Co-operation and Corporative Structures

In Danish Disability Policy

The constitution of a new system for co-operation in 1980 and the period of
consolidation of the Danish Disability Council

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1. Introduction

In this paper I present the first step in an analysis of the interaction between the Danish Government and the disability organisations as it has developed in connection with the Danish Disability Council (DDC). Danish Disability Policy has since the 1930thies developed in a close co-operation between the government and the disability organisations. It is my assumption that this context of part-dependency is framing the development of a new system of the political participation of the disability organisations in 1980. As so – I focus on the historical back ground of the development of a new system of participation and how one of the new institutions - the Danish Disability Council – consolidated a role in the political landscape through the years 1980-1985.

This issue is part of my PhD dissertation in political science, researching the interaction between the state and the disability organisations in the institutional setting of councils at different government levels.

In the paper I sort out the form of co-operation between the Danish Government and the disability organisations in relation to the DDC and I also point to some of the results of this co-operation. The paper is based on analysing government reports, minutes of the meetings and other written documents from the DDC focusing on the ideas and interests connected to this institution [i].

The paper is primarily empirical in its focus. Theoretically, I draw on a historical institutional approach placing emphasis on the dynamics and the relationship between ideas, institutions and interests. These concepts are primarily used as "building blocks" in the description of the history of the DDC. I also draw in the theory of corporatism, to conceptualise and discuss the position of the DDC in relation to the state and disability organisations. As so the paper reflects my working process between research of the empirical documents and developing a theoretical strategy for analysing the role of the DDC and user-councils at local level in the interaction between the government and the disability organisations.

2. The theoretical frame

As mentioned above the theoretical frame is primarily used as an entrance to get a hold on how to tell the story of the consolidation period of the DDC. As a starting point in this process I have used a historical institutional approach.

2.1. Historical Institutionalism

In simplistic terms I draw on the fundamental understanding that both history and institutions matter - that public policies and institutional arrangements chosen at one time have important consequences for policy choices in the future (Rothstein and Steinmo, 2002). Institutions are defined as norms, rules and procedures, but also ideas are placed as a keyword in the understanding and definition of institutions and their influence on actors. In this paper I place emphasis on an institution as a norm or procedure (i.e. the tradition of cooperation between the government and disability organisations) as it changes from one organisational form to another.

One of the common understandings in institutional theory is that institutions influence actors' strategies. Institutions structures (but do not determine)

- who the legitimate actors are
- the number of actors
- the ordering of action and
- to some extent what information relevant actors have access to (Rothstein and Steinmo (eds.) 2002)

Actors' strategies are seen as influenced by institutions. Institutions, it is said, convey a "logic of appropriateness" – that tell actors what they ought to prefer in the specific situation in which they find themselves. In that way, logic of appropriateness and the ideas connected to this logic provide a set of possible solutions for policy problems that arise within a policy area and in that way constrain the government performance and policy choice (Peters, 1999).

It is argued that once governments make their initial policy and institutional choices in a policy area, the patterns created will persist, unless there is some force sufficient to overcome the inertia created at the inception. This mechanism is referred to as path dependency (Peters, 1999). This does not mean that changes are impossible, but that the range of possibilities of the changes and development have been limited by the formative period of the institution.

The question: "How do institutions change? " is also seen as a question of changing ideas - for instance incremental adjustments can be seen as a means of institutional adjustments to changing demands and ideas.

To summarize, I emphasize the dynamics and the relationship between institutions, interests and ideas in analysing the cooperation between the Danish government and the disability organizations as it has developed in connection with the DDC. In a broader sense my aim is to contribute to the understanding of disability policy and its meanings as products of historical events, social forces and ideology – a constructionist position (Hacking, 1999).

2.2. Corporatism

The concept corporatism is here used in the meaning that certain organised interests have a privileged and institutionalised position in the political and administrative decision-making process. The privileged position can be related to both the making of policies and implementation. As a contrast to this, pluralism defines a relationship where the public authorities have not given certain interest organisations a privileged position, and where the integration and closeness in the relationship is limited. Corporatism and pluralism are seen as the extremities in a continuum framing the degree of closeness/openness in the interaction between the public authorities and interest groups (Christiansen and Sonne Nørgaard, 2003).

I use the concept of corporatism – pluralism contiuum as a model to point to the closeness/openness in the interaction between the Danish government and the disability organisations in the DDC, and by this to point to the form of cooperation.

3. The historical back ground - the disability policy reform in 1980
In 1980 the Danish government carried out a reform of the disability policy and services. The reform changed the organisation and administration of the disability services from a state-run care of disabled persons, which organisationally, financially and conceptually had been separated from the care and services of other user groups in the welfare state to a unified system, with the local and county authorities as the primary providers of services for the disabled citizen and other user/client groups.

The historical background of this reform was the development of a strong welfare state in the 1950s-70s, developing services and taking care of among others disabled people's needs. Disabled people's problems and needs was primarily conceptualised as social policy problems and the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) as the responsible authority. The legal framework and organisation of the care and services had developed in connection with the development of a welfare state taking over or developing partnerships with institutions and workplaces for different groups of disabled persons run by philanthropic and disability organisations. These institutions were organised around social and health care, education and work for different disability groups/diagnosis, for instance blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, speech-disabled, physically disabled, epileptic or people with learning disabilities.

In 1970 a local government reform was implemented which laid the foundation of decentralisation and development of a social assistance and security system, administered by local authorities. The number of local authorities was reduced from around 1300 parishes to 275 local authority districts (the local level) and 25 counties to 14 (the regional level). In 1976 a social reform had, among other things, placed responsibility for the care of disabled people living in their own home at local authority level.

A government led by the Social Democratic party planned and carried through the reform, but in 1982 a general election led to a shift in the power balance in Parliament, and a new government was formed, based on four non-socialist parties. In the following years Denmark, as other European countries, was placed in a period of economic recession and therefore experienced cutbacks in public expenditure. As so the reform was implemented in a period of economic cutbacks.

The reform of the disability policy in 1980 was based on the ideas expressed in the keywords decentralisation, normalisation and integration. By decentralisation the administration of the care of disabled people was placed in the same public agencies as in general. This also included a local democratisation process, as the local politicians were made responsible for the implementation process.

The normalisation and integration principles had developed out of a criticism of the living conditions and isolation that disabled people experienced living in the special institutions. The objective of the reform was that disabled people should have a life as similar to a normal life as possible and therefore be integrated in society on equal terms with other people.

The argument for these political changes was (among other things) based on the idea that by changing the institutional set-up the government could integrate disabled people in society and influence the population's attitude towards disabled people in a positive way, increasing knowledge and understanding of disabled people's needs in a broader sense.

3.1 The political participation of the disability organisations

As part of the reform in 1980 a new system for political participation of disability organisations was introduced. Since the 1930 a tradition for dialogue and co-operation had developed between the government and the disability organisations concerning how to response to the multiple challenges and problems that different disability groups meet in society. This dialogue had been institutionalised in boards/councils for special disability groups (deaf, blind, hard of hearing, physically disabled, persons with learning disabilities) in connection with the state-run institutions. Some of the disability organisations had in that way gained a privileged channel of influence in negotiating with the government about their needs and interests.

Establishing councils at the different government levels developed a new corperative system.

At the **national** level the DDC was established as a government-funded body, made up of an equal number of representatives of disabled people, nominated by the Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People (in Danish DSI), and of public authorities. The DDC was formally and organisationally connected to the MSA.

At the **county** level usercouncils was established in connection with the social administration. The usercouncils were made up of representatives from the Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People, members representing parents of disabled children placed in day-care or institutions and one member representing the users, living in an institution.

At **local** level the government encouraged the local authorities to establish user councils in connection with the social administration, but on a voluntary basis. A user-council could represent different user groups, for instance the elderly, disabled people, unemployed and other "client" groups.

The Danish government was in many ways inspired by the Swedish and Norwegian model based on disability councils at national, regional and local government levels. But in Denmark these councils were closely connected to the social administration and in that way maintaining the idea that disabled people's needs and pressure for equalization was a "social policy problem" placing responsibility on the MSA and the social administration at county and local level. This development can be seen as an example of path dependency. The range of possibilities of changes has been limited by the institutionalised idea and norm connected to the formative period of the cooperation between the Danish state and the disability organisations and in this way affecting the possible forms of political participation of the disability organisations.

3.2 The idea "one concept - one group"

The reform in 1980 was also built on the idea that disabled people could be conceptualised and understood as one group and that the government could regulate the needs and assistance for the different disability groups under the same legislative order as for other user groups and social clients. For instance, the Social Assistance Act from 1976 based the allocation of assistance and services on the assessment of the individual person's needs. The names of the disabilities are seldom seen – and even the word "disability" hardly occurs in this act. The offer should be for all, either the difficulties had their background in disability, or it was in social causes (Bengtsson, 2003)

Previously, special acts for different disability groups/diagnoses had raised administrative barriers between the assistance and care for these disability groups, and groups with more rare diseases and impairments had be left on a sideline. The government aimed to create one system that could take care of different individual needs. In this way the government equalized different disability groups by individualising the formal assigning of assistance and services.

The new corporate system, initiated by the government, laid pressure on the disability organisations to represent themselves as one group – the government manifested this by giving the Council of Organisations of Disabled People (DSI) the mandate to point out representatives of disabled people in the DDC and the usercouncils at county level. A majority of the disability organisations spoke in favour of this new system encouraging the government to implement the same system for political participation as in Sweden and Norway. But a few of the disability organisations expressed their concern about this unification of voices- a concern which can be seen as a concern for losing influence. As an example this was expressed in a letter from the "Federation of the Hard of Hearing People" to the commission that prepared the reform in 1980. The federation argued in favour of keeping the previous user-involvement system, based on a council at national level for each disability group/organisation.

One of the direct consequences of the new corporative system was a strengthening of the umbrella organisation: the Danish Council of Organisations of Disabled People (DSI) as a privileged actor in representing the disability organisations and in negotiations with the authorities. This can be interpreted as a governmental interest in creating a more efficient negotiation system in the disability area, as the number of disability organisations was increasing in the period before 1980. The question of which organisations legitimately represent disability as a phenomenon was in this way left to an internal debate in the DSI. In this way the government could regulate the demands and interests of different disability groups through one system. The DSI had gained a privileged and institutionalised position (corporatism), but the different national disability organisations could still gain access to the policy making process through establishing contacts to the authorities in question concerning their special group (in more pluralistic co-operative structures).

The disability policy reform 1980

	Before 1980	The reform in 1980
The legislative order	Special acts for different disability groups/ diagnosis	One act regulating the services for all social clients and user groups
System of Administration	State-run institutions	County and local authorities
The system of co-operation between the government and the disability organisations	Boards/councils connected to the state-run institutions	National Council – the DDC User council at county level User council at local level - voluntarily
Representation and disability - the privileged actors	The old Disability organisations	The DSI

4. The Danish Disability Council

In 1980 the DDC was established as a Government-funded body made up of an equal number of representatives from disabled people, nominated by the DSI, and from public authorities. The MSA appointed the chairman and the members of the council. Five members were appointed on the recommendation of the DSI, one member on the recommendation of the Association of County Councils in Denmark, one member on the recommendation of the National Association of Local Authorities in Denmark, one member on the recommendation of the City of Copenhagen and the Local Authority of Frederiksberg, one member on the recommendation of the governing body of the National Board of Social Welfare and one from the MSA.

To support the DDC's work the MSA appointed seven special experts from the fields of housing, traffic, regional planning, working environment, social- and health care, and education and labour. In most cases the special experts were working as civil servants in a ministry (The order concerning the DDC has been changed a number of times since 1980).

The DDC's tasks were to monitor the situation of disabled people in society and to act as an advisory body to the MSA on issues relating to disability. In the order concerning the DDC other public authorities were given the possibility to ask the DDC for advice on issues concerning the living conditions of persons with a disability.

The DDC was also given the mandate to take initiatives and propose changes in areas affecting the lives of disabled people and their living conditions.

According to the rules of procedure, the DDC should address its advice and proposals to the MSA, but after arrangement with the MSA this advice could also be addresses to the relevant public authority. The National Board of Social Welfare held the secretariat function under the head of the MSA.

The DSI had at this time 21member organisations and was given five seats in the DDC. To solve this complex representation problem DSI divided the member organisations into five voting groups, representing mobility impairments, communication impairments, mental health /mental impairments, other impairments and as the fifth group the chairman of the DSI. The DSI is led by an executive committee with representatives from the member organisations. The executive committee was given the mandate to point out representatives from these four groups and was as such divided into four voting groups according to the disability organisation they represented.

But this process of division was not without conflicts. An alternative system was suggested based on a free voting process, where the members of the executive committee of the DSI were free to vote independent of the disability organisations and group they represented. A majority carried through the "five voting groups" system, and the conflict ended as one of the opponents left his position in the executive committee of the DSI.

By choosing this strategy the DSI followed a path laid out in the former system of representation based on councils for each group of impairment. This points to how the range of possibilities of representing disability had been limited by the previous period of the co-operation between government and disability organisations, and it points to the path dependency in the creation of a new system of political participation. But it also points to the contingency of the system - i.e. it could have been different.

The DDC can be seen as an institution, which at the same time was a continuation of the tradition for co-operation between the disability organisations and the government, and as the beginning of a new period of institutionalised influence with the DSI as the privileged collaborator. Another innovation was the special experts as a new group of actors in the system of co-operation. The appointing of special experts signalled that a response to the multiple challenges and problems that different disability groups meet in society was a matter of concern for specialists. Also the participation of members from the National Association of Local Authorities and Association of County Councils is pointing to the fact that this was a creation of a new system of dialog and co-operation between disability organisations, government, experts and the local authorities. As so this institution pointed out the number of actors which were at that time, seen as the legitimate actors to function as an advisory body on disability issues.

Procedures and activities
The DDC carried out its activities through a number of procedures. The DDC-meetings were a central part of the activities. At the meetings problems and solutions to different disability policy problems were discussed. After a number of meetings the chairman and the deputy chairman together with representatives from the secretariat developed a procedure for organising the meetings. The chairman, deputy chairman and the secretariat held a meeting before the meeting in the DDC, where they pointed out which issues and problems were put on the agenda. This was a way of solving the question of how the DDC could act as an advisory body in an area characterised by complexity and multiple demands from the different disability organisations. This procedure can be seen as a beginning of a division of work between the DDC and the secretariat in the development of the

DDC as an efficient body – the secretariat preparing the agenda and which information the members of the DDC had access to.

The DDC addressed its advice and proposals through letters to the ministry concerned and by arranging meetings between the chairman of the DDC and the minister concerned – the meetings were led by the MSA. The DDC was also asked by some of the ministers to participate in working groups. In some cases the DDC had taken the initiative to propose the establishing of a working group in an area, an so to say played an indirect role as a promoter.

Another activity was to follow the work in Parliament and to promote the DDC as an advisory body in relation to new programmes and policy proposals in different areas, which the DDC believed had consequences for the situation of disabled people in society.

The development of procedures and informal rules concerning the work of the DDC was a process of consolidating a position in a political landscape where different actors (disability organisations, government departments) placed multiple demands and expectations in the position of the DDC. The DDC was primarily including activities and methods focusing on the policy processes at Government level and by this excluded the policy and implementations processes at county and local level, which were seen as a matter for the usercouncils at these levels.

4.1 The Council as a channel for interests

In this passage I will take a closer look at the role of the disability organisations in the DDC in this period (1980-1985). Drawing on a corporative approach, I look into how the disability organizations used their privileged position in the DDC to carry out their interests.

An analysis of the minutes from the Disability Council's meetings shows that the DDC developed as a channel of interest/ influence of the disability organisations in different ways. I have systematized the channels of interest/influence into three headlines:

Promoting common interests between the disability organisations
As one of the main tasks, the DDC raised questions and problems that were of a common interest to the disability movement. To sort out these common interests the DDC asked all the member organisations of the DSI to describe their organisation and the problems they faced. This led to an understanding of a number of common problems connected to the implementation of the reform of 1980.

The deputy chairman of the DDC, who was also the chairman of the DSI, also played a leading part in this formulation of common interests. The DDC stood behind a number of initiatives that led to the set up of administrative working groups in different areas concerning disabled people's needs and problems in society in common. As an example the DDC made a big effort in the area concerning disability and work, disability and transportation, and disability and accessibility to buildings.

Interest mediation

The second way of developing the DDC as a channel of interest was where the DDC played the role as a mediator between a disability organisation and a government department. In these situations, disability organisations contacted the DDC in cases where the dialogue between the disability organisation and a certain government department had developed in a negative direction. The DDC took the task to bring the dialogue back on track between the two actors, mediating between them and also to discuss and advise the disability organisation in its strategy. As an example the Danish Society for Persons with Learning Disabilities, (LEV), had for a number of years tried to put political pressure on the Ministry of Health to take steps to improve the general practitioners' knowledge about people with learning difficulties. LEV had raised this problem after a number of cases where general practitioners had refused to treat people with learning difficulties for the reason that a specialist should treat them. LEV advocated from the political idea of normalisation, meaning that the same general practitioners as for the rest of the population should carry out the treatment of people with learning difficulties.

The single case advocate

As the third aspect in this development into a channel for interest I will mention the cases where a disability organisation or the DDC on its own initiative worked for the special interests of a certain disability group. In these cases the DDC more or less took over pressure group function from the disability organisation. As an example I will mention the DDC's work for the establishment of a text telephone service for deaf people. The Danish Deaf Association, whose chairman was a member of the DDC, raised this demand. The DDC worked for a number of years on this issue supporting the Deaf Association in its claims. But this work lead to a dilemma concerning how far the DDC should go into detail about the response to certain technical questions concerning different models of text telephones also finding itself placed in a conflict between the Danish Deaf Association and the Federation of the Hard of Hearing People in this discussion.

Another example where the initiative was taken by the DDC was in the case of establishing services for deaf-blind people. The deaf-blind people were as a minority group placed in a difficult position to raise their demands. The DDC took the initiative together with the MSA to set up an administrative working group, to sort out how the care for the deaf-blind people could be organised.

A number of challenges followed this position as a channel for the interests of the disability organisations. In some cases the disability organisations based their claims and criticism on personal experiences, self-regarding preferences or the experiences of a few of their members. The DDC discussed how it could draw boundaries between these single cases and cases based on more common interest sometimes playing the role as the body to reformulate the claims into more principal political demands or cases.

In certain cases the DDC was met with claims from the special experts to produce scientific documentation for the problems and claims raised by the disability organisations. The DDC was accused for basing its criticism on feelings and the experiences of a few disabled persons or social workers. This type of knowledge was not accepted as a legitimate basis for rising claims in the political system. The DDC's secretariat, placed in the administrative body The National Board of Social Welfare, handled this by using their position and

relations to the staff in the Board who started to research and produce documentation in favour of the DDC.

In order to work effectively as a channel for the interests of the disability organisations in the national political area, the DDC had to correspond to the existing norms and rules of the political administrative system speaking the language and using the same methods as this system. In this way the DDC re-formulated the problems and criticism into what I will call a political discourse of rationality that could be dealt with in the political system.

4.2 The Council as an arena for developing a common understanding

As mentioned in the passage 2.2. about Historical Institutionalism, one of the common statements is that institutions influence actors by ordering action and create logic of appropriateness. In this passage I will turn to this issue, describing the influence of the DDC on the members' logic of appropriateness.

The question of Sector Responsibility

One of the main issues discussed in the DDC through these first years (1980-85) was the question of which administrative sector was responsible for solving the different problems that disabled people meet in society. The disability organisations, led by the second chairman of the DDC, were clear in their response to this question. The struggle for the idea of normalisation was a struggle for placing responsibility for disabled people's living conditions in a specific area in society with the authority responsible for the area in question. This political strategy has later been named the Principle of Sector Responsibility.

Using the passage in the order concerning the DDC about "its ability to take initiatives and propose changes in areas affecting the lives of disabled people" the DDC put pressure on a number of government departments to take advice from the DDC. In the first years this was done through the MSA, but the DDC gradually developed more autonomy in its relation to the MSA and started acting on its own.

New proposals and programmes initiated by Parliament provided several times the basis of a conflict between the DDC and the Ministry concerned. The DDC fought to be accepted as an advisory body independent of the MSA. As an example, a discussion between the Ministry of Education and the DDC about the DDC's role as an independent advisory body placed the special expert in education, who was also a civil servant in the Ministry of Education, in a bad position. The DDC (i.e. the chairman and the deputy chairman) put pressure on the special expert to influence the Ministry of Education to accept the DDC as an independent advisory body and claimed that he was not doing his job as a member of the DDC. He defended himself by pointing to his membership of the DDC as an expert and not as a civil servant representing the Ministry.

The special expert's role was in many ways unclear, placed between the role as an expert on disability and a civil servant representing the Ministry concerned. The DDC, especially the members from the disability organisations, emphasized the special expert's role as a civil servant, putting pressure on the special expert to act as promoter of the principal of sector responsibility in their government department. The DDC tried to influence the behaviour of the special expert by speaking highly of some of them and by reproving others.

This can be seen as a process of institutionalisation of the rule of the game – a step toward the development of a certain logic of appropriateness that came to influence the members of the DDC's behaviour.

From disabled people's problems to disability policy
Struggling for the promotion of the principal of sector responsibility can be seen as part of a broader struggle to constitute disability policy as a political field separated from the policy demand and problems of other user/client groups in the welfare state. The formulation of ideas, principles and objectives in disability policy was on one hand part of developing a common understanding and community between the members of the DDC. But this ideological dimension also worked as the framing of the interaction between the DDC and its environment.

Through the years before the establishment of DDC the Government and the disability movement had gained a common understanding of the ideas and objectives in the official Danish Disability Policy, as mentioned in passage 3, formulated around the concept of normalisation and integration. The DDC played a significant role in developing these ideas and objectives into more practical political and administrative routines and norms.

In this process the international development of disability policy, i.e. the United Nations World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, can be seen as backing the national process of developing an official disability policy. Another aspect that can be mentioned is the exchange of experience between the DDC and the Swedish and Norwegian Disability Councils. The Scandinavian link was used as a key to developing the national strategy and to understanding the advantages and disadvantages in different institutional settings.

The development of a common disability policy and vision was manifested in 1985 when the Danish Parliament held a parliamentary debate on disability policy. The Minister of Social Affairs gave, on behalf of the Government, an account of the Government's objectives and initiatives to integrate people with disability in society. The Minister emphasized the DDC's role in developing the principle of sector responsibility in practice and in gaining influence in a number of political areas. The opposition criticized the Government for not giving the DDC a more direct influence and in certain cases for rejecting the DDC's proposals with the reference to the need for cutbacks in public expenditure. Both Government and Opposition pointed to the necessity to involve the disability organisations in the policy-making and planning process as a method to consider the needs of disabled people.

Through these years from 1980-85 the DDC succeeded in creating a platform for acting and being heard. Continuously reminding the different government departments of its existence and task to advise on issues and policies affecting the lives of disabled people, it became an accepted advisory body separated from, but still formally linked to the MSA. The DDC's strategy was built on co-operation and dialogue and on the maintenance of the ideas and objectives of the official Danish disability policy as the framework for its considerations as a key actor in the disability field and in the development of new political initiatives and services.

4.3 The form of co-operation and the results

In this passage I will summarise and reflect on the form of co-operation between the Danish state and the disability organisations as it developed in relation to the DDC and also point to some of the results of this co-operation.

As pointed to in passage 4.2 the DDC succeeded in creating a platform for acting and being heard in this period of consolidation. The DDC's resources were based on its knowledge and information about how the disability policy affected disabled peoples lives and the problems they experienced.

The Disability Council legitimised its role as a spokesman for disabled people by
- Producing knowledge that could be accepted in the political area as legitimate documentation for policy development.
- By its ability to transform this knowledge into initiatives and proposals that led to an administrative work in the field, set up by the ministry concerned.
- By its continuing concern and pressure on the government to follow the ideas and objectives formulated in the official disability policy.

The co-operation between the state and the disability organisations in relation to the DDC can be characterised as a form of corporatism as the DSI was given a privileged and institutionalised position in the DDC and used the DDC as a channel for promoting its interest. But the corporative interaction was only legally formalised in relation to the MSA. The DDC was working for autonomy in relation to the MSA and to increase its surface of contact. By its continuous pressure on the different government departments it was to some degree accepted as an advisory body, but the interaction was not institutionalised formally.

The DDC was working in different types of interaction with the government, mostly as an advisory body in a relation characterised by hierarchy, but sometimes also as an actor in a working group together with civil servants, experts and representatives from some of the disability organisations and other interest organisations. In these situations the corporative system developed into a more network based structure, with the DDC as one actor among others to speak for the interests of disabled people (Bonfils, 2003). The co-operation was so to say taking place in the shadow of the hierarcy of the government.

Below I will point to some of the results of this co-operation:

A channel for the political participation of disabled people
Participation through elections and political parties can be criticised for being insufficient in complex and differentiated societies, and the corporative bodies as the DDC create an arena for the participation of disabled people in the policy process. The disability organisations used the DDC as a channel for expressing their interests and for seeking to influence the policy process.

Institutionalisation of interest is minimising insecurity
The DDC was not only a channel for the interests of the disability organisations but also functioned as a body promoting the common interest between the disability organisations and to work for consensus between the Danish state and the disability organisations. The consensus was built up around the official Danish disability policy and the idea of normali-

sation and integration. The idea that disabled people was conceptualised as one group - "people with a disability" - put pressure on the disability organisations to represent them- selves as one group through the DSI (i.e. passage 3.2.) This idea was so to say institu- tionalised in the DDC – in one organisation. In this way the DDC came to regulate the de- mands and created a more efficient system of the political participation of the disability or- ganisations.

Raising awareness on disability issues in the political system
The DDC had a significant function as the body to raise the awareness in the political sys- tem on disabled people's needs and problems. It succeeded in this raising of awareness by the creation of procedures and norms that could ensure the DDC position and influence to speak for disabled people's needs in the policy process.

Transforming the "voice of the disabled people" into a political discourse of rationality
The secretariat of the DDC placed in the National Board of Social Welfare used its relation to the staff in the board to produce documentation and research on different issues raised by the DDC. The demands and criticism raised by the disability organisations was in this way transformed into what I call a political discourse of rationality. By this I mean policy development and argumentation based on the knowledge of evidence in contrast to argu- mentation based on feelings and personal experiences.

5. Concluding remarks and theoretical challenges

The establishment of the DDC was part of a proces of changes in the danish disability pol- icy and the DDC was a new model of institutionalising the co-operation between the Dan- ish state and disability organisations. The establishment of the DDC can in part be ex- plained as the result of part dependency as a political strategi of the interaction between the state and the disability organisations. But the analysis also point to that the Danish state imitated the Swedish and Norwegian model of co-operation – but givning the model a national label by linking the disability councils at different government levels to the social administration. This linking has also been interpreted as a result of part-dependency, as the former councils and boards in the disability area were closly linked to the social ad- ministration.

The concept of part dependency has in this way facilitated an understanding of the DDC as a result of a tradition of co-operation between the governement and the disablity or- ganisation. The emphasis on the dynamics and relationship between institutions, interests and ideas has been used as the "boulding blocks" in the description of the history of the DDC and has shown that changes in the ideas of how to implement the disability policy - i.e. the development of the principle of sector responsibility - played a significant role in the development of the DDC from a council closly linked to the MSA to a council becoming an advisory body for government departments in generel. The concept of intersts has been used to take a closer look into the behavior of the members of the DDC. The analysis has shown that people are not only structured by institutions, they also use institutions to follow their interest and to gain influence and in this way changes the institutions they are part of. The representatives of the disability organisations used their priviliged position to raise claims and gain influence, pointing to that disability policy cannot be reduced to health pol- icy or social policy, but is a matter for all sectors of society.

The establishing of the DDC has also been conceptualised as a corporative structuring of the co-operation. The concept corporatism has be used in the meaning that certain organised interests have a privileged and institutionalised position in the decision making process.

But the study also shows that the DDC was engaged in different types of interaction with government departments, mostly working in a hierachical relation to the government, but sometimes also in more network based structures. The concept corporatism, as it is used here, can be criticised for not showing the complexity in this interaction between the state and the disability organisations, as it draws attention to the formal form of interaction leaving the question of the complexity of the system and the results of the interaction unanswered.

In the same way, the historical institutional approach can be criticised for placing emphasis on institutional order and the creation of common understanding and meaning among actors. Through this approach I have stressed the DDC as an institution creating order and stability. The historical institutional approach may in this way marginalize issues of power and conflict. As pointed to, the process of constituting a new system for the political participation of disabled people involved conflict among members of the DSI. The analysis of the DDC's work and activities can also be interpreted as a public agency exercising power and control in regulating the demands and interests raised by the disability organisations.

The theoretical challenge is to develop a research strategy, which can contribute to the understanding of the position and function of the DDC and usercouncils at county and local level not only as a tradition of co-operation and result of part-dependency but which can conceptualise the complexity of a power relation operating in the shadow of co-operation.

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[i] The empirical material consist of :

Betænkning nr. 781. 1976. Betænkning fra udvalget om udlægning af åndssvageforsorgen og den øvrige særforsorg (Report from the committee on the decentralisation of the care of disabled persons)

The minutes of the meetings of the DDC. The minutes consist of an almost correct report of what was discussed and the resolutions passed by it. In this way the minutes reflect the internal discussions, conflicts and dilemmas the DDC faces in this period of consolidation.

Document from the archives of the Council of Organisations of People with Disability (in Danish DSI).

Parliament debate on the situation for disabled persons in society, 15.01.1986.