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Bouncing back: The road to role mastery is paved with agency

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Abstract

Given the context of a Norwegian professional service firm, this case study design aimed to study the lived experience of organizational actors following a deliberate organizational change. The aim of the thesis was to identify the micro-processes that contribute to variations in agency following a deliberate change. Our analysis revealed how an organizational change triggered five distinct micro-processes. These are: orientation, role alignment, redefining the role, resource identification, and resource mobilization. Further, we found that resources, and specifically how organizational actors identify and mobilize them, act as both an enabler for the trajectory of processes and its own micro-process. In addition, our analysis reveals how resource identification and mobilization are the primary source of variations of agency within each micro-process. Lastly, our analysis reveals how the successful mobilization of resources results in the growth of agency. Thus, this thesis provides insight to both the change literature and institutional theory. Theoretical implications and contributions are discussed.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In a globalized marketplace, with changes to capital markets, technological advances, and a desire to improve competitiveness, the rate of change is ever growing. With the increasing rate of change in our modern organizations, the question turns to who is driving these changes and what is the lived experience of those involved? Change agents have traditionally been defined as 'the individuals or teams that are going to initiate, lead, direct or take direct responsibility for making change happen" (Caldwell, 2003, p. 664). This body of literature was historically concerned with developing taxonomies and describing competencies of change agents. For example, Schön (1963) introduced the notion of the change champion, whereas Stjernberg and Philips (1993) coined the term 'souls of fire', coming from the Swedish word 'eldsjälar' meaning 'driven by burning enthusiasm'. These individuals were argued to be key to driving forth a change as well as the success of the process.

The use of taxonomies and competencies limited the focus of possible change agents to individuals at a manager level. With a limitation of focus, this perspective implied that the role of the change agent is ultimately codifiable (Buchanan, Addicott, Fitzgerald, Ferlie, & Baeza, 2007). This static view of the process is an unrealistic representation of the social process that takes place during an organizational change. It may also fail to capture the lived experience of those that are driving change, as well as the interaction of various agents (Caldwell, 2003). Given these notions, there was a move towards rethinking the capacity for agentic behaviour, as more distributed in nature. The scholarly debate has moved to see change as a less well-defined concept and as a more dispersed and distributed responsibility in the organization (Buchanan, Claydon, & Doyle, 1999).

With this paradigm shift, the literature has seen an increasing number of studies looking at internal agents and the various conditions for their behaviour and its implications on organizations. In adopting a wider view of change agents and a broader application of agency, this project assumes that each individual making up the organization is now seen as a potential agent, having and exerting various levels of agency (Barratt-Pugh & Bahn, 2014). This is supported by the work of Ottaway who stated that we are all agents and that engaging in change processes is a "normal part of everyone's life" (1983, p. 379). This argument falls in line with how change can be seen as a continuous process (Weick & Quinn, 1999). "The distinctive quality of continuous change is the idea that small continuous adjustments, created simultaneously across units, can cumulate and create substantial change" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 375).

Despite the theoretical shift around change and organizational actors as agents, we observe how top-down approaches to change remain prevalent in organizations. Organizations are pressured to carry out smaller and larger organizational changes in response to market and shareholder pressures. These deliberate changes are difficult to manage and have been associated with insecurity and uncertainty for all involved (Saksvik, Tvedt, Nytrø, Andersen, Andersen, Buvik, & Torvatn, 2007). In the middle of and in the aftermath of these top-down changes, there are individual organizational actors living and responding continuously to their new reality. So how do these actors respond to this jolt in their lived experience? What role does agency play in how actors are able to bounce back to a state of equilibrium? Given the role of agency in this process, what are the inherent variations in the lived experience? It is the intent of our study to come to a deeper understanding of these issues.

Combining the theoretical paradigm shift towards continuous change with the reality of deliberate change, we adopt the view that change processes can be both deliberate and continuous (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Carlsen & Kvalnes, 2015). If we intend to develop an understanding of organizational actors as potential agents we have to move the level of analysis to the micro-level. This involves studying how individuals live their lives and what they do in their everyday practice in the organizational field. Within the practice-research, findings from such studies have been conceptualized as micro-processes and we will also be working accordingly (i.e. Seo & Creed, 2002). A more detailed survey of the literature forming the backdrop of our study will be reviewed in the subsequent section.

Given this focus of our study, we have not been able to identify existing research that looks at the individual variation in agency among employees in the period following an official change. This notion is supported by Vallas (2006) who points out specifically the lack of understanding of how employees perceive, understand, and subsequently respond to the change they are confronted with. Lastly, there are no longitudinal research studies on the fluctuating agency in a contextual setting. We hope to fill this knowledge gap.

1.2 Research Question

In response to the limited existing studies on the lived experience of organizational actors following a deliberate change, our research question is as follows:

What are the micro-processes that contribute to individual variation in agency, following a deliberate organization change process?

1.3 Outline of Thesis

In order to address our research question, the remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. Part 2 reviews the literature on agency, situating the concept in the current literature before moving into a discussion around our operationalization of agency. Part 3 outlines our methodological choices, including our choice of design, analysis and research context. Part 4 presents four case studies, in order to bring the reader closer into the lived experience of four of our informants. This will form the backdrop of the subsequent presentation of findings and discussion. Part 5 is the presentation and analysis of our empirical data, highlighting the presence of five distinct micro-processes and their associated impact on agency. Finally, in the last part of our thesis, we summarize and discuss our findings, before highlighting the contributions, limitations and suggestions for future studies.

PART II: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

This section will review the literature on agency through a number of steps. First, we will situate the concept in the institutional theory literature, and the development of this debate over the last decades. Second, we will discuss the role of micro-processes in the study of agency. Third, we will present Bandura's (2000; 2001; 2018) model of agency as our operationalization of the concept. This will be compared to the model by Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) as we will employ this in our general discussion in section 6.2.

2.2 Agency in Institutional Theory

Human agency has been the topic of study for different disciplines for decades. Inden (1990, p. 23) defines the concept as

> "The realized capacity of people to act upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex interrelationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view".

As Holland and her colleagues point out, the conundrum, or as others has called it, the paradox, of the debate around agency is the contraction between individuals as social products and social producers (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Agency as a concept resides in the field of institutional theory, and has been defined as an action-theoretic concept (Caldwell, 2005). Within institutional theory, institutional logics are important. These logics can be defined as the "shared understanding of the goals pursued and the means to pursue them" (Doldor, Sealy, & Vinnicombe, 2016, p. 286). In capturing the "assumptions, values, beliefs and rules" of the organization, the logics provide the individuals with roadmaps for and legitimacy of actions (Thornton & Occasio, 1999, p. 804). In theory, these logics guide behaviour for all organizational agents. This forms the backdrop for how scholarly debate has conceived of agency as historically and structurally determined (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), with an associated embeddedness (Seo & Creed, 2002). Embeddedness, or the degree to which actors and their actions are linked to their social context (Reay, Golden-Biddle, & German, 2006), has been seen as a constraint to action. Within this paradigm of thinking, agency and embeddedness were seen as a duality. Change agency was said to take place when a given actor is less embedded or become less embedded because of particular events (Seo & Creed, 2002). This resulted in said paradox and the following question: “How can actors change institutions if their actions, intentions, and rationality are all conditioned by the very institution they wish to change?"(Holm, 1995, p. 398).

This duality, and the “iron cage of determinism” (Carlsen & Välikangas, 2017), has since been challenged. Bourdieu (1977) argues that one cannot understand change agency without understanding the interplay between the individual and the social structures in which the actor operates. Bourdieu’s analysis of agency argues that “individual agents choose actions congruent with their complex relations within their respective fields and in recognition of their varied resources” (Nentwich, Ozbilgin, & Tatl, 2014, p. 237). Furthermore, Doldor and colleagues argue that institutional logics, and specifically competing institutional logics, provide opportunity for enacted agency and change (Doldor et al., 2016). Similarly, scholars argued that instead of acting as a constraint, embeddedness is an opportunity to enact change (Reay et al., 2006). The study found that being highly embedded allowed an actor to employ his or her network and intimate knowledge of the organization in order to legitimize new institutional logics.

In the more recent paradigm, it is argued that by focusing too much on embeddedness and structural determinism we have overlooked the capacity of the individual to enact agency and act as a change agent (Battilana, Leca & Boxenbaum, 2009). Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argued that actors should be viewed as “culturally competent with strong practical skills and sensibility who creatively navigate within their organizational fields” (p. 220). In seeing actors as both more independent and capable of shaping their institutional fields, scholars have shifted focus to understand agency as more distributed and emergent in nature, as well arising from everyday practices (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca., 2011; Zundel, Holt, & Cornelissen, 2013; Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2013).

2.3 Micro-processes and Agency

To get a more grounded understanding of how agency is produced, institutional work theory has sought how agency emerge and produce in everyday practices (Lawrence et al., 2011). Seo and Creed (2002) talk about this praxis as a possible site for agency. “Praxis is the free and creative reconstruction of social pattern on the basis of a reasoned analysis of both the limits and the potential of present social forms” (Seo & Creed, 2002, p. 225). With the shift in focus to the individual and its everyday practices, attention was also turned to the micro-level processes or micro-processes that these individuals engaged in, in order to transform their institutional fields. For example, Reay and colleagues (2006) looked at how nurse practitioners in Alberta engaged in micro-processes in order to legitimize their way of working in regional health districts. They found that the actors worked strategically to (1) find opportunities to introduce their new way of working, (2) fit it into existing systems and structure, and lastly (3) prove the value of the new way of working to colleagues. Through these micro-processes and what the authors call “small wins”, they were over time able to generate change at the macro-level (Reay et al., 2006, p. 990). Creed, deJordy, and Lok (2010) looked at how LGBT ministers who experienced an institutional contradiction between their role in the church and their identities as LGBT ministers could act as agents of institutional change. They found that the actors engaged in micro-processes consisting of identity work and role redefinition in order to overcome contradictory logics and enact change in their congregations. Further, the study points out the importance of embodied identity work in resolving the experience of institutional contradiction (Creed et al., 2010).

Doldor and colleagues (2016) looked at how UK headhunters became “accidental activist” in diversity management. Where Creed et al (2010) found that actors became change agents through being marginalized in their respective context, this study found that individuals became institutional change agents by being put in the spotlight in their context. Further, by looking at how female recruiters redefined their role as “gatekeepers of the elite labour market” through utilizing institutional contradictions, the study showed how institutional change does not have to only be strategic and driven by identity work, but can also be reactive and driven from impersonal reasons.

In their discussion of praxis, Seo & Creed (2002) conceptualize it as a political action in relation to institutional contradictions. They further position praxis as a potential solution to “the iron cage of determinism”. ”Praxis may be a core concept for reconciling two seemingly incompatible properties of institutional theory: institutional embeddedness and transformational agency” (Seo & Creed, 2002, p. 223). Recent research challenge the idea that agency is only political, with for example Bridwell-Mitchell (2016) arguing that agency can also arise under conditions of ambiguity and the uncertainty of solving practical dilemmas rather than political conflicts. Similarly, scholars have repositioned how we view resistance to change, focusing on the micro-processes of sensemaking and identity that actors go through during ambiguous times (Sonenshein, 2014; Ford, Ford, & D’Amelio, 2008). “Resistance as a self-serving and self-fulfilling label given by change agents trying to make sense of change recipients reactions of change initiatives, rather than a description of an objective reality” (Ford et al., 2008, p. 363).

Common for these processes was that the changes consisted of small adjustments over time by multiple individuals, and not necessarily a revolution carried out by a ‘heroic’ change agent. Given that these individuals all act according to their own values and interests, interpret their surroundings, and in some cases carry out intentional changes for the organization, scholars have voiced a need for a deeper understanding of these ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ (Battilana, 2006; Battilana et al., 2009). In light of our research context (multinational company), studies have also shown that the resulting micro-processes is a combination of both “large-scale institutional dynamics and how actors understand and interpret these dynamics given the local context in which they operate” (Mosley & Charnley, 2014, p. 245). These findings indicate therefore a push and pull between mandated institutional logics and the sensemaking on the ground, in terms of the everyday changes ultimately implemented. Organizations and by extension the people that make up the organizations should therefore be thought of as "interpretative mechanisms that filter, decode and translate the semiotics of broader social systems" (Suddaby, 2010, p. 19). This moves the discussion beyond ‘grand theories of institutions’

(Lawrence et al., 2011) to understand how different forms of agency contribute to continuous and emergent transformations.

2.4 Operationalization of Agency

In line with our research interest in the lived experience of agents in the aftermath of a deliberate change, with particular focus on micro-processes, Bandura's (2000; 2018) conceptualization of agency became a natural choice for our operationalization. Bandura works within the social-cognitive theory discipline, and advocates for the interactive, socially constructed and temporal nature of agency (2006). Further, in his work, he has written on the pursuit of personal and organizational goals and the impact of self-efficacy (2001), which will be evident in subsequent sections as important to our informants. He stated that "to be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances" (Bandura, 2006, p. 164). In his work on agency, he conceptualize four core properties of human agency; intentionality, self-reflectiveness, self-reactiveness and forethought (2006; 2018). In later years, he speaks of the latter three of the core properties, but we find that the property of intentionality remains of importance to our study and have included it in our operationalization. We now briefly introduce these four core properties. First, by intentionality, Bandura (2006) spoke about the intentions of an actor in terms of taking actions, drafting strategies and making plans. Second, in forethought lies the capacity for "temporal extension of agency" in terms of future plans and more. In this feature, the actor will make goals and anticipate likely outcomes (2006, p. 164). Third, by self-reactiveness, he claims that "agent are not only planners and forethinkers, they are also self-regulators" (2006, p. 165). This implies that actors have the capacity to regulate their action based on the feedback given from their environment, in order to take action that generates positive outcomes (i.e self-worth, confidence, happiness). Lastly, the property of self-reflectiveness, is more of a meta-cognitive capability of agents to self-examine their own limits and strengths. He argues that this results in an awareness of their own self-efficacy for a particular course of action. Given these properties, it is possible to identify manifestations of agency in empirical data. Thus, one final reason why we chose this operationalization is due to our interest in the manifestations of agency in the day-to-day life of our informants and how their may or may not be variations in play.

The academic conversation around agency in today's literature is mainly based on the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998). They conceptualized agency as encompassing three dimensions: an iterational one, which anchors action in the past through the replication of habitual routines; a projective one, which enables the envisioning of future courses of action; and a pragmatic-evaluative one, which modifies action in response to currently evolving situations. It is evident that there are similarities between the two frameworks, and that they are both ultimately appropriate to assess the variations of agency present in our case context. Emirbayer and Mische's model specifically accounts "for variability and change in actors' capacities for imaginative and critical intervention in the diverse contexts in which they act" (1998, p. 970). However, the choice of operationalization and model ultimately fell to Bandura (2001; 2006; 2018) due to the more clear differentiation between the different manifestations of agency.

PART III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Abductive Inquiry

When choosing a method design, the traditional choice of reasoning has been between inductive and deductive forms of reasoning. Inductive models of reasoning involves "developing theory from practice using an interpretive epistemology", while deductive models involves "testing theory against practice using a positivist epistemology" (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006 in Martela, 2012, p. 95). Both inductive and deductive have problems as forms of inference suitable for organizational research (Martela, 2012). Because of the lack of inductive and inductive reasoning, a third form of reasoning it has been argued for. Charles S.Peirce (1903/1998a) proposed a new form of reasoning called abductive reasoning, sometimes referred to as "inference to the best explanation" (Piecer, 1998b [1903], p. 216). Abductive reasoning can be defined as "the process of reasoning in which explanations are formed and evaluated" (Magnani 2001, p.18). According to Magnani (2001), abductive reasoning is a process of forming an explanatory hypothesis for poorly defined phenomena. In abductive inquiry the researcher starts with a situation in need of explanation. This situation initiates a process where the researcher uses imagination to come up with new ways of seeing matters. Based on previous theoretical explanations, one's pre understanding and observations, the aim of the abductive inference is to arrive at the best available explanation taking all into account (Martela, 2012). “The result of abductive reasoning is not the final truth about the matter- because of the fallibilism such a thing is unobtainable - but a tentative hypothesis that nevertheless would best explain the evidence and has the most potential to provide practical results” (Martela, 2012, p.98). In this case, ‘best’ means the best explanation from the point of view of the particular researcher or research community. The iterative process of abduction in which one uses different theoretical perspectives, utilize existing data and the gathering of new data, the aim is to reach an appropriate explanation. Abduction can therefore be conceived as a learning process, in which the researcher takes an active role in the creation of new knowledge (Prawat, 1999). Given the theoretical discussions and limited understanding of the variations in individual change agency, we deem abductive inquiry to be appropriate to our exploration of the ‘best’ understanding of the phenomena. This methodological choice is the reason why we are not operating with a predefined operationalization of change agency, but will develop an operationalization based on learning and discussions within the research field.

3.2 Research Design and Data Collection

The project will be a longitudinal case study design and will use a variety of methods to build the case, namely semi-structured interviews, participant observation, as well as responses to an internal change survey made available to the project. Triangulation, or the use of different methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of a context and ultimately the construct in question, has been shown to enhance the quality and credibility of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1999). It has also been thought of as a strategy to test validity of the findings, through the convergence of information coming from a variety of sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, Dicenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). In terms of data collection, the project ran over three phases. As presented above, the theoretical grounding for our research approach is abductive inquiry. Abductive inquiry argues for the necessity for the “constant movement back and forth between empirical data and theory” (Martela, 2012). Taking inspiration from Harrison and Rouse (2014), each of our phases has three modes: reviewing the literature mode, data collection mode, and data analysis mode (not necessarily in that order). This way of progressing our project supports the choice of abductive inquiry as our theoretical grounding.

The first phase consisted of an eight-week placement in the case context. Throughout this period, the researcher was able to learn about the organization in a natural setting (Kawulich, 2005), as he was working on an internal project. These participant observations, as well as responses to an internal change survey sent out by the HR department, helped form an overall impression of the case context, and acted as a pilot. The questions used in the survey can be found in the appendix. This pilot helped form our initial hypotheses about the processes that were taking place in regards to change agency in the organization, provided guidelines for sampling, and a basis for an interview guide (deWalt & deWalt, 2002). After the pilot we looked to academic literature to craft an interview guide.

We subsequently conducted ten semi-structured interviews in the second phase, consisting of six open-ended questions. These questions were designed to capture the lived experience of the respondents given the recent official change in the organization. We were particularly interested in hearing the informants' reflections about the challenges and opportunities they were facing. These ten individuals were sampled using a purposeful sample strategy (Patton, 2001). "The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling" (Patton, 1999, p. 169). It was the aim of this sampling exercise to end up with a sample that represented the full spectrum of rich experiences of the organizational change and who could speak about it from different perspectives. In the end, our sample represented individuals from different units, levels of expertise, and perceived variation in experiencing change. However, there was no deliberate stratification along these values. Names and a short description of the informants can be found in Table 1 below. The choice of the ten individuals was done by the HR Manager and is therefore independent of the researcher's bias in selection.

Table 1: Overview of Informants	
Name	**Role**
Emma	Consultant / Sales associate
Sarah	Client business developer
Matt	Product business developer
Jessica	Partner business developer
Britney	Client business developer
Bob	Product business developer
Tom	Partner business developer
Sam	Partner business developer
Peter	Sales manager
Susan	Product business developer

In the third phase, we conducted follow-up interviews with the same informants, but were only able to retain six of the ten. In this round of interviews, we asked the informants to reflect upon the past nine months since the change. This reflection was of particular interest due to our focus on enacted agency, which can only be assessed retroactively. In addition, we wanted to capture their perspective on the lived experience in that moment and how they saw their place in the organization moving forward. The interview guide for the third phase was based on first-order coding and narrative analysis from the second phase. The interview guide used in both interviews can be found in the Appendix. In line with our purposeful sampling, we sampled four of our six full cases for the purpose of description and analysis in this paper (Sarah, Emma, Matt and Jessica). These are presented in detail in the subsequent chapter. This sampling was in order to showcase the variation and rich description of these cases in relation to our research question. Having said that, our Findings chapter does at times employ the totality of data or reference persons outside of the four cases in order to highlight specifics of our analysis.

3.3 Research Context

This study focuses on an organization (referred to as the 'Company' from here onwards) based in Norway. The Company has close to 300 employees and is a part of a multinational corporation, while operating as an independent subsidiary. Starting with a change in top global leadership some years back, the Company has been on a transformation journey. This journey has been strategically grounded in changing the way the Company works as well as its offering to the global market in order to remain competitive. The Company is moving to servitization, defined as "the innovation of an organization's capabilities and processes to shift from selling products to selling integrated products and services that deliver value in use" (Baines, Lightfoot, Benedettini, & Kay, 2009).

Though annual smaller organizational changes have come to be expected at the start of each fiscal year, 2017 brought the most significant change in the past decade. The organizational change was announced at the beginning of the summer, and immediately put into action. The scope of the change included 190 individuals, and resulted in the creation of new company verticals and cross-vertical teams. This change was primarily directed towards the sales and customer-facing units of the Company, as well as some administrative and support roles. The process consisted of two components. First, with the creation of new verticals and teams, each employee had to be mapped and evaluated up against the roles available in the new organization. Second, the Company was mandated to remove 30 roles, in addition to several roles being centralized and moved to the regional office. In effect, most employees were mapped to a new role, others were asked to leave, and some requested to leave. Change was introduced in order fulfill the new company vision as well as to introduce new ways of working internally and with customers. At the core of this new way of working is a explicit freedom to generate new hypotheses on how to best work with the customers. During the month following the announcement of the change, leadership vocally encouraged each employee to test out these hypotheses on clients, learn, adjust and report back. Further, there was a shift to focus not only on sales, but also on long-term relationships, continuous contact and customer satisfaction.

The new organizational structure was ‘landed’ and announced in the middle of August 2017, with employees officially entering their new roles as of September 1st. Nearly all employees ‘in scope’ have new role descriptions, and a new team made up of new colleagues. The change has been described as a way to prepare the Company for the future. It comes at a time of financial prosperity and is not a result of stakeholder pressure. The official change period, in terms of the Leadership Team’s perceived unfreeze, change, and refreeze (Lewin, 1951), was carried out over the course of approximately 8 weeks.

3.4 Data Analysis

Given our research question and methodological choices, we found that grounded theory was appropriate in terms of our analysis (Glaser, Strauss, & Strutzel 1968; Suddaby, 2006). Our focus throughout the process was developing an understanding for how the informants of our case interpret their subjective reality, which is at the core of this analytical framework (Suddaby, 2006). Grounded theory is concerned with staying true to the reality of the informants and presenting their reality from their point of view (Van Maanen, 1979). Writing on the topic, Suddaby argues that grounded theory is particularly appropriate in situations where the “researchers have an interesting phenomenon without explanation and from which they seek to “discover theory from data”” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 636). Given our starting point for the project, an eight-week period of observation, this was exactly the position we were in when we decided to pursue the phenomenon. Linking back to our methodological choice of abductive inquiry, grounded theory is about imaginative inquiry, where one's discovery is rooted in existing theoretical frameworks and the actual data (Martela, 2012, p.122). Grounded theory, in accordance with abductive inquiry, is about “moving between induction and deduction while practicing the constant comparative method” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 639).

In line with the three phases of data gathering, the analysis also consisted of multiple steps. After the first phase, we gathered all the information collected about the organizational setting and participants, and submitted an essay on the organizational change process for another course. This became the basis of asking “what is really going on here?” and a foundation for the first interview guide. The data from the second phase was transcribed and analysed through narrative analysis and first-order coding was generated. This coding exercise consisted of open and axial coding, but refrain from selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The reason for not selectively coding at this point was because we wanted to keep our inquiry open going into the third phase. Given the fact that we were primarily interested in manifestations of agency in a longitudinal perspective, we knew evidence of this would primarily appear in the second interview. The first-order codes of the first interview provided a deeper understanding of "what is the real issue here?" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.143).

Following the third phase, the analysis was done in multiple iterations. First, we grouped findings into themes, in order to come up with a complete list of the various processes in play. Second, we went back to the data to in order to make sense of the initial concepts. Third, we considered the full trajectory of each informant, starting from August 2017 to April 2018. In line with Martha Feldman's approach, of "going where the energy is", we subsequently wrote up vignettes for four of the six cases (Cloutier, C, 2014, November 10). These vignettes described each informant and how they see their world, at least during the times they shared with us. This again became a source of data, generating new questions which required us to dive back into the data to unpack these new questions. It was based on these vignettes and later cases that we were able to identify our process model, consisting of our five second-order codes or micro-processes. This was done in order to attempt to capture the subjective reality of our informants. Lastly, when looking back, we realize that our analysis carried on into our writing. As Feldman (2000) states, when one tries to explain what one has discovered, one must make decisions to shape the data in a way that makes sense to the reader. Given our collaborative partnership in writing, we continued making sense of each of our findings and analysing each case until the end.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Having presented our design and analysis approach, we address the ethical considerations of the study. This project follows the appropriate ethical considerations by operating with informed consent, ensured anonymity and confidentiality, and the possibility to withdraw from the study at any time. As of

January 1st 2018, the project had approval from The Data Protection Official for Research, at the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Personvernombudet). The audio records of the interviews were deleted after they were transcribed. The transcripts will also be deleted after submission of this thesis, and will not be used for further research. All informants as well as the case organization were provided with new identities.

PART IV: VIGNETTES

In this section, we briefly introduce four of our informants, who we followed from August 2017 to April 2018. These are the cases we will be presenting in the following chapter as they represent the greatest variation of our data. Having said, we will also introduce examples from other informants in sections where we deem this useful.

4.1 Sarah

Although Sarah was happy with some of the elements of her old role, she described the organizational change as “a relief and an opportunity to do something completely different”. Sarah has been with the Company for nine years and has held a number of roles during her time. The organizational change brought about a drastic change, moving her from managing a small team to being Client Business Developer for a specific industry. Sarah enjoyed being a leader and the people in her team, but struggled to fulfil her duties, “due to the lack of training and coaching”.

When we first met Sarah, she had recently started in her new role as Client Business Developer and was trying to navigate the role. Her task is to create opportunities, sell as much as possible and be an industry expert, but there is no set way to do this. As she puts it “you can sort of make up your path as you go, but that don’t bother me”. Six months later, even though Sarah expressed that she was more confident in her role (“I have started to get to know my clients even better”), she expressed that she “does not have any examples of situations where she felt a sense of achievement” from the past six months. It appeared that this was a result of unfortunate outcomes in deals as well as recent management behaviour.

In the fall of 2017, she worked on a major deal and received praise and attention from management in the process. Unfortunately, despite the deal appearing to be a “done deal”, the deal fell through.

> “There was no one who came up to me and gave me a pat on the back, asking me how I was doing. For me, that was… just to get that pat on the back or a “good job”, would have made me feel more appreciated maybe. Now I felt that “we are only concerned with results, not the people”, and that I had done a shit job for not landing the deal. You feel it… even though they did not say anything, the fact that they did not say anything becomes negatively charged in a way. So that is something that I am still dealing with”.

The first step towards creating “opportunities” is a meeting with a C-level contact at her clients. Without prior knowledge and network in the industry, setting up these meetings has taken up a lot of her time. After having worked for months to get a number of these meetings, and having a sense of accomplishment, she was told by the CEO and her manager that she would not be a part of the meetings after all. This happened multiple times, and she felt left out of the conversation with her own clients. Ultimately, she questioned: “Is it because I am not up to their standards? I do not think so… but it sort of feels that way”.

Given these setbacks, Sarah has focused her energy on “creating an ecosystem around her industry” and becoming an industry expert when we meet her for the second interview. One of the ways she has done this is through arranging roundtable discussions, where she has brought in relevant speakers and invited her clients. She has also taken active steps to be present at different events, and offering to speak at panels. Through these initiatives, she has garnered praise from both attendants and colleagues. She explains how the contact with her clients is what truly drives her and makes the job enjoyable.

> “Being at these events, speaking, and meeting people is so much fun! This is really what I love about the role. I do not think it is all that fun to follow up on opportunities, use our CRM system and stuff like that.. well, it is kinda fun when things go well”.

4.2 Matt

Matt is relatively young in the game and has only been in Microsoft for three years. Before the organizational change Matt was responsible for sales of a specific product group. The organizational change brought increased workload, a new industry, and responsibility for a brand new portfolio of premium client relationships. According to Matt "[he] has been through a big change in terms of how [he] now has to think and how [his] customers think". Prior to the change, Matt had the opportunity to talk to the CEO about his future in the Company. In the conversation, he asked for more challenges, and that is exactly what he got. When they announced his new role, this did not come as a surprise. Six months later, Matt expressed how his work life had become very hectic. Despite going from having some spare time to no spare time, Matt is optimistic. "I think it is all really exciting".

Speaking of the possibility to take initiative, Matt explains that "within certain boundaries you can shape your own role. And where the frames are now not specified, you are given a lot of freedom". He further explains that it is important to use that freedom to do something great and to do something that is different from what has been done before. As he puts it, "now is our chance". Taking initiative from day one in the company, Matt is eager to learn. "From the day I started here, I was encouraged to ask silly questions and take initiative. I find the culture here very positive".

Matt is a high-performer who in the 10 months has achieved a lot. He has been given access to client executives, landed major deals, and have been able to shape his own role. Further, he expresses his appreciation for the team around him and his immediate supervisors, who he collaborates with on a daily basis. "It gives me a strong sense of achievement" he ended, when explaining how he had been given the chance to work closely with a client CEO. As a result, he is a feeling the jealousy of some of his older colleagues, but seem unfazed by this. In addition, he sees himself as a go-to-guy on a variety of topics, and shares how multiple people lean on him for support. "My colleagues leans on me when it gets challenging".

4.3 Emma

Emma has been with the Company for almost five years, moving through the different units of the company. She started out in Human Resources (HR), but made a transition into a customer-facing role after three years. Her new role is as a consultant and sales associate. As a result of the organizational change, she went from having 600 to 5 clients, where the focus now is on building a relationship as a trusted advisor. She describes the difference:

> “I was just placed in this role, but there was no interview process nor an introduction to what the role actually entails. The role I have been given is way more technical and just a different role. There is a lot of challenges. In this new role I have a portfolio of customers that I am responsible for following up, because they have a premium deal with us. The major difference is that I did not choose this role myself”.

Emma is definitely feeling the stretch of her new role, given both her personal abilities and the structural difference between her roles in the company. Her new role and her clients ask for technical knowledge, and she does not have a technical background. Furthermore, she “went from one end of the organization to the other”. However, she has gotten a lot of positive response and feedback from her manager, and this provides a level of safety and affirmation in her day-to-day work. She has weekly meetings with her manager where she is able to discuss her different ideas. Being new to a sales role, Emma is still trying to figure out how to navigate the role. However, she knows she is not driven by the numbers, but customer satisfaction and the relationship she manages to build with her clients.

Despite feeling a sense of questioning, she is grateful that the people who “mapped” her to this new position believes she is a good fit and has something to offer in the role. She is proud of the work she has managed to do when we meet her for the second interview. “I am very pleased with what I have managed to accomplish, because it actually requires a lot of trust considering how short time I have been in the role. It is fun to see how fast I was able to establish trust with the client”. She thinks chemistry with the client is everything and calls herself a people-person. When asked why she was successful with one of her client, she explained;

> "I think this comes from having a good relationship to the other teams around you, and that we collaborate on how we are to work with our client. What is kind of funny with this particular client is that he only calls me, no matter what. He will say "deal with Emma, she is the only one I will deal with". That is a lot of fun, because the role I have is a role of trust which means you are spending a lot of time with your client. As I always take the challenges they give me, they call me. I never call in order to try and sell something, which is why they call me. When they contact me I always get information and insight into their company, which in turn means I can play ball with the people around me [to drive sales]".

Emma has a good standing in the company, and is well liked by her colleagues and clients. Within the company, she is often used as a connector of people, as she knows almost everyone who works in the company from her HR days.

4.4 Jessica

For Jessica, the organizational change has been more about the formal details than a new role. She still has one major partner that she is responsible for, but has been given a new title as well as a couple of smaller partners. In the first interview, she stated "For me, what I do in my day-to-day job is not all that different, but there are of course clear differences in the role description of the role I had before and my new role". When we spoke to her in the second interview, she shared how she is having a hard time explaining to the major partner that she is not suppose to do her old tasks.

> "They are a little frustrated, because what my role was before.. well they do not really know who to ask for help about those things [that I used to do]. And I do not like it when the partner gets frustrated.. so.. but I don't really have time to do all those things they are asking of me , but I think it is difficult not to do them. So it ends up being a lot of late hours".

Even though there are similarities between the old and new role, Jessica experiences a state of "Jessica does things she does not know". She recognizes that she is frequently uncomfortable, but emphasizes that in order to work in the Company you have to be comfortable being uncomfortable. Despite this feeling of not knowing what she is doing, she shares "You feel like your employer believes in you [when they put you in this position], and when your employer believes in you, this gives you confidence, right?" In general, she approaches her new challenges with a yearning to learn more. She is drawn to people who knows more than she does, and is constantly seeking relationship with people who are better than herself. “I love to learn. There are so many experts on the 8th floor who I've brought with me to meetings with clients, and who I can get to help on whatever I'm working on”. In exchange she likes that she can teach some of her knowledge back, as she puts it, “making each other good”.

After four years in the organization, Jessica expresses a great enthusiasm for the Company and a sense of support from multiple sources.

> “I think I have a great job here, I think it is really great to work in the Company and I really enjoy it. I think it is great how the Company wants to develop their employees. [...] I think they have been successful in my unit with creating a good vibe and atmosphere [after the change] where we have had good dialogue around what happened. There is a great rhythm to our Monday meetings and there are great leaders in the unit”.

For Jessica, the opportunity to shape her role is always present. “It is… freedom, you always have the freedom to decide how you do your job as long as you meet your targets. It has been like that in all my jobs”. She recognizes that no one really knows how they are going to solve this situation, and “that we make the road as we go along”, without fussing too much about it. “Right now, everything is new, but everyone is experiencing it.. in a way, you just gotta do it. Take the tasks, and just do it”. Having said that, she believes there is a need for looking for new ways of doing things:

> “You have to force yourself, I think, to think in new ways. In a way, not think that ‘I have always done it this way’, because we are not supposed to do as we always have. We are supposed to work in a completely new way”.

PART V: FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Through our analysis, we found that our informants go through a number of micro-processes involving variations and growth of agency following a deliberate change. Further, we found that resources, and specifically how organizational actors identify and mobilize them, act as both an enabler for the trajectory of processes and its own micro-process. In addition, our analysis reveals how resources are the primary source of variations of agency within each micro-process. Lastly, our analysis reveals how the successful mobilization of resources results in the growth of agency, as agents become more equipped to meet future changes and day-to-day challenges. Our data revealed five distinct micro-processes; role alignment, role evaluation, role redefinition, resource identification, and resource mobilization. The definitions of these micro-processes are presented in Table 2, in combination with examples of behaviour from the empirical data and the link to resources.

Figure 1: Process model

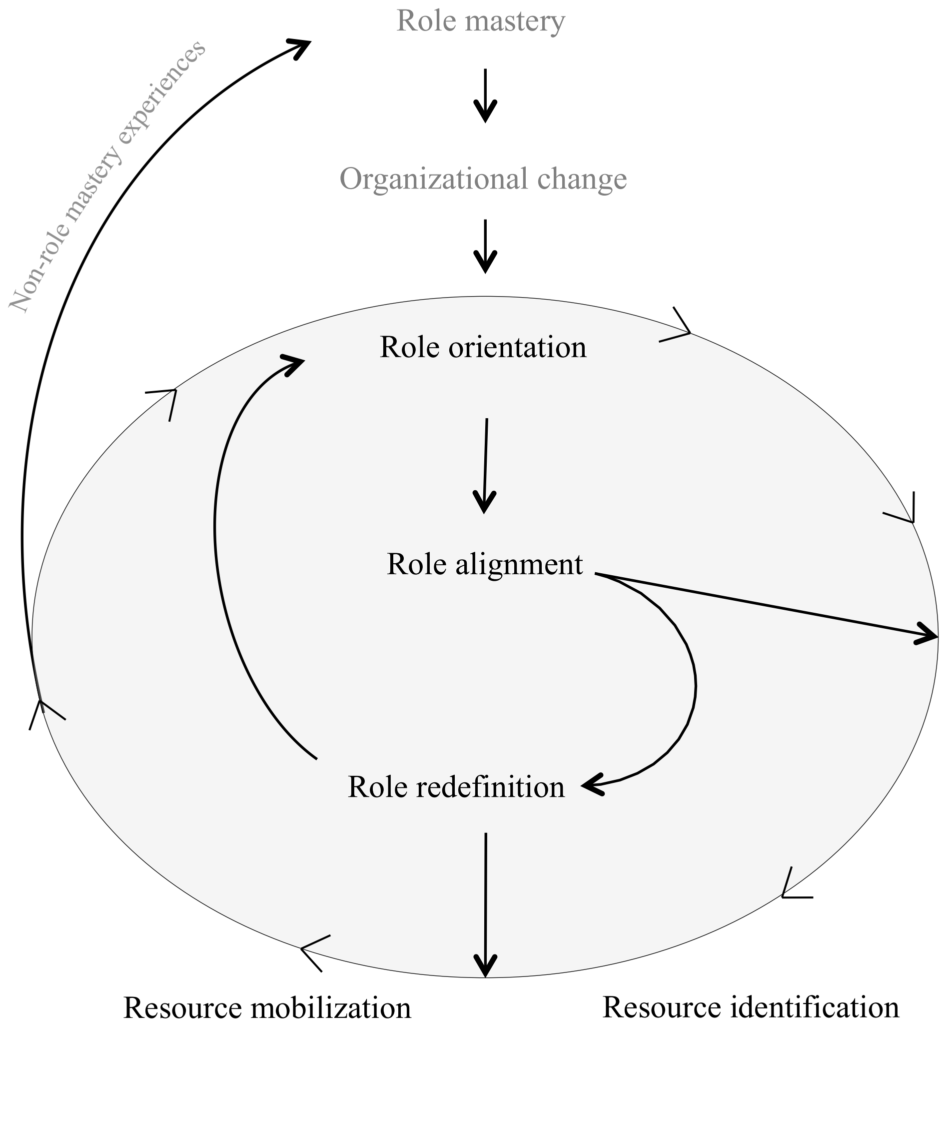


Table 2: Overview of micro-processes

<table>
<tr><th>Name</th><th>Definition</th><th>Examples</th><th>Resources generating variations in agency</th></tr>
<tr><td>Orientation</td><td>Intentionally developing an understanding of your role and how it relates to other organizational actors as well as the organization itself</td><td>Having conversations with colleagues, asking for advice as well as information. Individual self-reflection around role and meaning of change</td><td>Personal connections internally in the Company, as well as externally. Leadership support and knowledge of the change process. Self- efficacy as a personal resource</td></tr>
<tr><td>Role alignment</td><td>Evaluating of the perceived match between the new role and your self-assessed skills, capabilities and interest, and its impact on present and future actions</td><td>Cognitively assessing the match between the role and individual work identity. Having a clear understanding of how one is suppose to solve the role moving forward, versus feeling stuck in a role without a clear path</td><td>Personal resources such as, but not limited to, self-efficacy, past experiences, creative problem-solving skills</td></tr>
<tr><td>Redefining the role</td><td>Purposefully altering the cognitive perception of the role to fit your past experiences and strengths. This includes determining which tasks, activities and responsibilities are included in your role</td><td>Changing your role tasks in order for it to fit your personal values. Doing more of the things you are good at, and less of the things that are not going well.

Staking out a new path of future actions in such a way that you are more certain that you will succeed with your goals (personal and professional)</td><td>Personal resources in the form of skills and capabilities as well as past experiences. Professional and personal connections</td></tr>
<tr><td>Resource Identification</td><td>Cognitively identifying possible resources available to you in order to achieve personal and organizational goals</td><td rowspan="2">Asking colleagues and friends for help in order to compensate for lack of skills.

Applying knowledge of a firm in order to create new business for a new client

Taking one solution from a project, reconfiguring it to fit another client problem

Building your network and self-efficacy for future change and challenges</td><td rowspan="2">Personal resources, such as self-efficacy, past experiences, connections

Internal resources in the form of leadership support, knowledge of the organization and team-member support

External resources such as connections and friends</td></tr>
<tr><td>Resource Mobilization</td><td>Active engagement with or use of a particular resource towards specific goals</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1 describes the flow of the five micro-processes (in black) that the actors included in our study went through following the deliberate change, and which all contribute to individual variation in agency. As the figure indicates, there are two paths to role mastery observed in our data, following an organizational change trigger. Role mastery represents a temporary state of confidence in the belief that one can fulfill and succeed in the role. One path is role orientation - role alignment - role redefinition - resources identification and mobilization. The other path is from role orientation - role alignment - resource identification and mobilization. However, in the absence of successful resource mobilization, an actor may be stuck in the inner circle, and will return to role orientation to try another hypothesis. We argue that resource identification and mobilization is its own micro-process, but acts also an enabler for the preceding micro-processes. This is in line with our operationalization of agency (Bandura, 2018) and its socially constructed nature, and we conceptualize it as an encompassing sphere around the identified micro-processes. In line with our empirical data, we want to emphasize that the 'inner' and 'outer' circle of our diagram will interact and play off each other, and that no micro-process happens in isolation. We argue that role mastery is the end goal of our informants, but that they may experience non-role mastery experiences in the process of reaching this state. This may include, but is not limited to, growth of self-efficacy, network or confidence, etc. The process diagram describes the process as sequential with separate steps, and we recognize that the differentiation between the steps may at times seem arbitrary. In reality, the steps may all happen within a relatively short period of time, with each step interacting with each other as the actors test different options. However, for the purpose of analysis and description we have separated them into steps and talk about them in a linear fashion.

In the following sections we will present evidence for the presence of the five micro-processes, as well as how each process is connected to resources and ultimately how this generates variations in and growth of agency. We talk about these micro-processes through the stories of Emma, Sarah, Matt and Jessica. Please refer to the table in the methods section for details about the informants. It should be stated that we do not claim that this is an exhaustive description of what takes place in an actor's organizational life following a deliberate change, but rather an attempt to develop a deeper understanding of how actors enact on their environment in order to return to a sense of role mastery.

5.2 Orientation

Given the aim of the organizational change to create a new working model and structure for the organization, all respondents experienced some form of change in their role. On a purely practical level, this change could be in terms of focus, industry, clients or accounts, team, or manager(s). As one respondent put it, “everyone has been offered a new role, and if you did not receive a new role, then you have new accounts. And you may have a wider and different role than you had before, or even completely new products”. Most people experienced a complete change in teams, as well as one or multiple of the other factors mentioned above. This is the organizational change trigger, as presented in Figure 1. In the first interview it became clear that the majority of the participants agreed that a change was necessary and understood the reasoning for the change. However, while the overarching “why” might have been clear, the “how” of their new organization was at the time not as apparent. As a result, we observed how the ten employees we interviewed in the first interview went through a process of orientation. We define orientation as intentionally developing an understanding of your role and how it relates to other organizational actors as well as the organization itself. During this time, informants shared a general sense of questioning. How did I get this role? Who am I going to work with? What are the expected behaviour? How am I going to fill this role? How are we supposed to work under the new organizational vision? As two of our informants explained:

> “Right.. well today [this role] seems like a big black hole, I have to say that. [...] From having relative control, you are all of a sudden out on the deep end again.. Or kinda back to square one”.
> “The greatest challenge right now is figuring out how we are suppose to solve this. This is a completely new role that we haven't had before in the organization, so in that sense you could see it in two ways. Either, as trying to boil the ocean or as identifying pieces of a big elephant that you can try and eat. What we are doing now is taking some [pieces], and running with it. We will see if it works or not.. if it works, we will continue, and if not, we will have to try some other pieces”.

Participants looked for answers with colleagues, asking them how they had previously solved the role, if the role existed prior to the change. “I have been thinking ‘how the hell am I going to solve this’, and perhaps not as brutal.. but the fact that you are more seeking answers from others ‘how did you fill the role when you had it’”. Some were more prepared for the change and others had no idea what to expect before the change was announced. For example, Matt shared how, “Prior to the change, I had a conversation with the CEO about what I wanted to do moving forward where I asked for more challenges, and that is precisely what I have got”. Britney shared how “It feels like a lot of decisions were made above your head. I wish we could get a debrief about why they made the choices they did. ‘Why do you fit into this role, and not in another role’”.

In drawing on the change literature, this process of orientation is closely linked to sensemaking. “The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs” (Weick, 1993, p. 635, as cited in Maitlis, 2005). Scholars have generally described sensemaking as a natural reaction to an organizational change process, as change leads to a disruption of existing schemas that help organizational actors make sense of the world (Moch & Bartunek, 1990; Lockett, Currie, Finn, Martin, & Waring, 2014). The ambiguity and general state of questioning involved in a change process, as echoed by the Company employees, require each actor to develop new schemas through a sensemaking process. The new schemas become a tool for reducing the complexity of an organizational change (Bartunek, 1984). Scholars agree that as sensemaking is constructed socially, an individual actor’s sensemaking and the resulting schemas will be closely linked to their context, including their histories, position in the organization and personal background (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). As the data shows, employees engaged in both conversations with others and themselves in order to obtain some answers. Further, scholars have emphasized the link between sensemaking and identity, as originated through the first property of sensemaking, namely identity construction (Weick, 1995). Identity construction is a process where: “[...] who we think we are (identity) as organizational actors’ shapes what we enact and how we interpret, which affects what outsiders think we are (image) and how they treat us, which stabilizes or destabilizes our identity” (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 416). As the following processes will indicate, identity construction will be bearing for the following behavioural and cognitive decisions. We would argue that all the informants we spoke to went through this process of orientation, where they were seeking for information, purpose and meaning, not only in their own role, but also in the new organization. In addition to sensemaking, a highly related concept is role definition, which "denotes how individuals perceive their role and is often used to distinguish between in-role behaviour and extra-role behaviour"(Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2017). The actors have at this point not yet assigned their own meaning and interpretation to the role, but rather drawn conclusions based on the available information (Sluss, van Dick, & Thompson, 2011). Beyond drawing these conclusions and creating a perception, role definition can be seen as the first phase of role crafting (Sluss, van Dick, & Thompson, 2011). The subsequent sections will also indicate how sensemaking is a vital step in role crafting.

Going back to Bandura's definition of agency, we would argue for the presence of agency in this step (Bandura, 2007). The predominant feature of agentic behaviour in this micro-process is intentionality, exemplified through the intentional conversations with others and themselves (Bandura, 2007). The use of the resources available to them represents intentional and active strategies in their quest for an understanding, and manifests individual agency. Further, the empirical data provide evidence for the interactive and socially constructed nature of agency. None of our informants nor their agency operate in a vacuum, and we observe how agency variations starts already here. This is a manifestation of the presence of the parallel process related to resource identification and mobilization, already at this early stage. For example, the access to information about the organizational change as a reflection of position in the Company affected the disruption of existing schemas for some of the informants. In the case of Matt, he already knew about the change going into the process and did therefore not experience a significant disruption. He is observed as having a high initial level of agency. The disruption of existing schemas for Sarah and Emma had a negative relationship with the level of experienced individual agency in this moment. A sense of disruption takes away energy that they could have been spent on sensemaking, or at least force the actors to spend more time on sensemaking.

Ultimately, the somewhat artificial "end-state" of this step is an understanding of the expectations, tasks, practical details, potential team members and the financial targets within their new role.

5.3 Role Alignment

Given a sense of understanding of his or her new role, we observe that each participant subsequently participates in a process of role alignment. We define role alignment as evaluating the perceived match between the new role and your self-assessed skills, capabilities and interest, and its impact on present and future actions. We observe that Emma and Sarah experienced a misalignment. In Emma's second interview, she reflected on how she sees herself in the role:

> "I do not see myself as the typical sales person, meaning that I do not sit there and crunch the percentages and numbers every day. Numbers and budgets are not what drive me. I am more driven by making sure that my customers tells me that they appreciate the way I work as well as a high customer satisfaction score, rather than us selling for $10,000 more than last year. This is difficult and challenging, because you are constantly evaluated. I believe this is the Company biggest dilemma, how we are all measured and evaluated".

Further, the people who are currently in the same role as her all have technical backgrounds and are highly analytical and data-driven, whereas she has a human resources and organizational psychology background. Entering this role, Emma was therefore not an explicit match on paper in terms of who had previously filled this role. In addition, her new role was significantly different from her past experiences and skills, where she had been known as a "relationship builder". Initially, her perception of herself as a relationship builder did not fit into how the position was described to her or how the role is measured. As the story of Sarah shows, upon taking on their role she was expected to be industry expert overnight. However, she had never worked with the industry before and was neither a match on paper.

Throughout the time of getting to know Sarah, she appeared committed to the Company, sharing how she enjoys the contact with her clients, the challenge of helping them transform in the digital space as well as her speaking engagements, but also in many ways jaded by the system and its processes related to sales. One example is when her boss asks her to "fake her pipeline" after two weeks in the role.

> "Everything here revolves around opportunities in pipeline. So if I put something in there, because my manager tells me that I really should... well, not pimp my pipeline, or fill it with crap, but you know... think of something smart that you can put in. So, then I put something in there, and then people get caught up in something that from the beginning was nothing. It was just something I put in because I felt that I had to".

Further, Emma and Britney explain their reality working within the new vision and the incentive structure.

> "Yes, it is a little tricky, because you have the New Company, with the culture that [the global CEO] wants to execute on. In this new way of working, we are supposed to talk about New Company to our client, about how we are concerned with consumption, not only sales, and that they are satisfied customers. Right, so we are suppose to talk to C-suite contacts about all these things and build relationships, but it is very difficult when we are driven by the old behaviour through what we are measured on.. in this case, it is really difficult to work under the principle of "trial and error", because you will always go by what you are measured on".
> "I think it is a combination. One may slightly adjust and act within the processes that have already been given. How I know Microsoft is that within certain boundaries, you may shape your role. Now that those boundaries have not been set, you have great freedom. But in the end, it is all about delivering great results".

From these examples, we would argue that there are two factors that contribute to a sense of role misalignment. On the one hand, the participants reflect upon the expected necessary skills required to fill the role on a purely practical level. They feel as if the organization expects them to have certain skills and to solve the role in a certain way with these said skills. Some of these skills are explicitly stated in their job description and others are implicitly communicated to them from other organizational members or norms. For example, comparing themselves to others who currently hold the same roles. In conversation with us, they recognize that they do not currently have these skills and therefore it is not clear to them how they are going to solve the role. This feeling of a role mismatch or misalignment could be thought of as a role conflict. Role conflict is "the incompatibility of different expectations and demands associated with a given role" (Bamberger, Geller, Doveh, & Chen, 2017, p. 1720). Research shows that role conflict has a negative effect on employees placed in a new role, particularly through its effect on self-efficacy. An individual's self-efficacy about a new role is affected by the belief of whether or not they can actually do the job, or even achieves mastery (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Emma and Sarah's stories echo this link between misalignment and belief in one own's skills.

On the other hand, Emma and Sarah share how they struggle and feel disconnected with the organizational processes on a cognitive level. They struggle with the constant pressure to achieve their sales targets and the way they are expected to do this. In addition, the new vision emphasizes the importance of customer satisfaction and long-term relationship, but the incentive structure is based on quarters, driving short-term behaviour. As a result, we would argue that Emma and Sarah have a hard time seeing themselves as what the Company expects them to be. Linking back to the literature review of institutional theory, this misalignment is connected to the overarching institutional logic. Institutional logics capture the "assumptions, values, beliefs and rules" of the organization, and provide roadmaps and legitimacy for action (Thornton & Occasio, 1999, p. 804). For the Company we would argue for the presence of sales logic, which assumes that all its employees are driven by sales, that values the high-achievers who are willing to sacrifice their personal life for their job, believes in a short-term goal focus, and have relatively set rules of behaviour within their sales unit. As the stories of Emma and Sarah show, some participants experience a dissonance between the existing institutional logic and their own. The literature terms this as institutional contradictions: institutional contradictions are "ruptures and inconsistencies both among and within the established social arrangements" (Seo & Creed, 2002, p. 225).

Scholars have made a distinction between institutional contradictions around goals and means (Pache & Santos, 2010). While the former describes a situation where there is a contradiction around the ultimate goal or purpose of behaviour, the latter pertains to a contradiction around how the goal should be accomplished (Voronov & Yorks, 2015). Contradictions related to purpose is particularly difficult for organizations and their members because "goals are expressions of the core system of values and references of organizational constituencies and are, as such, not easily challenged or negotiable" (Pache & Santos, 2010: 460). To exemplify this, consider how there was an institutional logic in the Company prior to the change. The organizational change brought about a number of new roles, a new vision and new purpose. Consider how Emma is not driven by sales and sees herself as a "non-typical seller". Look also to Sarah, and how she struggles with the request to "pimp" her own pipeline and the other processes around sales. These are examples of contradictions between own values and interests and that of the Company sales logic. This creates practical dilemmas for them in their day-to-day work.

Turning to the other kind of contradiction, one may argue that the logic itself has internal contradictions or may be underspecified (Friedland & Ashford, 1991; Greenwood et al., 2011). The result of this internal contradiction is an "ambiguity about precisely how such goals as profitability and development should be pursued" (Voronov & Yorks, 2015, p. 568). This is what we observe when Sarah and Emma describe the Industry Expert Logic and Trusted Advisor Logic, respectively. As employees working within the logic of sales, they are simultaneously working within their role's logic. However, the latter logic is underspecified or as they state, there is no one way to embody the role. In other words, the assumptions, rules, beliefs and values of their role logic are not well-defined. Lastly, our data indicates that the New Company logic is also underspecified, given that most people have no idea as to how they are going to solve it. We would argue that role alignment is closely connected to the participants' work identity. As our examples show, Emma and Sarah experience a contradiction between their new realities and their sense of selfhood. Referring back to the definition of identity construction used earlier (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), we observe how these practical and cognitive contradictions creates a dissonance between their work identity and the image that the organization has of them in their new role.

Having presented the case of the informants experiencing a misalignment, we see a sharp contrast to those who do not. When asked in the first interview about what they saw as most challenging ahead, these individuals spoke about the practical details of their new role. After spending some time figuring out what her own role would entail, Jessica shared how she now looked forward to spending some time with her new team and understanding how they would all work together. Matt also explained how he saw it:

> “I have to work with new people, which means I have to adjust to them. Further, it is all about culture, where I now work with new people who think differently and are more sceptical to relatively young guys getting this much responsibility”.

Six months later, when asked about what he perceived to be the biggest change from the first to the second interview, he stated: “That is a good question, and one we discuss in our team every day. Personally, I don’t really think there has been that much of a change”.

In our conversations with these two people, it is apparent that they are not facing any institutional contradictions, but rather smaller practical details that have to be sorted out. We would argue that implicit in this finding is evidence that their new roles match their current work identities. Matt’s new role is a match with his identity in the organization as a high performer, go-to-guy, and a man who wants new challenges. This is also the reason for why they were both able to transition into their new roles relatively quickly. This is exemplified in the way Matt expresses how there has not been that much of a change from the first to the second interview. Jessica is a “typical seller”, and as long as she gets to sell and is selling, she is happy. She does not have a personal contradiction with the Company sales logic, the New Company logic or her role. Further, given the limited practical change for her, her new role is a continuation of her existing work identity. Both Matt and Jessica were required to learn new skills and alter the way they work with their clients, but their new roles do not require them to alter the way they see themselves or their place in the organization.

We conceptualize the organizational change as a collective trigger to the lived experience of these informants (Reay, Golden-Biddle, & GermAnn, 2006). In this step, all actors have evaluated how big this trigger really is, and how they see themselves in relation to the trigger. This active evaluation is a manifestation of a property of Bandura's definition of agency, namely self-reflectiveness. The actors self-examined in relation to their new role. "People are not only self-regulators but also self-examiners of their functioning. They reflect on their efficacy to realize given challenges, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, their values, and the meaning and morality of their pursuits" (Bandura, 2018, p.131). The data indicates that the actors are highly reflective and as a result become aware of different alternatives for actions. Furthermore, the different types of resources available to them impact the alternatives to action. Bandura argues that "the metacognitive capability to reflect on oneself and the adequacy of one's capabilities, thoughts, and actions is the most distinctly human core property of agency" (2018, p.132). In sum, all four of our cases manifest a state of agency through their capability to reflect on their own functioning in the temporal moment. However, the result of role alignment has bearing in terms of the options deemed available to the individual actors moving forward. In the case of an alignment the participants had a clearer picture of the road ahead in the new role. This is also reflected in the model, where there is a path directly from role alignment to the outer circle of resources, and then to role mastery. This implies that at this point, Jessica and Matt had a higher level of agency. This clear road ahead is a manifestation of their forethought (Bandura, 2018). However, Sarah and Emma did not have a clear picture of the road ahead, and this represents the variation of experienced agency in this micro-process. As the next section will show, Sarah and Emma were therefore triggered to engage with an additional micro-process in order to build their capacity for agency.

5.4 Role Redefinition

As the previous sections show, Sarah and Emma experienced a role misalignment. This section will show how this misalignment triggered them into engaging with an additional micro-process, in order to resolve the different conflicts they experience. We have chosen to term this micro-process role redefinition, as closely linked to the descriptions provided by the participants. We define role redefinition as purposefully altering the cognitive perception of the role to fit your past experiences and strengths. This includes determining which tasks, activities and responsibilities are included in your role. The data from these participants show that upon evaluating their options, a redefinition of the role was the best way forward given the incentive structure and context. The result of this is concrete behavioural changes in their day-to-day work to support and ultimately seek validation for these cognitive choices and rationalizations. It should be stated that the evidence of such behaviour is only observable retroactively, meaning that this data was collected primarily in the second interview. Before proceeding with the analysis, we would like to highlight the context within which these decisions were made. In the case of Company, all the informants touched upon the topic of shaping one's own role and the boundaries of these decisions.

> "You have great freedom to both take initiative... well, maybe not to create something new, as the 'new' is given. You are assigned a set of customers, a set of products and then you can choose the different paths to reach your goals. However, extremely innovative is difficult to be inside those boundaries".

> "The thing I know about Microsoft is that, within set boundaries, you can shape your own role. Now, when these boundaries are not given, this may give a great deal of freedom. Also, I hope that this change will allow us to gain freedom locally. Previously we were much more in a "box", whereas we now can think more creatively around our how to approach and work with our customers. The global office is good at making products, but we know the customers".

From our data it appears that there is a variation across our informants as to where the different boundaries are. As a result, there is a lot of discussion around the possibility to shape one's own role and obtain the best results. All employees are subject to legal and compliance constraints, and we conceptualize this as a strict boundary surrounding all organizational actors. However, within this boundary there is a softer boundary surrounding each individual actor, depending on your role, team, manager, etc. It is this softer boundary, which is the focus of this micro-process. As our examples will show, in redefining their role, these two actors shift their own soft boundary.

> [Emma]"I am to be a trusted advisor at the client, and I am really looking forward to that".

> [Emma]"There are definitely stories and best practices on how to best work with the client, but I think these are highly dependent on the person. I have a non-technical background, but I have colleagues in the same role

> who are very technically skilled. This means that I perhaps speak and behave in a different way with the client than they would. For me, it is all about building a relationship and making them talk to me, and for them to see that I am there, providing them with the best service and support when they need it".

In her first interview, Emma already knew that her job was to establish herself as a trusted advisor. As her reflection in the second interview shows, it has become clear to her that there has been one accepted way of filling this role and that she does not have the requirements to do it in this way. In order to 'survive' in the organization, she changes her approach and plays to her strengths. She argues that the best way to become a trusted advisor is all about trust, chemistry and utilizing her people skills, in order to compensate for the lack of technical skills. Emma also shifts the focus to her clients, "I think putting the client is the first priority", despite not knowing what the rate of return on this will be. She decides to follow her own instinct of long-term relationship with the client and hoping this will result in her meeting her sales targets. In sum, she has over the past six months shaped and redefined her role as a relationship-builder, playing to her strengths as a previous human resources employee and people skills.

> "There are many who ask me if I know of someone who can do this, and someone who can do that.. which I in many cases can. I know the organization so well. So sometimes I'll wear the [sales] hat, and then I will wear the HR hat, meaning I juggle a little. However, I really enjoy it, because when doing so you are building on your past experiences".

Beyond the cognitive, our data and observations also show that Emma alters the tasks of her role. In her case, this means adding tasks to her role that are not in her job description and which she is therefore not measured on nor rewarded explicitly for. However, as the quote above indicates, she derives enjoyment from these tasks, and experiences a sense of mastery, again playing to her previous experience.

At the core of Sarah's role is to be an industry expert. As we mentioned in her story, she tried in the fall of 2017 to do this in the same way as all the other industry experts in the organization. However, this did not work out for her, and she ended up not succeeding in terms of her organizational goals. This was also coupled with her feeling lack of leadership support, validation, and self-efficacy. Ten months after taking on the role she stated “ I feel to this day that I am still no industry expert, as I haven’t had any time to really dive into [the knowledge and training] as I should have”. However, when we meet her for the second interview, we observe her taking another take on what it means to be an industry expert. During this time, Sarah has taken initiative to organize roundtable discussions for her clients and industry, spoken at multiple events and conferences, and set up a knowledge exchange system on LinkedIn. This is not traditionally considered the core tasks of the role.

> “I spoke at a panel for all CIOs in [industry], which was nice. It doesn't really matter, but just to be there puts the Company on the map. If there is an opportunity to speak, I put my hand up and say “hello”. [Listing all the places she has been], and just to put that on LinkedIn with a cool title makes people think. “Oh, Sarah can speak about that, what a cool title”, and then they approach me to speak other places. I was recently invited to speak at [major event in the technology field], which was a lot of fun. So… after that there has been other request, and I am going to speak a couple of places too. Being at these events, speaking, and meeting people is so much fun!”.

In the absence of this specific industry knowledge, she has redefined what it means to be an industry expert for her. We observe that the way she defines being an industry expert is as a connector of companies, information and opportunities. As she is not the industry expert herself, she becomes the mediator of industry knowledge. In mediating and facilitating, for example these roundtable discussions, she is able to make herself relevant to the industry, as well as to create an image and identity as an expert. She does this to create an identity in the industry. When invited to speak she talks not about the industry itself, but rather about topics in which she is comfortable with. In the one instance, Sarah openly admits to not being an industry expert on paper, but in another she is referring to all the times in which she has been able to further craft the image of herself as an industry expert. If she was not perceived as an expert, she would not have had access to these speaking engagements. The perception of an industry expert is someone who has been working with the industry for a long time, taken significant coursework or training or have intimate connections to the industry. To summarize, in the absence of all of these three factors, Sarah has purposefully redefined what it means to be an industry expert in order to meet her quota and save face. Her expected tasks involve setting up meetings with C-suite contacts and driving sales processes. She tried entering the inner circle of Figure 1 with this goal, but the data indicate that she was not able to mobilize the right resources and move onto role mastery with this role definition. As a result, we observe and conceptualize her going back into the inner circle of our model and pursuing an alternative hypothesis.

In the second interview, and in some ways in the middle of the “black box” of figuring out her role, Sarah is explaining how she feels that the role has no boundaries and that this is tearing on her energy. When we asked her about taking initiative, she answered the following: “I think it's a type of role where you feel that you have some control and scratch a little on the surface, and then suddenly there's a lot more to come, and you lose that control. So once you take the initiative to something, it leads to a lot more. But I think that's what people start to understand afterwards, ‘what are the things that I can do, and what are the things others can do?’" Britney has created partnerships with colleagues based on topics. She explains how both her and the technology lead for his clients are supposed to be present at all meetings. Instead, they have made an arrangement where they split the meetings between them in order to free up time and help each other meet their targets. In Sarah and Britney’s examples, we observe them altering their tasks, however in the opposite direction compared to Emma. They find themselves actively limiting the tasks they take on as well as not searching for more tasks. In sum, for Emma and Sarah, this micro-process was the results of their perceived inability to operate as dictated by their official job description or unit norms and the attempt to minimize the sense of misalignment.

This particular step in the process can be linked to job crafting. Job crafting entails shaping the task or relational boundaries of your job, or both (Wrzesniewski & Dutton &, 2001). This behaviour implies changing the number of activities in your job (task crafting) or how one view one’s job (cognitive crafting), and the social interactions one has while doing the job (relational crafting). As the data shows, our three informants engage in all three types of job crafting. Specifically, we observe that they engage in job crafting techniques (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2008). To provide a couple of examples of these techniques, Sarah shifting the focus toward industry expert after a hard time with the sales process is both “changing tasks to cope with adversity” and “changing thoughts and beliefs about the job to cope with adversity”. Emma taking on “HR tasks” can be thought of as “taking on additional tasks related to one’s passion”. These examples is not exhaustive, but rather to exemplify the match between the existing framework and our informants lived experience. Writing on the topic, the authors discuss how such behaviour may have significant impact on the organizational field through modifying both the meaning of a job, and an individual’s work identity (Berg, Dutton, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). This is supported by the work of Grant & Hofman (2011), who argue that while employees may initially expand their role due to extrinsic reasons, they in turn craft their role for more intrinsic benefits. This supports our analysis that these Emma and Sarah are crafting to ultimately fit their role to their work identity. However, the essence is the “focus on the freedom employees have and the creativity they exhibit in crafting jobs to be different from their formally specified ingredients” (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 187). Writing on job crafting, Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski (2008) highlighted the individuality of the process of job crafting, with actors motivated to craft in order to achieve a better fit between the job description and the actors needs, preferences and abilities. Beyond the individuality, research also indicates that through job crafting, actors can exert agency (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Our data indicate all three manifestations of agency (Bandura, 2018) in the micro-process of redefining the role. First, the data shows how the active engagement in job crafting is a continuation of the manifestation of self-reflectiveness from the previous micro-process. Going back to Bandura’s (2007) description of self-reflectiveness, redefining the role pertains to the last component where the actors “make corrective adjustments if necessary”. Second, by redefining their role to fit their strengths and preferences, the actors manifests the property of self-reactiveness. Bandura (2007) argued that organizational members would do things that give them satisfaction and refrain from actions that cause them harm. Harm in this case is unfortunate business outcomes or contradictory values. Third and lastly, the property of forethought is manifested in the implicit and explicit forward-looking planning involved in job crafting. Emma and Sarah are actively redefining their role in order to both achieve personal and professional goals, as well as longevity in the organization. While the link between agency and job crafting has been shown in multiple studies (i.e Hennessy & Sawchuk, 2003; Billett, Barker, & Hernon-Tinning, 2004), the micro-processes involved in moving from a cognitive idea of the job one intends to craft to a validated role redefinition is less clear, which will be highlighted in the next section. Here again, we observe how resources play a role in the way the actors choose to redefine their role. In addition, while the data shows how Emma and Sarah chose to redefine their role to deal with their sense of misalignment, they both still struggled and sought validation from the organization after doing so. As the subsequent section will show, at the time of the second interview they still sought validation, even from us in the interview.

5.5 Resource Identification and Mobilization

From studying the Company over a ten-month period, the importance of resources in the everyday life of the employees became increasingly evident. As Figure 1 indicates, we argue that there is on the one hand a sequential micro-process of resources, following redefining the role and role alignment. This is conceptualized as the final stage before reaching role mastery. On the other hand, and as the previous sections have shown, the way actors are able to identify and mobilize resources impact the preceding micro-processes and lead to variations of agency on the way to role mastery.

Resource identification is the process of cognitively identifying possible resources available to you in order to achieve personal and organizational goals. Resource mobilization is the active engagement with or use of a particular resource towards specific goals. Given these definitions, identification is a necessary condition for mobilization. As for the preceding micro-process of redefining your role, this sequence of cognitive and behavioural elements can only be observed as manifestations of agency retroactively through our cases' behaviour. Therefore, there may have been a number of additional resources identified apart from those highlighted in our data, which may have been suitable to solve a given problem. However, for whatever reason, the participants were not able to mobilize this resource nor reap the benefits of doing so.

In the individual processes of Emma, Sarah, Jessica and Matt, we observe how the actors identify and mobilize a range of resources: (1) Personal resources, including skills, past experiences and knowledge of the workings within the organization. (2) Internal resources, including in-house technology, knowledge exchange and use of experts. (3) External resources, including personal contacts and partners. However, as the below section will highlight, the reason and end-result of this mobilization differs. It should be stated that the four examples presented below is not exhaustive for how the individual actor mobilize resources in their work life. As the table shows, there is great variety in the ways all the informants in this study chose to mobilize resources. The examples were chosen in order to best highlight the variation among the actors.

Sarah was already in her first interview set on trying to establish the roundtable discussion, explaining how she had identified a contact as a possible resource. “Right now I have… I have been thinking about how to do this. I know I have a friend... or a contact that wrote a report on digital transformation in [industry]”. Given that he had just written and published this report, he was the perfect fit to facilitate a roundtable discussion. In the second interview, she shared how she had approached him and managed to convince him to facilitate the evening. “I want to get people from all the different companies in one room to talk. I have managed to build a good relationship with the Chief Digital Officer in [main company in the industry], so that is a great starting point”. Furthermore, in order to ensure success in terms of having the right people attend, she asked her contact at this main company to help spread the word about the event. One major obstacle for Sarah when organizing these evenings was funding. “So far, it's been okay, but it is more if you want to take initiative for something that is a outside the normal. [...] I've been everywhere to raise funds, but that is.. I found it in the end, but these are the things I have to deal with”. She shared how she “asked at least 20 times” before finally receiving funding to hold her three roundtable discussions. This included asking around in the office, consulting with her manager, applying for funding within the European contingency before finally finding money locally in a budget.

> "[Emma] I get a call from one of my clients who I really enjoy working with, but who is also a bit of a cowboy and at times challenging to work for in the sense that he expects things to move really quick. He calls me to ask if we have a person who can be ready Monday morning, and this is Friday evening. This is physically impossible to do by myself, but then I call the guy who is responsible for this client in the other team and together we are able to fix something for Monday morning. Monday morning they are starting a new company, so we just had to fix it. Not just do we manage to get a guy from us ready, we also call our partners and ask if they want to join. In a matter of hours, we are able to assemble a team ready for Monday morning to start on this project. This generates tons of sales, partner collaboration and potentially a lot of business for my client. Also, it may result in me getting to land a new client. It is so cool to see how we can make it happen!".

Even though Emma is not capable of solving the challenge herself, she identifies internal and external resources available to her, and manage to maintain her role as a trusted advisor. Both Sarah and Emma talked about the importance of what Emma calls "the Company school". The Company has a culture of individual autonomy and a responsibility for taking initiative. All employees are encouraged to figure out who to ask and how to manage the challenges and expectations and to not expect that these answers come to you. In Emma's eyes, once you have "graduated" from the Company school, you will have an overview of the resources available to you. These quotes exemplify how the actors use their past experiences and knowledge of how the organization works in order to drive processes that benefit them in their new role. However, as the stories show, moving from this identification into mobilization requires the active use of both internal and external resources.

If we look at Jessica, she shared the process of working with a major electronics retailer. "I know how [company name] thinks and what it takes for them to be successful. I also know their management and that is an advantage". When she was assigned a new and smaller client after the organizational change, Jessica saw the possibility of matching them with the retailer. Due to her intimate knowledge of the retailer, she was able to position the deal and partnership to ensure success.

> "No other retailer in the world has sold [product name], so we will be the first to do so. [...] It is very exciting and different than anything we have done before, it is groundbreaking. And it is really fun because Western

Europe is very interested in what we are doing and thinks it is very exciting".

Matt shared a story about his most successful initiative in his new role. Having worked with one major client, which resulted in a successful outcome, he started to think about how the process they had used could be applied to his other clients. He shared how "I looked at all the components in the process and started breaking the process down to look for commonalities". After establishing his pitch, he looked to a number of internal resources to discuss his idea. He had a session with his immediate manager, he identified the other internal resources that would be required to go forward with such a deal and asked them for input, and ultimately received sponsorship from the executive team locally. He then set up meetings with CEOs of his clients to discuss his idea, where they provided tips and insight into what the idea could mean for them. As a result, he landed one of the biggest deals in the Company in 2018.

As we observe, Matt identified and mobilized all three types of resources, his personal thinking process and experience, colleagues and managers, as well as his connections outside of the Company. Similarly, Jessica used her personal and external resources. Given her earlier work experience at the retailer, she had a deep understanding of what was required to make a deal happen. In addition, through her old contacts she was able to assess the opportunity for such a deal. We would argue that because these two actors do not have to redefine their role, they could mobilize their resources towards extra-role initiatives such as these two examples show. This behaviour, and especially the fortunate business results associated with the behaviour, becomes a validation of their existing work identities. In turn, this means that they acquire a sense of role mastery in a relatively shorter time. They both share a sense of confidence around their role and the future within the Company.

Resources have been the topic of social studies for a long time. We adopt the resourcing perspective, which makes a distinction between an object and a resource (Feldman, 2004; Feldman & Worline, 2012). Objects are considered "tangible and intangible asset that employees must act on" whereas a resource is "an object that has been acted on to make it useful" (Sonensheim, 2014, p. 815).

On adopting this perspective, we would argue that all the examples listed above represent the movement from objects to resources. A contact in another firm is simply just a contact prior to making a call and arranging for him to hold your roundtable discussion. Implied in this adoption of definition is the agency required to move from an object to a resource, which we would argue that all of the four informants have.

In studying the Company, we observe that when faced with an uncertain situation and/or a contradiction, these actors generated and applied a solution to their problem. It is clear from the data that all of the solutions, or mobilized resources towards a goal, required a level of creativity. Creativity is "the generation of products or ideas that are both novel and appropriate" (Hennessey & Amabile, 2010, p. 570). Writing on resources as an antecedent for creativity, Sonensheim (2014) discuss the importance of slack resources. Slack resources, as the opposite of resource scarcity, will foster creativity through how it opens up for experimentation and as a response to uncertainty (Cyert & March, 1963). Despite empirical research primarily looking at time as a slack resource, we would argue that similar arguments apply in this case. In the absence of time, our informants are playing to their strengths and objects (later resources) available to them in order to experiment and meet this uncertainty. Further, from spending eight weeks in the organization and following these individuals over a period of ten months, we observe how resourceful they are. It is valid to argue that as a professional service company, the Company is known for attracting high-performing individuals with varied background and a range of personal resources.

Looking to the literature, resource mobilization has in the context of change and agency been explored and studied at the macro-level, particularly looking at social movements and its political and economic environments (i.e. McLaughlin, & Khawaja, 2000; Rucht, Corrigall-Brown, & Ho, 2017). This work falls into resource mobilization theory (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004). For example, scholars identified the access to solidary associations such as black churches, colleges and chapters of the NAACP as crucial for the emergence and expansion of the southern civil rights movement (McAdam 1982; Morris 1984). Moving one level down in terms of analysis, McCarthy & Johnson (1996) looked at the role of agency in resource mobilization of grass-root and local communities, where communities were mobilizing in order to stop drunk driving. They found that high scores on three different forms of agency consistently predicted mobilization of both volunteer hours and membership (McCarthy & Johnson, 1996). In all of this research, the focus is on the different types of resources, either individual or collective, needed to mobilize towards collective goals. Within our knowledge of the literature, there is no study looking at this particular process at the micro-level, namely how individuals mobilize resources in order to enact endogenous change to their organizational reality, and how this again relates to agency. Following the line of reasoning from McCarthy & Johnson (1996), we posit that all four informants mobilized as a result of their existing levels of agency. In addition, we argue that the act of mobilizing resources is a clear manifestation of agency, and the subsequent sections will highlight how there is a variation in these manifestations.

If we consider the stories of Emma and Sarah overall, we would argue that this step of resource mobilization represents an act of compensation for the lack of required skills. It is clear that they utilize the full range of resources available to them to compensate for their lack of technical skills and industry knowledge, respectively. In turn, by successfully compensating, these actors also validate their role redefinition decisions and the work identity their are trying to craft. This validation is on the one hand for the actor. To use Emma as an example, this means that she proves to herself that she does not need to be a technical person to fill this role. On the other hand, this introduces a new way of thinking and working to the organization, indicating that there are multiple (and perhaps new) ways of filling this role, moving the organization towards a new way of working. We would argue that this example shows all of the manifestations of agency if we apply Bandura’s (2018) framework, as well as the key role played in the actors intentionality (Bandura, 2006). First, mobilizing in the form of compensation is a manifestation of agency through the property of self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2018). In order to compensate, Sarah and Emma must have intentionally examined their weaknesses and strengths, representing agentic behaviour. They have also intentionally applied resources to the problem at hand. Second, we would argue that successful mobilization is the final phase of job crafting, or at least a job crafting cycle. This applies for the cases of Emma and Sarah, while we observe that other informants (not included in detail) are still trying to define their role and have not been able to validate their choices. While you may exert agency in attempting to job craft, we would argue that the greatest variation on agency is not reached until one has managed to complete the cycle. In completing, the choices you made when crafting are validated by other organizational actors, giving you legitimacy for further action. This opens up for potential agency changes in your role moving forward. We would argue that this is manifestation of the properties of forethought and self-reactiveness, both during and at the point of completion of this process. Sarah and Emma are actively engaging with their world in order to both control the direction of their future in the organization, but also derive “coherence and meaning to [their] lives” (Bandura, 2018, p. 131). Further, the act of seeking and receiving validation relates directly to the self-regulating standards that these two women have set for themselves, and which guide their actions. Upon receiving validation, the two no longer feel required to seek for different options and will have a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy moving forward (Bandura, 2018). This sense of self-worth and self-efficacy becomes a personal resource for Sarah and Emma. In sum, validation as a result of successful mobilization moves the actor from the inner to the outer circle, progressing towards role mastery and a higher level of agency. Lastly, this analysis reveals how in mobilizing the actors are building agentic capacity, both in the form of forethought

While we argue that our cases have mobilized resources through different means, they all appear to be striving for the same end goal. We observe how all they all strive for a sense of equilibrium, which we have chosen to call role mastery. Role mastery represents a temporary state of confidence in the belief that one can fulfill and succeed in their role. Matt and Jessica mobilized in order to pursue the explicitly stated role goals, meaning reaching their quotas through new paths of action. In pursuing this level of role mastery, they simultaneously sustain their work identities. This implies that while they both are able to mobilize and therefore exert agency, we would argue that they do not necessarily experience agency changes. In the period in which we observed these two individuals, they shared examples and stories of consistent levels of agency. Sarah and Emma mobilize primarily to craft their new work identities in the belief that this would ultimately lead to a sense of role mastery. However, in doing so they have mastery experiences that pertain to their personal goals and have an impact on their sense of selfhood and self-worth in the organization. As both the empirical data and our analysis show, these two individuals exert agency in doing so and for a period of time experience agency changes as a result of engaging in an additional micro-process. This sums up the agency variations of resource mobilization if we look at the micro-process in isolation.

PART VI: DISCUSSION

6.1 Summary of Findings

We have presented the findings from a qualitative study investigating how organizational change can trigger a set of micro-process involving growth and variation of agency. Based on four case studies from a professional services firm we identified five distinct micro-processes that the actors engaged in following a deliberate change. These are orientation, role alignment, redefining the role, resource identification and resource mobilization, as presented in Figure 1. We further shed light on the importance of resources and its impact on variations in and growth of agency.

The micro-process of orientation involved seeking an understanding of their new role, how it relates to other organizational actors and the organization itself. Orientation was also observed as a quest for meaning or purpose in their new role as well as in the new organizational structure. The actors actively engaged both in conversations with others and themselves in order to seek answers. The observed variation in agency was closely linked to the variation within the sensemaking process, with some actors having a lesser understanding of the role in the moment of conversation. This lack of understanding, coupled with the access to resources and social status in the organization, translate into variations of agency. Having said, the variations in agency at this stage are not that significant, but rather act as a precursor for greater variations in later stages of the process. The somewhat artificial “end-state” of this process was an understanding of the expectations, tasks, practical details, potential team members and the financial targets within their new role.

The micro-process of role alignment involved assessing the perceived match between the new role and the employee's self-assessed skills, capabilities and interests. In order to complete this assessment, the actors evaluated the match on both a practical and cognitive level. The analysis revealed that while practical alignment influences the perception of change, the experience of misalignment ultimately depends on whether or not the organizational schemas conflicts with the individual's existing work identity. As a result, some of our informants experienced an alignment, while others did not. This feeling of alignment had bearing on the perceived options available to each actor. The variation in agency lies in the actors' capability for forethought in this moment, as we observe them all manifesting self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2018). In the case of an alignment the participants had a clearer picture of the road ahead in the new role. For those who experienced misalignment, the road was not as clear given the contextual circumstances and the resources available to them.

The micro-process of redefining the role involves altering the cognitive perception of the role to fit the actors' past experiences and strengths. The analysis showed how the actors redefined their role, through altering their tasks and crafting an image, to solve both practical and political dilemmas. In redefining the role, the informants are exerting agency and make corrective adjustments to their roles in order to better fit their personal work identity and strengths. The effect of this, our study found, is the growth of individual agency. Successful redefinition of the role will make the person more prepared for both future organizational changes as well as smaller changes to their organizational reality. The variation of agency in this micro-process is between those actors who were triggered to engage in it and those who were not.

The micro-processes of resource identification and resource mobilization involve cognitively identifying resources available and actively engaging with these in order to mobilize them towards predefined goals. We here summarize only the results of resource mobilization as a sequential step. The informants who experienced a role alignment mobilized resources towards their organizational goals, namely sales, which became an extension of their existing work identity. Our analysis shows how these actors have consistent levels of agency throughout this process. Those informants who experienced a role misalignment mobilized resources in order to compensate for their misalignment and seek validation for the role redefinition in the previous micro-process. In turn, if successful in achieving their personal goals, this also represented a mobilization towards their organizational goal. This manifests the greatest variation in agency changes in the process.

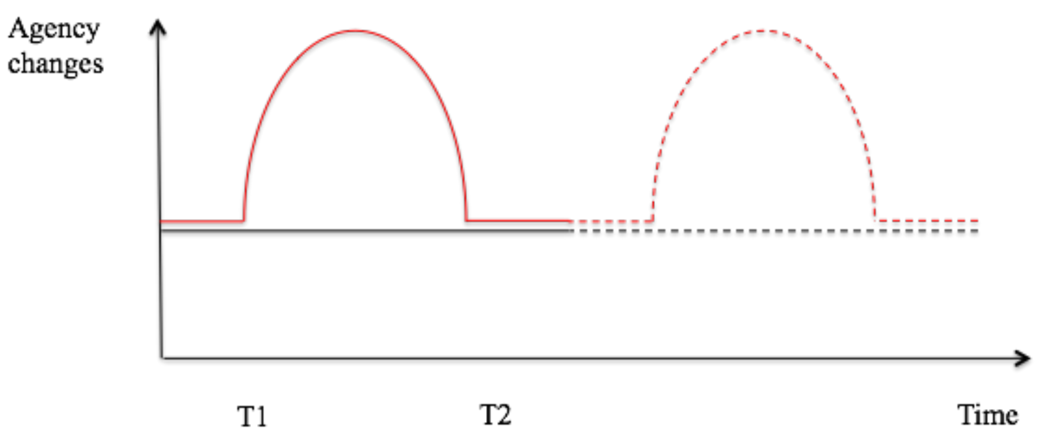
6.2 General Discussion

The empirical analysis reveals that the organizational change represents a trigger in the lived experience of all organizational actors and over the course of these micro-processes this translates into variations of agency. Further, those organizational actors who experienced a a misalignment pertaining to their work identity, show greater agency changes than those who do not. In addition, our study shows that importance of resources in connection to both agency and job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). First, given our definition of agency, it is apparent from the case studies that resource mobilization is a manifestation of agency. In mobilizing, all four actors are acting upon their world with the intent of creating or potentially transforming it (Bandura, 2001). Further, in explicitly linking resource mobilization and agency, this adds to our understanding of agency as a socially constructed, interactive and temporal construct (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Lave, 1998). Second, resource mobilization is in our opinion the last step of redefining the role, and we have therefore linked job crafting, agency and resource mobilization. The mobilization of resources becomes a criterion for successful job crafting, and becomes evidence for endogenous change as a result of everyday practice (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Lave, 1998). By successfully and actively job crafting, the individual will set an example for others on how one is able to solve the job. The individual is in other words introducing a new schema, and acting as a role model. When validated by the rest of the organization, successful job crafting could over time introduce new practice. One could think of this as showing off your 'new soft boundary' and how it works to the rest of the organization. This opens up for others to follow and adopt the same practice, slowly changing the institution endogenously. Our finding is evidence that endogenous change does not only arise out of political conflict, but could also be born out of ambiguity and the solving of practical dilemmas (Bridwell-Mitchell, 2016). While we argue that Emma and Sarah have growth of agency through job crafting and contribute in a significant way to changing the perception of their role in the organization, this is not to say that Jessica and Matt are not change agents. Sarah and Emma are manifesting greater change and variation in agency as they are experiencing a combination of both practical and political conflict. For Jessica and Matt, the impact on agency and therefore impact on change correspond to the experience of trigger, and is therefore smaller. In sum, our study showcases how the capacity to act as institutional entrepreneurs is more distributed and emergent, and that all actors have the capacity to drive forward a continuous change process (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca., 2011; Zundel, Holt, & Cornelissen, 2013).

While we have discussed resource mobilization as a micro-process in itself, the empirical analysis reveals how resources play a part in the continuous experience of post-change for an organizational actor. Resources, and the way an actors applies them to the problem at hand, is the primary source of variations in agency. In order to unpack the agentic components of resource mobilization in the process of bouncing back and achieving role mastery, consider Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) theoretical framework on agency. As presented in the literature chapter, they conceptualized agency as encompassing three dimensions: an iterational one, which anchors action in the past through the replication of habitual routines; a projective one, which enables the envisioning of future courses of action; and a pragmatic-evaluative one, which modifies action in response to currently evolving situations. While they specify that the framework is purely analytical, it is helpful in order to dissect the different components of resource mobilization. This dissection helps us develop a picture of how resource mobilization affects how these actors perceive their ability to act upon their world, both now and in the future. In the temporal time in which a given actor is mobilizing resources, we can identify all of the three dimensions of agency in play. Faced with a contextual challenge in the moment, the actor will look for answers and meaning in their schemas in order to "selectively recognize, locate, and implement such schemas in their ongoing and situated transactions" (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). This could be to reproduce through creativity, such as identifying an object and turning it into a resource, or connecting two existing resources that you have connected before. However, our actors are not only contextualizing their current reality (pragmatic-evaluative), but are also mobilizing in order to create a future path. Emirbayer & Mische discuss how the locus of agency is in the “hypothesization of experience” (1998, p. 984) in the projective dimension. To exemplify, our informants are not only trying to mobilize to meet their sales targets, but are also trying to stake out a course of action that position them in the organization. As they share, they truly have no idea whether or not their choice of resource will benefit them in the future. We would argue that regardless of the presence of an institutional contradiction, these four informants are all mobilizing in order to craft an image that is consistent with their desired work identity. In doing so, they are positioning themselves for agentic behaviour in the future. In line with Emirbayer & Mische’s (1998) reasoning, while all dimensions are present as the actor is mobilizing, we see the projective dimension as the dominant dimension in the temporal and contextual reality that we have investigated. One final finding around resource mobilization is what effect mobilizing has on your future level of agency. The reason for this is because through mobilizing resources you are also creating future resources. To exemplify, going through a successful process of achieving role mastery after a change will in most cases lead to the development of an efficacy and skills to handle future challenges. We would argue that this growth of efficacy and skills will most likely result in growth of individual agency. These future challenges could be another major change, but could also be smaller adjustments. Beyond these personal resources, all four of our cases have now identified potential future resources that could be applied in the same challenges.

If we consider the whole process of pursuing role mastery, our data and analysis indicate that there are differences in the road to achieving this state. Consider Figure 2 for visual representation of our point of view. First, consider the black line in the Figure 2. T1 represents the step of role alignment. If you experience role alignment you will automatically move to resource mobilization, and in the case of our data, achieve role mastery (T2) faster. As the results chapter indicate, this require significant enacted agency, but not necessarily agency changes. These were individuals who had high levels of agency from the beginning. Second, consider the red line in Figure 2. If you experience role misalignment, our data shows how actors move into the process of redefining the role in order to reach mastery. As the above section showed, on the way to achieving role mastery, the actor may have mastery experiences pertaining to personal goals. However, as in the case of Sarah, you may not succeed in your initial hypothesis of action, and find yourself back at T1.

Figure 2: Cycle of Agency Changes



Moving from T1 to T2 requires an initial level of agency, but also involves agency changes and the exertion of change agency towards the new role. We posit that when they reach this state of role mastery they will not experience agency changes anymore, but may be at a higher level of agency. However, we have no data to confirm this, as these actions would have to be verified in a third round of interviews. We would argue that actors will remain in role mastery, with a constant (relative) level of agency that depends on the various factors that influence human agency. We believe that actors will be in the state of role mastery until the next jolt or trigger, where we would expect a repeat of either of the two trajectories we have described in this study. This echoes the discussion around continuous change, and how we see organizations evolving and changing in cyclical fashion. Having summarized our main findings, we now turn to what we see as our main contributions to field of institutional theory and organizational change literature.

6. 3 Theoretical Contributions and Implications

This study set out to explore the micro-processes following an organizational change, and the dynamics of individual agency as a interactive and social constructed phenomenon in this context. Given the results presented in the previous chapter, we believe our theoretical contribution to the literature on organizational change and institutional theory is fourfold. (1) that no other study has linked resource mobilization to agency at the individual level, (2) a deeper understanding of the antecedents for micro-processes involving agency changes, (3) how resource mobilization play a factor in the deliberate versus continuous change debate, and (4) the interplay between political and practical dilemmas as a source of endogenous change. We highlight both the practitioner and practical implications in relation to these contributions.

First, as mentioned above, there is to our knowledge no existing study that links resource mobilization to agency at the micro-level of analysis. As our discussion shows, resource mobilization is a site for agency, in terms of both enacted agency and as a source of agency changes. It is an interesting finding, as it is present for both 'paths', and therefore in our data acts as a mediator for the change process. Resource mobilization is the reason our informants are able to "bounce back" from their relative uncertainty following a change. In addition, resource mobilization as a site for agency becomes a tool in order to set a new path of action, and therefore challenge the existing institutional structures. This finding may be a possible contribution to the discussion around embeddedness and its effect on endogenous change processes. As stated in our literature review, one camp argues that highly embedded actors are not able to drive endogenous change processes as they are too restricted by the existing organizational structures (Seo & Creed, 2002). The other camp argues that due to their embeddedness, these actors have a higher capacity to enact agency and start endogenous change due to their intimate knowledge of the organizational structures (f. eks Battilana, Leca & Boxenbaum, 2009; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Perhaps the question is not about the degree of embeddedness, but a question about the ability to mobilize resources. One could argue that there may be correlations between embeddedness and the ability to mobilize particular resources. We observe that actors who have been in the Company for a long time may have a higher ability to mobilize internal resources towards changing said organizational structures. In the case of external resources, less embedded actors may have higher ability to apply these to the organizational structures. Having said that, the literature on prosocial behaviour argues for the democratization of agentic behaviour (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Thus, our result showing the link between agency and resources contributes to the theory that all organizational actors are possible change agents. The implication for practitioners in the field of institutional theory is that one should continue to study the micro-level impact of resources on agency variations and therefore endogenous change.

Another contribution is to the discussion around why it is the case that certain individuals experience agency changes differently than others. Put simply, our study shows that when an actor is facing relatively less role uncertainty than others, then she can use this energy in order to enact agency and move towards role mastery. While it is apparent and widely discussed in the literature that the presence of institutional contradictions is the first antecedent for agentic behaviour, we would argue that this study have highlighted a number of other potential antecedents that may influence the speed at which each actor reaches role mastery. We recognize that agency is a temporal (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998), as well as an interactive construct (Bandura, 2001). This implies that agency may vary for these four informants in any other context then the one we have observed, and is also fluid in its form. Having said that, we observe from our data that the informants who in the second interview had reached role mastery displayed evidence of high quality relationships with their leader and team. To exemplify compare Emma and Sarah. They were both triggered to redefine their role, but we observed in the second interview that Emma had reached role mastery while Sarah was still in the process. Emma spoke highly of the weekly meetings she had with her manager, where she was able to test out her ideas and discuss. The practical implication of such a finding is that high-quality leader-member relationship could accelerate the process of employees reaching role mastery. Another implication is that organizations that have recently executed a large change should be aware of the potential impact poor leadership-member relationships could have, and take this into consideration when evaluating a member’s progress in their new role. Another possible antecedent is self-efficacy or the personal belief around “how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations” (Bandura, 1982, p.122). We believe that given no institutional contradictions, this is one of the main reasons for why

Jessica and Matt are able to move directly to resource mobilization. Not only do they move directly to resource mobilization, they move in this direction at a high speed. We would argue that this perceived self-efficacy is related to past experience. In making this connection we observe the chain of action between self-efficacy, agency and resource mobilization, as exemplified in the result chapter. The link between agency and self-efficacy has been established in the literature (Bandura, 2001). The practical implication of this is that in the absence of personal resources related to past experiences, organizations could benefit from providing other resources to compensate. Compensating may speed up the process for these individuals. In terms of practitioner implications, we would argue that our contribution pushes the dialogue around what factors influence agency at different times in a change process and that there may be a greater need to understand the specific forces of these.

The third contribution is to the debate around continuous versus deliberate change. Ultimately, the chain "job crafting - agency - resource mobilization" becomes evidence for why we should be expecting continuous organizational change. This study shows how if an organization puts resourceful people in a situation where they are forced to job craft and are successful in doing so, this may ultimately lead to a number of positive outcomes. First, the individual will experience positive agency changes and be more prepared for future changes. The successful completion of a job crafting process following a organizational change becomes a personal resource in the form of agency that can be applied in the future. The next trigger or jolt could be a new team or a new leader, and the actor may again feel the need to job craft. Second, successful job crafting introduces a new pattern of behaviour in the organization. By doing so, the actor will shape and influence organizational structures. This indicates that there is room for both new process and goal logics in the organization. This behaviour contributes to a continuous change process, and highlight how deliberate and continuous change processes can occur simultaneously and/or sequentially (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Carlsen & Kvalnes, 2015). We therefore posit that in the aftermath of a deliberate change, organizational members are participating in micro-processes that contribute to what could be perceived as a continuous change process. However, the flip side is as potentially damaging as the benefits are potentially positive. If the organizational member is unable to ultimately go through all stages where they sensemake, job craft, mobilize and reach role mastery, they will most likely burnout, create hostile work environments or worse, quit. This is echoed in our data, with our informants sharing how the need for job crafting in certain units have resulted in toxic work environments where people are overworked and tired.

The fourth contribution to the theoretical landscape is around the source of endogenous change. Whereas the literature today has in many ways created a duality between the impacts of political and practical conflict, as potential source of endogenous change, our study has highlighted how there may be an interplay between the two. First, we have shown how actors can be endogenous change agents and enact on their world with the intention to transform it with the sole intention of solving practical dilemmas. This is the case of Jessica and Matt. Second, we have shown how the combination of practical and political dilemmas generates the greatest variation in agency changes in our sample. This forces the actor to seek new paths for actions, moving the organization in a new direction. Having said that, both these groups act as change agents, but with varying impact on the organization. The implication of this for practitioner is that there is no need for the duality, but rather a deeper understanding of the interplay. Further, it shows the granularity and temporal nature of the interactive property of agency.

6.4 Limitations and Further Studies

Our aim of this study was to offer a practice-based view on how actors enact on their world following a deliberate organizational change. The first limitation of this study is that we have interviewed a limited number of people within a given domain. Further, we have only interviewed employees below middle management, and have not included a secondary perspective from management. Even though we have included observations and knowledge of internal processes to our cases, an assessment of the actors from their manager would have strengthened the data in terms of enacted agency. Second, as in any case study design and the sample of our study, there is a limit to how generalizable these findings are. In order to validate these results, and to test if they apply in other domains, further research would be needed. Third, we have deliberately chosen to approach the construct of agency from a practice perspective and as available to all. However, it should be stated that there is a possibility that there may be personality factors in play here. Further research should assess the extent of this hypothesis. Fourth, in the second round of interviews, the subjects were predominantly female due to uncontrollable circumstances. This majority of females could have influenced our data in one way or another. Further research should investigate whether such personal characteristics impact the identified micro-processes. Lastly, our study has focused on individual agency and its relationship to individual resources. However, we have not accounted for the possibility that there may be collective goals in play in this case and associated collective agency (Bandura, 2000). Further research should look into how individual and collective agency interacts around the pursuit of both individual and collective goals.

6.5 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the presence of micro-processes anits implications on variations in individual agency following a deliberate change. What we came to observe is how organizational actors navigate and enact on their world in order to bounce back to their state of equilibrium. We refer to this state as role mastery. Our study found that the pursuit of role mastery is achieved through five distinct micro-processes; orientation, role alignment, role redefinition, resource identification and resource mobilization. In addition, we found evidence for the presence of variations of agency within each micro-process, and identified how actors who go through the processes of role redefinition experienced growth of agency throughout the full chain of processes. Further, we found that resources, and specifically how organizational actors identify and mobilize them, act as both an enabler for the trajectory of processes and its own micro-process. In addition, our analysis reveals how resources are the primary source of variations of agency within each micro-process. Lastly, our study showed how the capacity to mobilize resources in the current temporal moment leads to the growth of agency, manifested through the property of forethought as well as the capacity to meet future challenges (Bandura, 2018).

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide Interview 1

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your current role, and how this change has affected your role?
2. The tasks you see for you to work with now - what makes them exciting? Can you give any examples of this?
3. What do you experience as challenging in your new role? Can you give any examples?
    a. If you were to give a grade from 1-5, where 1 is a little challenging and 5 is very challenging, what character would you give your role as today?
4. How do you perceive your opportunities to take the initiative / create something new / show your ability / act on your own / even make suggestions and initiatives in your job? Do you have examples of cases where you have taken the initiative?
5. Last week, you had a visit to Matt, the head of Western Europe. During the meeting, an employee asked what he meant you should do, now that

many of your roles do not have specific processes or pipelines. He then said that he wants you to make their own best practices hypotheses, test them on customers, then learn and report back to the corp.

   a. What do you think about that?
   b. What can such a mindset mean for your job? Do you have any examples?

6. Can you describe an event or give an example that you think exemplifies the culture of the Company?

<u>Interview Guide Interview 2</u>

1. Can you tell us something about your role?
2. How has your working day changed since we talked last September?
3. From the last six months, can you share an experience or story from a situation where you felt a sense of achievement?
4. When we spoke in September, I asked you what you are experiencing as challenging in your role. Then you gave the grade X on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is a little challenging and 5 is very challenging. What character would you give your role as today?
   a. What do you think are the reasons why there has been a change in how you experience your working day?
5. Can you give some examples of what you have done to change this?
6. How do you perceive your opportunities to take the initiative / create something new / show your strength / act on your own / yourself come up with suggestions and initiatives in your role today?
7. Do you have examples of cases where you have taken initiatives from the last six months? Please tell specific projects or customers and explain your role in these
8. What people in the organization do you feel support you? What support have they given you in the last six months?

<u>Survey Questions employed by HR-office (August 2017)</u>

1. My experience of change in this company has been positive
2. I am confident I can make the changes required in my role

3. People I work with have the resilience to implement necessary changes
4. I am willing to make a significant contribution so that we empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more
5. In my area, people’s energy for making/driving changes is high
6. Managers in my team show high commitment for change
7. The Leadership Team demonstrates effective sponsorship for change

Change Agency and Micro-Processes

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Content

Executive Summary

This paper is a preliminary thesis report, as a part of the continuous assessment of our master thesis. Our master project is guided by the following research question:

What are the micro-processes that contribute to individual variation in change agency, following a deliberate organizational change process?

The report has five parts. We start by situating our topic and research question in the contemporary context and the academic history of change agents. We adopt a wider view of change agents and a broader application of agency, and position our inquiry within this literature. The project aims to contribute to the discussion around change being both deliberate and continuous, through a longitudinal and contextual frame.

In the second part, we review the literature on agency as well as change agency. First, we situate the concept in the institutional theory literature, and the development of this debate over the last decades. Second, we discuss the role of micro-processes in the study of agency. Third, we present Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) model of agency and a discussion around operationalization. Lastly, we discuss the concepts of proactive behaviour and job crafting in relation to our project.

The third part discusses our methodological approach. We have chosen to use abductive inquiry as our methodology and provide reasoning for this. We discuss our research design and plan for data collection, as well as a description of the case context of our project.

The fourth part covers our preliminary findings following completion of phase two of our project. This includes presenting themes that describe the organizational field in the period immediately following a deliberate change, as well as initial observations of individual variation in change agency.

We close the report by describing the plan for thesis progression.

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project introduction

In a globalized market place, with changes to capital markets, technological advances, and a desire to improve competitiveness, the need for change initiatives is growing. With the increasing rate of change in our modern organizations, the question turns to who is driving these changes? Change agents have been defined as 'the individuals or teams that are going to initiate, lead, direct or take direct responsibility for making change happen" (Caldwell, 2003, p. 664). In the following discussion and in this project, we focus on internal change agents, excluding perspectives surrounding external change agents, such as management consultants. This body of literature was historically concerned with developing taxonomies and describing competencies of such internal change agents. Schön (1963) introduced the notion of the change champion, whereas Stjernberg and Philips (1993) coined the term 'souls of fire', coming from the Swedish word 'eldsjälar' meaning 'driven by burning enthusiasm'. These individuals were argued to be key to driving forth a change as well as the success of the process. Expanding on this to include a larger number of people in the process, several change agent taxonomies were developed. Ottoway's (1983) model identified ten change roles in three separate categories, of change generators, implementers, and adopters. Beatty and Gordon (1991) separate management patriarchs from evangelists as taking on the respective roles of idea generators and implementers. A number of additional taxonomies can be found in the literature.

The use of taxonomies and competencies limited the focus of possible change agents to individuals at a manager level. With a limitation of focus, this perspective implied that the role of the change agent is ultimately codifiable (Buchanan, Addicott, Fitzgerald, Ferlie, & Baeza, 2007). This static view of the process is an unrealistic representation of the social process that takes place under an organizational change. It may also fail to capture the lived experience of those that are driving change, as well as the interaction of various change agents (Caldwell, 2003). Given these notions, there was a move towards rethinking the role of the change agent, as more distributed in nature. The scholarly debate has moved to see change as a less well-defined concept and as a more dispersed and distributed responsibility in the organization (Buchanan, Claydon, & Doyle, 1999). An example of this was presented by Buchanan, who looked at a change process in a hospital where the change agents were from different parts of the organization, indicating a "dispersed responsibility model of change implementation" (2003, p. 663). The study found that there were positive effects in terms of both personal and career nature to those who chose to enact on their change agency.

In adopting a wider view of change agents and a broader application of agency, this project assumes that each individual making up the organization is now seen as a potential internal change agent, having and exerting various level of change agency (Barratt-Pugh & Bahn, 2014). This is supported by the work of Ottoway who stated that we are all change agents and that engaging in change processes is a "normal part of everyone's life" (1983, p. 379). This argument falls in line with how change is seen as a continuous and emergent process (Weick & Quinn, 1999). "The distinctive quality of continuous change is the idea that small continuous adjustments, created simultaneously across units, can cumulate and create substantial change" (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 375). Turning to the change agent within continuous change, their role is one of managing language, identity and dialogue. Importance is placed on the sensemaking process that the individual actors go through, facing these sequential changes (Weick, 1995). This view also shifts change agency from being a specialist management activity to a necessary skill for all participants in the global workplace (Buchanan et al., 2007). Wylie, Sturdy and Wright (2014) argue that this may lead to ambiguity in core activities from those of line or middle manager, as well as difficulty in identifying change agent competencies and skills. In addition, adapting such a model opens up for the possibility that change agents may act in a way counterproductive to the overarching strategic goals of the organization. This is because it can be assumed that when actors enact agency on behalf of an organization, they do so based on a variety and interlinked motives that have to be taken into consideration in the overarching change strategy (Doyle, 2001). We will return to this particular situation in the following literature

1.2 Research Question

With this paradigm shift, the literature has seen an increasing number of studies looking at internal change agents and the various conditions for their behaviour and its implications on organizations (as will be presented in the subsequent section). However, adopting the view that change processes can be both deliberate and continuous (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Carlsen & Kvalnes, 2015), we have not been able to identify a study that looks at the individual variation in change agency among employees in the period following an official change. This notion is supported by Vallas (2006) who points out specifically the lack of understanding of how employees perceive, understand, and subsequently respond to the change they are confronted with. Lastly, there are no longitudinal research studies on the fluctuating change agency in a contextual setting. We hope to fill this knowledge gap. With this in mind, the aim of our thesis is to investigate the following research question:

What are the micro-processes that contribute to individual variation in change agency, following a deliberate organizational change process?

PART II: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section will review the literature on agency through a number of steps. First, we will situate the concept in the institutional theory literature, and the development of this debate over the last decades. Second, we will discuss the role of micro-processes in the study of agency. Third, we will present Emirbayer & Mische's (1998) model of agency and a discussion around operationalization. Lastly, we discuss the concepts of proactive behaviour and job crafting in relation to our project.

2.1 Institutional Theory and Agency

Human agency has been the topic of study for different disciplines for decades. Inden (1990) defines the concept as

> "The realized capacity of people to act upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex interrelationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view" (p. 23).

As Holland and her colleagues point out, the conundrum, or as others has called it, the paradox, of the debate around agency is the contraction between individuals as social products and social producers (Holland, Lachiotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Agency as a concept resides in the field of institutional theory, and has been defined as an action-theoretic concept (Caldwell, 2005). Within institutional theory, institutional logics are important. These logics can be defined as the "shared understanding of the goals pursued and the means to pursue them" (Doldor, Sealy, & Vinnicombe, 2016, p. 286). In capturing the "assumptions, values, beliefs and rules" of the organization, the logics provide the individuals with roadmaps for and legitimacy of actions (Thornton & Occasio, 1999, p. 804). These logics guide behaviour for all organizational agents. This forms the backdrop for how scholarly debate has conceived of agency as historically and structurally determined (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), with an associated embeddedness (Seo & Creed, 2002). Embeddedness, or the degree to which actors and their actions are linked to their social context (Reay, Golden-Biddle, & German, 2006), has been seen as a constraint to action. Within this paradigm of thinking, agency and embeddedness were seen as a duality. Change agency was said to take place when a given actor is less embedded or become less embedded because of particular events (Seo & Creed, 2002). This resulted in said paradox and the following question: "How can actors change institutions if their actions, intentions, and rationality are all conditioned by the very institution they wish to change?" (Holm, 1995, p. 398).

This duality, and the "iron cage of determinism" (Carlsen & Välikangas, 2017), has since been challenged. Bourdieu (1977) argues that one cannot understand change agency without understanding the interplay between the individual and the social structures in which the actor operates. Bourdieu's analysis of agency argues that "individual agents choose actions congruent with their complex relations within their respective fields and in recognition of their varied resources" (Nentwich, Ozbilgin, & Tatl, 2014, p. 237). Furthermore, Doldor and colleagues argue that institutional logics, and specifically competing institutional logics, provide opportunity for enacted agency and change (Doldor et al., 2016). Similarly, scholars argued that instead of acting as a constraint, embeddedness is an opportunity to enact change (Reay et al., 2006). The study found that being highly embedded allowed an actor to employ his or her network and intimate knowledge of the organization in order to legitimize new institutional logics.

In the more recent paradigm, it is argued that by focusing too much on embeddedness and structural determinism we have overlooked the capacity of the individual to enact agency and act as a change agent (Battilana, Leca & Boxenbaum, 2009). Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) argued that actors should be viewed as “culturally competent with strong practical skills and sensibility who creatively navigate within their organizational fields” (p. 220). In seeing actors as both more independent and capable of shaping their institutional fields, scholars have shifted focus to understand agency as more distributed and emergent in nature, as well as possibly stemming from everyday practices (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca., 2011; Zundel, Holt, & Cornelissen, 2013; Smets & Jarzabkowski, 2013).

2.2 Agency and Micro-processes

With the shift in focus to the individual and its everyday practices, attention was also turned to the microlevel processes or micro-processes that these individuals engaged in, in order to transform their institutional fields. For example, Reay and colleagues (2006) looked at how nurse practitioners in Alberta engaged in micro-processes in order to legitimize their way of working in regional health districts. Creed, deJordy, and Lok (2010) looked at how LGBT ministers engaged in micro-processes consisting of identity work and role redefinition in order to overcome contradictory logics and enact change in their congregations. Doldor and colleagues (2016) looked at how UK headhunters became accidental activist in diversity management through micro-processes. Similarly, scholars have repositioned how we view resistance to change, focusing on the micro-processes of sensemaking and identity that actors go through during ambiguous times (Sonensheim, 2014; Ford, Ford, & D’Amelio, 2008). “Resistance is a self-serving and self-fulfilling label given by change agents trying to make sense of change recipients reactions of change initiatives, rather than a description of an objective reality” (Ford et al., 2008, p. 363).

Common for these processes was that the changes consisted of small adjustments over time by multiple individuals, and not necessarily a revolution carried out by a ‘heroic’ change agent. Given that these individuals all act according to their own values and interests, interpret their surroundings, and in some cases carry out intentional changes for the organization, scholars have voiced a need for a deeper understanding of these ‘institutional entrepreneurs’ (Battilana, 2006; Battilana et al., 2009). In light of our research context (multinational company), studies have also shown that the resulting micro-processes are a combination of both “large-scale institutional dynamics and how actors understand and interpret these dynamics given the local context in which they operate” (Mosley & Charnley, 2014, p. 245). These findings indicate therefore a push and pull between mandated institutional logics and the sensemaking on the ground, in terms of the policy changes ultimately implemented. Organizations and by extension the people that make up the organizations should therefore be thought of as "interpretative mechanisms that filter, decode and translate the semiotics of broader social systems" (Suddaby, 2010, p. 19). This moves the discussion beyond ‘grand theories of institutions’ (Lawrence et al., 2011) to understand how different forms of agency contribute to continuous and emergent transformations.

2.3 Theoretical Model and Operationalization

The academic conversation around agency in today’s literature is mainly based on the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998). They conceptualized agency as encompassing three dimensions: an iterational one, which anchors action in the past through the replication of habitual routines; a projective one, which enables the envisioning of future courses of action; and a pragmatic-evaluative one, which modifies action in response to currently evolving situations. The use of Emirbayer and Mische’s model is appropriate for our research question, as this theory specifically accounts “for variability and change in actors’ capacities for imaginative and critical intervention in the diverse contexts in which they act” (1998, p. 970). We hypothesize that the projective and pragmatic-evaluative dimensions will be the most relevant to our project given the case context. Their model will form a backdrop for our discussion and guide the project, however, given our research focus and methodological choice, we are interested in enacted agency, rather than perceived agency. This implies that the ultimate operationalization of change agency and degree of change agency within our research context will become clearer and specified at the end of data collection.

2.4 Related Concepts

In surveying the literature, two associated concepts can be found that provide useful context to how we perceive specific actions as reflections of the dimensions of change agency that we hypothesize to be relevant. The first concept is proactive behavior. Proactive behavior is defined as "anticipatory action that employees take to impact themselves and/or their environments" (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Research shows that individuals are more likely to display proactive behavior in situations that are unclear, uncertain, and with less well-defined role expectations (e.g., Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). Ambiguity therefore becomes an antecedent to proactive social behaviour. The mechanism underlying this finding is that individuals will aim to minimize the uncertainty or seek clarity, in order to achieve a relative state of equilibrium in their organizational field. Specific actions that may fall under this behaviour could be to build a new network, seek feedback or guidance, or negotiate job changes (Grant & Ashford, 2008). These scholars posit that individuals will continue to engage in proactive behaviour until the uncertainty is resolved with a relative positive effect for the individual, in the case that the first attempt was not successful.

The second concept is the concept of job crafting. Job crafting entails shaping the task or relational boundaries of your job, or both (Wrzesniewski & Dutton &, 2001). This behaviour implies changing the number of activities in your job (physically) or how one view one's job (cognitively), and the social interactions one has while doing the job, respectively. Writing on the topic, the authors discuss how such behaviour may have significant impact on the organizational field through modifying both the meaning of a job, and an individual's work identity. However, job crafting differs from proactive behaviour by specifying that the behaviour is not available for everyone and that the effect of crafting may be positive or negative for both the crafter and the organization. However, the essence is the "focus on the freedom employees have and the creativity they exhibit in crafting jobs to be different from their formally specified ingredients" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton &, 2001, p. 187). We hypothesize that we may observe these two concepts in our case, as enacted change agency.

PART III: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Abductive Inquiry

When choosing a method design, the traditional choice of reasoning has been between inductive and deductive forms of reasoning. Inductive models of reasoning involves "developing theory from practice using an interpretive epistemology", while deductive models involves "testing theory against practice using a positivist epistemology" (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006 in Martela, 2012, p. 95). Both inductive and deductive have problems as forms of inference suitable for organizational research (Martela, 2012). Because of the lack of inductive and inductive reasoning, a third form of reasoning it has been argued for. Charles S.Peirce (1903/1998a) proposed a new form of reasoning called abductive reasoning, sometimes referred to as "inference to the best explanation" (Piecer, 1998b [1903], p. 216).

Abductive reasoning can be defined as "the process of reasoning in which explanations are formed and evaluated" (Magnani 2001, p.18). According to Magnani (2001), abductive reasoning is a process of forming an explanatory hypothesis for poorly defined phenomena. In abductive inquiry the researcher starts with a situation in need of explanation. This situation initiates a process where the researcher uses imagination to come up with new ways of seeing matters. Based on previous theoretical explanations, one's pre understanding and observations, the aim of the abductive inference is to arrive at the best available explanation taking all into account (Martela, 2012). "The result of abductive reasoning is not the final truth about the matter- because of the fallibilism such a thing is unobtainable- but a tentative hypothesis that nevertheless would best explain the evidence and has the most potential to provide practical results" (Martela, 2012, p.98). In this case, 'best' means the best explanation from the point of view of the particular researcher or research community.

The iterative process of abduction in which one uses different theoretical perspectives, utilize existing data and the gathering of new data, the aim is to reach an appropriate explanation. Abduction can therefore be conceived as a learning process, in which the researcher takes an active role in the creation of new knowledge (Prawat, 1999). Given the theoretical discussions and limited understanding of the variations in individual change agency, we deem abductive inquiry to be appropriate to our exploration of the 'best' understanding of the phenomena. This methodological choice is the reason why we are not operating with a predefined operationalization of change agency, but will develop an operationalization based on learning and discussions within the research field.

3.2 Research Design and Data Collection

The project will be a longitudinal case study design and will use a variety of methods to build the case, namely semi-structured interviews, participant observation, as well as responses to an internal change survey made available to the project. Triangulation, or the use of different methods to develop a comprehensive understanding of a context and ultimately the construct in question, has been shown to be enhance the quality and credibility of qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1999). It has also been thought of as a strategy to test validity of the findings, through the convergence of information coming from a variety of sources (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, Dicenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014).

In terms of data collection, the project runs over three phases. As presented above, the theoretical grounding for our research approach is abductive inquiry. Abductive inquiry argues for the necessity for the "constant movement back and forth between empirical data and theory" (Martela, 2012). Taking inspiration from Harrison and Rouse (2014), each of our phases has three modes: reviewing the literature mode, data collection mode, and data analysis mode (not necessarily in that order). This way of progressing our project supports the choice of abductive inquiry as our theoretical grounding.

The first phase consisted of an eight week placement in the case context. Throughout this period, the researcher was able to learn about the organization in a natural setting (Kawulich, 2005), as he was working on an internal project. These participant observations, as well as responses to an internal change survey sent out by the HR department, helped form an overall impression of the case context, and acted as a pilot. The questions used in the survey can be found in the appendix. This pilot helped form our initial hypotheses about the processes that were taking place in regards to change agency in the organization, provided guidelines for sampling, and a basis for an interview guide (deWalt & deWalt, 2002).

After the pilot we looked to academic literature to craft an interview guide. We subsequently conducted ten semi-structured interviews in the second phase, consisting of six open-ended questions. These questions were designed to capture the lived experience of the respondents given the recent official change in the organization. See appendix for full interview guide. These ten individuals were sampled using a purposeful stratified sample strategy (Patton, 2001), in effect choosing individuals from different units, levels of expertise, and perceived variation in experiencing change. It was the aim of this sampling exercise to generate maximum heterogeneity in the final sample. The choice of the ten individuals was done by the HR Manager, based on these three criteria, and is therefore independent of the researcher's bias in selection. In the third phase, we will conduct a follow-up interview with the same ten individuals in order to capture reflections on enacted behaviour since the first interview. The interview guide for the third phase will be based on first-order coding and narrative analysis from the second phase, and is at this time not ready.

Lastly, this project follows the appropriate ethical considerations by operating with informed consent, ensured anonymity and confidentiality, and the possibility to withdraw from the study at any time. As of January 1st 2018, the project has approval from The Data Protection Official for Research, at the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Personvernombudet).

3.3 Research Context

This study focuses on an organization (referred to as the ‘Company’ from here onwards) based in Norway. The Company has close to 300 employees and is a part of a multinational corporation, while operating as an independent subsidiary. Starting with a change in top global leadership some years back, the Company has been on a transformational journey. This journey has been strategically grounded in changing the way the Company works as well as its offering to the global market in order to remain competitive. The Company is moving to servitization, defined as “the innovation of an organization’s capabilities and processes to shift from selling products to selling integrated products and services that deliver value in use” (Baines, Lightfoot, Benedettini, & Kay, 2009).

Though annual smaller organizational changes have come to be expected at the start of each fiscal year, 2017 brought the most significant change in the past decade. The organizational change was announced at the beginning of the summer, and immediately put into action. The scope of the change included 190 individuals, and resulted in the creation of new company verticals and cross-vertical teams. This change was primarily directed towards the sales and customer-facing units of the Company, as well as some administrative and support roles. The process consisted of two components. First, with the creation of new verticals and teams, each employee had to be mapped and evaluated up against the roles available in the new organization. Second, the Company was mandated to remove 30 roles, in addition to several roles being centralized and moved to the regional office. In effect, most were mapped to a new role, others were asked to leave, and some requested to leave.

The new organizational structure was ‘landed’ and announced in the middle of August, with employees officially entering their new roles as of September 1st . Nearly all employees ‘in scope’ have new role descriptions, and a new team made up of new colleagues. The change has been described as a way to prepare the Company for the future. It comes at a time of financial prosperity and is not a result of stakeholder pressure. The official change period, in terms of the Leadership Team’s perceived unfreeze, change, and refreeze (Lewin, 1951), was carried out over the course of approximately 8 weeks.

PART IV: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

This section should be prefaced with a description of the distinction we have established between the official and emergent change periods. As described in the case context section, the official change was carried out during the summer months of 2017, and ended with employees entering their official roles as of September 1st. However, many of the respondents mentally and socially started their new roles as of August 15th, when the new organizational structure was announced with respective roles and teams. The period of interest to this project is the emergent change period, defined as the period after August 15th 2017. We will in reality capture a snapshot of this emergent process when we enter in March 2018 to conduct phase three. However, we acknowledge that his reality may look different six months thereafter.

4.1 Formative processes in emergent change period

Based on the data collected in the pilot and the first phase, we have identified some formative processes that describe the emergent change environment immediately after a deliberate change. These categories are the results of first-order coding of both transcribed interviews, and the qualitative data from the questionnaire. At this point, we will not be providing detailed description of these categories due to space limitations.

- Sense of uncertainty
- Lack of 'local leadership' (support, coaching, presence, etc)
- Lack of role clarity
- Lack of vision clarity
- Mixed experience of the 'official' change
- Changing culture as a result of the loss of a number of "culture bearers"

Do these formative processes foster or prevent change agency immediately after the official change? On the one hand, one could ask: How can one effectively be a change agent if one does not know what one's role is and what the role of one's team members is? Participants shared feeling of "treading water", and "standing still" without a clear understanding of the road ahead. On the other hand, does this situation represent the precondition for change agency as it forces each agent to search for meaning, purpose and forward-looking possibilities? Bridwell-Mitchell (2016) support the latter perspective, arguing that change agency is born in the uncertainty and ambiguity of solving practical dilemmas rather than political conflict. We predict that the answer to this will become clearer for the context of the Company after phase three.

4.2 Individual Variation of Change Agency

Given the results above, one interesting observation made is that it appears that participants are enacting different levels of change agency at the same point in time. To contextualize this, one respondent, when asked what he wanted to accomplish in this new role that he had been given, he responded,

> "It is more like 'How the hell am I going to solve this?', and perhaps not as brutal.. But that one is searching for others to ask them what they did in a similar role. But no, it's not like I can say that I am going to go in and

completely shape this role bottom-up, because it seems a little too big and complex at this point”

Another respondent described how she wanted to create a roundtable debate among executives in the industry she was working in, to facilitate knowledge sharing and network building. She had already reached out to a contact who was an expert on the matter to ask him to speak at the roundtable. At that particular point, while some respondents were searching for purpose and meaning in their role at this point, others were already sharing stories of concrete actions taken.

We are interested in exploring this particular observation around ambiguity or the lack thereof, and the impact this has on change agency, in moving forward with phase three of our project. We hypothesize that individuals displaying different levels of enacted agency during periods of ambiguity is a result of micro-processes. Taking a longitudinal perspective, we hypothesize that these micro-processes will become apparent when the individual is asked to reflect on their actions in retrospection. We will solicit these reflections during the interviews in phase three.

4.3 Contribution to the change literature

The change announced during the summer of 2017 constitutes a deliberate and radical change to the Company (Weick & Quinn, 1999), but similarly to what was presented by Carlsen and Kvalnes (2015), we observe that in the aftermath of a deliberate change, organizational members are participating in micro-processes that contribute to what could be perceived as a continuous change process. We posit that our research may contribute to the academic literature concerning change as both deliberate and continuous, as we study how change agency is enacted in the period following an official, top-down, change process. In addition, through the focus on micro-processes, we aim to contribute to the understanding of change as a more collective and democratic process.

PART V: PLAN FOR THESIS PROGRESSION

In terms of thesis progression, we will in the coming months be completing the analysis of the data from phase two, in preparation for phase three. In preparation for the second rounds of interviews, we will develop a new interview guide, as well as a grid-framework to codify actions based on the 'level' of change agency. This is to be used primarily by the researchers, but could also be used as a tool for co-creation of knowledge, if we deem this appropriate following the second round of interviews. Phase three will begin in the end of February 2018, and we plan to have a first draft of the final thesis completed by May 1st 2018.

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APPENDIX

Interview Guide

1. Kan du fortelle meg litt om din rolle per i dag og hvordan denne endringen har påvirket din rolle?
2. De oppgavene du ser for deg at du skal jobbe med nå - hva er det som gjør dem spennende? Kan du gi noen eksempler på dette?
3. Hva opplever du som utfordrende i din nye rolle? Kan du gi noen eksempler?
    a. Hvis du skulle gitt en karakter fra 1-5, der 1 er lite utfordrende og 5 er meget utfordrende, hvilken karakter ville du gitt din rolle per i dag?
4. Hvordan oppfatter du dine muligheter til å ta initiativ/skape noe nytt/vise handlekraft/handle på egen hånd/selv komme med forslag og initiativ i din jobb? Har du eksempler på tilfeller hvor du har tatt initiativ?
5. Forrige uke hadde dere besøk av Nuno - sjefen for vesteuropa. Under allmøtet spurte en ansatt hva han mente dere burde gjøre, nå som mange av rollene deres ikke har bestemte prosesser eller pipelines. Han svarte da at han ønsker at dere skal lage deres egne hypoteser på “best practices”, teste disse på kunder, for så å lære og rapportere tilbake til corp.
    a. Hva tenker du om det?
    b. Hva kan en slik tankegang bety for din jobb? Har du noen eksempler?
6. Kan du beskrive en hendelse eller gi et eksempel som du mener eksemplifiserer kulturen til MS Norge?

Survey Questions

1. My experience of change in this company has been positive
2. I am confident I can make the changes required in my role
3. People I work with have the resilience to implement necessary changes

4. I am willing to make a significant contribution so that we empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more
5. In my area, people’s energy for making/driving changes is high
6. Managers in my team show high commitment for change
7. The Leadership Team demonstrates effective sponsorship for change
8. I understand why we want to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more
9. I believe we need to fundamentally change the way we work to ensure our future success
10. People I work with are open and receptive to new ideas and changes
11. People I work with are willing to accept changes to their role if it helps improve our performance
12. If you were GM for a day, what would you do differently?

Question 1-11 were rated on a Likert scale from 1-5 [highly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, highly agree], whereas Question 12 was open-ended.