Lektorsky, 1990, p. ix).⁸

What are your views and thoughts about the historical dialectics in which individual learners initially deviating from specific instructional intentions collectively produce and design new activities and their own collaborative initiatives? How to overcome the gaps between individual deviation and collectively produced designing of collaborative initiatives?

Yrjö Engeström

That is the big question, and I am glad you asked it. The study we are now completing has been a four-year project on how eighth-grade students in Finnish schools can create their own projects and what this can tell us about their potential. One of the main lessons we have learned in this is that the students, the learners, need to identify a topic that touches on critical conflicts, multiple conflicts in their lives. If they can come together, just a few students, for example, and if they are given sufficient time and support, they can actually generate very powerful processes of collaborative design.

I have in mind, particularly, one example. This was a group of four students, eighth-grade students who selected the topic of what they called simply “Everyone should be accepted as one is.” The conflict of motives that they felt was that they had seen a lot of bullying among students. If you intervened, you would be bullied yourself. So the conflict was: Should I intervene, or should I just stay away? That’s a conflict of motives for a young person who has a sense of justice, that you want to have justice and fairness, and you see that it is very difficult.

This motive conflict was very strongly felt by these students. When we started the Change Laboratory process we gave the students the possibility to select a topic and form a group. These four students selected the topic almost immediately. It was clearly a conflict of motives that was so strongly felt by them that it was not a difficult process. Some other groups had much more difficulty identifying what their topic was. But this group of students went for it right away.

Pretty soon, I think already in the second session of the Change Laboratory, they decided that they were going to produce a documentary film out of this. A documentary film is not an easy thing to make. So they started working, and you could see that if you have a strong enough conflict of motives as the starting point, and if you have sufficiently concrete second stimuli, that keeps it on the track. In this case, it was the idea of the concrete product, the documentary film.⁹

The doctoral student who was responsible for that group, Pauliina Rantavuori, is completing her PhD dissertation on that process. She is looking at it from the point of view of how the students generated power, how they gained power, were empowered. The risk or possible shortcoming of this kind of process is that it can become only a student-owned process. The next step should be that also teachers get involved.

In this case, we had the school space and the classroom, and for every Change Laboratory session, we had some school hours. The students did not have to stay after school. But the teachers were not very much involved. The process was not really connected to the contents of regular teaching. The challenge is to overcome this gap, to connect the student-initiated ideas and deviations with regular teaching and regular curriculum.

Another challenge is to find partners outside the school, partners willing to engage in collaboration over a long time span. In this case, the students got a professional documentary film maker to help them. They recruited a number of people from outside the school to be interviewed for the film. These were partners for a specific purpose. They were not long-term partners. How can these actions evolve into a durable activity? In this case, you could say that it was an embryo of an activity. It lasted one year.

Adolescent students have to experiment with possible activities. These do not necessarily become their lifelong activities. They are transitional in this period of testing possibilities of what one wants to do in one's life. But still, it would be important to build this type of process, where both ends, the connection to the school subjects and the connection to the outside world, are made stronger. In our study, the middle part, the student's own work, was very strong. But the connections at both ends were not yet very strong.

There were connections to the teachers and school instruction. And there were very useful connections to the outside world.¹⁰ But both of these ends were still just beginnings. They were not very strong. It is not so easy to find outside school such partners who really care for the kind of values that the students should also be involved in. We do not want a partnership with somebody who just wants to make a profit out of it. We want partnerships with communities, NGOs, cooperatives who really are looking for the common good, and not for their own private benefit.

Those are possible to find. If I had a new project like this, I would really expand these two ends. So far we have been focused on the middle, so that the students' actual creative work is sustained. The results were impressive. I have no doubt that students of that age can show that these deviations are not just destructive and that they can be extremely productive. When at the end of this process these groups presented the results of their projects, the teachers and adults were impressed. They were saying that this was wonderful. But it is not enough to say that it is wonderful. You have to start thinking about how to weave this kind of energy into the regular schoolwork so that it is not just a sort of a wonderful adventure. It should be part of everyday life. That is a challenge.



It is a little bit different when we talk about adults in a Change Laboratory. Adolescents do not know yet what their activity would be, so they have to experiment. But for instance in the Change Laboratory in this housing unit for formerly homeless youth, the participants decided to embark on what they called spearhead projects. They identified how they wanted the future, the zone of proximal development, to look like. They wanted the role of the staff member to become not anymore a guard but a coach and a fellow traveler. They also wanted the unit not to be encapsulated. The unit was to become a kind of a generator of movement between the society and the unit, so that outsiders would be invited in, and the residents would go to do meaningful things outside. This opened up two dimensions for the zone of proximal development. In that zone of proximal development, they identified concrete projects. Our intention was to follow up on those projects, and then COVID hit. In a housing unit like that, COVID meant that people could not do things together. It paralyzed everything for a couple of years. Now, we can finally go back. But I am sure the situation is, in many ways, so different that we might have to start an entirely new process. The Change Laboratory can start some of these spearhead projects, but it may not complete them. It will get them started and running.

But in your case¹¹, you might have a better chance, because you will have a long period to work with your Change Laboratory. And so, if they identify these concrete ways to move toward the zone of proximal development, you can call them spearheads, or some other name. Maybe in your case, you can follow up on them already during the Change Lab a little bit further. It is important to see how these initiatives can gain momentum. They are not just individual deviations anymore. They are collective design efforts and collective implementations.

In this housing unit, some of the initiatives were really strong. For instance, they wanted to turn their basement floor into a community kitchen where they would serve and prepare meals together and also offer them to the neighborhood so that it would be a place where people could come in and eat with them

and interact. It would also provide meaningful work for the residents.

We visited there, and the basement is beautiful now, but it will still be quite an effort to turn it into a functioning community kitchen because after COVID, learning to interact again is not so easy. The essential thing is that you have a conflict of motives, you have a strong second stimulus, and you have to give them time and multiple iterations. Most likely, these things don't happen quickly. When you have time, it means that you cannot just wait. You have to interact so that the participants realize that there is a process going on, and they are being supported. They are being noticed. They are receiving comments and feedback, a feeling of connectedness.

In research, we have paid too little attention so far to this phase which actually evolves only after the Change Laboratory sessions have finished. In Change Laboratory sessions, the participants typically have very good design ideas and projects. But then, the sessions end, and you don't know what happens. How to follow up?

There are a couple of studies where these longer follow-ups have been done. There is one by Arja Haapasaari and Hannele Kerosuo from 2016, published in *Journal of Education and Work*,¹² where Arja had follow-up sessions for a year. The other one is a paper that Annalisa Sannino, myself, and Johanna Lahikainen published in the *Journal of Workplace Learning*.¹³ It analyzes the consequences of the Change Laboratory conducted in a university library. There, it was complicated because the library changed its organization. You could trace the consequences, but they were not linear; they were like a zigzag move. But these follow-up analyses are important to make sure that you understand what is actually happening after the sessions are over.

This can also be quite tricky because the data collection is different. It is one thing to videotape a Change Laboratory session, but it is another thing to go and see how people are implementing something. You have to figure out what this particular implementation is about and what would be important there to record or to have data on. We cannot just tell stories. We also have to show evidence.



One of the spearhead projects in that housing unit was that they wanted to start a football team of the residents and staff. It would play with other teams of the neighborhood. The formerly homeless youngsters, many of them with addictions and mental health problems, would engage in this kind of sport activity. From research point of view, following up on this would require that you go and record a football game and interview the participants. In this case, the work was interrupted by COVID. We will see.

Notes

- 1 See “2007 Interview on Cultural-Historical Activity Theory” in this issue.
- 2 See: <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2023/mar/10/david-attenborough-bbc-wild-isles-episode-rightwing-backlash-fears>
- 3 Engeström, Y. Conducting research on expansive learning: Preface to the Japanese translation of *Learning by Expanding* (2nd ed).
- 4 Engeström, Y. (2020). *Kakuchō ni yoru gakushū: Hattatsu kenkyū eno katsudōiron karano apurōchi* (K. Yamazumi, Trans.). Tokyo: Shin-yo-sha.
- 5 Engeström, Y. (2015). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research* (2nd ed). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 6 Prokopis, D., Sannino, A., & Mykkänen, A. (2022). Toward a new beginning: exploring the instructional dynamics of expansive learning with workers in a youth supported housing unit. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 34*(7), 628–642.
- 7 Engeström, Y. (2023). Writing for stabilization and writing for possibility: The dialectics of representation in everyday work with vulnerable clients. In P. M. Rogers, D. R. Russell, P. Carlino, & J. M. Marine (Eds.), *Writing as a human activity: Implications and applications of the work of Charles Bazerman* (pp. 293–314). Fort Collins: The WAC Clearinghouse.
- 8 Engeström, Y., & Lektorsky, V. P. (1990). Note to the American reader. In V. P. Lektorsky (Ed.), *Activity: The theory, methodology, and problems* (pp. ix–x). Orlando: Paul M. Deutsch.
- 9 Engeström, Y., Rantavuori, P., Ruutu, P., & Tapola-Haapala, M. (2023). From future orientation to future-making: Towards adolescents’ transformative agency. In N. Hopwood, & A. Sannino (Eds.), *Agency and transformation: Motives, mediation and motion* (pp. 107–138). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 10 Engeström, Y., Rantavuori, P., Ruutu, P., & Tapola-Haapala, M. (2023). Finding life beyond the classroom walls: A Change Laboratory supporting expansive de-encapsulation of school. *Éducation & Didactique, 18*(2), 125–141.
- 11 This refers to a year-long Change Laboratory intervention study conducted by Katsuhiro Yamazumi and his research group in a Japanese elementary school.
- 12 Haapasaari, A., Engeström, Y., & Kerosuo, H. (2016). Emergence of learners’ transformative agency in a Change Laboratory intervention. *Journal of Education and Work, 29*(2), 232–262.
- 13 Sannino, A., Engeström, Y., & Lahikainen, J. (2016). The dialectics of authoring expansive learning: Tracing the long tail of a Change Laboratory. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 28*(4), 245–262.