Abstract: Learning in Conflictual Practice.

In general, theories of learning take as implicit presupposition that the social world is prestructured and static. Consequently, learning is often described as processes of taking over (in processes of internalisation/memorizing) already prestructured tools and applying them on already formulated problems. However, what happens if we take social practice as a changing process, where human activity and structure presuppose each other rather than seeing them as separate categories? Lave’s work about learning, identity and social practice has taken the first step in setting another agenda for theories of learning and social practice. Conceptualizing learning as dialectical processes where participants are actively changing practice and in turn are being changed as participants in social practice opens for discussions of structure, power and change.

In this presentation, I wish to focus on aspects often overseen in Lave’s work: the dialects of conflict and cooperation as pivotal for learning in a changing practice. This will be done concretely by discussing specific incidents from a research project conducted with Axel about how different professions (engineers, architects and craftsmen) learn to cooperate when being part of a conflictual practice of building a house. In the presentation specific incidents from the research project (e.g. constructing the shafts in a dormitory) will be outlined and discussed in greater detail. This presentation will concentrate on the learning aspect of these processes while Axel will focus on the same processes but from an organizational developmental perspective.