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Faculty of Natural Resources and  
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# Dealing with disagreements at water management meetings

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## Abstract

This thesis examines how disagreements and doubts in communication are managed in institutional, multiparty talk in interaction regarding management of water related issues. Using a theory of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974), I analyze ways disagreements and doubts in communication are managed and understood at six water management meetings. At the observed meetings, the frameworks of a new EU financed water management project are being discussed. The actors involved are officials from Municipalities, County Administration Boards and Water Councils, and researchers. I will encounter different ways disagreements and doubts in communication are managed at these meetings through concessive, e.g. “yes, but...” exchanges, laughter, tactful blindness and stand-offs by postpone the management of the disagreement to another, unspecified, time point in the future. At the meetings, the concessive approach creates both misunderstandings and solves disagreements through repeated turn-takings. I hope this thesis will give interested individuals a better understanding of institutional, multiparty talk in interaction regarding water related issues.

Keywords: disagreements, conversation analysis, environmental communication, natural resource management, institutional talks, multiparty, “yes, but”.

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Best regards,

*Johanna Löfberg*

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## Abbreviations

Adjacency pair	When utterance needs to contain a recognizable production towards the other; hello is a greeting and is replied as one by the other. The reply of a greeting shows the greeting is accepted.
CA	Conversation Analysis
CAB	County Administration Board
EU	European Union
LIFE IP RICH WATERS	An EU Financed Water Management Project in Sweden, for the North Baltic Water District
NRM	Natural Resource Management
SI	Symbolic Interactionism
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
WFD	Water Framework Directive, an EU directive for European countries to create good ecological status in lakes, rivers, coastal beaches and ground water, together with getting citizens more involved in water management.



## 1.0 Introduction

This thesis focuses on how disagreement and doubt in communication are managed in institutional, multiparty talk in interaction concerning management of water related issues. The Water Authority of North Baltic Water District in Sweden has been granted an EU financed project (December 2016) with the aim to contribute to the implementation of the Water Directive, WFD, which has not yet been reached. The EU commission states that if the WFD is to be successful, close cooperation is required at Community, Member State and local level (Europeiska gemenskapen, 2000). Society must then endeavor for how they talk, handle and coordinate water management. An unpublished pre-study indicates that some municipalities and CAB lack resources to reach the directive, and perceive the communication between the different actors in water management in this district as vague and use one-way communication. The definition of the WFD is also perceived to be unclear.

I have recorded and observed six startup meetings where the frameworks of the new LIFE project are discussed by officials. At these meetings, there are different actors involved; officials from the CAB from Stockholm, Uppsala, Södermanland, Västerås, different municipalities, the Water Authority in Västerås, researchers and people from different water councils. When water management officials meet, they do this by talking at meetings. Decisions on how society will manage water are made during these meetings. This coordinated way in the conversation, in a rational way, depends on *how* they communicate. Knowledge becomes available when they meet and talk about water at these meetings. A mutual awareness, together with a common understanding of a situation are established and maintained by interactants when communicating effectively (Garfinkel, 1967; Philips & Jorgensen, 2002; Schegloff, 1992). Having disagreements though, is a key resource and give the potential to learn something that you do not know about. Therefore, more knowledge about how disagreements and doubts in communication are managed in NRM is needed. Disagreements then hold the opportunity to improve decision making when one could learn something new from the other. Though, as said earlier, in environments where fairminded is endeavored and disagreements dispreferred, it might be difficult to see this opportunity. The aim

here is to get a better understanding of how disagreement and doubt in communication are managed in institutional, multiparty talk in interaction concerning management of water related issues. The thesis will be in 5 chapters, whereas the first chapter has been an overall information about why and what has been studied in the thesis. The second chapter covers the methodological approach and information about the data collection to answer the research question of *how* disagreements and doubt in communication are managed. I will then present the theory in chapter three together with the literature review. The results and analysis from my recorded meetings are presented in chapter four. When I have presented the results and analysis, I will discuss the findings in a discussion and finish off with a conclusion and further research ideas in chapter five.

## 2.0 Method

To answer my research question on *how* disagreements and doubts in communication are managed in institutional, multiparty talk in interaction concerning management of water related issues, I have recorded six meetings where the frameworks of the new water management project, LIFE IP Rich Waters, are discussed. These recorded meetings contain administrative decisions and discussions when starting this new EU financed project to implement the WFD in the North Baltic Water District in Sweden. To secure a successful data collection, I used two cameras and two voice recorders when recording the meetings. Also, when I observed the meetings, I wrote down the time, and did a mark in my notes, the times I sensed disagreements and doubts in communication which could help me when transcribing. When recording meetings, where a face-to-face interaction occurs, Creswell encourages to show ethical considerations when collecting the data; such as names, gender, opinions, political views etc. (p. 107). To proceed, I made sure to ask the participants in advance if they approved the recordings by sending out an email one week in advance, and asking the officials in person before the meetings. I explained that they are going to be anonymous, and the recordings will only be used for this thesis. To avoid the use of topic control I did not tell them that I was planning to analyse how disagreements are managed in institutional, multiparty talk. I have no intention to put anyone in a bad light in this thesis, on

the contrary, I feel grateful getting the opportunity to see how opposing views are managed at these meetings. This will give me as a student, and hopefully others, a better understanding and knowledge about how disagreements are managed in institutional talk regarding water management. There is approximately 10 hours of recordings where about 4 hours has been transcribed when they discussed, had disagreements and/or doubts in communication. Some episodes were quite long and therefore I have only used parts of the disagreements and how they finished it, which hopefully will give a better flow in the thesis. From the 4 hours, I have selected 7 episodes where disagreements and doubt in communication are managed in different ways, e.g. when they questioned someone's proposal/utterance, used laughter, refused an utterance or negotiated about it through "yes, but...". The selected episodes were verbatim transcribed through a simplified transcription convention, coded and put into themes so I could start to interpret the conversations.

To decode the transcript, I used a technique of Uzelgun et.al (2015) when they used concessive "yes, but..." construction, here, for multiparty interaction. This method helped me to identify how the disagreements are managed through a "yes, but..." construction. Uzelgun et al. (p. 471) argue that the use of "yes, but..." means that the arguer accepts the prior speakers stated propositional content of the argument (Yes), but reject its argumentative potential (but). In other words, one speaker addresses a proposition, where the other express first a concession ("yes-clause") *and* a contrasting proposition ("but-clause"). The yes-clause delays and softens the argumentative situation between the interactants. Here is one example:

**Concession example:**

1. T2: We need to decide what scale to do the water samples.
2. T3: No, we can do this another time.
3. T1: Yes, we can decide now according to the project plan, but okay let's decide this another time.

The propositional content from a speaker is what T2 says in line 1 "we need to decide this matter". In other words, the potential of the propositional content is to decide the matter. T3 in the conversation does not agree with T2 and utters;

we can decide this another time, in line 2. T1 does a “yes, but” utterance where the “yes-clause” applies to T2s’ propositional content, and the “but-clause” rejects the argumentative potential and agrees with T3 to decide this another time. There are two ways the but-clause can be expressed: first, as a direct expression of not wanting the argumentative potential, and second, as an argument of a new proposition against the argumentative potential, as stated above in the example (another time). Other kinds of disagreements and doubts in communication will be analyzed through different kinds of articles from both two- and multiparty conversations.

## 3.0 Theory

### 3.1 Theoretical framework

This study will be based on the theory of conversation analysis, CA. To analyze how disagreements and doubts in communication are managed at the recorded meetings I use research from both Heritage (1997) and Schegloff (1992 and 2006) (and two articles together with Sacks and Jefferson, 1974 and 1977). Heritage (1997) studies the difference between institutional talks and ordinary conversations and how participants through talking build context of their talk. Schegloff presents repair after next turn in interaction (1992) and sequence organization (2006). According to Heritage (1997, p. 109), contexts of interactants’ talk are being shaped through, and in, talking by co-constructing the context in turn-taking. When doing the analysis, it is not a question of how I experience these turns at the recorded meetings, but how these turns are connected and responded to each other. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, (1974) have been studying turn-taking in conversations and I would like to continue by specifying that I perceive all interactions involving two or more people are having a variation of a turn-taking organization as Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, (1974) argue. In turn-takings, Bremer et.al (1996) argue that it might take a long time to understand one another due to: first, the expectancy to understand and therefor a will to cooperate, and second, to protect one’s face and not asking for clarification. Sometimes, the encounters’ important parts might be misunderstood and extended due to the divergence of the listener’s interpretation and speaker’s intentions. If one is uncertain about understanding the other, or to be understood, one can either ask questions, before making a

statement about what has being said, or can respond as one do understand when he or she does not (Garfinkel, 1969; Schegloff, 1992). Hollander and Gordon (2006) consider that meanings in interactions are not stated by whom who makes an utterance, but is negotiated between the interactants when communicating (p. 204; see also Linell, 1995, p.186; McKinlay & McVittie, 2006, p. 798). This understanding is important when the turn-takings (here, between the officials) will show how disagreements are managed by talking, if disagreements occur. Thoughts become actions through language and it is here CA meets Symbolic Interactionism, which I will use when analyzing. Symbolic interactionism perceives people constructing the world, and the meaning of it, through language and symbols when interacting with each other to create norms and beliefs (see Blumer, 1962, 1969; Charon, 2006; Mead, 1934).

### **3.2 Literature review**

As I observed the meetings, I noticed laughter was commonly recurred when disagreeing. This made me search for articles regarding laughter and disagreements (e.g. Jefferson, 1984; Osvaldsson, 2004). Other articles and books I searched for phrased “disagreement”, “conversation analysis”, “yes, but”, “doubts in conversation” “multiparty talk” and,” institutional talk” in their titles or abstracts. Through these articles, I got suggestions to other relevant readings related to the topic which I have also used. Recent research that has been done regarding doubts in intersubjectivity has been by Ekberg et al. (2015) who argue the need to maintain intersubjectivity in interactions for coordinated social action. They examine equivocal trouble in understanding from classroom conversations between teacher and students. Articles regarding multiparty conversations have been examine conversations between pharmacists and patients (Nguyen, 2011), multiparty network conferences (Osvaldsson, 2004), everyday conversations how topic control is used to avoid disagreements (McKinlay and McVittie, 2006) and Heritage (2006) in institutional talks. An accusation or contradiction against one’s utterance might contest another speaker which again must be countered (by e.g. a counter-accusation or insisting of the primary utterance) and a disagreement has occurred (Norrick, 2008). Utterances can of course be understood in different ways when humans are subjective species with different perspectives (see Charon, 2006, who examine

this deeper). This makes communication coherent and different opinions inevitable, with other words: a normal process which also Linell (1995) argues. Mouffe (2011) (and Berg, 2011) argue in the perspective that conflict in interactions is something that develops the society, and is something we have done since we encountered one another (see also, Daniels and Walker, 2001). Even though disagreement might be inevitable, Pomerantz (1984) argues that disagreements are dispreferred and agreements are preferred in interactions by participants. This will then make processes go slower *if* disagreements make society develop. I though, think disagreements should be encouraged and not something to “sweep under the carpet” when it gives the opportunity for new accessible knowledge from someone else’s perspectives and experiences. Pomerantz further states that in situations where one partially agrees and partially disagrees in a conversation, one tends to rather disagree than agree (p. 75). This can be useful to have in mind. So, how can disagreements and doubts in communication be managed?

### **3.2.1 Ending disagreements**

Norrick (2008) examines four ways disagreements can end when they occur. They can end in *submission*, *compromise*, *withdrawal* or *stand-off* (topic control). Nguyen (2011, p. 1756) observes a fifth in institutional talk; *dominant third-party intervention*. It is between pharmacists with asymmetric access to information, where directives from a third-party, in higher authority, takes stand to end a disagreement (see also Parent/children third-party intervention by Buchanan, 1983 and Chang and Weisman, 2005). Those in the disagreement will in these situations submit towards the third-party instead of each other. Disagreements ending in submission are when a speaker concedes to the others maintained standpoint. When both give up their initial standpoints the disagreement has ended in a compromise. When someone in a disagreement discontinue the interaction, like leaving the room, it has ended in a withdrawal. A stand-off is when no resolution can occur because both stick to their initial standpoints by e.g. an abrupt topic switch, which I call topic control, when the conversation reframes by an interlocutor. Last, Hollander and Gordon further sense that if one’s utterances do not *fit in*, with the rest of the groups construction of a situation, it might be ignored by them. The group are calling attention to

elements which are socially inappropriate in a certain construction, a “*tactful blindness*” to move on the conversation (p. 204).

### **3.2.2 Yes, but...**

Norrick (2008, p. 77) argues that disagreements might cause the interactants to remain silent, hesitate, delay, request a clarification or utters a concessive agreement (e.g. “yes, but...”). Pomerantz, (1984) and Antaki and Wetherell (1999) argue that concessive argumentation techniques are used where interlocutors are in environments where “fairminded and rational settings” should occur. Norrick (2008) further sense that “yes, but...” can improve intersubjectivity in interaction when it orients towards negotiation (p. 469). Uzelgun et al. (2015, p. 471) argue that the use of “yes, but...” means that the arguer accepts the prior speakers stated propositional content of the argument, (Yes), but rejects its argumentative potential (e.g. doing an action *now*) (but). They further call it an “argumentative exchange” where a speaker addresses opposing interpretations with reasons that supports her own (p. 468). In other words; one speaker addresses a proposition, where the other expresses a concession (“yes-clause”) *and* a contrasting proposition (“but-clause”). The yes-clause delays and softens the argumentative situation. This should give the first speaker the interpretation that the second speaker is not wholly blind towards the first proposition and appreciates ones’ point of view. The but-clause is a marker that allows an expression of dispreferred disagreements in a partial agreement (p. 471). This is explained deeper in the method chapter with a conversation example.

### **3.2.3 Topic control**

When someone in an interaction introduces/challenges with an unrelated topic to the conversation, or restart a conversation, it is called *topic control* (McKinlay & McVittie, 2006). This topic control can be challenged or accepted by the interactants (p. 802). Conversation restart and collusive laughter can be introduced to avoid disagreements. Laughter can be noted as a tool to deal with different situations, and people can use laughter to make the atmosphere more cheerful, reduce antagonism, and end disagreements, as explained earlier by Norrick (2008, p. 1669). The use of laughter in topic control accords with Osvaldsson’s (2004) findings that laughter often was used interactionally to

avoid disagreements and close to a topic shift (see also, Holt, 2010; Jefferson, 1984; McKinlay & McVittie, 2006). Also, to encourage social order, group cohesion and to instill embarrassment in interactions (p. 1663; Pomerantz, 1984). Norrick (2008) explains how laughter can lead to defuse tension in the conversation, topic shift and stand-off. These endings increase the chance of having this conflict arise again in the future (p. 1669). As stated from the literature review, many articles and books study different aspects of disagreement (management) in different talks.

## 4.0 Analysis

I will now examine the disagreements and doubts in communication from the recorded meetings. Two different disagreement episodes (A and B) will be examined first, where disagreements are managed by ending them in stand-offs. I will then examine five situations of how the conversations managed disagreements and doubts in communication through turn-taking. The speakers in the conversations are called T1-T10, and T1 in the first conversation do not have to be the same T1 in another episode. I have named them this way from when I took my notes when observing the meetings and excluded their names. In the last sequence, the project team will be present and I have named them TA, TB and TC. What also needs to be said is when “\_” is used in the conversations, they interrupt the other who is talking, and, I have marked the discussed sentences with an arrow to the left of the conversations.

### 4.1.1 Stand-offs

A.

In the first episode, T1 and T2 discuss if they should take water samples from a bigger area of a river or a smaller area. T2 who is working at one of the laboratories tells his/her concern to T1 about the need to choose a method for this project, as seen below in line 1. The laboratories have the task to do the water analysis and is therefore present at this start-up meeting. Thus, T3, interrupts and says that they, with a correction to *us*, do not need to decide this now. T2 will then answer this utterance through a concessive “Yes, but...” construction:



1. T2: Och hur är det där, om vi tänker på moduleringen. Vad är syftet att modulera, är det av hela Sagån? Eller är det då mer att man fokusera på de mindre närområden där ni har aktiva lantbrukare?  
And how is that, if we think of the modulation. What is the purpose to modulate, is it the whole Sagån? Or is it more to focus on the smaller neighborhoods where you have active farmers?
2. T1: Jag tror, jag skulle nog säga att man, (1.0) det beror på vad skillnaden beror på. Alltså i bästa världar hela Sagån men jag menar att\_  
I think, I would say that we, (1.0) it depends on what the difference depends on. Thus, in the best of worlds the whole Sagån but I mean that\_
3. T2: \_höjddatat och väldigt hög upplösning? Men frågan är om man klarar hela Sagån?  
\_elevation data and very high resolution? But the question is if one can make the whole Sagån?
4. T1: Nej nej.  
No no.
5. T2: Och det är där vi måste välja, för då styr det val av modellen och syftet, och allt möjligt.  
And it is there we must choose, because it will steer the choice of model and the purpose, and everything possible.
- 6. T3: Jag tänker att ni, (1.0) att man kan komma fram till det sen. Det finns ingenting som jag ser i projektplanen som bestämmer det här liksom. Eh, utan... (1.0)  
I'm thinking that you, (1.0) that one can decide that later. There is nothing, of what I see in the project plan that decides this. Ehm, but... (1.0)
- 7. T1: Och möjligtvis då, eller eftersom det står här (visar projektplanen) om underifrånperspektivet, eller det lokala perspektivet, som man vill ha. Med det sagt, så är det ju den nivån, som man ska komma med... Ned till den nivån verkar mer lovande i så fall, med det samtalet som man ska ha med den lokala lantbrukaren sen. Att man har ett bättre upplöst underlag att komma ut med i första hand då. Men visst det behöver vi nog inte avgöra riktigt än.  
And possibly then, or because it says here (showing the project plan) about the bottom-view perspective, or the local perspective, the one wants. With that said, that's the level one is supposed to come with. Down to that level, it seems more promising in that case, with the conversation that you should have with your local farmer. That you have a better dissolved data to show in firsthand then. But sure, we do not really need to decide that quite yet.

T2 asks the group about the scale and the purpose of taking these water samples (line 1). T1 answers this question by expressing first what s/he thinks, but then corrects oneself to answer only the water sample scale (line 2) before getting interrupted by T2 (line 3). T2 asks for clarification and opposes the scale that T1 has expressed in a but-clause. This opposition will be accepted by T1 who says “No, no” (line 4). When T1s proposition has been rejected by T1, T2 rephrases the need to choose the scale when it steers the choice of model and purpose (line 5). T3 interrupts the conversation between T1 and T2 (line 6), and reframes the conversation by saying *they* (with a correction to *us*) can decide this later and refers to the project plan. T3 finishes the utterance by expressing an empty “but...” and silence. T1 first turns down this reframing and concludes towards T2 with the intention to the possibility to choose the scale now by showing the project plan where it says about this “bottom-view perspective”. But after been expressing his/her thoughts for some time without any responds from any other official, s/he agrees with T3 to decide this another time (the *but-clause*). The conversation ends in stand-off where no date or time is set when they should decide this matter.

B.

In the second episode, from another meeting with different officials, they end the disagreement with a chain of opposing breaks off regarding the borrowed English word “workshop”. Through the disagreement, they use “yes, but”, laughter, and finally, a repeating sequence of topic control from a third-party when handling the disagreement. Prior turn 1, T1, the agenda setter (together with T2), explains for everyone the concern about the plans of having separate workshops at the different CAB’s in the district. T4, from a water council, is first to oppose this with the question if the laboratories should then travel to every CAB in the district:

1. T4: Men du har ju bara en begränsad skara som håller på med \_  
But you only have a limited crowd that deals with \_
- 2. T1: \_Ja, ja men\_  
\_Yes, yes but\_
3. T4: \_labb, så det är ju några, en handfull labb liksom. Ska de åka till varenda länsstyrelse då?

Lab, so there are some, maybe a handful of labs. Should they go to every county administration board then?

- ▶ 4. T7: Det känns som att vi kan ta det här\_  
It feels like we can take this\_
- 5. T1: \_Nej det är ju mer kommunerna, den, den på miljögiftsövervakning, som\_  
\_No, it's the more the municipalities, the, the one on environmental monitoring, that\_
- ▶ 6. T2: \_Jag tänker att man kan utgå från ett program och få fram vilka sorts organisationer som finns. Och så när man ser det, så bestämmer man hur man lägger upp *workshopen*.  
I think one can work on a program and find out what kind of organizations exist. And when you see it, you decide how to arrange the workshop.

What is being understood in the turn-taking by the interactants when managing this disagreement? First, they all interrupt each other, and T1 interrupts trying to utter a concessive “yes, but...” which T4 turns down by finishing the first opposing question (line 3). T7 is the first who tries to reframe the conversation (line 4) but fails when T1 keeps reframing to the topic about the laboratory issue and not answering if the labs should then travel to all CAB in the district (line 5). T2 gets the turn when interrupting and tries to reframe the conversation about the laboratories to the idea of discussing this another time after creating some kind of program to arrange the workshop (line 6). This reframing is also turned down by T1 who interprets T2’s word “*the workshop*” as ONE workshop, and argues with T2 that it most likely will not be one big workshop:

- 7. T1: Men det är inte säkert att vi ska ha en enda workshop\_  
But it is not certain that we will have one only workshop\_
- 8. T2: \_Nej\_  
\_No\_
- 9. T1: \_för hela distriktet för det kanske inte funkar.  
\_for the whole district because it might not work.
- 10. T2: Nej absolut inte.  
No absolutely not.

The participants in the discussion have now excluded T4, which Hollander and Gordon (2006) would call through a *tactful blindness*, and T1 and T2 are now agreeing in three turns that it might not work with one workshop (line 7-10). The choice of words is vital as seen in the conversation, when T1 corrected T2 about the turn of the noun in singular or plural when saying “the workshop” in

Swedish. Workshop is according to Einersson (2009) a borrowed English word, this can be difficult to turn to proper/common noun when using it in Swedish (see also Viberg et.al 1984). This can explain T2s' agreement with T1, when T1 thought s/he opposed the turn of the noun as singular, when apparently, s/he agreed with having it as plural (line 8). Another official, T10, questions this agreement between T1 and T2 about the turn on the plural noun, workshops. T1 answers with a "yes, but..." utterance. Let's see how the conversation managed this situation:

11. T10: Är det inte det vi ska göra: bara träffas allihopa och bara nätverka?  
*Isn't it that what we are supposed to do: everybody meets and just network?*
- 12. T1: Jo, men det kan vara så att vi nätverkar på mindre skalor först för att sen kanske nätverka...(1.0)\_  
*Yes, but it may be that we are networking on smaller scales first, so that we may be able to network...(1.0)\_*
- 13. T8: \_Så tvärtom. Heheh  
*\_So the opposite. Hehehe*
14. T1: Jaa heheh  
*Yes heheh*
15. (Skratt i rummet förutom T10, T7)  
*(Laughter in the room except for T10, T7)*

T10 asks for a clarification of what it means to have a workshop to understand the situation better after T1 and T2's agreement earlier. T1 tries to explain to T10 that it is not decided by using words like "might", "first" and "maybe". By answering with a concessive opposition to what T10 utters by trying to negotiate the meaning of "first having small workshops and then network..." before getting interrupted by T8. This "yes, but..." is challenged by T8 (line 13) who finds T1s' argument the opposite from what the others are concerned about and starts an invitation of laughter (line 14). This is what Uzelgun et al sense, that "Yes, but..." is a vague way to say ones' standpoint when the but-clause contradict the "yes-clause", here, that everyone should meet and network. Everyone except T10 and T7 starts to laugh when T1 accepted the laughter about the contradicting statement from T8 (line 15). T10 reframes the conversation back to the previous topic, and continues to argument about the disagreement in line 16:

16. T10: Men vi har inte så många aktörer\_  
 But we don't have that many actors\_  
 17. T1: \_Nej men\_  
 \_No but\_  
 18. T10: \_så det blir tunt för oss\_  
 \_so it will be thin for us\_  
 19. T1: \_Nej, visst, men\_  
 \_No, sure, but\_  
 20. T10: \_en tunn workshop.  
 \_a thin workshop.  
 21. T1: Vi får titta utifrån de två perspektiven tror jag.  
 We may look at those two perspectives I think.  
 22. T2: Vi gräver vidare med det här sen. Nu har vi börjat tänka på det  
 också. Mm. Då kör vi nästa då, punkt tre.  
 We'll dig further with this later. Now we have begun to think about  
 this as well. Mm. Then we go to the next; point three.

T1 expresses a sense of mutual understanding and is not wholly blind towards the first proposition from T10's concern ("No, but's" in line 17 and 19). T10 then finishes the sentence by expressing their perspective of that this decision will result in a "thin workshop" for them, in line 20. T1 answers this concern with an utterance that s/he thinks they may look at those two perspectives. After the laughter in line 13-15 and the oppositions between T1 and T10 in line 16-21, T2 abruptly says they are moving on with the meeting with a topic control in line 22 to shift the management of the disagreement to another, unspecified, timepoint in the future. This topic change is expressed meta communicatively when the others understood the meaning T2 expressed by moving on with the meeting. The others attempt (line 4 and 6) have been implicit and not meta communicative towards the others at the meeting.

#### 4.1.2 Tactful blindness

Another episode from the same meeting as previous episode, the officials are discussing about ground water. This will be questioned by a third-party official who has been promised to go through a document earlier in the meeting. This disagreement about the agenda will result in laughter after a concessive "yes, but..." utterance. This is how the disagreement was managed in the conversation:

1. T8: Nu har det gått 5 minuter...(1.0)  
 It has been 5 minutes now...(1.0)

2. T1: Ja...  
Yes...
  3. T8: Sen jag sa att jag inte ville\_  
Since I said that I didn't want\_
  - ▶ 4. (skratt i rummet)  
(laughter in the room)
  5. T8: \_och att vi ska gå igenom det här (visar ett dokument).  
\_and that we should go through this (shows a document).
  - ▶ 6. T1: Ja okej, men jag ska bara se här.  
Yes, okay, but I will just see here.
  7. T8: (skrattar)  
(Laughs)
- (T1 continues with the ppt.)

T8 has been wanting to start a discussion about the project plan after a five minutes' draft of the power-point presentation. When it has been five minutes T8 complains about the fact to the rest of the group that it is time to switch topic (line 1). T1, the agenda setter, responds to this fact in line 2 "Yes...", and T8 utters about not wanting something (line 3), and the utterance was drowned by the groups laughter (line 4). T8 clarifies what s/he wants to talk about, by saying they should go through a document and shows it to them (line 5). T1 responds with a concessive "yes, but-clause" and wants to continue the power point. This shows that the power-point, the "but-clause", is more valuable than the document, the propositional content made of T8, at this moment. T8's reaction to the "yes, but..." is by using laughter (line 7) before T1 continues the power point. Even though T8 expresses the willingness to go through the document, T8 laughs when his/her concern are not being accepted. This expression could be explained as a response of showing inexplicit indications that it is okay to avoid awkward associations (Schegloff, 2006, p. 153).

#### **4.1.3 Insertion sequence through "yes, but..."**

In this sequence, I will examine another "yes, but..." but as an insertion sequence against T1's suggestion by questioning it. An insertion sequence is where two, or more, associated utterances are introduced between an adjacency pair (e.g. utterances between a question from A and an answer from B) (Sacks, et.al., 1974). The conversation before the disagreement starts with an utterance from T1 who utters what s/he thinks should be included in their procurement to the EU commission:

1. T1: Alltså det finns väl inget som är.. har... Vi kan ju så... upphandla vad vi vill inom den upphandling vi gör egentligen. Vi skulle kunna inkludera närsalter om det skulle vara så. (1.0) Det behöver ju inte vara strikt miljögifter?  
There is nothing that is .. has ... We can sa... procure what we want within the procurement we really do. We could include nutritional salts if that would be the case. (1.0) There is no need for strict environmental hazards?
2. (1.0)
3. T1: Så ser inte jag det.  
I don't see it that way.
- 4. T10: Ja fastän pengarna är väl satta för miljögifter?  
Yes, but the money is intended to toxins?
- 5. T1: Ja, men det beror på hur man utnyttjar pengarna sen, men upphandlingen kan ju omfatta vad som helst egentligen\_
6. T10: Aa, jaha, så menar du, Mm.  
Oh yeah, that's what you mean, Mm.
7. T2: Ja den kan ju omfatta flera analyser än vad som behövs.  
Yes, it may include more analyzes than needed.
8. T10: Mm, bra.  
Mm, good

In line 2 there is a silence after T1's statement which T1 will be answered by T1 by clarifying his perspective. T10 understand the previous utterance in a different way from T1 and questions T1's utterance with an insertion sequence in the form of a "yes, but..." argument (line 4). This leads T1 to repair the statement to be more clear through another "yes, but..." in line 5. T10 expresses an understanding, in line 6, after the clarification from T1. In line 7 T2 reframes the subject back to the misunderstanding and takes T1's side.

After the disagreement, they become silent and T7 tries to continue the meeting but gets no responses by the officials:

9. (3.0)
10. T7: Eehm...
11. (2.0)
12. T7: ja... (nickar mot ppt:en)  
yes... (nods towards the ppt)
13. (1.0)
- 14. T7: Fortsätt.  
Continue.
- 15. (Skratt i rummet)  
(Laughter in the room)  
  
(Continues with the meeting)

It took three turns to get a response from the group what T7 wanted to happen in the interaction. First T7 expressed “ehm...” (line 10), second “yes...” with a nod (line 12) and finally “continue” in line 14. Instead of e.g. abrupt switching the topic, T7 takes three turns to repair the communication when the group is being silent. In line 15 there is a shared laughter by the group after T7 expressed the word “continue” (line 14) and they continued the meeting. What also can be noted is that here, words were more clear than body language, when it was the word “continue” that made T7 satisfied when the group understood what T7 try to make in the situation by continue the meeting.

#### 4.1.4 “I don’t know”

In this episode officials respond to the use of “I don’t know” as both a turn down and an agreement of a proposal. They will use a series of insertion sequences and turn-allocation techniques where a series of questions are self-allocated by the speaker (Sacks, et.al., 1974) (from line 8) towards the other official. This is a conversation between T1 and T2, and T2 is wondering if they should include a project communicator to one of their future meetings. This will first be challenged by silence, and second by T1 who vaguely turns down the proposition through “I don’t think so”. This imprecise turn down gives T2 the opportunity to further argue for the proposition which becomes unclear for both interactants. T1 is trying to guess the validity to include the communicator as T2 is trying to say. Let’s see how the disagreement is managed in this conversation:

1. T2: Ska vi ha med, eh... projekt-kommunikatören, på det här mötet kanske?  
*Should we include the, ehm... project communicator, on that meeting maybe?*
- 2. (3.0)
3. T2: För jag tänker om vi... jag tänker\_  
*Because I am thinking if we... I think\_*
4. T1: \_Jag tror inte det.  
*\_I don’t think so.*
- 5. T2: För jag tänker såhär, ska vi börja prata om såna här aktiviteter typ hur ska vi, eh, hur ska vi nå ut med vissa saker, vilka målgrupper som vi ska välja\_



Because I think like this, should we talk about this kind of activities, like how we are going to, ehm, how we are going to reach out some things, what target groups we should select\_

6. T1: \_Mm
7. T2: Och jag vet inte om det är där vi är, då behöver nog dom vara med, men eh\_  
And I don't know if it is there we are, then they probably need to be with us, but ehm\_
- 8. T1: \_Tänker du att de är med i nästa möte?  
\_Do you think that they should be included to the next meeting?
9. T2: Aa, kanske gången efter det?  
Yes, maybe the time after that?
- 10. T1: Aa, jag vet faktiskt inte. Hur tänker du mer att eh.. Vad tänker du att dom skulle behöva vara med på?  
Yes, I actually don't know. How do you think more that ehm... What do you think that they should be needed to attend to?
11. T2: Jag tänker inte när vi diskuterar temasamordnarrollen\_  
I am not thinking when we discuss the theme coordinator role\_
12. T1: \_Nej.  
\_No.
- 13. T2: utan mer såhär, kompletterande åtgärder, och (1.0) eller nej, jag vet inte.  
But more like, complementary measures, and (1.0) or no, I don't know.
14. T1: Men hur vi ska kunna försöka definiera en projektplan? som vi\_  
But how we are going to try to define a project plan? That we\_
15. T2: \_Ja!  
\_Yes!
16. T1: \_har användning av? Vad för roller?  
\_have use of? What kind of roles?
17. T2: Ja, åtgärdsplan, precis.  
Yes, action plan, exactly.
- 18. T1: Jag tänker att det, på något sätt, att det, det, inte riktigt behövs.  
I think that it, in some way, that it, it, not really is required.
19. T2: Ja, okej.  
Yes, okej.

First, when having silence after an assessment one can conclude that the other does not agree with the utterance (Pomerantz, 1984) or does not understand what the other is saying (Charon, 2009; Hollander & Gordon, 2006). In this matter, it seems the prior is more accurate. When T2 has gotten a minor turn down s/he starts to explain further the idea to get an acceptance (line 5). Thus, T2 expresses uncertainty if the communicators should be included, in line 6. This is

interpreted and framed by T1 that T2 is talking about having them on the next meeting (line 7). T1 is then trying to repair the breakdown by guessing T2's thoughts (e.g. line 8 and 10). In line 11, T2 states what one does not think which T1 will agree to understand (line 12). T2 then tries to state what one does think, but this attempt will collapse with an "I don't know", in line 13. From line 14, T1 uses turn-allocation to T2 in the conversation by selecting the next turn; "But how we are going to try to define a project plan?" (line 14) and "What kind of roles?" (line 16) which T2 answers is exactly what s/he was thinking about (line 15 and 17). These suggestions will T1 turn down by in the end of the conversation (line 18). Sacks, et.al (1974) would argue that the questions are "allocated by self-selection" by the speaker when T2 is unable to explain why the communicator should be included. This misunderstanding of what T2 might mean to include the communicator goes on for many turns by T1 finishing the last words of T2s' sentences with a turn down. T1 has interpreted T2s' thoughts with his/her own experiences and steered the conversation to a refusal because it was interpreted as a "vague" idea from the beginning. When the idea of turn-taking is to understand and be understood (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Linell, 1995) T2 does not get the change when being steered towards T1's interpretation of one's idea from the beginning.

#### **4.1.5 Anomic excuse in doubts in communication**

The two prior officials ended the previous misunderstanding by agreeing that T2 has a non-functional brain. Their way of handling the disagreement of including the project communicator leads to a collapse in the communication, where one interlocutor utters his/her brain stopped working (line 3), as Garfinkel (1963, p. 219) and Heritage (1984, p. 98) would call an anomic collapse. A non-functional brain could not be possible when the interlocutor could express the thought of having a brain that stopped working. In a conversation, of two, or more people, involved, they are responsible for making the communication work by taking the role of the other (Charon, 2006; Mead, 1934; Schegloff; 2006). Here, we can interpret that only one person has the responsibility over the conversation – that one's brain eventually stopped working when not being able to express the arguments of including a communicator. The two first utterances (20 and 21) are from the previous episode when the conversation

shifts towards doubting the communication between the interlocutors after the turn down by T1.

20. T1: Jag tänker att det, på något sätt, att det, det, inte riktigt behövs.  
I think that it, in some way, that it, it, not really is required.
21. T2: Ja, okej.  
Yes, okej.
22. T1: Vi har ju på något sätt lite... (*reser sig upp och går runt bordet*)  
We have in some way little.... (*gets up and walks around the table*)
23. (2.0)
24. T2: Jag känner att mitt huvud tog slut.  
I feel like my head stopped working.
25. T1: Ja.  
Yes.
26. T2: Det var på gång där och sen funkade det inte längre (skratt).  
It was working there and then it did not work anymore (laughter).
27. T1: Nej. (1.0) Det var kanske den där sockerbiten.  
No. (1.0) It was maybe that cookie.

After T1 gets up and walks around the table (which made me not hear what followed in the sentence) T2 feels that one's head stopped working (line 24). The meaning of having a brain stopped working was expressed after not being able to give arguments to why the communicator should be included. T1 agrees to T2's utterance (line 25), which makes T2 explain how the process went for it to stop working and laughs (line 26). T1 agrees again the utterance (line 27) and express a reason why the brain might have collapsed "It was maybe that cookie". When it is not possible to have a non-functional brain, and make these utterance, could sense a collapse in the communication between the interlocutors.

#### 4.1.6 "That's why we are annoying"

The last episode is a disagreement about prioritizing two individual important problems between the LIFE IP project leaders and some CAB's at an introduction seminar. The project leaders are prioritizing their set timeline with functioning time reports, and the CAB officials their public procurement which they are uncertain about. Prior line 1 some officials are anxious to have a meeting with the project leader who does not have time for it at the same time point as the officials want. There have been a few incidents earlier at the seminar with laughter in the conversation when having disagreements and acknowledgements about the unstable situation some officials are in. TA, TB and TC are from the project leader team and T2, T4, T6 and T7 are from

different CAB who wants to book a meeting as soon as possible regarding their public procurement:

1. T2: Men vi får grotta ned oss i det här.  
But we will have to engage more in this matter.
2. TB: Ni får skriva ned läget och\_  
You can write down the situation and\_
3. TC: \_Ja det här var mycket större, och att ni berättar om det här nu.  
\_ Yes this was much bigger, and that you tell us this now.
4. (skratt i rummet)  
(Laughter in the room)
5. T2: Det är ju också så att vi gör vissa miljögiftsanalyser på en nationell, nationella analys-labb. Det kan finnas önskemål inom projekten att göra det mot de här nationella labben.  
The case is that we also do some environmental analysis on a national level, national analysis-lab. There may be requests within the projects to do this for these national labs.
6. TC: Nej det här måste man börja om med känner jag nu. Vad finns det? Och gräva ned sig i det som TB säger.  
No, I feel that this needs to be start over now. What is there? And engage in into the matter as TB says.
- 7. T2: Ja men jag mailar TA för att sätta en tid, tidigt... (skratt)  
Yes, but I email TA to book an appointment, early... (laughter)
- 8. TA: \_ehm. Men som jag sa med det här med tidsplanen där, att vår ambition är att alla ska kunna tidsrapportera och göra det enklare saker som, feb/mars och under april/maj så kommer vi på hembesök, så jag är jätteledsen *men* vi kommer inte kunna lösa alla saker nu, säger jag nu bara såhär och flaggar för det här.  
\_ehm. But as I said with the schedule before, that our ambition is for everyone to be able to report and to make the easier things in Feb/March, and in April/May, we will go visit the CABs. So I'm very sorry, *but* we will not be able to solve all things now, I just must say this and flag for this at this point.

The episode starts with T2 expresses the need that “we” should understand the issue better (line 1). This is answered by TB who encourages the officials to write down the situation (line 2), but gets interrupted by TC who expresses a feeling of worry about the expressed issue with the public procurement (line 3). This creates laughter in the room. After the laughter T2 further describes their situation which TC again senses worry about. TC agrees with TB that they should write down the situation. T2 interprets this as sending an email to TA to book a meeting, early, and laughs. To understand TA’s sentence, I need to explain that TB and TC has done the “yes-clause” (line 2 and 6) and TA

responds with a “but-clause” (line 8) about the need to understand that “we”, the project team, will not have time to solve all problems *now*. TA apologizes to the CAB about how the situation looks like for them when they do not have the time that the CAB’s seem to need. The conversation continues and the disagreement escalates regarding TA’s apology and “Yes, but...” utterance:

9. T2: Nej men\_  
No but\_
10. TA: \_kan vi lösa saker så kan vi göra det, så att vi verkligen kommer igång, men\_  
\_If we can solve things then we can do it, so that we really get started, but\_
- 11. T2: \_Det kan betyda att vi behöver revidera vår tidsplan troligtvis.  
\_This may mean that we need to revise our schedule probably.
- 12. T4: Ja det är allting.  
Yes that is everything.
13. TC: Det är här är större än vad jag trodde.  
This is bigger than what I thought.
14. T4: Men vi kan väl ha en diskussion?  
But can’t we have a discussion?
15. TA: Jaa\_  
Yes\_
16. T4: \_Boka in ett möte för diskussion kan vi göra?  
\_We can book a meeting for discussion, can’t we?
- 17. TA: Absolut, men jag måste flagga för att just nu är det jag som jobbar heltid med det här, vi har ju inte hela vår projektledning på plats. Så vi har ju inte kapacitet att hjälpa alla just nu. Vi har skitmycket saker som vi behöver ha på plats. Så att, blir det att vi måste skjuta på tidsplaner så blir det att vi måste göra det.  
Absolutely, but I have to flag for it because right now, I’m working full time with this, we do not have our entire project management in place. So we do not have the capacity to help everyone right now. We have so much stuff that we need to have in place. So, if we have to shoot up some schedule, we’ll have to do it.

T2 now drops the information that this might cause them to revise their timetable, and a third party, T4, agrees with T2 and says that this is everything for them. Nguyen (2013) argues that an involvement of a third party in a disagreement is common in multiparty talk. TC comments their utterance with another worry, which makes T4 asking for a discussion with TA through a “but-clause” (line 14). This is answered through another “yes, but” (line 17) where

TA accepts the idea to book a meeting, but warns and explains that TA is the *only one* working in the project team at the moment (which earlier was a team, line 8) and expresses that they will have to push some timetables if that is needed. The disagreement ends after one of the CAB officials expresses that this is the most important thing for them, and both parties express why both are annoying/concerned in different ways about getting the money from the EU:

18. T6: För att det hänger... så himla mycket hänger på det, så det vi har angett är det som den stora biten vi ska ha samma utgångspunkt på provtagning och analys. Och det ska ju ske en upphandling – står det ju i dokumentationen i ansökan, det är så viktigt. Jag skulle vilja säga att det här är det *viktigaste* för oss just nu.  
Because it depends... so much depends on it, so what we've stated is that the big case we will have the same starting point for sampling and analysis. And a procurement should be made - it says that in the documentation in the application, this is so important. I would say that this is the most important thing for us right now.
- 19. TA: För jag vill bara säga att det *jobbiga* här är ju att *vi* vill ju att *vi* gör upphandlingen rätt, så att EU inte kommer och säger att "ni har gjort fel och får inga pengar". Det blir så sjukt tråkigt, för alla. Så det får inte hända. Så därför är vi rätt jobbiga.  
Because I just want to say that the annoying thing here is that we want to make the procurement correct, so that the EU does not come and say "you've done wrong and won't get any money". It would be so sad, for everyone. So it must not happen. So that's why we're pretty annoying.
20. T6: Mm.
- 21. T7: Det är därför vi också är rätt jobbiga.  
That is why we are pretty annoying as well.
22. (Skratt i rummet)  
(Laughter in the room)
23. TC: Men börja med det att skriva ihop en text om det, det vore som en bra start på alltihopa.  
But start by writing a text about it, it would be a good start regarding the issue.
24. TA: För det kan TB ta också.  
Because TB can also handle this matter.

T6 expresses a grand importance of their issue if this will not be solved in time for them in line 18. This makes TA explain why s/he is annoying by expressing ones' perspective about why s/he might not be able to help them (line 19). In line 21, T7 agrees and states that it is the same reason why they also are annoying. When it was expressed they had a collusive laughter (line 22) and the

project team concluded the situation with a “but-clause” and moved on with the meeting. Here they took the turns by expressing ones’ perspective to make the other understand their situation.

## 5.0 Discussion

I perceive some of the examined disagreements are based in diverse expectations of the meetings (e.g. A, B, “Tactful blindness” and “That’s why we are annoying”) where officials express different agendas. It also seems like the officials have different expectations regarding this project. The diverse inexplicit expectations and disagreements can be explained by Hallgren and Ljung (2005) who argue about first, to take the perspective of the other to keep an interaction going, and second, the need to have the purpose of a situation understood for all interactants to avoid conflicts. In this matter, bigger conflicts will be difficult to arise when officials are expected to be rational and fairminded. I interpret their fairminded endeavor, results many of the times in having shared laughter, topic switches and “yes, but’s” when having disagreements. I believe this could explain why they handle disagreements in a concessive way, which could result in a collapsed communication as seen in “Anomic excuse in doubts in communication” after the self-allocation turns. Thus, as Norrick (2008) argues, not coming to a resolution increases the chances of having the disagreement again in the future, which makes the strategy to use these techniques not successful when they do not open room for perspective taking. Laughter could be a norm for making the atmosphere more cheerful to handle awkward situations at this institution. If this is the case, Jefferson’s notion (1984) of laughing to make the atmosphere more cheerful applies, which she presented early to deal with problematic or sensitive topics. In a comparable manner, McKinley and McVittie (2006) explain Osvaldssons’ perspective that multi-party assessment talk use laughter to manage situations that are “tense or sensitive” by allowing them to orient toward it. I interpret their laughter as a concessive function when disagreements occur to handle the situation easier, which corresponds with their use of “yes, but...” as Uzelgun et.al. (2015) argue. As stated in the introduction, people can be skillful in avoiding to express disagreement and therefor avoid it as much as possible, unconsciously as habits. Thus, in the examined episodes, except “Insertion sequence through yes, but...”

and “That’s why we are annoying”, the conversations do not lead to any mutual understanding of the disagreements and doubts in communication. In some of the episodes when laughter was used together with a complaint, Glenn and Glenn (2013) argue that the interlocutor should not have laughed to show more seriousness about one’s concern, in e.g. what I interpret in episode B, Stand-offs. As for the last episode, where both parties got the opportunity to express their perspective, is what Mead (1934) and Charon (2006) argue for: the need of understanding the other by taking the perspective of the other. Taking the perspective of the other will help people to understand the other and to reflect over attitudes to adjust towards them. This can explain the questioning and disagreements when not creating space for perspective taking to happen by e.g. switching the topic and interrupting. Hollander and Gordon (2006) address how power and authority construct success in interactions, which could explain the steering of the conversation when antagonism arise; in episodes B, “tactful blindness”, and “I don’t know”. They further sense that the utterances that are supported by those in power can be expected to succeed in interactions due to their location in hierarchy (p. 205-206), which has been the case in the mentioned episodes by the agenda setters. What I also want to discuss is the disagreement that occurred when using the borrowed English word “workshop”. By turning the word to a proper noun, instead of a common, the word seemed to be interpreted as ONE workshop. The number of workshops were not decided in the conversation, but was questioned when some wanted one big workshop and the agenda setters, T1 and T2, agreed to, most likely, have more than one. I find it therefor interesting of how important it can be to use proper noun when using borrowed English words.

## **5.1 Conclusion**

My conclusion is that the disagreements and doubts in communication is managed in a concessional way by using topic control, “yes, but...”, laughter, tactful blindness and to shift the management of the disagreement to another, unspecified, timepoint in the future. When fairminded and rational being is endeavored in some institutions and where “yes, but” exchanges are advantageous, it might explain the concessive argumentation. As explained before “yes, but” is a way to negotiate between standpoints, but *how* the



argument is constructed is essential to not escalate the disagreement, as to compare with: 1. Episode B (“...So the opposite”) where a concessive utterance is being challenged, and 2. “That’s why we are annoying” where both parties expressed why both are as concerned in the matter by taking the perspective of the other. The “yes, but” argumentative techniques *can* be a successful strategy to come to a compromise when having disagreements and doubts in communication as shown in the thesis where space are given for perspective taking (“Insertion sequence through yes, but...” and “That’s why we are annoying”). When disagreements are a key resource and give the potential to learn something that you do not know about, I find it vital to create constructive methods to deal with disagreements and doubts in communication at environments when talking is how decisions are being made. This is as Charon (2006) argues, all persons are biased, but through an open-mind one can question one’s perspective to see the most likely truth by another’s perspective.

## **5.2 Further research ideas**

It would first be interesting to see if these findings (the sequence of first “yes, but”, then laughter and final topic control), are a general act in this institution. Second, the social power would be interesting to focus on in further research regarding water management in Sweden. For example, in B, “so the opposite”-sequence, one could do a deeper analysis about who is framing the agenda at the meeting and is it the person who shifts the topic and agreed with T1 from the beginning? The last idea from me is the opportunity for universities and County Administration Board’s to use each other’s resources to further develop their institutions when more knowledge about how people are talking about NRM is needed when environmental questions are being more and more prioritized in society.

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