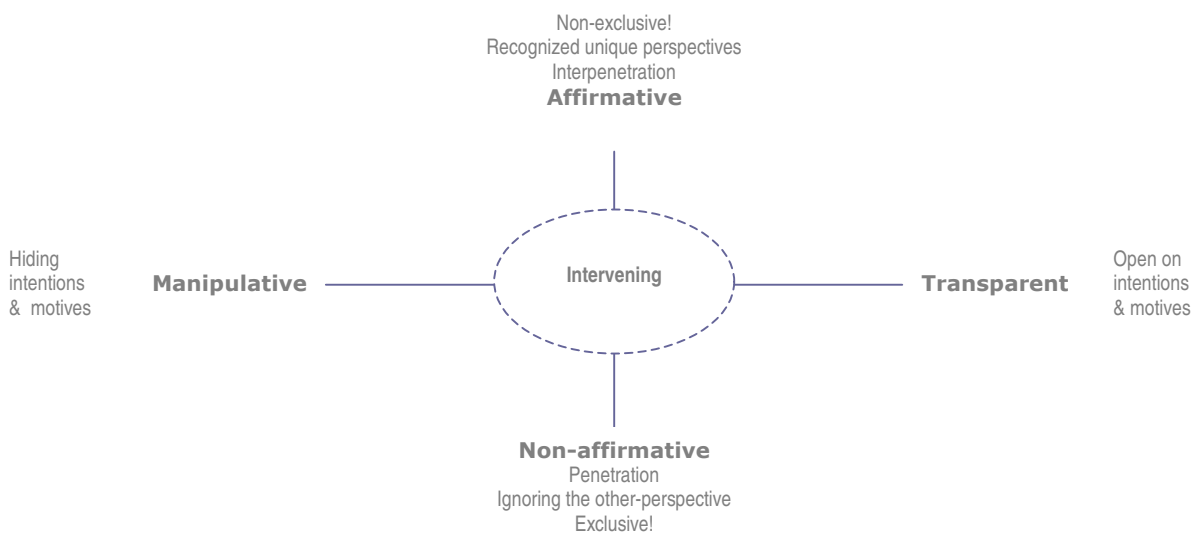

Agency and Power in organizational change processes

Af Mogens Lilleør



“What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning
The end is where we start from” T.S.Eliot¹

¹ Eliot, T.S. (1986); Little Gidding (Four Quartets), Collected Poems 1909-1962, Faber and Faber.

Content

	Page
0. Abstract	3
I. Closing in on the research	4
○ 1.Organizational context	
○ 2.My curiosity	
○ 3.Research perspective – my research question	
○ 4.The topic - Agency	
○ 5.Agency in a systemic social constructionist context	
○ 6.The rationale of the research process	
○ 7.Design of process	
○ 8.The method of analysis	
○ 9.Ethics	
II. You-search – recommendations	14
○ 1.Themes relevant for creating agency	
○ 2.Strategies and techniques reflecting creating agency	
○ 3.Summing up – recommendations	
III.You-search - the challenge of intervening	22
○ 1.Transparent and manipulative	
○ 2.Non-exclusive or exclusive	
IV. I-search - Developing my insight	26
○ 1.The challenge of intervening – my own practice	
○ 2.Two styles of intervening	
V. Concluding remarks and perspectives	31
VI. References	34

0. Abstract

This paper contains a dissertation on the MSc. course in Systemic Leadership and Organizational Studies. It builds on the ideas of systemic social constructionist research and is a case study concerning issues of agency and power in managerial practice.

It is my hope that this study will provide practical knowledge about fostering agency and the exercise of power in a managerial context of organizational change processes, and perhaps contribute to future leadership for the benefit of the organization.

The overall context for the study is the extensive alterations concerning management and organization the public sector in Denmark has gone through due to the reform of the Danish public administration (municipal reform). I have been deeply involved in the merger of 8 public organizations working as an internal consultant and later as chief consultant in the HR-sector. My primary assignments as HR chief consultant and manager of a small group of HR consultants are leadership- and organizational development.

My focus is the fostering agency and the power exercise related to that. My burning question concerns how I manage to balance conflicting accounts and care in complex situations i.e. how do I manage issues of agency and power in organizational change processes?

My research process is conducted as interviews with managers in an intermediate position and as an analysis based on Grounded Method. As a result, I come up with five overall strategies to adopt when dealing with agency in change processes: Founding agency; Building agency; Rooting agency; Flexing agency; Propagating agency. And I come up with twelve sub-strategic moves, i.e. possible interventive moves: 1) Confidence and security. 2) Clarity and simplicity. 3) Vision and hope. 4) Tradition and continuity. 5) Familiarity and co-creation. 6) Team playing. 7) Responsibility. 8) Professional identity. 9) Self esteem. 10) Embracing change. 11) Growth. 12) Role models.

I further claim that intervening to foster agency must be affirmative inviting either full participation or partial participation depending on the potential of the involved persons and the possibilities in the moment. Agency is not a static phenomenon. Maintaining and fostering agency is an ongoing co-created balance between capacities and claims. Intervention I believe should therefore be either affirmative transparent or affirmative manipulative. Core values in this are Honneth's ethic of recognition and the Kantian idea of meeting the other 'always *also* as purpose, never just as means', i.e. whatever the potential of agency, it should be brought into play.

I. Closing in on the topic and the research

1. Organizational context

During the last 3 years, the public sector in Denmark has gone through extensive alterations concerning management and organization due to the reform of the Danish public administration (municipal reform). The preparation through local planning took place in 2005-2006 and gave birth to the new organizations in January 2007. The reform meant a reduction of 271 municipalities and 14 counties to 98 municipalities and 5 regions and as a consequence plenty of mergers. I have been deeply involved in the merger of 8 public organizations working as an internal consultant and later as chief consultant in the HR-sector. My primary assignments today as HR chief consultant and manager of a small group of HR consultants are to facilitate leadership development and organizational development.

2. My curiosity

I am curious to learn more about how leadership creates agency.

It is about what managers are thinking and doing when they support 'transformation' of staff or themselves, when they place staff and themselves in new positions, when they communicate the need for change and take the necessary steps.

It is about how the exercise of power is part of such an intervention, whether it is through organizational changes, interventive processes or simply by asking questions, how exercises of power directly or indirectly, openly or concealed supports creating agency.

It's about managers who sometimes is positioned or positions themselves in situations where they focusing on creating agency simultaneously must play a game withholding information, avoiding certain topics, or maybe telling little white lies or giving cryptic advice and recommendations that make the relations to their employees complex and requires skills in balancing transparent and manipulative action.

Such conditions I believe is sometime part of being a manager in organizational change processes, it may at times be part of everyday life in an organization adapting to future expectations. But it amazes me sometimes how managers in these processes of change are able to adapt and move with the changes.

My overall guiding perspective is embedded in this. What do we think and do when change as though 'dumped from the sky' nevertheless is adapted and transformed into possibilities and we, though 'victims of change', are becoming managers of the change processes, moving from perhaps the domain of the aesthetics to the domain of production? What happens when we facilitate such transformation? What strategies do we pursue? How do we see ourselves?

3. Research perspective – my research question

My focus is the fostering agency and the power exercise related to the process. As my ideas have matured and, realising some implications of practicing systemic social constructionist research, and realising that my burning question concerns how I manage to balance conflicting accounts and care in complex situations, I have sharpened my research perspective: I have moved from the more descriptive approach 'The role of power exercise in building agency and capacity in organizational change?' to a position incorporating a direct focus on my own development. My research question is therefore:

- How do I manage issues of agency and power in organizational change processes?

Foregrounding the 'I' and back grounding the issue, and inspired by the idea of action research, here sketched by Kevin Barge:

"Systemic constructionist research is action research that is aimed at generating the capacity of the inquirer (I-search), the abilities and resources of the co-researchers (You-search), and the capacity of the inquirer and co-researcher to work collaboratively (We-search)." (Barge 2008:6)

I focus my You-search perspective on the questions:

- What are the themes that characterize agency?
- What strategies and techniques do managers employ that reflect creating agency?

Moving through different contexts, connecting them with one another and creating a coherent story between contexts (Bateson 1983) I deliberately position my self as a metareflexive observer of my own practice. My I-search perspective is focused through the following questions:

- In what way are the themes that characterize agency relevant for me?
- What are their influences on my practise associated with creating agency?

Agency is a complex matter relating to issues of communication, exercise of power, strategizing, applying tactics and techniques, interventive positioning, transparent or manipulative affirmative action, recognition, and usage of language. I will close in on the matter.

4.The topic - Agency

The philosophical idea of agency often relates to the idea of the 'moral person', i.e. the ancient as well as modern conception of a self-guiding *individual* (Slote 1996:645ff.) characterized by an openness to impressions which implies that it makes a difference for him how he is treated, a difference that justifies him consideration and protection; an individual further characterized as a capability to recognize and estimate the moral relevant in situations and act on it appropriately. In short this is the idea of a two dimensional human individual constituted by a moral patient dimension, which justifies the ethical status and entitlements to certain rights and care; and the moral agent dimension, which denotes agency, i.e. an agent with sufficient skills to fully or partially manage its own life and do something for others as well. This idea implies competencies like moral perception, judgement and autonomy, i.e. being able to identify morally relevant situations and to use standards of 'right and wrong' and to reason about goals and resources and to either accept or change them (Dworkin 1996:359ff). The idea of such a self-sufficient free individual goes far back.

In the sociological context, the term agency traditionally refers to the capacity of a similar agent to act in a world, i.e. agency belonging to an individual or agency as the human individual as such. In this line of thought structures might limit or support individual agency. However, human agency might also be considered a collective phenomenon, i.e. humans organized to act in concert whether this be structured through social class, customs, gender, ethnicity, subculture, religion, group spirit, organized processes, etc. The debate over the primacy of structural- or personal agency is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, practically considered I like the idea, that structure and agency are seen as complementary forces like the two sides of the same coin (Giddens in Burr 2003:185). Structure influences human agency and human agency is influencing the structures. As an agent adapts to his role in the context of his position he internalises relations and expectations, the actions of the agent on the other hand, externalise intentions and ideas. Thus, 'the social' affects and forms the individuals who create 'the social' (Burr 2003:185).

Summarizing the philosophical and sociological ideas, I consider agency primarily as grounded in the individual or in a collective both depending on the structure that organizes the agency. This line of thought is in fact very much in accordance with Foucault's analysis of power exercise. I might say, whenever one experiences agency one experiences power.

From a classic perspective on power, the agency issue is a straightforward individual matter dealt with in terms of 'possession' and 'control', rendering the 'location of power' as well as 'power as cause of events' a major issue, so that agency as 'power to' is causing something or agency as 'power over' is dominating, coercing or commanding somebody (Foucault 1978:93-95). This is agency as the direct exercise of mostly formal power, which intervenes in or interferes with relations to bring about something, to prevent something or to neutralize something, operating through the hierarchic division of powers: If I as principal takes action and invites my employees to participate in my research it is thus to be conceived as a straightforward command from an authority *de jure* intending to position the employees in a certain way. The invitation would be a linear command.

However, even if power is formally and personally localised, the effect of power exercise is somewhat out of control. Foucault recognizes the conception of localized power imposing laws and rules on men, but expands 'power' to cover also 'exercise of power', stressing the 'exercise'-part, i.e. the depersonalised relations that are constituted by the influences and functions that is inherent the exercise, - covered by the term 'governmentality'. Power exercise is not just a matter of "imposing law on men, but of disposing things (...)" (Foucault 1978:95), such as wealth, means of subsistence, accidents or death, resources, and relations (Foucault 1978:93). De-personalized power exercise might do this working as emergent and tacit structures such as customs; ways of acting and thinking, or it might do it indirectly through the organising of leadership and physical conditions, etc. Thus, agency or power exercise works through law and rules, but also through structures such as disciplines and incitements (Foucault, 1978:100) and is in doing so by employing tactics and techniques (Foucault 1978:95).

5. Agency in a systemic social constructionist context

In the systemic social constructionist context all agency is collective so to speak. Both the individual and the group capacity imply focus on individuals in relation to other individuals. I quote Drewery to mark this perspective:

"Agency is only possible in relation with others." Agency is "something that exists between people rather than within the individual." (Drewery in Burr 2003:190).

The point is that agency is not just a matter of individual capacity but should be considered relational, i.e. something, that is constructed in the moment in the conversation through the usage of language reinforced or weakened by structure and settings. Implicit conversations dispose invitations to take up certain subject positions (Burr 2003:188) Drewery is speaking about so called 'position calls'. Some invitations are accepted some are rejected. Some invitations invite the other to respond as a full participant some leave no way of responding as participant, i.e. some:

"... forms of speech reproduce unequal power relations by reproducing the kinds of relationships where one party to a conversation is called into a non-agentive position (...)" (Burr 2003:189)

This brings me straight to my subject 'the fostering agency and capacity in organizations'. If agency is constructed, what are the prime conditions of such a positioning that is non-exclusionary? According to Kevin Barge (Barge 2006:32-33), the key concepts concerning agency are 'capacity for meaning making', 'being able to adopt an observer position' (reflexivity) and 'capacity for action'.

Now, because 'meaning making' depend on several sources, building the meaning making feeds from people connecting both horizontally and vertically to the social- and organizational environment via a variation of encounters that generate the possibility of exploring different perspectives or contexts, promoting reflexivity and self-reflexivity, i.e. the 'I' recognizing himself being part of the environment he is part of, and recognizing he is affecting and transforming it as well as he is affected and transformed by it (Barge 2006:36). Inspired by Maturana (Maturana 2004:36), I will say that the 'I' neither is submerged in his practice nor is a submerged observer of a practice, but he is a reflexive observer of a practice and of own practice, i.e. also observes his own observation of a practice and own practice. This might either be an act of self-reflexivity working in cognitive terms of understanding (Shotter 1999:10) or a relationally responsive activity conjointly producing conversations (Barge 2003:3).

The systemic social constructivist approach to agency also stresses the importance of generating the capacity for action by designs that allow for the confirming of employees. Following Axel Honneth and his 'moral of recognition' this is implicating mainly working in three dimensions of recognition (Honneth 2003:83ff) implying actions that, understood in an organizational sense, facilitate affirmation of the employee's self-respect, self-confidence and self-esteem. A practise which should allow for the spheres of legality, emotional recognition and solidarity, i.e. 'mutual respect for all people' with the paradigmatic example of 'dialogue free of domination', 'caring for the other' with the mother-child relation as role model, and confirming individual skills, efforts and achievements, i.e. the community's valuing performances of individuals. The three patterns of recognition represent the moral position consisting of the three moral preferences. We are in concrete situations required to deliver services of recognition, and if the preferences conflict, we decide what obligations shall prevail. There is no predetermined ranking, - the tension is resolved in the moment of now.

Thus, agency is conditioned by the potential of meaning making, metareflexivity, and action (self-respect, self-confidence and self-esteem), and to promote agency one ought to focus on those dimensions. In one sense, these concepts refer to the single individual: The more of them present the more being in control, being motivated, and being focused the individual is. However, a group of people may also exercise meaning making, metareflexivity, and action. Depending on individual competences, but not reducible to a single such, agency might be understood as an emergent phenomenon (Barge 2006:17,35), perhaps belonging to the group only.

What ever the agent in agency is, individual or group, it implies the agent being committed empowered in terms of 'possession', 'control', and the 'location of power', or in terms of disciplines, incitements, and co-created relations working within or co-creating structures such as customs, rituals, and habits, ways of acting and thinking, and the organising of leadership, structure of meetings, etc.

6.The rationale of the research process

My research method is inspired by a systemic constructionist approach to research (Barge 2006:35).

Beginning in the analytical, distanced, You-search approach, working in the We-search, and analysing in an I-search perspective, I consider my research a strategic conversation concerning various aspects of agency. This implies awareness having an eye on all participants including my self, i.e. seeing both the other and my self as agents acting on an expectation that 'the other part acts and how the other part acts as a respond to my act' (Elster 1990:28), i.e. realising that what you do depends on what you believe the other part does depending on what you do. Following Kevin Barge (Barge 2003:5), I as researcher should be both a distanced observer or reader of situations and a practical author co-creating relations through the way I

respond to others. This means that I continually perform two roles recognizing that one role may be more or less dominant at any given moment. As spectator, strategizing is not limited to the periods before or after a process, but following Karl Tomm, the researcher is continually making decisions on a moment-to-moment basis as the process unfolds (Tomm 1986:3-4). In this sense I take, adopting a strategic attitude implies positioning the participants and myself as reflexive and metareflexive agents (Harré 2003).

Kevin Barge argues that it is fostering agency and building the capacity for meaning making and action that distinguishes systemic constructionist research from other forms of research. Research designs should promote the meaning making potential of the participants by moving them to adopt an observer position reflecting on their participation in the research and the meaning of it for their working life (Barge 2006:32-33). Research processes generating the capacity for action imply designs that allow for affirmation of the participants' self-respect, self-confidence, and self-esteem. It has been my ambition that my research process foster agency through conversations following the rationale of jazz jamming basically summarized in 'Listen – pick up – follow – and deliver' (Barge 2009 verbally) inspired by guidelines suggested by Frank Barrett (Barrett 1998:610-617).

In accordance with the jazz-inspired approach, the systemic social constructionist research as a form of Action research (Barge 2006:14) implies that the 'I' of the research is positioned right in the centre of the research as participant (McNiff & Whitehead:15). Action research emphasizes that the researcher should recognize himself being part of the system he is exploring affecting and transforming the system as well as being affected and transformed by it. Even his research position is co-created (Barge 2006:5). As opposed to traditional research, practised in cognitive terms of understanding in a more or less positivist sense collecting independent data, data is considered not only being constructed through analysis but also during the process of collecting them. I am not collecting independent statements of the focus persons but are co-creating them listening and responding.

Central to systemic social constructionist research is the case study (Barge 2008:4). I believe that the case study is suitable for a study of agency. My research is as such an empirical inquiry. My research method is qualitative consisting of semi-structured interviews. I do not intend to be the miner digging to discover objective truth, but I will be the traveller, who explores co-created meaningful stories underway. The basic subject is not objective data to be quantified, but meaningful relations to be interpreted (Kvale 1997:24).

Not focusing on generating truths my purpose is to generate results measured by usability, i.e. results that might help all participants reflect on and develop agency.

7.Design of process

The interview process includes participation of four level-3 managers. One is an experienced head of a well-established rehabilitating center with just about 135 employees. One is head of a children and youth center with just about 49 employees having gone through a long turbulent period before the head entered. One is head of a 'team' in the elderly sector with just about 50 employees having experienced a tremendous growth in short time. One is head of a daycare institution, a merging of two institutions, for children with just about 15 employees.

The primary criterion for participation was that the participants have initiated and/or participated in creating agency successfully in change processes as managers. The second criterion was that the participants are known to be both theoretical and practical reflexive individuals familiar with the challenges of change processes. The third criterion was that the participants are related to me in a non-formal way, involving no inter-dependencies what so ever. I do not have any direct supervisory control over them.

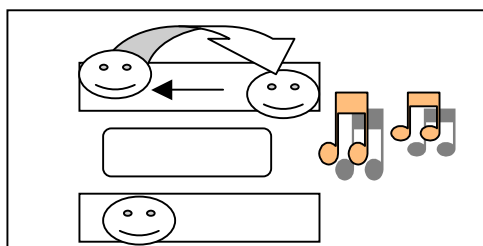
I made the agreements with the four participants on the basis of an approximately 2½-page memo-1 describing what the project basically was about, i.e. criteria, purpose, hopes, expectations and possibilities concerning learning and development.

I conducted the research together with a colleague of mine as my co-researcher taking part in all the interview processes as outsider-witness and co-reflector. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed to secure accuracy of data. My data consists of the audiotapes, transcripts, and mind maps.

Overall, the interview processes were planned to contain 4 moves:

1) A process with my co-researcher interviewing me and we together creating a mind map on our views on agency. This experience was quite good to me; it contributed to both widen and focus my perspective. It made me redesign my interviews, so that each focus person got an opportunity to create a mind map ending the interview.

2) A process where I did the four interviews with my co-researcher in an outsider witness position. All interviews were intended to follow an interview guide. Letting the interviews be inspired by the values of jazz improvisation I only used four of my prepared questions i.e. no.1, 2, 5, and 10, working as 'formal switches'; beside them I approximately posed about 120 follow up questions in each interview. The interviews took place in the 'Red room' with two soft sofas and a table.

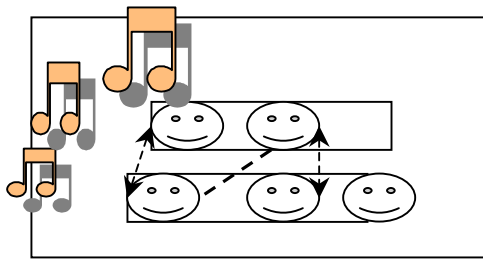


The interview was scheduled to last max. 2½ hours all-inclusive.

The fact that the interviews went through three phases – interview, witnessing and mind mapping – made it possible for us to present views, reflect and sharpen them. In this sense, I believe the data is co-created.

3) The third move, i.e. my co-researcher interviewing me on my thoughts after having ended the interviews, we had to skip due to work pressure and lack of time.

4) The fourth move was a focus group workshop for all of us (one missed due to illness). The workshop took place just about two months after the four interviews. Before the workshop, all focus persons had received an approximately 10 pages memo-2 containing their own individual story and views on agency based on the transcripts. The process was planned to include the phases 'Check in' and 'Setting the context' based on the memo-2 using the 'wave interview'. My intention was that my co-researcher witnessed the focus persons and all afterwards were joining a free conversation on the themes brought up, ending by summing up points concerning leadership development. The process, however, took a different turn. After the check-in, we began the wave interview (with me in the fourth position):



Soon, however, it developed into an energetic conversation between the focus persons on the subjects. I decided to let go my plan and join the conversation during the 2½ hours it lasted, feeding and perhaps disturbing it by offering alternative pathways (Barrett 1998:609) or by offering generative metaphors (Barrett and Cooperrider 1990) or perhaps by being irreverent (Cecchin 1992). I didn't quite succeed. Having ended the workshop, I noted in my diary:

"I introduced the jazz metaphor as a provocation. I wanted them to reflect on the interaction in the actual conversation. But it was no provocation at all; it just did not seem important in that moment. All listened well mannered to me. All agreed that the metaphor was useful. And that was that. 'You're perfectly right!' they said, and returned to their conversation."

In the end, we summed up some points concerning leadership development and we agreed in a new (extra) workshop in June 2010 focusing on our own agency.

8. The method of analysis

My analysis contains two overall steps: First a You-search analysis. Second an I-search analysis of my interplay with the focus persons during the interviews.

You-search analysis:

In my You-search approach to the analysis of the data, I am inspired by the Grounded Method approach (Barge 2008). Grounded Method I consider a basic inductive method implying starting with the material, meaning what I notice should be grounded in my data material.

The analysis follows some overall phases: Noticing, Naming, Connecting, Comparing and Storying (Barge 2008: 23). My moves were the following: I listened to my tapes once without making notes to get a sense of the conversations. I 'read' the mind maps created during the interviews to get a feel of the range of subjects. The tapes were then transcribed. The transcripts were qualified by reading them over while listening carefully to the tapes. First then I read the transcripts without any particular angle to get a sense of what was said here; second I read the transcripts focusing on *statements explicating* fostering agency; third I read the transcripts focusing on *descriptions showing* how managers actually worked fostering agency. Having done those readings, I identified plenty of possible themes to deal with.

To reduce the amount of possible themes I decided to 'analyse by foot' so to speak. I cut up the transcripts in statements and descriptions each concerning a possible theme and sorted them on the floor lead by 'affinity', i.e. I did the first sorting somewhat fast working spontaneously trying not to be too articulate about my preconceived ideas and assumptions. The process though looking linear was indeed circular in that I repeatedly were connecting and comparing influencing the noticing and naming analogous to the models of single loop and double loop learning (Argyris 1999)

The steps in detail were the following:

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- 1) Statements and descriptions were spread on the floor, then sorted into piles by affinity, each pile was given a temporary name: 43 themes.
 - 2) Statements and descriptions within each pile were looked through and compared one after another focusing on connections, some were removed some discarded. The rest were taped together sequentially given a new temporary name if needed: 18 themes.
 - 3) All themes were again placed on the floor and sorted by inter-connectedness, now working more thoughtful some piles were merged: 12 themes.
 - 4) Then I decided the order of themes by comparing them relating to the chronology of the stories told, which meant changing some titles again.
 - 5) Finally, I ended up with the twelve themes lined up.
 - 6) I further choose several possible quotes as evidence within each theme.
 - 7) While developing a coherent narrative combining the themes, I decided not to aim at categories but instead change the themes into 'recommendations' guiding an approach to agency. Working with the 'recommendations', however, made me come up with five look-alike categories.

Originally, I intended my analysis to combine with the Discourse Method and the Narrative Method as well. In fact, not knowing the content of the material I was not quite sure about what method would do the job. Having done the interviews it was obvious to me that the Grounded Method approach should be basic and that the Narrative approach perhaps only should support it. In particular, two of my focus persons tell their story so energetic, vivid and inspiring that I considered letting their stories form the core of my learning. I decided, however, mainly due to scarcity of time and space, to skip that idea. I therefore see my task not to reconstruct the different stories (Barge 2008:39), rather I construct a coherent story concerning fostering agency organising the chosen themes.

I-search analysis:

My I-search analysis is inspired by two jazz-guidelines suggested by F.J.Barrett (Barrett 1998:610-617) and supplemented by views of Kevin Barge, Harlene Anderson (2003), Sallyann Roth (1999), Rom Harré (2003), and M.J.Hatch (2002).

The first guideline, 'Sense making – working with the material in the moment, or bricolage', is about listening and responding. Listening plays a major role in improvisational jazz because "(...) the openness of jazz-structure means that the predictability of others' playing is at a minimum." (Hatch 2002:77). Harlene Anderson defines 'listening' as attending to, interacting with, responding to, and Sallyann Roth emphasises the importance of listening for what the other wants acknowledged; noticing what the other person values.

The second guideline, 'Errors as sources of learning' is about handling mistakes staying open to hearing meanings that differ from one's or that may be challenging to hear (Roth 1999). "The jazz musicians know that mistakes are defined by their context, so if someone plays a 'wrong note', changing the context can save the situation (...)." (Hatch 2002:77). Another way to put it is to accept all offers and be generous with giving material (Barge verbally 2009).

The process consisted of the following steps: Reading my transcripts, I got a vague sense of a certain style of interviewing. Following up on that attending to 'intensity', 'speed', 'shifts' and the subject thematized, I found nine possible sequences that looked interesting concerning our

interplay. Listening to the corresponding tape sensing the energy and presence made me choose four, which I have analysed in detail, the analysis was guided by three perspectives:

1) Listening and responding: Harlene Anderson and Sallyann Roth offer some guidelines inspiring my approach: Understand tentatively; Assume you do not know about the other's experience; Give the other sufficient time, pause before you speak; Pay attention to the others way of using language; Hear the exact words and feelings; Ask for clarification of anything that seems confusing or obscure; Reflect what you understand and check out if you have got it right; Listen, hear, and speak in a self-reflective manner by not minimizing the complexity of a dialogue by reducing it to techniques.

2) Kinds of improvisation: Kevin Barge (Barge verbally 2009) suggests two rules of thumb: Avoid duplication! - Affirmation without difference adds nothing. Avoid negation! - Difference without affirmation adds without appreciation. I reckon these rules imply trying to make a difference, i.e. listening and affirmatively introducing differences e.g. generative metaphors, irreverent suggestions or alternative pathways.

3) Kinds of positioning: Rom Harré distinguishes between three typical kinds of positioning talk (Harré 2003:22-23): First-order acts of positioning, mostly tacit inducing constraints on and openings for acts available to speakers. Second-order practices where acts of first-order positioning become a topic. Third-order positioning, which has as a topic first order or second order positioning that occurred in another context.

9.Ethics

I want to emphasise that I intended my research process itself being an example of fostering agency. Due to the systemic social constructionist research idea, all participants are co-researchers in the interview process reflecting and co-creating patterns and ideas. I regard in a sense the participants as partners in the interviews and workshop and I has framed the research process as securing feedback and feed forward regarding insights and intentions. During the process, all have received a memo-1 introducing the rationale of the research, a memo-2 on their own views and a first draft on the You-search insights gained.

I facilitated a context of mutual agreements in order to sustain clarity about the purpose, aims and consequences of the research. I tried to set a clear context from the early beginning of the research process, the interviews and workshop on the spot; I have tried to be transparent about my own positioning as researcher and as a professional consultant sharing the same organization with the participants. All interviews and the workshop are based on an explicit oral 'social contract' trying to minimizing discomfort and ensuring that all feel able to express opinions without fear of reprisals, and that their participation in the study is fully voluntary.

Recordings and transcripts as well as the analysis are treated confidential. Each participant has only been acquainted with her own interview-data. Only the researcher and co-researcher have known the identity of the participants until they met in the workshop. No personal data in transcripts will be known to other than the researcher. Tapes have been stored in a locked cabinet and the transcripts are saved in a personal computer accessible by use of a password known by the researcher only. When the research project has been completed all material will be disposed of.

II. You-search - 'Recommendations'

1. Themes relevant for creating agency

As a result of my analysis of the material I present 12 themes of importance to agency: 1) Confidence and security. 2) Clarity and simplicity. 3) Vision and hope. 4) Tradition and continuity. 5) Familiarity and co-creation. 6) Team playing. 7) Responsibility. 8) Professional identity. 9) Self esteem. 10) Embracing change. 11) Growth. 12) Role models.

The 12 themes might be seen as strategic moves concerning creating agency in organizations handling change processes. Below I unfold them as recommendations and give some evidence. In doing this, I move from the several different voices of my interviews to form one single voice, - the voice of the 'Y' in the quotes brought together forming a coherent story, - my story. I organise the material reflecting the chronology in the stories told, i.e. from the time that the challenge of change appears on the scene to managers and employees confidently embrace the change. This way of presenting the material might give a false impression of linearity.

2. Strategies and techniques reflecting creating agency

The first recommendation, basic confidence and co-creation, stresses the importance of allowing the employees building up a base they can operate from:

"Y = I think that it is about realising ones position in the change, so that you feel 'where we are and how we get this done'. And here it was important that space was well defined: we have this group of children, these specific colleagues, and the specific parents, whom we relate to in the first place. It was about not making the confusion even bigger. And this peace, or capacity, I believe, is needed to be able to act. And that was the focus we had, i.e. that it should work within this framework. And then after a while, we could extend the framework."

The recommendation is about creating a basis from which agency can grow keeping pace with the challenges rising in the organization. This is security understood not as a static phenomenon but conceived of as a process dynamically mediating between challenges and capacities. Challenges and capacities are not just opposites but are related in a dynamic tension. To meet a challenge means trying to expand your repertoire of manageable situations. In principle, you can be confident in every sort of situation, if you know how to deal with it and its 'unknowns'. A base is not simply a state of affairs; it is an ongoing temporarily co-created balance between capacities and claims. To stress the dynamics, the activity building a base and the flexibility inherent, one might shift from noun to verb placing emphasis on the unfolding activity and talk about 'basing' rather than base (so-called e-prime language, Weick 2005:400).

To support basing the manager should be concerned with presence, i.e. being 'visible' to her employees or 'accessible':

*"Y = Management shall be present. Otherwise, you cannot achieve ... confidence.
I = Physical?
Y = No, not quite, because I am not there every day. But when I am there, they know I am there. It is about them being my first priority. Accessibility! It is about one being available. But it is also that they sense me whether I am there physically or not. I think if you feel seen and heard in your everyday life, - recognized. (...) then you also feel seen and heard by your leader even she is not there. But it's obviously also about knowing that you always are supported."*

The second recommendation, clarity and simplicity, emphasizes as an extension of the first the importance of building up structure and framework that creates the relevant clarity and simplicity:

*"Y = I have constantly made written process plans: What are we to do now, where are we going and how do we do it. This has been an important part.
I = Why is that important?
Y = Because otherwise it is so confused. We need something we can look at to keep things on the track.
I = So it is to focus ...?
Y = Otherwise it is derailed, - it is to get a direction.*

Structure and framework might also consist of formalised structures of decision and collaboration, i.e. work committees or councils, and meetings. And it may consist in articulating the change process analogous with a project ensuring the appropriate progression and the joy of moving in a well-defined direction. This is very much about power exercise disposing disciplines, incitements and organising leadership (Foucault 1978:100).

Creating simplicity is an ongoing activity. It is not to avoid or to neutralize change but to facilitate dealing with it constructively. It is about supporting agency by keeping things simple. Structure, frameworks and values reduce complexity by reducing certain possibilities of action in the moment and are doing so by reinforcing others. As such, structure, frameworks and values work as technologies creating efficiency by enhancing focus, i.e. condensing attention by highlighting possibilities or functions (Ihde 1987). Structure, framework and context are ongoing activities and should rather be articulated as e-prime language (Weick 2005:400): structuring, framing and contexting or context negotiating.

Negotiating the context reinforces focus by reducing certain views and possibilities. This is an ongoing activity that requires constantly awareness of ambition and an ability to adjust it. The alternative might well be an inconvenient shift in focus:

"Y = It's about the employees feeling secure. Partly concerning their job, but also in relation to the framework. Some indeed need that things just carry on 'dot, dot, dot', as usual, when they arrive at 7 am, - and rightly so. Otherwise, it creates insecurity, and so there will be resistance ... (...). Then it would all be about the colour of the apron, they must wear in the kitchen, and i.e. one will focus on the little things."

Focusing on the 'little things, perhaps moving from the domain of production to the domain of aesthetics (Lang 1990) focusing on the things that definitely are manageable only.

To facilitate context building and focus, the manager should practice good foresight and timing connecting her sense of what is coming with her sense of what is workable in the moment:

*"Y = And then it's always a tight-rope walking when we are ready to take the next step. It is sometimes difficult to decide, I think. (...) Because we are always busy, we are always full of all sorts of tasks.
I = What is it, that triggers you to say now it is now?
Y = Well, ... I think that is a little difficult ... It is such a feel - I lurk a little every day.
I = You lurk?
Y = Yes, I do. Of course, I also use the formalised conversations, and we actually have had 2 sessions this 1½-year we have been merged. I use this to find out where we are. Usually my findings fit very well with my insights from my everyday lurking, - that we are now ready to ...
I = It is such a 'sense of' combined with some analysis?
Y = Yes, I find it is more than just a sense. It is also a question of me having listened to talks in daily life."*

The practice of foresight and timing implies reflexivity, i.e. observation and analysis. This practice positions the manager as observer; she moves from the 1.order level of 'just carry on' to a position as more or less submerged observer of the employees (Maturana 2004:36):

"Y = Yes, when I see my employees, then it is not only an observation. It is a very personal me having this intuition and an ethic for my fellow man. When I say 'see another human being', it's partly what kind of expression they have, how their eyes play, how they smile, their pitch; what I sense when I say good morning; how they respond. And if they walk out the door, in what way do they do it – is the door slammed or is it closed gently or do they say 'see you later'? So, it is all those signals. (...) It is such a ... 'gut feeling'. It is both what they radiate, what they articulate, the way they do it, and the unsaid."

The manager might be combining reflexivity by working in both cognitive terms of understanding and operating in a participatory perspective emphasizing presence and relations (Shotter 1999:10). The manager is not just positioned as the distanced spectator. To act on a 'gut feeling' you have to be part of the game, involved with your people, interacting, - perhaps the managerial practice is best understood using the jazz metaphor implying an emphasis on sensory and sensual engagement. The jazz metaphor encourages us to think with our ears, bodies and emotions: "Hear and feel organizing (...)" (Hatch 2002:79).

"Y = I think my method is very much to sense the employees, - and be a little ahead trying to grasp 'what this might bring'. I sometimes sow things among the employees that I anticipate will be resistant, to get a reaction that I can begin to work on (...). They are very different, because it depends on where they are right now in their working lives. And where the group is, after all it is very much 'up and down'."

To sow things, - and to reap later; this is about leadership employing tactics and techniques (Foucault 1978:95). Applying some tactical testing might support the gaze and might contribute to develop the meaning making potential in general.

The third and fourth recommendation, 'vision and hope' and 'tradition and continuity', stresses as an extension of one and two, the importance of giving faith in future and of creating a sense of continuity:

"Y = We had staff meetings, where I drew a timeline: 'Where are we in about a year, where do I see we are in two years from now?' I did this to say: 'I'm not just head this year, it is not just for this year.' We drew a timeline also including them going through some training, to show that this process continued. We made long-term targets showing that 'once we get over that top here and this here, then you will see'. Give them the faith, right.

I = Long-term goals, i.e. show them that they had a future?

Y = Yes, and then we said, 'we need some traditions', something so that they can see that it is a recurring thing, something we need to do year after year: A summer party, staff outing, Christmas lunch."

Plan ahead to communicate that this continues is a matter of co-creating a context not too short-sighted visualising that one has a future as well as a past, i.e. vision that one is part of something bigger; creating a sense of continuity by building up rituals and by explicitly aiming at something important in the future. Faith in future depends on experiencing stability, i.e. continual events, tasks and expectations.

The fifth recommendation, familiarity and co-creation, further focuses on creating the opportunity for people to become acquainted with each other, i.e. disposing relations:

"Y = (...) And they have of course become familiar with each other, so they know where to get things and who master what... yes, the basic knowledge of each other, so that everyone knows who stands for what. And it is very cool that things are in control: Who is in charge."

When people get familiar with each other, they gain the opportunity to co-create professionally. This requires a good common sense of the 'we' and to establish this might sometimes be a challenge. The challenge may consist of building the sufficient confidence to let colleagues come in for a share:

"Y = It was also a challenge to some to realise that if you do not manage to get things done, then there might be someone else to do it. It was a change of culture.

I = To have colleagues who could also...?

Y = Yes and be confident that we pull together, and that we will get it done (...). I usually comply with the general principle, that we create things together."

The more connected the greater the possibilities of effective collaboration and the more tasks may be performed through co-creation, - and the better the organization is to embrace complexity and adapt to the new. The increase in the variation of encounters, shifts of perspectives increases the possibility of meta-reflexivity (Barge 2003), and the possible meaning making potential.

The sixth recommendation, team playing, extending the fifth is committed to preparing people for what is to come by involving and engaging them in time. This is about positioning the employees as agents. Preparing the employees depends on close contact in daily life, i.e. it is about the manager knowing her staff well:

"I = I just noticed that you said 'we' decided. Who makes the decisions and how?

Y = We do ... mostly along the road. Many decisions are taken among the employees here and now, because this is how our work is pieced together. The big decisions we take in the staff group. And sometimes I decide, - that is rare though. But I am good to give a lead so that we get the right frame of mind about things and nobody is in doubt about what I mean. I catch what I see in everyday practice and pursue it. And I join the talk that occurs around things and cultivate it, - over a period.

I = So you are not sitting in your study and figure something out, it is...?

Y = It is always in interaction.

I = So there is always someone where you are?

Y = Yes, that is how I do it. (...) I manage talking with virtually all every day. Sometimes it is in a slightly larger group, when they pause or something."

Talking with virtually all every day, giving leads, cultivating, the manager might be described as a jazz musician co-creating the 'groove', helping the colleagues to feel structure and framework, which is required for them to depart from the predictable patterns and meet the new and unexpected. Once the feel is there, they are able to 'play ahead of, or behind, the beat' (Hatch 2002:77). This is about the staff experiencing themselves as partakers of the process and of the responsibilities inherent it:

"Y = I involve the staff in the ideas I get underway. On team meetings, I say: 'I have actually thought such and such. What do you think? Could it be a good way to do it, should I go ahead with it? Or would it be too much (...)?' And then I bring in some examples, ... So my process when something is coming from outside, is very much my own process getting it up so they get a feel of what I call ownership. I do not know if there is another word for it, but it is about them being part of it too. So that it is not just me who give orders."

This is about what Drewery calls 'position calls' (Burr 2003:188), i.e. the manager implicitly invites the employees to take up positions as agents. The point is that this agency is not just

being a matter of individual capacity but is constructed in the moment in the conversation through the usage of language. Some invitations might invite the other to respond as a full participant:

"Y = Well, I say to them: 'right now ... there is nothing fixed by now, we think out loud together.' In the beginning, they very much had it like if I said something, then it was a 'must'. But then I said 'No! Everything is negotiable. We think out loud together, I think, you think and we think together. And then we'll find out.' So, it is very much about insisting on that (...). And they are just about realising this, - that it works. (...)

I = So in that way you use them as your assistants?

Y = Sparring partners, we are equal when we think together. And they are really good at it by the way. It is them who are the experts."

This is about positioning employees as co-creators and professionals, so they contribute with their expertise.

The seventh recommendation, responsibility, as an extension of five and six emphasizes precisely empowerment, i.e. increasing the capacity of the employees making choices and transforming them into the desired outcomes. It concerns the delegation of responsibilities and duties and is about getting the person closest to the task to solve it:

"Y = I think agency is about taking on responsibility and getting things to work where it should and that it is the right person who gets it done, i.e. the one in the actual situation. That she must have both desire and courage to act.

I = So the one who has...

Y = He who meet the task must also be the one who performs. You can say: 'If it's me who's out there, and it is me who knows best, then it's also me who should act'. (...) Empower the primary persons. Delegate to them the responsibility and give them the confidence."

The eighth recommendation, professional identity, focuses on strengthening people's professional identity by documenting in writing their efforts and services:

"I = Then you mentioned that, when you conduct parents conversations you do a kind of description of the children...?"

Y = Yes, I guess that all institutions have a practice of how to 'see' the individual child. We just choose to support it in writing - to maintain professionalism. Each time we express ourselves about efforts and services in relation to our work, it gives us confidence and a good feeling, if we get it formulated in writing also.

I = So this is also to promote agency, working with the professional confidence, reinforcing it?

Y = I think so. I think it is very much connected. The more confident you feel, the more you dare engage in. We are working a lot with that, (...) it might be that we spend some extra time, but I know that it works doing the writing. I know that when you have to express yourself in writing, you reflect a little more."

Staff describing their practice in writing is positioned as observers of their own practice. They are moved to a 2.order observer position including perhaps also 3.order focusing on how the efforts and services are influenced by their own thinking and doing (Maturana 2004:36). This is about how a technology such as written language promotes metareflexivity and thereby tends to enhance the meaning making potential of employees. And this is about how leadership works by disposing relations, ways of acting and thinking (Foucault 1978: 93-100).

The ninth recommendation, self-esteem, emphasizes along this line, supporting people's self-esteem by documenting the process they have gone through, what they have developed and achieved:

"Y = And then I have been aware of the written part of it, -that the process really is always very accurately described.

I = Why is this important?

Y = It clarifies things ... the articulation. I think it is a little cool, having it all gathered in this folder, right. 'Wow! Now we have added some more.' It is about a need that I think most people have: 'Look what we have accomplished! We have done so and so.'

I = If you were to connect to agency, what will you highlight?

Y = It gives energy. It works ... It gives energy. Satisfaction and a good team spirit, 'Wow! We have achieved this together; we have created this together'. It gives joy among the employees. Quite simple."

Empowerment is reinforced by success; people experiencing success expand their skills and their professional scope. The gain might be a lift in both self-confidence and self-esteem (Hon-neth 2003:83ff).

The tenth recommendation, embracing change, focuses on strengthening employees to handle change and complexity by promoting a more exploratory and tentative attitude and approach to things to replace the wish to manage and control them:

"I = If you look back at the beginning, when the new joined in, you had your old block and then came in the new. What do you pay attention to now about the difference between now and then?

Y = I feel quite clearly that we have a spirit in the house and confidence in 'we'll find out'. The feeling of uncertainty we had in the beginning, expressed by people saying: 'what if?' and then they posed a thousand questions, is gone. 'Well, we do not know. But it's all right that we do not know yet.' I had to say that often in the beginning. But now all agrees that it is okay that there is something we do not know, - and that we will find out. It is this confidence I sense in the group. (...)

I = So that is a change of attitude?

Y = It is, quite clear, - constantly pursuing the belief that it is okay that we do not know it right now, but that we will find out. We know that we can work it out together. (...)"

An exploratory and tentative approach implies recognising the social constructionist idea that every individual perspective is a limited perspective, which again implies accepting that mistakes happen and should be handled conveniently. This means to some extent asking questions rather than provide answers (Tomm 1988), i.e. doing more listening before you give your answers (Anderson 2003). This means greater awareness that one depends on each other. For the manager as for the employees it might demand certain abilities concerning improvisation, in order to get along, they must suspend some degree of control and surrender to the flow of challenges and activities (Barrett 1998: 607), i.e. being prepared only on basics and the major lines, - not in detail:

"I = How do you prepare yourself before meeting the staff?

Y = Not much, it can easily change. My idea of the topic and that it surely might change. You could say there is the mental issue concerning now I am on, and now I speed up. This is the least thing to prepare. But it is not much I prepare myself concerning details. It all happens during the conversation and what we come up with. The major line is of course prepared, my humanity.

I = You have the big lines in place and then you enter the meeting and then...?

Y = And then we go along. It is about sensing the atmosphere connected to one or the other issue. No, I do not think I prepare a lot."

The eleventh recommendation, growth, emphasizes that the individual often can do more than she thinks. It is about expanding the personal base. It is about in a sense, pushing the individual to take on more responsibility than she herself could imagine she could handle:

"Y = Pushing them a little more than they think they can. Tell them that 'I see much more in you than you do.' And it turns usually out that they manage well. Unless you push them, they do not develop (...)

I = See something more in them?

Y = Yes. Give them the credit that: 'we really believe that you can grow a lot more than you think'. I am obviously not talking about those who are quite self-confident, I'm talking about the ordinary person, who may not be that good to articulate what it actually is, he is really good at, wishes to be good at or could be better at. It is important that I can see the potential, and give them faith and confidence in it."

This is about being ambitious either using language with implicit positions calls or addressing the issue explicitly positioning the other in the new context. It is about irreverence (Cecchin 1992), because it is about meeting the other not so much 'where she is', but just a little ahead, i.e. meet her as what she is to become, recognizing her potential, meeting her not just as history but also as future, - see the potential and make it come through:

*"Y = I believe you can be appreciative while exercising power: It might be 'to recognize you' that you are assigned to a task, if it is because I see you as the most competent (...)
It might be recognition to see the other as a man with skills.... I think after all, it is affirmative to say: 'I recognize that you can do this, but also a little more.' (...) Affirmative power exercise is to see more in a person and use one's power to get him to develop."*

This requires that the manager is able to discern what is hidden, having an eye on it and having it communicated well to the employee. This is about what Foucault calls disposing of relations, i.e. self-confidence and self-esteem (Honneth 2003). It is about the manager supporting the employee being transparent on requirements, expectations and ambitions on his behalf to avoid pushing him too far.

The twelfth recommendation, role models, focuses on positioning the employee as a model for colleagues. It is about getting people to assume roles as role models, and this might start by experience oneself as a pioneer:

"Y = To implement the social action plans - these are statutory - we set out in a completely different way than the others. And this implied that we later were used as spearheads. Some of the employees with specific skills were used in the other teams to initiate some of their processes. And I believe, and so they tell me, that it was really funny for them that they had moved from the shadow, from not being involved with the merger to suddenly being pioneers in this, and being involved in getting the process started elsewhere. All of a sudden, it was them who were in."

To promote the creation of role models it is very much a matter of starting with oneself, whether this concerns the quality of your IT equipment, spending cuts, food at meetings, uses of language, holiday planning or collaboration:

"I = So that was a little change of attitude?

Y = It was - and you know, we then had to work with it, they have not seen it like that before. But if you go forward with the good example and say this is the way it should be ... I am not asking anything of anyone I wouldn't do myself.

I = So that is a principle?

Y = Yes, it is. It is of no use me sitting playing the prima donna, that would make me unreliable."

To be reliable is very much about commitment:

"Y = Well, it is about whether they can feel that I am passionate about this, that I want it, (...). And they can see that there is action behind the words immediately; to experience that I burn for this, for what we agreed on."

3. Summing up - recommendations

The twelve recommendations might be regarded as basic strategies to promote agency when dealing with change processes. To me it seems that they represent different overall perspectives:

1-4) 'Confidence and security', 'clarity and simplicity', 'vision and hope', and 'tradition and continuity' are about stabilizing capacities, i.e. founding agency.

5-7) 'Familiarity and co-creation', 'team playing', and 'responsibility' are about co-creating capacities, i.e. building agency.

8-9) 'Professional identity' and 'self-esteem' are mainly about reinforcing capacities, i.e. rooting agency or consolidating agency.

10-11) 'Embracing change' and 'growth' are about developing multi-faceted capacities, i.e. flexing agency or making it many-faceted.

12) 'Role models' is about releasing capacities, i.e. propagating agency via role modelling.

Promoting agency in accordance with the twelve recommendations is all about intervening in the organizational life of the employees. This may be carried out more or less open.

III. The challenge of intervening

1. Manipulative and transparent

Founding agency, Building agency, Rooting agency, Flexing agency, and Propagating agency are all about non-neutral intervening in the organizational life. Analysing my material I discover some recommendations concerning intervention. Basically, leadership is about intervention and when managers intervene, it might be done openly, less openly or closed.

"Y = Openness, mutual openness, I think that is really important to agency. I do not believe that one can act appropriately if there is no openness, and this I think in terms of frames and expectations."

Transparency concerning frames and expectations, reasons and motives is important creating the security and the confidence that is important for agency. When the manager intervenes giving time to explain and talk things over might fulfil the demand of openness:

"I tell a story: 'I remember some years ago, I had a manager, and I had been there for 14 days, when he told me 'we must talk tomorrow!'. And I just couldn't work afterwards and eventually I had to go to him and tell him, because I was sure that I had done something wrong.' If I sense that they feel that way, I tell this story and I also tell them what happened, that the manager just wanted to know how I felt. We talk about that when they are invited to a talk, (...)."

When she intervenes, the manager should pay attention to the timing, the way she communicates her wish, and give time. Sometimes however, one has to intervene in a less open way:

"There was one employee that had been outgoing for a while where I could feel that now, oh - she was about to run out of steam, had fallen asleep a little -. What I realised was that if I did nothing, then she would find something else, another team, -. She had to be awakened from the 'lethargy'. So I asked her: 'I need you in the centre, because we must start the project on the philosophy of care and some other stuff. You have technical skills about dementia. What do you say to join?' But no, she told me, she had mentioned already when she was hired that only in an emergency would she be in. She preferred to be outgoing. 'But can we not make a deal?' I asked. 'Because I need you, we need you inside, - just in 3 months? And then you tell me, whether you prefer going out again.' And then after two days in, she came up to me and told me 'Yes! It is the best you could have done for me! (...) I think that you must act it in a way so that employees feel recognized. For what I did, - it was to put her skills into play and say that we needed them. I said nothing about how I felt she was about to go dead. I turned it around."

The manager decided that to make the employee grow to the benefit of the employee and the organization, she could not intervene openly: the manager 'turned it around', i.e. responding to the sensed emotions of the employee she changed the context from a matter of 'burned out' to a matter of much wanted expertise. Not positioning the employee as a problem, she positioned her as an important resource, like the jazz musician who is changing the context to save the situation (Hatch 2002:77). And in so doing she made the employee felt seen, heard, - and prevented further deroute. Some might describe the manager as being manipulative in this case because she did not act in the open. Sometimes intervention might be even more manipulative:

"Y = I can certainly hear when I am doing it [being manipulative].

I = How does it sound?

Y = Often it appears as me being stubbornly persistent; that I carry on and circles around the subject; that I strongly want a result and want to hear them saying it, so they think it is their own.

I = So you bring it up ... ?

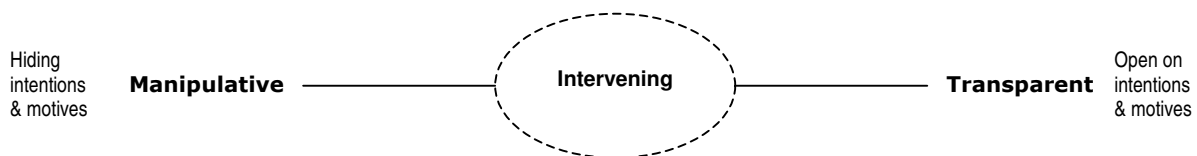
Y = From several different angles and - Yes. Well, you take on a little more ownership if you feel yourself have come up with it."

Waiting for the right words to turn up, then snapping them and carry on from there. Positioning the employees as agents, herself reflexively as manipulator, the manager creates ownership and agency.

"It's about passing the ball to them, so they get the ideas themselves. And then I say 'damn good thinking!'. It may well be that I have had the idea the last half hour, but he said it now in his own words. Then I use his words, quickly snap up the words."

I believe experiences like these are well-known parts of managing organizational life in change processes, working out solutions to the benefit of the organization and the individuals manning it, - working openly, less openly or hiding intentions and motives:

Fig.1



My own experience is that organizational life is very much influenced by opaque collaborations and relations. It is not always easy to detect intentions and motives behind the choices of means among people pursuing their interests. I believe that actions based on hidden motives often would be described as cases of manipulation and dismissed as non-affirmative because of the closed-ness, due to the view that affirmative intervening implies being open about motives, reasons, and intentions etc., i.e. the more transparent the more affirmative. This I think is also a well-reputed experience (Hornstrup 2008:11). However, I think it would be a mistake to consider affirmative action as exclusively opposed to manipulative action. By denouncing all action as non-affirmative, which cannot be fully open on motives and assumptions, a great deal of sound organizational life might be denounced too. There might be actions informed by an ethic of recognition (Honneth 2003), which cannot be fully transparent on motives etc. in the moment. At least everyday practice seems to indicate this as shown by the quote above where the manager is giving the employee a lift in self-confidence and self-esteem by changing the context, i.e. 'turning it around'.

Considering this makes me think that it might be useful to be open for the possibility of affirmative actions not being fully transparent of some motives, wishes, passions, reasons and intentions, i.e. be open to the possibility of manipulative action being affirmative.

2.Non-exclusive or exclusive

Dialogue is often perceived as a fundamental, ethical communicative relation, which is incompatible with the 'game of power', and in a sense represents a limit on power in the localised and personalised sense of that word (Foucault 1978:93-95). As such, dialogue is characterized as a responsive activity (Bakhtin in McNamee 2009:2) based on a participatory attitude, i.e. a 'true reciprocity' or 'presence' (Shotter 1999:10), or as Harlene Anderson points out (Anderson 2003:2):

"Dialogue invites and requires of its participants a sense of mutuality, including genuine respect and sincere interest regarding the other."

The important part of the relation in dialogue concerns communication. Following Niklas Luhmann, communication happens between so called autopoietic systems, i.e. systems that are operatively closed meaning that no system can create elements for another system (see also Maturana 2004:71). In spite of the closed-ness, communication happens and relations are constituted. Luhmann uses the conceptual pair 'penetration / interpenetration' to denote the relations:

'Penetration' occurs when a system unilaterally makes its 'complexity' available to another system. 'Inter-penetration' is when this occurs reciprocally (Luhmann 2000:257). Basically, communication is about the systems' availability to one another. Or as Harlene Anderson puts it, it is a dynamic joint activity (Anderson 2003:2):

"Dialogue involves having space for people to connect and talk with each other. It involves a process in which participants engage with each other in shared or mutual inquiry: jointly examining, thinking, questioning and reflecting. In and through dialogue meaning and understandings are continually interpreted, reinterpreted, clarified, revised, and expanded. These characteristics distinguish dialogue as a dynamic generative joint activity and as different from other language activities such as discussion, debate, or chit chat."

Communication according to Luhmann happens when a message is understood (or adopted) in the sense that the receiver connects to the content, i.e. that the statement is accepted in some way (either confirmed or contradicted or something in between), i.e. a perturbation triggers a structural change (Maturana 2004:71). The point is, that communication occurs recursively in that the receiver relates to the message (Luhmann 2000:261). To be in dialogue is to "engage in the tensionality produced when one holds one's own position while simultaneously remaining open to the (...) position(s) of the other(s)." (Stewart and Zediker in McNamee 2009:6).

An encounter between systems implies that each closed system provides meaning to the actions of the other system in a way that makes sense for the other as well, i.e. the parties are listening in the sense of 'participating in' and 'responding to', as Harlene Anderson suggests (Anderson 2003:3):

"(...) listening is always being in a process of trying to understand what the other person is saying. We try to understand by participating in and responding to what we think the other has said. Participating and responding involve being genuinely curious, asking questions to learn more about what is said (not what you think should have been said) and checking-out to learn if what you think you heard is what the other person hoped you heard."

Or as Hatch describe the encounter in jazz:

"The best listening and responding involves noticing how others are listening and responding to you, - the greater the interpenetration of listening and responding, the better the music sounds." (Hatch 2002:77)

As I see it then, the special about dialogue is interpenetration and recognition: Imagining an encounter between two, there are two possible approaches: 1) Recognizing the difference of perspectives. This is inter-penetration. 2) Not recognizing a difference in perspective. This is penetration, i.e. perturbations that destroy the 'system' (Maturana 2004:71).

The communicative attitude (1) I think is fundamentally informed by the Kantian idea of meeting the other 'always *also* as purpose, never just as means' (Kant 1965:52), i.e. whatever the potential of agency, it should be brought into play and developed. The central point is the contrast between actions that are exclusive in the sense that they are ignoring the perspective of the other, destroying agency as a whole, and actions like in dialogue, which in a fundamental

IV. I-search – Developing my insights

1. The challenge of intervening – my own practice

My ambition was that my research process should create agency for all involved. I wanted it to follow the rationale of jazz jamming basically summarized in 'Listen – pick up – follow – and deliver' (Barge 2009 verbally) described in ch.1.

My interviews were intended to be affirmative conversations or dialogues conducted openly to get the participants into the storytelling to unfold their stories. Having conducted the interviews, I wrote in my in my diary the 22. December 2009:

"Fine conversations, or rather 'fireplace talks'. The model in practice was 30-45 minutes interview in the sense 'join the speaker', where I try to get the focus person into the storytelling. In all the interviews, I opened with my no.1 question. The conversation then progressed in the way that the focus person quickly immersed herself in her story and I restricted my self to 'keep up' by posing additional questions. My questions mainly 'reflect', 'sum-up', 'interpret', and 'check'."

The quote expresses my feeling having ended the interviews. Having analysed my transcripts, however, things look more complex. I will give two examples from my material to illustrate certain points about non-affirmative manipulative interviewing and affirmative manipulative interviewing.

Sequence 1:

The sequence is about a manager, 'Y', telling about principles guiding her practice; we are half way through the conversation.

Listening to the sequence on tape, the 'I' appears very attentive and interested in the subject and the story of 'Y'; 'Y's story is followed by listening sounds such as 'hmm' and low-pitched 'yes, yes, yes' supporting 'Y' telling her story. The 'Y' is very eager to tell about her views, experiences and hopes. To me it sounds like I am doing what Harlene Anderson (2003) describes as the core of listening: 'attending to, interacting with, responding to'; I am asking questions *to participate* in the storytelling (to clarify); but also questions that seek *to guide* the conversation.

- 1 I = As we are now talking about the principles, guidelines, are there other sentences guiding your practice?
- 2 Y = I am very much in to 'openness'; I do not feel comfortable hiding anything. That is, such a situation with dismissals, where I know something that cannot be said. I suffer if doing so; I am actually not very good at it. I am good to enter a team meeting saying: 'I hear these things; these are the trends that there are. This is what I know right now. It may well change, but right now this is what we should be concerned about.' That is, be open about what I know, but remember to tell that it may change. So, it is much about being open.
- 3 I = So openness. And the second thing - it was this about you possessing a secret knowledge?
- 4 Y = Yes, in fact this I don't like - It is no good, I am not at ease with it. So I do best by telling people, what I know and what I do not know.
- 5 I = Yes, but how do you handle the second thing when you are creating agency – for yourself or with others?
- 6 Y = About what? What do you mean specifically?
- 7 I = Well, about possessing a knowledge - you mentioned a dismissal.
- 8 Y = Yes, but one way or another it worked anyway, because none of them, - none of them noticed. It was just me who felt bad about the knowledge I possessed.
- 9 I = But, but, but [impatient], there are you as an agent in this and then there are what you create or avoid happens. How do you maintain the momentum, how do you keep yourself -
(...)
- 13 I = But the situation possessing a knowledge that you cannot give even if you feel

better saying things as they are, - that you may run into again and again, when it is about changes coming from outside?

- 14 *Y = I believe there has only been one time where I was not able to pass a message on what we think. Believe me, even if you think you can keep it secret, - you cannot. Something will be disclosed eventually. Then, I'd rather say: 'We believe that it is this...' Then people know what they have to relate to. 'I tell you what I know, I know no more than this.' This is much better; the other thing gives you a stomachache.*
- 15 *I = If you were to connect this to agency, the last bit?
(...)*

What is happening here? Well, let me take this in two steps: First, I will describe what I do in the sequence, and then afterwards I will reflect on it.

Starting with (1): I as the interviewer is making a summary and then guiding the conversation towards more principles. In (3): the 'I' chooses to use another wording than used by the 'Y'. 'Something that cannot be said' is referred to as 'secret knowledge'. The 'I' pay no attention to the discomfort 'Y' expresses concerning possessing knowledge that cannot be said. The 'I' is reflecting, checking and guiding by introducing a difference (secret knowledge). In (5): the 'I' opens with a 'yes-but' and chooses to follow not the 'openness', which is stressed by 'Y' (telling people, what I know and what I do not know), but sticks to the 'secret knowledge', i.e. the 'second thing'. The 'I' still pay no attention to the discomfort that 'Y' expresses. The 'I' is guiding 'Y' by introducing a difference (how to handle the second thing) thereby positioning the 'Y' as 3.order observer of her own approach. In (7): the 'I' is sticking to his context and reminds 'Y' that she earlier has mentioned a dismissal. The 'I' is guiding by introducing a difference (dismissal). In (9): the 'I' starts impatiently with three times 'but', then explains the context, and then starts posing a question. The 'I' does seemingly not notice the difference of contexts: The 'Y' in the domain of aesthetics and the 'I' in the domain of production. The 'I' is guiding by introducing a difference (momentum). In (13): the 'I' beginning with a 'but', is making a summary and is guiding by introducing a difference (run into again and again) by positioning 'Y' as 2.order observer of her own practice. In (15): the 'I' seemingly not realising that the 'Y' is in the domain of aesthetics implicitly reflects and guides the 'Y' by bringing in the main issue, agency, i.e. affirmatively introducing a difference (agency).

Reading this sequence, I feel a little uncomfortable. What have become of the dialogue? As Frank Barrett suggests sense making is important in relations, i.e. listening and responding using the material in the moment. In this sequence the 'I' sticks to his context almost using no material at all, not listening to what the 'Y' wants acknowledged, what the 'Y' values (Roth 1999). The 'Y' introduces the themes 'openness' and 'knowledge that cannot be said', expresses strong emotions concerning the last, and the 'I' just sticks to the first, what he calls 'secret knowledge'; he does not respond to 'Y's emotions (3) nor hear the exact words and feelings (Roth 1999).

This conversation seems deadlocked because the 'Y' is operating in the aesthetic domain and the 'I' in the domain of production (Lang 1990), and the context is never coordinated. Or the 'I' reflects the difference of domains by impatiently repeating three times 'but' and then 'teaches' 'Y' about the 'right' context thereby positioning the 'Y' as a 1.order 'learner', and reflexively himself as the 'expert' (9). It is obvious that the 'I' did not change the context trying to save the situation like the jazz musician transforming mistakes by changing the context. The 'I' is sticking to his context (7), and while he himself remains in the domain of production, he seemingly tries to persuade 'Y' to switch domain, by the wording 'that you may run into again and again.' (13). One might say that neither did the 'I' accept all offers nor show much generosity with the given material (Barge 2009 verbally). The 'I' breaks plenty of the guidelines offered by Harlene Anderson (2003) and Sallyann Roth (1999) mentioned in ch.1. Perhaps this is just an example of a monologic collapse? Bakhtin remarks according to Shotter: "Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not ac-

knowledge in it any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other... " (Shotter 1999:11).

When 'Y' introduced her topics 'openness' and 'knowledge that cannot be said' the 'I' introduced 'secret knowledge' as an interpretation of 'knowledge that cannot be said'. This wording if accepted, might change the context, the meaning, and thus the direction of the conversation, i.e. 'secrecy' and 'something cannot be said' denote something different. One might accuse the 'I' of manipulating the context. Later in the domain of production, the 'I' seemingly try to persuade 'Y' to switch domain, by the wording 'that you may run into again and again'. None of this is carried out in the open. One might therefore describe this as a subtle way of manipulating 'Y'.

Sequence 2:

'Listening and responding' is a matter of separated minds sharing the same subject or context. Another sequence from my material shows how a conversation might grow unfolding the subject. Due to the metaphors and the improvised questions, there is progression and a pulse. We have done about two thirds of the interview.

The 'Y' has just told about the campaigns they have made to attract new 'customers' (youngsters).

- 1 *Y = But it is the right people at the right positions, no doubt about it.*
- 2 *I = Did you manage to adjust that before?*
- 3 *Y = Yes, with the Section Head and one employee, who did not fit into the group. The Section Head - he is a good tradesman, he is.*
- 4 *I = When you say tradesman, what are the virtues you have in mind?*
- 5 *Y = That is to trade for us. We are a business, a pedagogic shop, in fact. And then it is to get it known how damn good we are. If the municipality has a need, then we solve it. We just need to know what they expect; then to clarify what we are to deliver. Then we adjust.*
- 6 *I = So you run a pedagogic shop?*
- 7 *Y = Yes, I do*
- 8 *I = And the municipality, you say, commissioning?*
- 9 *Y = Yes the commissioning sector is ordering. I push them a little, because the more they need the problem solved, the more I can push them, so we can ensure that we do a decent job. So, it is very much about negotiations.*
- (...)
- 12 *I = I would like to dwell a little by this about the municipality and the 'we' ... Now I relate to agency. What does it mean that you are a pedagogic shop and there is a commissioning sector? Is there a connection between you experiencing agency and that the commissioning sector and you are separated?*
- 13 *Y = [pause]. Well, I know that we are colleagues and that we are in the same organization. We also share the same goal - to create a good solution to the youngsters. But then it stops, because, as it is now, they got their intentions and their economy and they try to get it as cheaply as possible. And we want the best deal, not necessarily the cheapest. So, we might collide. In that sense we're not the same, we have each our own agenda.*
- 14 *I = There is a difference of interests, you say?*
- 15 *Y = Yes, exactly. Definitely, although both want the best for the young. They just want it cheaper.*
- 16 *I = Is it an advantage or is it a ...*
- 17 *Y = [interrupts] It is a super advantage. I think it is. I must admit. (...) It keeps us on toes concerning our professionalism and it keeps them on toes in relation to the financial control. So I actually think it is good. And then it is also exciting, these small trades, - the give and take between us, - Tradesmanship.*
- 18 *I = Okay, well, that is the image you use?*
- 19 *Y = Yes, that it is.*
- 20 *I = In relation to the commissioning sector?*
- 21 *Y = Yes. Sometimes you might yell 'Ai for a shopkeeper!', but that is how it is. It is a game you know. That is what makes it fun too.*
- 22 *I = So, when you say 'Tradesmanship', then there is something mutual in it, that is, you are at level although the one is the commissioning sector?*
- 23 *Y = Yes. We can always say no, and they can always say no. But we very much want the tasks, SO we go as far as possible. It is a bit funny actually, it is.*

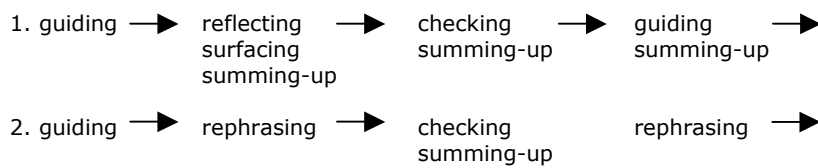
In detail the conversation went as follows: Starting in (2): the 'I' is participating asking for clarification. In (4): the 'I' asks to the meaning of the 'tradesman' metaphor used by 'Y' by introducing 'virtues'. The 'I' could have asked more openly, e.g. what 'Y' meant by 'tradesman' or simply 'say something more'. The 'I' is reflecting and guiding by introducing a difference (virtues). In (6): the 'I' using the exact words reflects, participates and checks by asking to the metaphor 'pedagogic shop' used by 'Y'. The 'I' could have asked more openly using surface questions or questioned 'get it known' or 'adjust happily'. In (8): the 'I' in extension of the metaphor 'pedagogic shop' introduces the metaphor 'commissioning'. The metaphor directs attention towards the commissioning sector as part of the managing structure, as both know. The 'I' could have asked more openly. The 'I' is reflecting, and guiding by introducing a difference (commissioning). In (12): the 'I' connects the metaphors 'the tradesman', 'the pedagogic shop', 'the commissioning role' to the main theme of agency bringing in the overall context. The 'I' is guiding by introducing a difference (agency related to the separation of the municipality as commissioning and the institution). In (14): the 'I' is participating, checking. In (16): the 'I' asks for an assessment by introducing two options, i.e. offering alternative pathways by positioning the 'Y' as 2.order observer of her practice. The 'I' is guiding by introducing a difference (the options). In (18): the 'I' is checking the metaphor Tradesmanship used by 'Y'. In (20): the 'I' checks asking for clarification. In (22): the 'I' not responding to the metaphor 'shopkeeper' used by 'Y' is following up on the metaphor Tradesmanship perhaps reflecting the metaphor 'it is a game' used by 'Y' and asks for mutuality. The 'I' could have asked more openly 'what do you mean by Tradesmanship?' or surface questions or asked to the metaphor 'shopkeeper' used by 'Y'. The 'I' is reflecting and guiding by introducing a difference (mutuality). In (24): the 'I' takes up the main theme 'agency' guiding by introducing a difference (agency).

It is the 'I' who is pushing the conversation forward by guiding questions introducing differences (virtues; commissioning; agency related to the separation of the parties; options; mutuality; and agency); at the same time, the 'I' reflects 'Y'. In doing so the 'I' follows the metaphors 'tradesman', 'pedagogic shop', and 'tradesmanship' offered by 'Y'. The questions are improvised in light of the metaphors, i.e. inspired by the metaphors offered, i.e. perhaps the 'I' is closer to be 'seeing and thinking with another's words in mind'? (Shotter 1999).

I think when I listen to the voices as well as when I analyse the sequence that we play well together. This might be communicative inter-penetration as Luhmann and Hatch speak of it because we share the same context and co-create meaning. I am affirmatively introducing differences, however, I am not always motivating my choices and the questions could be more open, - less controlling.

2. Two styles of intervening

Having ended my interviews, I had the impression that my style of questioning mainly consisted in 'reflecting', 'summing-up', 'interpreting', and 'checking'. I still believe this is my basic approach, replacing 'interpreting' with 'guiding'. Analysing my style in detail, however, I discover two basic styles of interviewing, i.e. a persistent, affirmative but sometimes manipulative unfolding style, fundamentally loyal to the interviewee's thinking; and an insistent, challenging and non-affirmative manipulative style which fasten on a certain subject and stick to it. I think that the two sequences might illustrate an important difference between being affirmative manipulative and non-affirmative manipulative, the question of staying loyal to the wording and context of the other.



In general, I take the lead during the conversations by posing explicit guiding questions. Guiding in (1) happens primarily by introducing differences, options, and metaphors loyal to the context and the wording; reflecting and surfacing, often just listening sounds, help me keeping the focus person in the storytelling, sometimes reflecting is replaced by summing-up. Checking helps me being loyal to the wording and context of the focus person; sometimes checking is cheer clarification, sometimes summing-up works as checking, sometimes as subtle guiding. Sometimes (2) reflecting and guiding is replaced by a subtle change of the wording (rephrasing) and as a consequence, I implicitly change the context.

Listening to the voices of my tapes including the first sequence, recalling the energy, the atmosphere, makes me think whether my research as such after all might fundamentally be considered an example of an affirmative transparent intervention, also due to the degree of information beforehand. A too narrow focus on the wording and techniques might risk reducing the conversation to applied techniques of the right wording (Anderson 2003).

Perhaps the sequence as transcript is an example of an analysis in an epistemological intellectual context consisting of my critical reflection on the texts (Barge 2003:19), an analysis that makes me the distant spectator by positioning me as 3.order observer of a 2.order observation (written sequence) of my lived practice (Harré 2003:22-23). Perhaps my analysis of the sequence is the living fish dissected as a dead fish bleaching its colour; the voices on the tape, however, perhaps not being the living fish, vision the living fish and makes me recall the smell of the fish; the feel of the original context that conveys the relevant meaning to the statements. Perhaps.

Pastoral conversations - reflection:

Dialogue is often perceived as a value constraining power, power in the localised and personalised sense (Foucault 1978:93-95). One might, however, describe the dialogues in my research interviews in terms of control and discipline. The conversations might be considered a complex set of inter-penetrations, which again might be considered a complex set of power relations constantly created and dissolved, i.e. non-localizable controls manifested in the exercise of so-called 'pastoral power':

"(...) the idea of pastoral-power points to the entry into the public realm of the Christian notion of the shepherd tending the individual conscience by techniques such as self-examination and confession." (Bevir 1999:11-12)

The Christian idea and practice behind pastoral power is first and foremost exercised towards the agent imposing on him a duty to 'examine and confess' with the aim of his salvation. Following Foucault one might say that this idea has permeated the organizations applying methods to ensure employee's 'earthly salvation' (Foucault 1978:103), and as in my research urging managers (for their salvation) to constantly reflecting on their identity and practice as managers. In my conversations, both public 'confession' and private 'self-examination' took place, - taped and stored.

V. Concluding remarks and perspectives

My burning question concerns how I manage to balance conflicting accounts and care in complex situations. My research question is: How do I manage issues of agency and power in organizational change processes? I further focused on the questions: What are the themes that characterize agency? What strategies and techniques do managers employ that reflect creating agency?

My answer so far consists of a model presenting five possible strategies and 12 possible moves to deal with concerning agency in change processes. Depending on the condition of the actual staff, you might work back and forth dwelling in the subjects that matter in the moment. Fundamentally, it is all about making sense of change.

5 strategies to promote agency				
Founding agency: Stabilizing capacities	Confidence and security	Clarity and simplicity	Vision and hope	Tradition and continuity
	Let people build up a base to support confidence and security	Create structure and framework to provide clarity and simplicity	Create visions of the future to give hope	Create traditions to promote continuity
	Basing confidence and security	Structuring and framing clarity and simplicity	Visioning faith in future	Traditioning a sense of continuity
Building agency: Co-creating capacities	Familiarity and co-creation	Team-playing	Responsibility	
	Make people acquainted to support co-creation	Prepare people in time the task to make them team players	Delegate responsibilities and duties to create a sense of responsibility	
	Co-creating familiarity	Preparing team playing	Delegating responsibility	
Rooting agency: Reinforcing capacities	Professional identity	Self-esteem		
	Document in writing efforts and benefits develop a professional identity	Document in writing effort and benefits to support people's self-esteem		
	Writing professional identity	Writing self-esteem		
Flexing agency: Developing multi-faceted capacities	Embracing change	Growth		
	Develop an explorative and tentative approach to help people to live in and with the changes	Increase ambition, demands and expectations to make people grow. Meet people a little ahead		
	Developing research attitude	Pushing growth		
Propagating agency: Releasing capacities	Role model			
	Make people experience being pioneers to motivate them becoming role models			
	Pioneering role modelling			

I further asked the questions: In what way are the themes that characterize agency relevant for me? And what are their influences on my practise associated with creating agency?

I believe that the model might work as an overall strategic perspective in change processes guiding interventions or as an analytical tool supplementing a strategic perspective. I will give two reflections, one on me in my own research process and one on a case from my practice.

1) Me in my own research process. Reflecting the strategies, my research process becomes a matter of me handling change:

- Important for the founding of my own agency I notice my alliance with my co-researcher and the clear distribution of tasks and expectations; and I notice clarity on expectations concerning the participants. I also recognize the value of planning ahead to be good to communicate purpose and activities. Keeping things simple I did through careful preparation: Research proposals, Research Question, Ethics Form, planning the research process including screenplays for the conversations, interview guide, mind maps, the memo-1; and of course checking up on all practicalities.
- Important for building my agency I recognise my co-researcher interviewing me and us together creating a mind map; later both co-creating interviews and the workshop.
- Important for rooting my agency I notice the detailed preparation mentioned above and the writing of the memo-1, memo-2, and the first draft of You-search results. And no-doubt the conversations with my co-researcher after each interview.
- Important for flexing my agency I notice the careful preparation mentioned earlier. The better the preparation, i.e. planning, the more flexible, because it is easier for me to improvise within a clear frame and structure, i.e. be well prepared, but be ready to let go. And no-doubt the energetic committed participants.
- Important for propagating my agency, I wonder whether I might be role modeling as far as I present a research process carefully planned, communicated, and fulfilled; a process affirming the participants importance by the attention given and the obligingness inherent the conversations.

An analysis like this might have been a useful part of my preparation carried out before the research process. A corresponding analysis may of course be done relating to the focus persons.

2) Reflecting the strategies on a case of intervention the model might help fostering insights qualifying similar interventions in the future:

- I recently was invited to support a merger of two specialized children care units involving two managers and a number of employees. Some pending among staff was reported as regards collaboration and progression. All waited for the managers but they were passive. I held some meetings with all employees to get a feel of what was at stake and it became evident that there were severe frustrations regarding an unclear future, an uncertainty, which had been there for quite a while. It became equally clear that the genesis of the current management had its own strange history, which was known to the employees of the one unit, but not the other. These insights brought the employees to the edge so to speak; they have had enough but were apparently not able to act in concert.
- Subsequently we divided the process into two: One concerning all together and one regarding the managers only, involving guided dialogues focusing on their collaboration and ambitions. Through this process, it appeared that none of the managers wanted to continue as manager. It also appeared that a major difference in their personal approach to the manager-job, different wage conditions and expectations, have evolved in massive collaborative difficulties. At this stage, we brought in their sector commander. Together we all four created a solution that made collaboration on formally equal terms possible and with a division of labour better matching their personal differences of approach and skills. And we made them enter into conversations on every issue of importance, conversations that had fizzled out during the last year.
- The situation as it unfolded showed that the group of employees lacked 'Vision and hope' (3) and also suffered from a lack of 'Clarity and simplicity' (2) having as a consequence the absence of 'Confidence and security' (1) concerning the future. The result was that the employees remained within the frames of the two separated institutions maintaining continuity related to existent routines and traditions (4). They found clarity in the old roles, but had obvious problems concerning the common 'we' and the inherent co-creation (5), i.e. to share or reallocate roles and responsi-

bilities. This meant that 'Team playing' (6) broadly happened in the old frameworks. I discovered, however, a strong sense of 'Responsibility' (7) in relation to existing tasks, and a strong 'Professional identity' (8) as well as a high professional 'Self-esteem' (9), although lack of security, clarity, and vision reinforced a narrow focus on the concrete citizen services to be delivered. The group's skills concerning 'Embracing change' (10) may be said to be poor; they expressed clear discomfort with the situation. No one, neither the managers nor the employees did position themselves as 'Role models' (12).

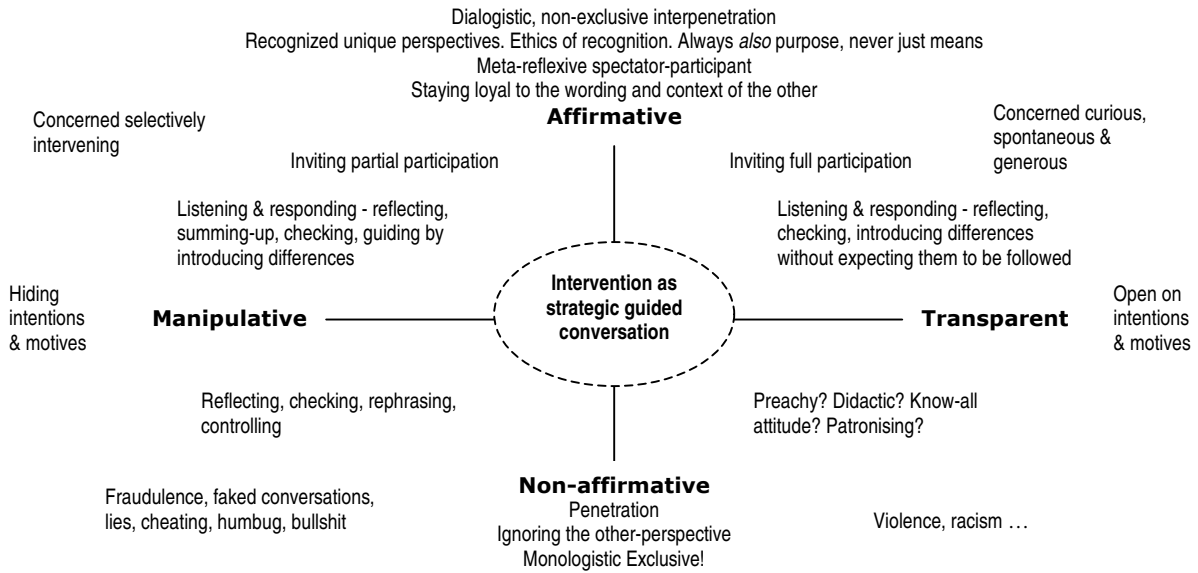
- My entry relates especially to 2,3,4,5: Working with the group to clarify headings, together outlining the vision and goals (3), and how it might be done (2) articulating values and objectives; working out how they might share the different skills along the way, making the employees more familiar with each other personally and in terms of competences (5); in addition, working with both maintaining continuity through the old that they were departing and preparing the group to meet the new (4).
- Concerning the managers, focus was on co-creating confidence and security they could act on (1); making them familiar with each other (5); and making them decide how to play together (6). Focus was further on how they might handle themselves being in the change process (10). By several individual- and joint conversations, I 'met them a little ahead' (11) and we succeeded in basing them co-creating security, clarity and some hope as the first step positioning them as heads and role models (12).

My research has further generated insights concerning fostering agency in change processes. Agency is not a static phenomenon. Maintaining and fostering agency, individual or group, is an ongoing temporarily co-created balance between capacities and claims. When I intervene as in the case above with the purpose of fostering agency, my initiatives should reflect those dynamics, i.e. being flexible inviting the relevant degree of participation applying the relevant degree of transparency. Recognizing the Kantian idea of meeting the other 'always *also* as purpose, never just as means' and Honneth's ethic of recognition, whatever the potential of agency it should be unfolded. Affirmative intervention I believe might therefore be transparent, or manipulative, i.e. inviting full participation being fully transparent on motives, intentions, wishes, assumptions etc., or inviting partial participation not being fully transparent.

I am aware that my understanding of 'manipulation' might be controversial to some, at least it differs from the understandings of Maturana who seemingly regards manipulation solely a matter of exploiting and cheating people (Maturana 2004:51), i.e. using one's insights to promote some behavior in the other that serves one's own interests (Maturana 2004:74). Of course, this is non-affirmative manipulation ruled out by an ethic of recognition and the Kantian dictum.

I suggest one being open to the idea of some manipulations being affirmative. I sum up my open-ended views in fig.3 below:

The end is where we start:



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