

# It's Being Close that Makes it Possible to Accept Criticism!

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A central question for a researcher with interactive ambitions is to what extent the research concerned can support development at the same time as distance and a critical attitude are maintained. In this article I will show how the interactive research approach has made it possible to create new knowledge together with the participants, in a situation in which closeness itself was largely the factor that enabled the participants to accept reflections and criticism, and to exercise self-criticism when reviewing their activities. The learning of the participants enabled them to move beyond common sense, and to jointly acquire and develop knowledge in the research process. This article will show how the interactive research process made the situation of young people an item on the municipal agenda, and how the knowledge gained came to be expressed both in discussion and in political decisions.

**Key words:** Closeness, criticism, trustful relationships, regional development

In my dissertation (Svensson 2006), I investigate the driving forces behind the choice that young people make, to either stay in their home town or to move. The empirical foundation for the dissertation is the experiences and opinions of young people in the municipality of Söderhamn in Sweden. This article will show how the interactive research process made the situation of young people an item on the municipal agenda, and how the knowledge gained came to expression both in discussions and in political decisions.