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Dialogues in Sustainable HRM: Examining and Positioning Intended and Continuous Dialogue in Sustainable HRM Using a Complexity Thinking Approach

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Abstract: In the emerging sustainable Human Resource Management (HRM) literature, advocating to 'rehumanize' and pluralize HRM, dialogue is put forward as a silver bullet to cope with paradoxical tensions and pluralist workforces. This conceptual paper aims to add to the sustainable HRM literature by examining the position and application of dialogue within sustainable HRM, using ideas and concepts from dialogue literature and complexity thinking. We applied core concepts of complexity thinking (i.e., self-organization, nonlinearity, attractors, and emergence) to deepen our understanding of the positioning of dialogue, the position of power, and the emergence of intended and unintended outcomes. Moreover, through the distinction between intentional and continuous dialogue, the intentional, dynamic, and emergent nature of dialogue was explored. Connecting, sensing, grasping, and influencing the local patterning of continuous dialogue is important for positioning dialogue within sustainable HRM, and intentional dialogical practices can support this. More specifically, based on our literature review, we present a conceptual model that furthers our understanding of (1) conceptualizations of dialogue as both intended and continuous; (2) the role of power in dialogue; (3) how stability and novelty emerge from dialogue. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of the developed perspectives on dialogue for future research as well as management practices.

Keywords: sustainable human resource management; dialogue; complexity thinking; emergence

1. Introduction

In the wake of the Brundtland Commission report [1], Elkinton's [2] 'Triple-P model' (People, Planet, and Profit), and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations [3], human resource management (HRM) has engaged in the search for more sustainable strategies and practices. Influenced by critical management studies [4], HR scholars and practitioners have increasingly focused on fostering sustainability both on the individual level, aiming for sustainable employment and sustainable careers [5], and on strategic levels, by developing sustainable HRM policies, practices, and processes [6]. This attention has led to the emergence of *sustainable HRM*, considered to be the next phase in the development of the field of strategic HRM [7]. Sustainable HRM explicitly addresses the need for attentive and respectful employment and organization of work, including employee workability, vitality, and employability, while simultaneously applying a long-term, open, and critical view of HRM's content, processes, and outcomes. More specifically, sustainable HRM advocates a way of organizing work to protect, sustain, and regenerate human and social resources, and thus maintaining the long-term social legitimacy of the organization's operations [6]. Sustainable HRM can be defined as "the pattern of planned

or emerging human resource strategies and practices intended to enable organisational goal achievement while simultaneously reproducing the HR base over a long-lasting calendar time and controlling for self-induced side and feedback effects of HR systems on the HR base and thus on the company itself" [8] (p. 1076). Moreover, sustainable HRM accentuates the paradoxical nature of HRM [9,10], stimulating HRM practitioners to actively deal with paradoxical tensions associated with multiple and often conflicting organizational, employee, and societal short- and long-term needs and demands; for instance, those associated with efficiency and sustaining employees' health, work and career motivation, work-life balance or professional skills [10–13]. Since HRM is rooted in ideology, that is, a "system of values and beliefs" [14] (p. 1119), HRM practitioners must handle its *normative* characteristics. Whereas mainstream HRM was rooted in unitarian ideologies in which an employer and a worker are implicitly *assumed* to share and work to mutual organizational goals [4], sustainable HRM is rooted in pluralistic ideologies of HRM and postulates that the needs and demands of the organization and its workers may not only be shared but may also diverge [12]. As it clearly parts from unitarist ideological perspectives, a pluralist view demands HRM embraces respect, openness, continuity, reciprocity, and mutuality as its core values. HRM practitioners, therefore, have to navigate new territory when developing HR practices and processes and move beyond optimizing short-term profitability as the sole objective [15–17]. This makes managing employment relationships increasingly complex [15,18,19].

As sustainable HRM must deal with pluralist workforces, employment relationships cannot be regarded as merely transactional phenomena in which effort and reward are exchanged, but also as complex, social phenomena. This forces HR practitioners to shift from teleologic, machine-like perspectives to more organic and transformation-based perspectives on HRM [20,21] in which individuals are embedded in complex networks of human relationships and engage in social acts of conversation [22,23]. For these reasons, mainstream HR theory—with its focus on causal and instrumentalist ways of working and thinking—may not be sufficient to comprehend or influence the meaning-making processes on the part of stakeholders in these networks with respect to, for instance, sustainable work [24]. Shared meaning should rather be understood from involvement with and within microsystems—i.e., the "small group of people who work together on a regular basis" [22] (p.68)—that do not necessarily correspond to formal organizational structures (i.e., organograms). Understanding and dealing with acts of social interaction and the subsequent power dynamics among people and groups requires conversational and dialogical practices [25].

In view of the above, the sustainable HRM literature has paid increasing attention to dialogue as a relevant HR practice [15,26–28]. An omission in this body of literature, however, is that it has not yet clarified the conceptual position of dialogue within sustainable HRM ('how to see it?') and its practical implications ('how to use it?'). Due to the lack of a clear positioning, dialogue can appear to be a uniform concept in the context of sustainable HRM. Consequently, dialogue is often regarded as a silver bullet that can be used to address all kinds of social sustainability issues, regardless of the organization's time-spatial context and the local meaning of what sustainability entails that emerges in daily human interactions at the shopfloor level. On the one hand, tensions resulting from underlying paradoxes *can* be exposed, understood, addressed, and bridged by the *intentional* practice of dialogue with partners, such as employees [26,29–31]. In this case, dialogue as "an ongoing dialogue between organization and employees (. . .) that leads to customized careers and sustainable value for both parties" [15] (p. 279) is regarded as conditional for achieving sustainability. On the other hand, in all social interactions, power constitutes an important dynamic element, which is generally regarded as problematic but largely ignored in the dialogue and sustainable HRM literature [32]. Yet, within their own microsystems, workers, viewed as communicative beings, are engaged in *continuous* dialogues with each other about what they experience [33], for instance regarding sustainability, resulting in the patterning of their interaction. Therefore, although HR practitioners

can view dialogue on social sustainability (e.g., lifestyle, career planning, and life-long learning) and its application and outcomes as *intended*, it should be realized that dialogue also has *emergent* and ordering properties and consequently, can have unpredictable and unintended outcomes (e.g., resistance, competition, burn-out complaints, workaholism, or work stress) for all parties [34–36].

The above illustrates our need to further our understanding of dialogue in the context of sustainable HRM and its practical usefulness when applied in complex networks of human interaction. We borrow from both dialogue theory and complexity thinking [36] as these literatures, in addition to the (sustainable) HRM literature, can provide views and concepts that enable us to focus on dialogue not only as an intended practice but also as a process of emergence and self-organization within complex systems in which power relations play an important role. The goal of the present paper is to integrate notions of dialogue theory and complexity thinking into the sustainable HRM literature. To this end, we shall answer the following research questions: (1) How can dialogue be viewed in the context of sustainable HRM? (2) What is the role of power in dialogue? (3) How do potential outcomes of dialogue emerge?

The contributions of this conceptual paper are as follows. First, the integration of dialogue literature and complexity thinking with the sustainable HRM literature may yield new insights into the practice of dialogue in sustainable HRM through discerning *both* intentional *and* continuous dialogue. Second, by considering dialogue from a complexity thinking perspective, we can focus on the dynamic nature and role of power [32,36,37]. Third, complexity thinking also allows us to study emergent outcomes of dialogue. Fourth, by developing a conceptual model, this study contributes to the conceptual positioning of dialogue within sustainable HRM theory by linking the perspectives on dialogue and the concepts of complexity thinking to the concepts and values of sustainable HRM, including the notion of taming paradoxical tensions. Finally, the current study contributes to strengthening the role of the HR practitioner by formulating principles for management practices associated with sustainability.

This paper is structured as follows: first, we shall elaborate on sustainable HRM, its paradoxical and ideological nature, and its call for dialogue. Then, using dialogue theory, we shall clarify the concept of dialogue and elaborate on the distinction between intentional and continuous dialogue. In addition, we will address complexity thinking as its core concepts, philosophical starting points, and methodology help us shift our view to patterns in human interaction—known as 'attractors' ('sustainability' in this study)—that provide insight into the dynamics of human interaction, the role of power herein, and emergent outcomes. Finally, we shall address the research problem and discuss implications for theory and practice that give direction to the development of sustainable HRM using complexity thinking.

2. Sustainable HRM

2.1. HRM and Sustainability

Organizations can no longer ignore societal pressures demanding sustainability to be incorporated in strategies and practices [15,26]. Although often perceived as a "fashionable buzzword" [13] (p. 63), organizations must take into account that they cannot exhaust and exploit ecological, social, or human resources to achieve their organizational goals. Furthermore, HRM has "an important role to play in sustainability" [38] (p. 134). In response to this, the field of strategic HRM is gradually moving away from a perspective solely aimed at improving human performance, efficiency, and productivity—as prescribed by (neo-)classical perspectives on HRM [12]—towards sustainable HMR, stressing not only alertness with respect to the ecological effects of work and people management (Green HRM, [39]), but also to social sustainability, in terms of the attentive deployment, well-being, and regeneration of human and social resources and the reduction of negative side effects of the organization of work [4,11,40,41].

2.2. The Paradoxical Nature of Sustainable HRM

As organizations are submerged in pluralist contexts with paradoxical needs and demands, HRM is becoming a paradoxical field too, as a matter of course. In their external environments, organizations are confronted with contradictory demands from many stakeholders (e.g., customers, unions, capital providers, governments, public opinion). Therefore, strategies and practices have to be developed with regard to social, ecological, and financial bottom lines [11,12]. However, organizations themselves are also increasingly perceived as complex and pluralistic phenomena with many and often conflicting interval voices, resulting in paradoxical tensions [42,43]. For instance, achieving cost efficiency as well as the substance of the workforce, ensuring short-term and long-term effects of HR investments, and responding to local and global demands would seem to be polarized trade-offs [11,12], but are in fact paradoxical tensions that HRM needs to tame.

As sustainable HRM needs to integrate the needs and demands of multiple internal and external stakeholders on an ongoing basis, practitioners and managers increasingly have to embrace a 'both/and' way of thinking [12,44]. The practice of dialogue—addressing opposing and overlapping objectives, assumptions, beliefs, and values held among stakeholders—may contribute to the development of mutual understanding and to bridging the apparent 'messiness' of paradoxes within sustainable HRM practices, thus making it a worthwhile avenue of progress [24,29,30,45–47].

2.3. The Ideological Nature of Sustainable HRM

Due to its implicitly normative character, HRM can be regarded as an ideology [16,17], that is, "a relatively coherent set of assumptions, beliefs and values about a demarcated part of social reality, being illuminated in a selective and legitimizing way, restricting autonomous and critical reflection" [48] (p. 209). Dominant within mainstream HRM is the ideology of utilitarian instrumentalism [41], characterized by a *unitarist* focus on performance-related organizational objectives and outcomes. In this view, human employment is merely regarded as a 'resource' needed to fulfil solely these objectives, and HRM is tasked with aligning, converging, or even subduing individual abilities and motivations with these objectives, making the personal needs and interests of people relevant, but not essential [18].

The emerging field of sustainable HRM challenges this normative foundation of mainstream HRM, especially by calling out its one-sided focus on organizational needs and its failure to acknowledge negative effects, for instance on human well-being [49,50]. Rooted in *pluralism*, sustainable HRM sees employment relations "comprising different groups with both common and divergent aims and objectives" [51] (p. 2227). This alternative view calls for integrating wellbeing, values, beliefs, and the needs of *all* stakeholders, including employees, families, society, shareholders, et cetera. Therefore, sustainable HRM can be regarded as a normative 'rehumanization' of HRM that promotes ethical values such as respect, well-being, openness, collectivism, and the common good as HRM's core values [52,53].

The two ideological perspectives on HRM mentioned above—mainstream and sustainable HRM—are inherently different. Organizations, employees, HR practitioners, and other stakeholders are not always aware of the ideological nature and subsequent implicit assumptions that influence their view of their own role. Bridging these implicit and profound differences is a complicated matter as it requires an understanding of the basic assumptions and paradigms that people hold and follow with respect to what is considered 'normal'. Since basic assumptions are often not articulated, but deeply rooted, contradictory viewpoints based on these assumptions are difficult to understand and bridge. However, the tensions that may result from these differences do not necessarily need to be eliminated [19], but stakeholders could invest in searching for mutual gains [54]. In dealing with these challenges, taking a dialogue perspective may provide interesting insights as it implies postponing judgments and recognizing one's own presuppositions [55].

3. Dialogue Literature

3.1. Defining Dialogue

In organizational science, attention for dialogue has increased significantly in recent years [32,56–58], resulting in what is referred to as the 'dialogical turn' [59] and the conceptualization of the 'dialogic organization' [60]. The etymological roots of dialogue can be traced back to ancient Greek. *Dia* is a preposition meaning 'between' or 'passing through'. *Logos* means 'speech', 'thought', or 'meaning of the word'. Over time, the term 'dialogue' has come to denote a "stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us" [55] (p.7). Defining dialogue, however, remains intricate as "tidy or definitive ways to summarize the sprawling dialogue research" [61] (p. 259) are absent. Deetz and Simpson [62], for instance, discern three conceptual positions ('camps') within dialogue literature.

First, the liberal humanistic 'camp' conveys a normative idealistic outlook on dialogue and emphasizes the importance of finding common ground through positive communication. Second, the critical hermeneutic 'camp' regards interaction as the locus where meaning emerges, as opposed to an individual perspective where meaning-making involves intra-psychological processes. Third, the postmodernist 'camp' stresses the importance of opening "new opportunities for people to be mutually involved in shaping new understandings" [62] (p. 142).

Dafermos [63] discerns four groups of meanings of dialogue. First, dialogue can be regarded as a classic literary genre (e.g., Plato's dialogues such as 'The Republic'). Second, it can be defined as a live, oral conversation between two or more people. Third, it can be defined as an indication of the usage of *all* language used (both written and oral), where dialogue is regarded as the 'universal condition' to use language at all [64]. Fourth, following the notions of Bakhtin [65] and Buber [66], dialogue can be viewed as a characteristic of human consciousness and, by extension, the human condition. Dialogue is seen as an act of constituting self-consciousness through interactional relationships with others that includes, but is not limited to, the use of language. In addition, the self is considered to be reflexive, consisting of internal processes—within the person—and external processes— between the person and others [67].

To define dialogue, additional distinctions may be helpful (see Table 1). First, it is important to distinguish dialogue from other conversational practices, such as debate and dialectics. Although often used synonymously, these conversational practices have different ends. Debate has a connotation of polarization and opposition. The objective is to win an argument through rhetorical practices and to gain superiority through the subversion of opponents. Conversely, dialectics, also rooted in ancient Greek academia and with likewise manifold meanings, strives for insight and truth. Dialectics can lead to 'either/or' positions, but also to the synthesis of these oppositions through reasoning and the validation of arguments [68].

Table 1. Distinctions in dialogue literature.

Distinction	Description
Conversational practice	Dialogue can be discerned clearly from other conversational practices like debate and dialectics.
Praxis–poiesis	Dialogue can be regarded as praxis (intuitive, practical wisdom), or as poiesis (procedural, technical).
Generic–local	Dialogue can be seen on a generic, institutional level or dialogue on a local level within microsystems.
Dialogue$_1$–Dialogue$_2$	Dialogue is a teachable, structured procedure, or dialogue is an elusive, communing process.
Noun–verb	Dialogue can be seen as a noun (normative, episodic) or as a verb (processual, non-episodic).

Second, following the important distinction made by Artistotle between *poiesis* (making) and *praxis* (doing), dialogue can be seen as either purposeful—rational, instrumental action needed to bring something into existence to attain a conscious goal (*poiesis*)—or as action directed toward the attainment of a morally worthwhile end (*praxis*) [33]. Dialogue as *poiesis* is based on technical and procedural knowledge (Greek: *techne*, technology, craft, skill). Dialogue as *praxis* is intuitive as it applies, but also generates, practical wisdom or practical judgment (Greek: *phronesis*). Practical wisdom is social and embedded in local contexts. Therefore, it can only be understood when one takes a reflexive attitude towards one's own experiences and presuppositions [37].

Third, dialogue can also be understood on different conceptual levels: generic and local. Examples of dialogue that are conceptualized on a generic, institutionalized level are Employment Relations (ER) or societal movements. Organizations, unions, or other interest groups—work councils or groups within society at large—can engage in social dialogues about generalized topics such as bargaining for collective agreements, laws and regulations, visions of labour markets, employee and stakeholder voice in decision making, and general societal themes such as inclusion, gender equality, and ecological preservation [47,69]. These dialogues often convey generalized, second-order abstractions of actual human experiences. Therefore, they do not *directly* interfere with actual conversational experiences between people at the local level [70]. Conversely, dialogue that is considered on the local level—the workplace dialogue [71]—relates to conversations between people about what they actually experience. In this case, for instance, the focus can be on team members who engage in dialogue on work stress, how they give each other space in the conversation (or not), how they take turns and postpone presuppositions (or not), and how they search for shared meaning (or not). In contrast to generic dialogue, as people engage in dialogue through repeated, non-prescriptive interactions, local dialogue is continuous and involves a responsive chain of gestures and responses between people [31].

Fourth, dialogue can be regarded as a procedure or as a process. Hyde and Bineman [72] call these perspectives dialogue$_1$ and dialogue$_2$, respectively. Dialogue$_1$ is teachable, content-privileged, and procedure-driven (e.g., structured turn-taking, the role of the facilitator). It is aimed to support non-polarized dialogue among interlocutors. It can be clearly linked to the *poiesis* (making) perspective on dialogue and focuses on the instrumental practice of dialogue to fuse perspectives into one inclusive view. Dialogue$_2$ is more elusive, process-driven, and communing, and it yields unpredictable outcomes. This process-orientated meaning of dialogue is advocated by Francis et al. (2013), who regard dialogue as a "never-ending, responsive and relational chain of utterances between interlocutors that can lead to greater sense of how they connect with one another and a greater sensibility to the constraints and possibilities of the wider socio-political context in which they operate" [31] (p. 2718). Both views, however, consider dialogue to be a process that facilitates the emergence of shared meaning. Moreover, procedural dialogue (dialogue$_1$) can change the nature of the relationships between interlocutors, which can in turn have transformative effects on how communicative human beings relate on a deeper level (dialogue$_2$).

Fifth, Reitz [58] distinguishes between dialogue used as a noun and as a verb. Dialogue as a noun refers, for instance, to teams engaging in dialogue on how to organize work sustainably. In this example, the team is not having an ordinary talk but engages in a dialogue that can be delineated from other types of conversations. It is normative and indicates a special, episodic occasion; it is a prescriptive conception of dialogue [33]. Dialogue as a verb recognizes the relationality that people share when they encounter each other in an intersubjective connection and carries the connotation of the importance of 'space between' people instead of focusing on their individual perspectives and needs alone. Therefore, the 'verb perspective' is processual and non-episodic; it is a descriptive conception of dialogue as it describes processes of interaction that are fundamental to the human condition [33]. Table 1 summarizes these five distinctions that help to conceptualize dialogue.

3.2. Two Dominant Views: Intentional and Continuous Dialogue

Based on the communalities in our overview of the different perspectives on dialogue (cf. [32,33,58]) and the distinctions presented in Table 1, two dominant perspectives on local dialogue can be discerned, each with different characteristics (see Table 2). In the present study, we argue that these are compatible rather than distinct perspectives. The different perspectives and how these can be linked are discussed below.

Table 2. Intentional and Continuous Perspectives on Dialogue.

Intentional Perspective on Dialogue	Continuous Perspective on Dialogue
Dialogue as a 'noun'	Dialogue as a 'verb'
Dialogue as an explicit, episodic activity	Dialogue as an implicit, continuous process
Dialogue as *poiesis* (making)	Dialogue as *praxis* (doing)
Dialogue is content-driven, monovocal (predefined topics)	Dialogue is process-driven, plurivocal (undefined outcomes)
Dialogue is procedure-focused and learnable (Dialogue$_1$)	Dialogue is process-focused and elusive (Dialogue$_2$)
Intentional (someone defines the intention of the dialogical endeavour)	Emergent (dialogue has emergent outcomes that can result in intentions)
Liberal humanistic conceptual positioning: one should do dialogue	Critical hermeneutic/postmodern positioning: dialogue happens
Prescriptive perspective on dialogue	Descriptive perspective on dialogue

First, reflecting the 'noun' perspective, dialogue can be regarded as an *intentional*, conscious, and deliberate activity in which prescribed, rational, content-driven, and problem-focused goals are explored through procedures of dialogue, often guided by facilitators. The interaction of interlocutors converges around a given problem. For instance, a team may engage in a dialogue regarding the democratization of their work to enhance their voice in decision making with their manager. Second, imaging the 'verb' and critical humanistic/postmodern perspectives, dialogue is viewed as *continuous* processes of human conversation in which, both consciously and unconsciously, order and shared meanings emerge over time. Dialogue as a process is non-prescriptive, non-episodic, and focuses on how people actually conversationally interact on an ongoing basis as they exchange gestures and responses in turns of communicative interplay [73].

Sustainable HRM must take these two views into account when considering dialogue. On the one hand, dialogue is intentional, reflecting the call for dialogue often found in sustainable HRM literature [26,28,53] and embedded in the liberal humanistic camp [62]. In this view, the dialogue practice is intentionally applied by HRM to attain goals regarding sustainability. Examples could include, for instance, intentional dialogue of HR and teams on fostering sustainable working conditions, or dialogue on the organization of work that promotes employee voice, dialogue on performance criteria, and dialogue between employee and his or her manager on sustainable career development. On the other hand, sustainable HRM has to take into consideration that dialogue is also a description of complex communicative processes involving people in microsystems in which they relate to each other and make meaning while discussing themes including sustainable HRM. This can lead to convergence, but it also has emerging properties that form a breeding ground for novelty [32]. Intentional dialogue can be supportive of this but does not necessarily always influence the complex continuous dialogues between people. It is interesting to understand why, for instance, an intentional dialogue on sustainable work in a group can lead to concrete views on what sustainable work entails for them or to nothing at all. It is also interesting to understand how novel meanings can emerge within processes of continuous dialogue. Additional language could be helpful to deepen our understanding of the notion of power and the unlooked-for outcomes, but also of stabilizing patterning that

influences and emerges in continuous dialogue. Understanding how this comes about and what this implies for sustainable HRM requires the additional language that complexity thinking can provide [36,74–76].

4. Dialogue and Complexity Thinking

Originating in the natural, mathematical, and computational sciences, complexity thinking refers to a cluster of concepts spanning multiple branches of science [36]. It studies self-organizing patterns in natural life—the emergence of patterns not only in the behaviour of ants [77] or the weather [78] but also in human behaviour, as studied in the social and organizational sciences [34,37,79]. However, complexity thinking is not often applied within HRM [80] and sustainable HRM literature [22,81], nor is it implicitly addressed [53].

A notable theory within complexity thinking with explanatory potential for dialogue in the context of sustainable HRM is Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS) theory. A complex adaptive system consists of a population of heterogeneous agents. In apparently unordered communicative interaction processes, something that is characteristic of processes of continuous dialogue, a set of locally constructed rules emerge that simultaneously govern the activities of these agents, thus creating order, but with some degree of agency. The agents' subsequent actions give rise to system-level emergent properties [25,34,37,70,79].

4.1. Understanding Intentional and Continuous Dialogue Using Complex Adaptive Systems

Figure 1 sketches how intentional and continuous dialogue may interrelate. In processes of continuous dialogue within a microsystem (e.g., the HRM department), fuelled by information from, for instance, sustainable HRM discourse, the need emerges to apply intentional dialogue that can support sustainable HRM and prompt sustainable management and employee behaviours (cf. [15]). The resulting narrative is *conveyed*, in processes of intentional dialogue (Figure 1), to other microsystems (e.g., a work team). However, in these processes, expectedly as well as unexpectedly, novel, innovative, and transformative themes and behaviour can arise. Whilst this generative potential of dialogue is recognized, it is unclear how not only order but also new ideas and themes arise in dialogue [31]. Moreover, in dialogue also stabilizing and ordering effects emerge as topics, turn-taking, et cetera, recur. Since people tend to converse in comparable ways over time, it also means that the process, content, and dynamics of dialogue can converge and solidify, even to the point that this may lead to what is termed the "orthodoxy of voice" [32] (p. 104). To understand these processes further, language from CAS (i.e., self-organization, emergence, nonlinearity, and attractors) allows us to understand how meaning, power, stability, and novelty emerge within continuous dialogue and affect intentional dialogues and also what happens within microsystems when they are confronted with sustainable HRM initiatives (Figure 2).
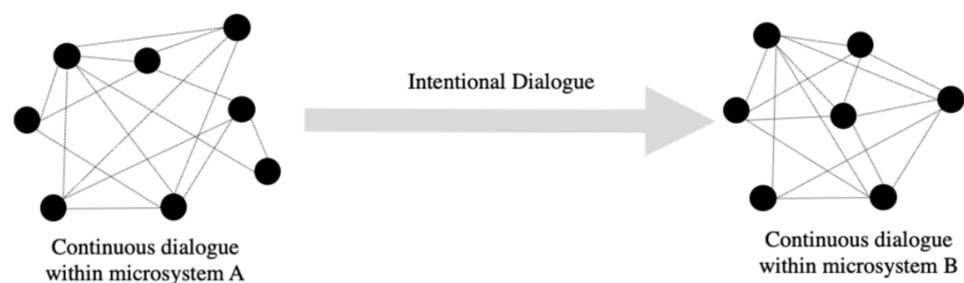

Figure 1. Intentional and Continuous Dialogues in the Context of Sustainable HRM.
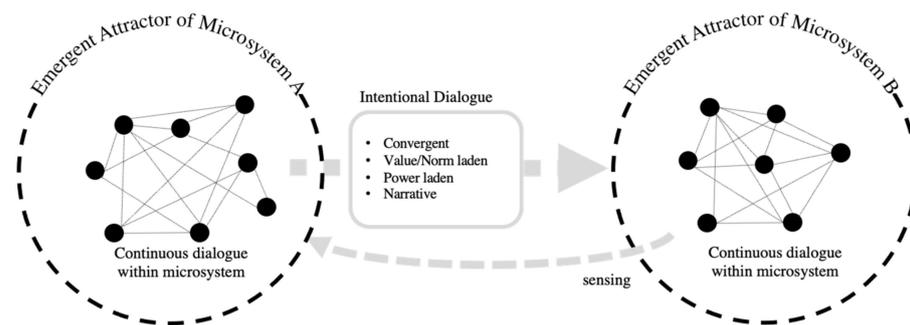
Figure 2. Intentional and Continuous Dialogues on Sustainable HRM from CAS perspective.

4.1.1. Self-Organization, Emergence, and Nonlinearity

Continuous dialogue is self-organizing, but this form of self-organization must be distinguished from contemporary trends such as self-direction or self-management as used to indicate processes and practices of conscious work redesign and authority assignment to self-directed or self-governing teams [82–86]. Self-organization starts with the assumption that people, as sentient beings, have a natural aptitude to perceive and recognize patterns, regularities, and irregularities in their daily experiences. People make sense of and give meaning to these patterns by inferring underlying dynamics and consistencies through processes of self-conscious reflection and dialogue [35]. These patterns (i.e., recurring topics and themes, patterns in turn-taking, informal roles, routines, power dynamics, et cetera) *emerge* over time, have meaning to those involved, and sustain implicit order and organization, through which meaning-making, stability, and novelty become path-dependent [81]. Self-organization occurs because people share, interpret, and value information together [74], making information the "solar energy of organization" [87] (p. 105). However, this process is *nonlinear* as inputs (e.g., team members reading a memo about the importance of sustainable work behaviour, dialogue on healthy working conditions, or new policies and processes aimed at increasing employee participation in decision making) do not necessarily lead to proportional or predictable outcomes (e.g., sustainable work behaviour) as it can be exponential, different, or totally absent due to the interpretation given to the information at the local level [22,74] in processes of continuous dialogue.

From the continuous perspective on dialogue, self-organization means that a system is in an "ongoing dialogue with itself in order to define itself, describe itself, mark common sites of order and coherence, mark common sites of disorder and incoherence and redefine itself" [25] (p. 8) through the exchange of 'conversational symbols' such as text (e.g., a memo with policies and procedures regarding sustainable work), language (e.g., the discourse of HR practitioners in a sustainable work dialogue), signs, et cetera [22]. From the intentional perspective on dialogue, HRM might want to influence the behaviour of employees to enhance, for instance, employee autonomy over their sustainable careers. However, these intentions, conveyed in intentional dialogue, may be interpreted differently within separate microsystems.

4.1.2. Attractors

These processes of continuous dialogue at the local level, as processes of sharing and interpreting information, appear to become synchronized and stable [74] as human behaviour tends to be, over time, attracted to "socially defined isomorphic preferences for acting and organizing" [34] (p. 9). This emergent boundedness of behaviour [75] is called an attractor. Attractors do not represent actual interactional behaviours of agents but are seen as "a set *range* of accepted values for various organizational practices, processes, behaviors, strategies" [74] (p. 114). Conceptually, 'within' an attractor there are limitless ways to discuss a certain topic or how behavioural patterns are repeated. However, these are always bounded within parameters, creating a *basin of attraction* [75]. Through nonlinear processes of self-organization, an attractor is self-similar, but never exactly repetitive. Interaction

processes that have been proven to be successful in the past are repeated but also provide room for small deviances, and even novelty [37,74]. Therefore, an attractor should not be viewed as a stable entity but rather as a process "by which a system self-organizes into coherence and adapts to maintain, sustain or recreate such order when subject to change either from internal functioning or external influence" [35] (p. 381). In view of this, an attractor can be understood as a continuous tension around which continuous dialogues revolve that self-organize and can only partly be influenced [74]. As attractors tend to reinforce themselves through feedback loops, intentions conveyed in intentional dialogue beyond the prevailing attractor are not noticed, deemed to be not normal, are not understood, or considered not fitting or deviant [22].

An example of an attractor within mainstream, strategic HRM is the quest for the optimization of efficiency and effectiveness. Much research and discourse in HRM converge around the idea of improving and adapting human behaviour to optimize efficiency and effectiveness and to maximize the economic value of human employment. Within this attractor, in continuous dialogues within a myriad of microsystems, there is an almost infinite range of possible ways to achieve the desired effectiveness and efficiency [88]. With the emergence of sustainable HRM, this 'classic' attractor appears to become gradually infused with demands for sustainability (as new information), thus altering the basis of attraction—or as some sustainable HRM scholars put it, through intentional dialogue—to transform this attractor into a pluralistic ideology [19].

4.1.3. Power Distribution

The word 'power' derives from the Latin word 'potere' ('to be able'), highlighting an ability to act. Often, an *individualistic*, agent-based notion of power is used [89] in which a person is able to achieve something relative to someone else through reward-orientated, coercive, referent, expert, or legitimate power bases [90]. For instance, managers have the formal authority to terminate contracts, or HR practitioners can compel sustainable work routines. This explicit perspective on power implies that there are powerful and powerless entities and that the powerless are vulnerable to the malicious use of power by the powerful, thus reducing the voice of the powerless. Within the sustainable HRM literature, this perspective on power and control prevails, and calls are made to address this disparity and give voice to the needs of the powerless [41].

Hammond and colleagues [32] pointed to misconceptions regarding this notion of power. Dialogue does not necessarily help marginalized groups become more powerful as prior power bases are needed to even get heard. Moreover, although dialogue can help unearth conflicts, it does not necessarily resolve them, as problems become more complicated as people learn to stand their ground more explicitly. Also, intentional dialogue does not ensure fairness for participants as it can be taken over by predominant groups or by experienced and assertive individuals with sturdy and experienced power bases.

Complexity thinking provides a more dynamic, implicit, symbolic, and social perspective on power that does not refer to the allocation of authority, but regards it as "a fundamental fact about life, not simply an ideological positioning" [37] (p. 28). Power emerges in continuous dialogue within microsystems as people hold each other in check through mutual adaptation. People cannot do just what they want to do, but need others that are, in turn, dependent on them. However, those need-based interdependencies are seldom balanced, as people implicitly and repeatedly ascribe power to people who have higher access to the valuable resources that they need, such as time, money, knowledge, networks, and authority [89,91]. Therefore, people's behaviour is *enabled* and *constrained* [73] through a history of continuous dialogue, constituting the distribution of power.

Moreover, power distribution stimulates a sense of 'self' and of 'we', thus contributing to the constitution of team identity and creating membership categories that signify ideologies of inclusion and exclusion. The dynamics of inclusion and exclusion distinguish people who adhere to, for instance, sustainable HR practices from those who do not [70]. Power distributions can also shift, which changes "the rules of the game" in these pro-

cesses [58] (p. 56). Furthermore, language, constituted in forms of discourse, is power-laden and expresses what is regarded as normal. In practice, however, the underlying power distribution mechanisms are often taken for granted or ignored [92]. When, for instance, an HR practitioner engages in intentional dialogue about a healthier work-life balance, power distributions between members in that microsystem must be taken into account when commencing this dialogue, as members always keep each other in check to maintain the existing distribution of power.

4.1.4. Values and Norms

In continuous dialogues, based on past experiences and power distributions, generalized and idealized narratives emerge that constitute attractors: values and norms. Values are narratives that describe what is good to desire. Conversely, norms are narratives that people share and that constrain and define what ought to be done [37]. These values and norms create a sense of normality and order within a microsystem, but they also provide a narrative that can be shared between microsystems. Due to information and power differences between people (e.g., the HRM department proposes sustainable HRM initiatives), these narratives can disperse across microsystems through normative statements, articulated values, and narratives about how work *desirably or ought to be* organized; this subsequently influences the assumptions, beliefs, and ensuing activities and routines of managers, workers, and practitioners. Intentional dialogues are, therefore, always value- and norm-laden and are valued against a 'backdrop' that emerges in processes of continuous dialogue. When confronted with intentional dialogues about, for instance, diversity, people will try to influence others given the prevailing values and norms (i.e., attractors) and power distributions, indicating that politics, resistance, equivocality, and misunderstandings are important factors in the adoption of sustainable HRM practices [93]. Box 1 illustrates and integrates these concepts.

Box 1. Conceptual integration illustrating the interaction between intended and emergent sustainability dialogues using complexity thinking.

Within the microsystem of an HRM department (i.e., a microsystem), in daily conversation (i.e., 'continuous dialogue A'), a lot of recurring attention has been paid to themes such as sustainable careers and work-life balance (i.e., 'emergence'). It is not clear to the HRM practitioners in the team, however, who had started this conversation (i.e., 'self-organization'; 'non-linearity'). Yet, it is clear that their conversations over time converge around these particular themes (i.e., 'attractors') which have become part of their daily conversations (i.e., 'continuous dialogue'; 'patterning'). Although the HRM practitioners view and value these themes differently, there is a certain degree of implicit agreement that these themes ought to be given more attention within the organization (i.e., 'the norm'), partly because the dialogue is determined by a number of senior HR practitioners (not the HR manager) who have regarded these themes to be important for a longer time (i.e., 'informal power'). In the process of continuous dialogue, the need arises to develop appropriate HR practices that can propagate these themes in the organization and convince employees of their importance for their own sustainability (i.e., 'values'). Because the HR practitioners cannot impose these values on the employees, they engage in a dialogue with the employees (i.e., 'intentional dialogue').
At the same time, the employees are immersed in their own teams (i.e., 'microsystems') that each have their own discourse and dynamic (i.e., 'continuous dialogue B, C, D, et cetera'). In one of the teams (i.e., microsystem), regular discussions take place between employees about the limited career opportunities they have. Consequently, new employees are also immediately told this when they join this microsystem (i.e., 'self-organization'; 'norm') and the topic becomes an important topic to talk about within the team (i.e., 'attractor'). When HRM proposes to dialogically investigate possibilities for sustainable careers and work-life balance with the employees in the team (i.e., 'intentional dialogue'), most members decide to decline, or ignore the invitation out of protest, since they do not expect anything good to come from HRM. Although some new members secretly are interested, but they keep quiet as they do not want to stand out and anticipate disapproval from other team members (i.e., 'informal power'), the majority of the employees dismiss the invitation, labelling it as irrelevant and unbelievable, strengthening their mistrust in the career opportunities of the organization (e.g., 'non-linearity').

5. Discussion and Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

Dialogue is brought forward in the sustainable HRM literature as an important HR practice that can both foster respectful and sustainable employment and safeguard organizational and career continuity. The goal of this paper was to explore and understand the role of dialogue in sustainable HRM with the help of insights from complexity thinking. In this article, we sought to answer three central questions. Below, the answers provided in this contribution are summarized and reflected upon.

5.1.1. Dialogue in the Context of Sustainable HRM

Dialogue literature has provided quite a differentiated picture on what dialogue means, even revealing contrasting 'camps' [62]. This implies that sustainable HRM needs to clearly define and research the concept of dialogue in the context of sustainable organizations, work, and careers. In the study of dialogue in sustainable HRM and by means of complexity thinking, a focus is placed on complex social processes of conversational interaction *between* people in their microsystems [94]. Therefore, this paper distinguished between an intentional and continuous perspective on dialogue. From an intentional perspective on dialogue, in an episodic, procedural, and content-driven conversational activity, interlocutors collaborate in achieving a proposed outcome (for instance, the well-being of employees or the enhancement of employee voice). This clearly deviates from the continuous perspective that views dialogue as a characteristic of human consciousness and, by extension, the human condition [63,67]. Dialogue is described as the continuous, implicit processes of daily conversations in which, over time, novelty and order emerge. Intentional dialogue applied to support, for instance, workplace democracy [52] is always related to and embedded in the continuous dialogical processes within microsystems [72].

5.1.2. The Role of Power Distributions in Dialogue

Although intentional dialogues, especially from a liberal humanistic perspective [62], are often considered to consciously mitigate power distributions [32], complexity thinking states that power is always present as a relational phenomenon in which people have a tendency in their conversational interaction, over time, to enable and constrain themselves and create patterns of relationships that include some and exclude others and that bring some sort of implicit order to human behaviour. Power distributions and their corresponding dynamics are fundamental features of human interaction that cannot be ignored [37]. Therefore, power distributions between participants (e.g., employees, managers, HR practitioners, facilitators, et cetera) will always emerge, whether in intentional or in processes of continuous dialogue.

As sustainable HRM is aimed to 'rebalance' power in HRM [41], which mostly implies rebalancing agent-based, formal, legitimate, and coercive power bases [90] between employers and workers, applying dialogue does not remove power as dialogue is also power-laden. Even when formal power distribution is tilted more towards employees, a *dynamic* power distribution emerging in continuous dialogue needs to be considered as it is present in every local interaction, even after an intentional dialogue activity, for instance, a Future Search conference [95], has ended. Consciously removing formal power from the distribution does not remove power itself. Moreover, introducing a plurality of voices in dialogue increases the potential for power struggles to develop as more voice does not necessarily lead to coalescence; it can also lead to novelty. Therefore, a professional sensibility towards power is important, especially for HR practitioners as they should always consider who has power over *whom* and the power to do *what* [89].

5.1.3. Emerging Outcomes of Dialogue

Self-organization within microsystems can have stabilizing as well as unexpected outcomes. When people converse regularly, patterns emerge over time that provide some stabilizing order in human interaction; meaning-making and people's behaviour tend to

be attracted to socially defined isomorphic order—attractors [34]—that constitute values and norms and that provide a sense of normalcy to them, something of which people are oftentimes not aware. People could regard sustainability and performing their work more sustainably as an attractor that guides dialogue in a direction of more attentive and balanced employment relations. The problem is that it is hard to 'steer' as they are the result of recurring discussions.

The process of sharing, interpreting, and valuing information together [74] is nonlinear as certain inputs (e.g., an intentional dialogue on work-life balance) do not necessarily lead to proportional or predictable outcomes (e.g., healthy work-life balance) as these can be exponential, different, or totally absent due to continuous dialogue [22,74]. In this process, information is made to fit (i.e., particularized) and made to work (i.e., functionalized) against the 'backdrop' within a microsystem, giving way to novel ways of meaning and thus potentially transforming intended meaning [93].

5.2. Implications for Future Research

Researching dialogue through the lens of complexity thinking requires a qualitative and interpretative research paradigm that neither starts from theories nor seeks absolute generalizations or tests hypotheses [96]. This poses interesting challenges for the methodological design and execution of research. First, there is the challenge of understanding patterns in the conversations in microsystems, for instance when ideas about Sustainable HRM are discussed. This holds particularly true since ideology is mirrored in the language that people use while discussing their ideas and practices. To enhance our understanding of how people make sense of and co-construct narratives about sustainable HRM, attention is drawn to the way in which they converse together and which themes (values, norms, language, et cetera) emerge from these conversations. This requires a narrative-based, explorative, and emergent research approach, with an emphasis on discourse analysis [97]).

Second, complexity thinking implies that researchers' own involvement in the study of dialogue and the phenomena they encounter must also be considered. The reflexive stance described to deal with the tension of involvement vis-à-vis detachment requires not only awareness on the part of HR practitioners, but certainly also on the part of researchers when studying microsystems and organizations. Consequently, applying complexity thinking implies a detached stance from research 'objects'. The assumption that the researchers' presence has no impact on what is being observed is a near-impossible one as the researcher is always involved in the experience. Hence, researchers always have to take implicit personal assumptions into account [98].

5.3. Implications for Practice

In itself, intentional dialogue is a practice for HR practitioners to explore with respect to tensions in sustainable HRM, but it can also be supportive for HR practitioners to develop sustainable HRM practices themselves, for instance, related to recruitment, development, and compensation and benefits in a participative manner: from *designing for* to *developing with*. Intended HR practices will always be evaluated in the light of continuous dialogue in microsystems (attractors). Although the importance of dialogical approaches is acknowledged in sustainable HRM [26,29,53], their practical application always requires further reflection and definition. Therefore, developing dialogical practices that foster the sustainable employment of people requires—besides dexterity in applying the procedural aspects of intentional dialogue such as guidance of turn-taking, summarizing, listening, asking, observing, self-positioning, but also doing nothing [95]—the ability to develop secure places where fruitful dialogue concerning sustainable work can take place and also the ability to deal with the radical inequality of participants in a dialogue as people are individuals and bring themselves to the table [36].

Understanding and influencing continuous dialogue in microsystems involves *phronesis*, practical judgment: "the experience-based ability to notice more of what is going on and intuit what is most important about a situation" [37] (p. 108). It also involves accepting

that dialogue is always 'muddling through' [99] as the emergent nature of continuous dialogues excludes purely instrumental approaches that do not take local interaction into consideration. In addition, dialogue requires sensitivity (see Figure 2) from HR practitioners, employers, and managers: "a certain way of knowing how to come in and how not to come in, of watching all the subtle cues and the senses and your response to them—what's happening inside of you, what's happening in the group" [55] (p. 45).

5.3.1. Pattern Sensitivity

Complexity thinking focuses on the conversational patterns that emerge over time and that indicate the attractors 'governing' a microsystem. Developing sensitivity to this is important for HR practitioners and managers. As Stacey [37] (p. 107) noted: "Through experience [people] are able to recognize patterns, distinguishing between similarities with other situations and unique differences. The patterns they recognize are the emerging patterns of interaction that they and other people are creating". Pattern sensibility requires sensing *recurrence* in both content and process. With regard to content, it is relevant to see which substantive themes recur when people talk about the nature of their work and employment relationships. If people regularly discuss work stress, their boss, or their work reality, it can be indicative of patterns of continuous dialogue. Recurrence in process implies sensing, understanding, and naming what happens when people converse. It concerns observations about who is first to speak, who sits where, who never actively participates, et cetera. Hence, it concerns an understanding of the continuous dialogue attractors and the power distribution within a microsystem.

Pattern sensitivity also requires sensitivity to and awareness of what happens at the margins of the focus of attention, not only of what is in plain sight [37]. When the objective is to make work more sustainable and intentional dialogue is focused on this objective, it is interesting to sense what is happening in the periphery (what is not said) because precisely at these edges the continuous dialogue within a microsystem can become visible.

5.3.2. Narrative and Linguistic Sensitivity

In the narratives that people tell each other (and themselves), they interactively position themselves in relation to others and in relation to prevailing discourses, values, norms, and ideologies. Following McKenna [100] (p. 8), "when a person writes (or speaks) it is not only the content of the written words that are important, but how those words position the narrator, others in the story, and the event(s) themselves in a wider structural and discursive context". HR practitioners should consider not only the content of a narrative but also the dialogical and interactional context where interlocutors have positioned themselves in relation to broader discourses and each other [101], possibly uncovering power distributions.

According to Blomme [34], an important implication for practitioners is understanding the symbolism of the language used within microsystems and organizations when sustainability is discussed. Symbols generate the themes that constitute order through interaction. Whilst pattern sensitivity refers to recurrence, language sensitivity concerns the meaning of what is said. Language does not refer to mere words and grammar alone, but also to the meanings that accompany language and the misunderstandings that language can cause. In dialogue, words constitute meanings, and therefore sensitivity to meaning is important [72]. Furthermore, Stacey [37] emphasizes the importance of sensing the usage of rhetorical devices such as hyperbole, irony, and metaphors. Being sensitive to what people say (and do not say) gives practitioners important clues about the ways in which people relate and discuss. For instance, if people in a team talk about a sustainable HRM practice such as workplace democracy by naming it 'the new fad from management', practitioners ought to be sensitive to this speech act and explore what is actually meant by it.

5.3.3. Temporality

Understanding and applying dialogue in microsystems or organizations in order to advance sustainable HRM also requires a sensitivity to time. In continuous dialogue, patterns emerge *over time*, and these are fuelled by information [74]. Patterns stabilize and become attractors that 'guide' further conversations. It takes time to discern, understand, and articulate these patterns. Patterns that are stable but simultaneously dynamic are not revealed in one single intentional dialogical activity. As patterns emerge in complex processes of human interaction, it requires the increasing involvement of practitioners to actually sense and 'capture' these patterns and to understand or 'be part of' the attractors, which calls for 'slow' management [102].

Moreover, as dialogue in sustainable HRM is proposed to contribute to change, time is inherently important: the systems, values, beliefs, et cetera, that ought to change do this *over time*. Temporality is often overlooked, however, leading to decontextualized concepts and practices. In the work of HR practitioners, if time is not taken into account "it logically follows that stability is privileged over change, for static moments in time are by definition stable" [89] (p. 3). Therefore, when developing practices that foster change to more sustainable HRM, practitioners should consider time.

5.3.4. Reflexivity

Dialogue requires that HR practitioners are aware and reflective of what they do or have done, and also that they are aware of their own beliefs and presuppositions in order to understand their own involvement in dialogue. This requires reflexivity, an activity that is thoroughly social because people cannot step outside of their own experience and observe it, as others have always participated and still participate in creating this experience. This means that reflexivity is actively noticing and thinking about the way in which people think about their interdependency and participation: "When we take a reflexive stance we are asking how we have come to think as we do, and this will involve (...) noticing and thinking about our history together and more widely about the history of the wider communities we are part of (...) which we are reflecting in our interactions" [37] (p. 112). Janssen and Steyaert [4] stress the importance of constructive reflexivity in sustainable HRM as it concerns the ability to bring in alternative paradigms, perspectives, and values, and it especially focuses on the margins and what is left out in main discourses in order to open up new interpretations.

Reflexivity also implies thinking about the tension between involvement and detachment [103]. Practitioners need to be involved in microsystems in order to be able to understand and cooperate in continuous dialogues. Nevertheless, this can become problematic when they become too much immersed in a microsystem and 'part of the attractor'. Conversely, when practitioners or managers are too much abstracted from the continuous dialogue in a microsystem, they cannot tap into and understand the themes and 'hidden transcripts' that are used in it [37].

5.4. Avenues for Future Research

Based on our conceptualization of dialogue as a process presented in this paper, we suggest four avenues for future research on dialogue in the context of sustainable HRM. First, a potential avenue for future research is to explore how HR practitioners themselves, when developing and applying sustainable HRM strategies, processes, and practices within their own micro-system(s), regard, value and apply intentional dialogue. This is especially interesting in view of sustainable HRM practices that are often being developed within and across HR silos (e.g., recruitment, Human Resource Development, well-being, organizational learning), in which different continuous dialogues may take place. The focus can be on how these local initiatives differ thematically and practically and how the notion of power plays a role herein.

Second, future research could also be focused on how workers within their own microsystem converse on sustainable work and how this process of continuous dialogue is

related to formal and informal power differences. Particularly when workers are confronted with initiatives from HRM for organizing work more sustainably, it is expected that these will be valued and translated against their own local narratives coming from continuous micro-level dialogues. Consequently, HRM practices on sustainable HRM may be valued differently by employees than intended by HRM practitioners. To understand the (intended and unintended) outcomes of sustainable HRM policies and practices, more insight needs to be gained on what happens in local meaning-making processes and how meaning on sustainable HRM and sustainable work is constructed and altered. This may be especially interesting in view of teams being increasingly diverse in terms of tenures, contract forms, roles and disciplines, that may be associated with different and dynamic power positions.

Third, future research could focus on how HR practitioners and team members co-construct meaning in dialogues on sustainability and how that solidifies into concrete sustainability practices. More specifically, using discourse analysis as a methodology, it is interesting to study the confluence of their separate discourses in processes of inter-action mirrored in their language, symbols, and the oftentimes value- and norm-laden conversational patterns. Using discourse analysis helps to enhance our understanding of what happens when parties to the dialogue from different microsystems try to actively co-construct meaning and practices on sustainable HRM.

Fourth, the conceptualization presented in this paper and the avenues for future research presented above can also inspire HR practitioners to develop practices that can foster intentional dialogue among different stakeholders. Awareness of different discourses and paradoxical tensions may, therefore, require new tools and instruments that enable HR practitioners, team members, and managers to engage in fruitful dialogues regarding sustainable work both surfacing and transcend the various discourses arising from continuous dialogues within and between microsystems.

5.5. Conclusions

Many authors have stressed the importance of dialogue for fostering attentive deployment, well-being, and regeneration of all human and social resources at both the local and the institutional level [26,28,29,41,53]. In this paper, we applied core concepts (self-organization, nonlinearity, attractors, and emergence) of complexity thinking [22,36,80] to deepen our understanding of the positioning of dialogue and especially the position of power and the emergence of unintended outcomes of it. Through the distinction between the intentional and the continuous perspective on dialogue, the intentional, dynamic, and emergent nature of dialogue was explored.

In every microsystem, via processes of self-organization and in nonlinear ways, patterns emerge as people converse in their daily activities and make sense of what they experience. This interaction tends, over time, to revolve around certain themes and patterns (attractors). That being said, it remains important to bear in mind that the intentional practice of dialogue is not a silver bullet that has unlimited potential. Given the nonlinear and self-organizing properties of local interaction, it always has to be defined and contextualized in order to explore and expose conversational interactions, discourses, and subsequent values and norms regarding sustainable work.

The conceptual positioning of dialogue is highly dependent on the perspective one has on dialogue, and what one expects of it. When intentional dialogue is used to resolve differences and to foster sustainability in the workplace, one should always consider and be aware of the emergent nature of human interaction within continuous dialogue. Therefore, in view of its practical application, dialogue requires the direct participation of those involved over a longer period of time. It cannot be used as a one-time, intentional event. Indeed, dialogue demands the longitudinal involvement of practitioners, managers, and team members because continuous processes of local power dynamics, thematic patterning, and processes of self-organization also influence the application of dialogue.

In conclusion, as sustainable HRM theory and practice aims at 'rehumanizing' and pluralizing HRM, it should take the human side of continuous dialogue seriously. If dialogue

is seen as something that must be done, then sustainable HRM, if not carefully executed, will exchange one unitarian perspective for another. Connecting, sensing, grasping, and influencing the local patterning of continuous dialogue is the way forward for positioning dialogue within sustainable HRM, and intentional dialogical practices can support this.

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