UNIVERSITY OF DERBY

'IDENTITY WORK' IN THE CONTEXT OF ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE: A GESTALT PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

The purpose of the thesis is to make a contribution to the development of an empirically informed theory of identity work in organisations on the basis of a gestalt paradigm.

Since its emergence almost three quarters of a century ago, gestalt has been applied to therapy, personal development, leadership education and organisational consulting. Gestalt remains, however, fundamentally a paradigm, which preferentially projects onto and deals with complex and dynamic organisational phenomena at individual, dyadic or small group levels. It can be argued that, with its focus on phenomenology and awareness, the gestalt paradigm is predominantly methodological, with only ambiguous or weak links to explicitly articulated epistemology or ontology.

A long-term professional, consulting relationship with a trade union branch enabled conducting action research in order to explore the constituents and dynamics of its organisational identity, prior to and following significant change. The subsequent dismantling and closure of the branch demanded an adjustment of research design. The new situation offered a unique opportunity to follow the existentially challenged organisation as its members reacted to and made sense of the closure.

The research is contextualised in three analytical clusters: identity and identity work, gestalt paradigm, and trade unions as organisations, institutions and social movements. An ontology of the intersectional field is posited, and on this foundation, four statements, seen as fundamental conditions for identity work, are operationalised through six propositions explicating identity work in a gestalt paradigm perspective.

Methodologically, the overall design is informed by a constructivist grounded theory approach, moving abductively - iteratively and even recursively - between inductive and deductive analysis and reflection. The empirical component of the thesis comprises participant observation, field notes, in-depth interviews during and subsequently two years after the closure, and memos. The data proved relevant and informative in terms of identity work in the organisation.

The result of the research is a hypothesis about identity work in organisations, firmly anchored in and commensurate with a present-day revised gestalt paradigm, which contribute to a formal development of a gestalt organisational theory. The hypothesis states that: "Identity work in organisations is a dialectical positioning, both individual and collective, between the

existential polar opposites of inclusion and exclusion. The processes through which identity work is enacted are cognitive, affective, and conative, instrumentally served by the contact boundary dynamics of egotisming, confluencing, projecting, retroflecting, introjecting, and deflecting. "

The empirical findings are considered robust, and the theory formulation meaningful. Acknowledging the specific circumstances of the study organisation and empirical design, however, a more general application of the hypothesis requires further research in diverse contexts for verification and possibly refinement of the gestalt theoretical concepts at the organisational level. The research results are of interest to gestalt practitioners who teach or work in or with organisations, and equally so for those interested in dynamic process perspectives in which attention shifts - whether at the level of the individual, group, or organisation - from static assessment of reified identity to real-time identity work; from structure to mutual interaction and influence, in order to balance the well-being of the human beings "in" and "profitability" of the organisation

Acknowledgements

Chapter 1 – Introduction

" You must be able to imagine yourself in a new organisation
to believe it is good"........ Informant

This thesis aims to contribute to the development of organisational gestalt theory by researching 'identity work' in the context of radical organisational change (Haslam and Ellemers, 2011;Hatch and Schultz, 2004). The distinctiveness of the study is anchored in:

- *Firstly*, utilisation of a gestalt paradigm as the epistemological framework in empirically informed organisational research. I argue that, during the 1950s the gestalt paradigm was applied to various forms of human organisation in addition to its intended therapeutic purpose. Although it was refined and developed within a global gestalt community, this was without any critical examination of its applicability to the understanding of large complex systems.

- *Secondly,* that 'identity work' takes place in the context of radical organisational change, where parts of the organisation were terminated in order for the main organisational body to survive. The research undertaken during the past decade on 'identity work' in and around organisations all emphasises its major importance for the wellbeing of individuals, teams and group dynamics, as well as for organisational strategising and the achievement of goals.

- *Thirdly*, the workplace is a trade union branch. Unions in Denmark carry an organisational identity (Albert and Whetten, 1985;Corley et al., 2006) as those who defend workers, strive to maintain or develop good working conditions, and negotiate wages. In "the good old days", the unions also occupied the role of societal watchdogs. Now their members are leaving in increasing numbers; the union incomes do not correspond to their cost of living; and they are in a situation where the unions themselves must downsize and make people redundant. However, in such a situation union employees do not have a legitimate, impartial organisation to which to turn beyond that in which they are organised and/or employed. Whether paid or voluntary, how does this fact impact upon their self-definition, their identification with the trade union as such, and in particular with union values and beliefs?

- *Fourthly,* the long-term affiliation (year 1999 till 2011) between union branch and me consists of a client/consultant, a participant/practitioner researcher and an informants/researcher relationship. From a field perspective context matters, and when attended to and critically reflected upon these perspectives provide a unique opportunity for data collection as well as analysis. Furthermore, it is rare that a researcher is present when news about closing down a workplace is announced and still is trusted access.

- *Finally,* by critically reviewing the gestalt paradigm in close "dialogue" with empirical data and extant literature understandings of *'identity work'*, the thesis leans towards an ideographic and abductive study suggesting a definition of 'identity work' coherent with a revised gestalt paradigm explicitly applicable to organisations.

In this introduction I will first present a societal context[1] for the thesis; then elaborate further on the five statements mentioned above. My point of departure provides an explanation for the emergence of the topic, which was not, initially, a deliberate choice. I finalise by explaining the intention of the thesis, its purpose and aims - including a short review of concepts and delimitations - followed by a presentation of its structure.

The societal situation

Organisational downsizing, mergers, alliance formation, and outsourcing are proclaimed as the order of the day (Adams, 2007). The dynamics and consequences of these radical changes have been explored and explained within different theoretical frameworks, for example psychoanalysis (De Gooijer, 2009;Yiannis, 1999), sociology (Samuel, 2010), organisation (Argyris, 1990;Lerpold, 2003) and economy (Czarniawska, 1997). In the western world paid employment has for the last century captured such a pivotal position in human identification that a society without it is unimaginable. However, work places change or decline due to technological advances or a liberal economic growth strategy which necessitates the transfer of workplaces to countries with different, often worse, working conditions. According to Beck (2002), paid work has become amalgamated into the very essence of human being, its moral, and self-definitions to such an extent that it becomes the most valid standard for evaluating humankind and its activities. From the cradle to the grave we identify with, and are being evaluated through, 'paid work' irrespective of how organisations downsize, merge,

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[1] By writing 'a social context' I want to emphasise that it is I who carve out and present a particular part of an overall picture, which forms part of my pre-understanding.

disappear abroad, or terminate. "Therefore, it should not be surprising that a social identity, called a work-based identity, exists" (Saayman and Crafford, 2011: 1). Nor should it be surprising that human adaptations to ongoing change requires 'identity work' (Kovoor-Misra, 2009). The changed work situation is part of a general sociological and psychological discourse, especially combined with a theorisation of globalisation, the fragmentation of modern life, and individualism (Adams, 2007;Alvesson, 2004;Brinkmann, 2008;Giddens, 1997). Adding to this instability, human beings (at least in the western world) are being bombarded with information from all over the world. Without warning, catastrophes and disasters are played out in the middle of our living rooms; political harassment that we must take a stance on, or trends of the day mediated by specialists, telling us how to dress or about our responsibility for staying (happily and healthy) alive. Longhurst (2007: 5) claims that "ordinary life is media drenched" and consequently social life increasingly becomes a set of "audienced and performed", processes which influence peoples' 'identity work'. According to Adams (2007) people organise their world as much as the world impacts upon the shape and resilience of people, leading him to explore different self-constructions in relation to social change on the grounds of existential questions such as: "Is there really a free choice"?, "What does responsibility mean"?, " What form does power take in modern human relations"? (Adams, 2007: 14). In keeping with the uncertainties of our times, he underlines that, apart from dogmatic religious or political convictions there are no straightforward answers to, or comforting guidelines about, how to manage our everyday lives. Nietzsche's conception of the sovereign, autonomous individual, who is but self-actualised, now provides the collective basis for our western life style (Ehrenberg, 2010). The point taken here is that leaping victoriously from the conformist institutions of former times, with its certainties (that is, norms, regulations and rules) into democratic modernity with its staggering range of opportunities and its information overload, human beings are left on their own to make responsible choices, which they can then only base upon their own self-constructed landmarks. This seemingly circular autonomous decision-making process, in which the individual is judged by his/her ability to self-realise and to take the initiative, eventually evokes feelings of inadequacy and impotence, leading to stress and depression (Ibid).

These phenomena with their human and financial consequences[2] partially justify the concept of identity and the concomitant production of vast amounts of scholarly theory about it on different levels of system and from different philosophical perspectives. 'Identity work' became the focal point of this thesis providing a conception link between the individual and the collective, namely by aiming to understand how 'identity work' manifests itself in the context of radical organisational change when seen through a gestalt lens.

Point of departure

Is it at all possible, in fact, to propose a comprehensive gestalt framework at the level of the organisation and, in particular, a gestalt-based theory of the existential aspect of present-day organisations with their dynamic complexity, their identity or, in process terms, their identity work? This curiosity has been fuelled by and became figural[3] for me through my work experience of more than 20 years in organisational consulting, as well as holding positions as a pedagogic leader in institutions offering training on "gestalt in organisations" at master's level. In particular, my consultancy work with the union had me focus on identity dynamics as an overall theme. Consulting on the basis of a gestalt paradigm - which I claim that I undertake - guides how I perceive and understand the world as part of my professional "toolbox" and, by inference, contributes to how I make sense of the way that individuals organise. Thus, I entered into this research arena, not only with pre-existing notions about what is good, right, possible, desirable etc. shaped and flavoured by my life and work experience in general, and my training, consulting and reflective practice in particular; however also with a pre-understanding of the union and our interaction. This pre-understanding will be explicitly articulated and subjected to critical reflexivity in the methodological section.

Gestalt therapy and the underlying philosophy/theory was, with the publication of the founding book *Gestalt Therapy, Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality*, (Perls et

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[2] The cost of sickness benefits in 2005 was DKK 11.5 billion in Denmark. In addition the cost of lost time, hospital treatment, doctors and other forms of treatment. The Danish Institute of Occupational Health estimates that up to a quarter of sick leave in Denmark is due or related to stress. Compared with the Employment Ministry official figures of sickness absence are equivalent to about 35,000 people every day being off work due to stress. Sources: Statistics Denmark and the Institute of Occupational Health http://www.statistikbanken.dk/statbank5a/default.asp?w=1280

[3] I utilise gestalt psychological terminology denoting the figure/ground principle which describes the "emergence, prioritising and satiation of needs...and is the basic perceptual principle of making the wholes of human needs or experiences meaningful" (Clarkson, 1989: 6) explicated in my case as based on the totality of my background this interest emerged and became an insistent question.

al., 1972/1951) quickly applied to societal (Hentoff and Holt, 1967) and organisational work (Nevis, 1997). The view of Perls et al. about human development originated from an amalgamation between a revised Freudian psychoanalysis (Barber, 2004;Perls, 1947), existential philosophies (Masquelier, 1999), phenomenological methodology (Yontef, 1979), Gestalt psychology (Yontef, 1988 p.235-254), American pragmatism (Hassrick, 2003), philosophical anarchism (Höll, 2003), and inspiration from eastern philosophies (Bowman, 2005). The rich diversity of sources provided a collection of ideas and concepts ahead of its time, which can still illuminate and inform contemporary events across a broad range of human activities (Levin and Bar-Yoseph Levine, 2012;Melnick and Nevis, 2009). Hence, gestalt thinking offers a rich and comprehensive understanding of the self, the social world and their relatedness - an understanding that could be readily applicable to an organisational context. In general, identity and self are seen as intertwined, albeit different, concepts (Leary and Tangney, 2005). However, within gestalt thinking, therapeutic or otherwise, identity has not been defined. The foundation of the gestalt paradigm is field theory, and consequently it espouses a process view, albeit principally based on the self construct. Pragmatically, in organisational parlance, 'identity' does not have the connotation of 'self'; the latter often being interpreted as a kind of "spiritual voodoo", therapy, or both. Nonetheless, the 'self' concept is being utilised by process organisational theorists (Schultz et al., 2012) that call for a closer scrutiny of self-processes as underlying identity dynamics. Interestingly, Pratt (2012) finds that process theorising about organisational identity is impoverished because it seldom considers an organisational self. Theoretically, identity has been fused into organisational theorising with the ground-breaking study of Albert and Whetten (1985). Hatch and Schultz' (2004) proposed an organisational identity dynamic model derived from theorising at the level of the individual - namely Mead's model explaining how the individual mind and self arises out of the social process (Mead, 1934). I believe this to be a theoretical springboard for exploration of gestalt's conceptualising of self in relation to identity work in an organisational context.

Understanding identity processes at different levels of system - individual, group, organisation, and society - is of great importance, not only for managers or consultants but also for employees being subjected (or 'objected') to organisational change. While there is a vast body of research (Cornelissen et al., 2007, providing a overview) with identity as its pivotal point, I have not been able to trace contributions exploring how people make sense of

and respond to their situation when their workplace is being closed down, not by "an outsider" but by another part of their organisation - themselves. How does such a situation impact upon identity work or self-definitions? Is it possible to identify with the part of the organisation that closes one's workplace, either making one redundant or leaving one as "a survivor" (Appelbaum et al., 1997)? A further important question is how employees' understandings may shape the overall organisational identity, if we are to believe Weick's claim that "organisations exists largely in the mind" and "what ties organizations together is what ties thoughts together" (Weick, 2001: 308) - a claim that leads to methodological questions such as what is in fact stored in people's memory and how can we get to know about it? We know that this matters from experimental research on 'unfinished situations' (Lewin, 1997a p:169 -190). Some clues to the questions may be found in more recent work on organisational mergers (De Gooijer, 2009), decline (Samuel, 2010), and downsizing (Gandilfi, 2009). None of these writings address identity and identity work explicitly. However in different ways they articulate emotional, attitudinal and behavioural reactions to radical change in people's work environment.

All these questions were evoked by such a situation faced by a union branch, its employees and elected officials one day in May 2007. They were democratically "outvoted"[4] during a major trade union cutback. While they knew that the trade union had to downsize, they did not seriously believe their branch to be among those that would have to close. During the previous five years they had implemented major changes, not only structurally but also in terms of their cultural foundation, diverging from received opinion about the raison d'être of a union. I worked with the organisation as a consultant during some of this period, which gave me insights into their change history as well as formed our relationships. I believe that this relationship, a mutual acceptance, paved the way and subsequent made my research possible. Furthermore, my interpretations and questions from this period informed the research question and formed my initial research design.

The union branch management and I made a prior agreement about collaborating on an action research process, beginning in 2006. This was about to be fully implemented just as the

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[4] Unions as political organisations vote about major decisions which impact how members (official elected and employees) navigate in order to influence. At the very beginning of my consultancy assignment I questioned this behaviour. I found it dysfunctional because of the many resources spent on lobby activities and alliance formations. However, as research practitioner I challenged my labels (hypocrisy and dysfunctional), being curious how this kind of organising was interpreted by participants and how it impacted them.

closure information was released. Despite the complicated situation I completed the scheduled interviews in June 2007, transcribed them and had them confirmed. Then I paused to reconsider. Hence, the second research design took shape based on the research practitioner period, described in the research design section below. While my focus changed from "organisational identity maintenance" to that of 'identity work' I did not change my claim that the lack of rigour in gestalt theory construction, combined with very limited empirical research into its application, has left a big gap to be filled if a gestalt paradigm as applied to organisational life is to achieve and maintain legitimacy. The gestalt terminology emerged from a therapeutic context which may appear less inviting to the business world, even though within recent decades psychological and therapeutic technologies have made their influence evident (Brinkmann, 2008). Even more problematic appears to be the rather unquestioned application of a therapeutic framework to organisational practice and a micro-level approach to complex systems.

Research purpose and definition

The purpose of the study is to contribute to development of gestalt theory applied to organisations by conducting a research study of a particular union branch. I seek to understand how a group of people bounded to a specific union branch experience and make sense of the closure of their branch; specifically the impact on their identity and identification with the union's different constituencies. I contend that the identity question becomes especially salient when people in organisations experience significant, radical change, irrespective of whether the incumbents themselves feel confirmed or threatened in their employment. Hence in situations of uncertainty, when people are grappling with "what's going on" and "how to relate to who and what", including their self-reflections (Pyszczynski et al., 2010), identity work becomes prominent. While there are contributions exploring organisational identity dynamics when an organisation is exposed to threat (Elsbach and Kramer, 2004;Ravasi and Schultz, 2006), as well as research on how and why individuals identify with their organisations (Dutton et al., 1994;Pratt, 1998), I did not find any research explicitly exploring what happens with employees' identity work when the organisation to which they belong is being closed down. This can partly be understood as downsizing, often executed as outsourcing, where the function is moved partially or totally out of the organisation, or by the "forage harvester method", a metaphor for reducing each unit by the same percentage. Finally, it is not often that a researcher is privileged by being present at the

very moment when the news about the closure is announced and subsequently is allowed to remain in contact up to two years after the closure.

The thesis focuses on understanding 'identity work' in a particular organisational context from a gestalt paradigm perspective, aiming at theory development. It does so through a triangulation of gestalt perspective of practice, fieldwork and theory reprocessing as represented in figure 1.
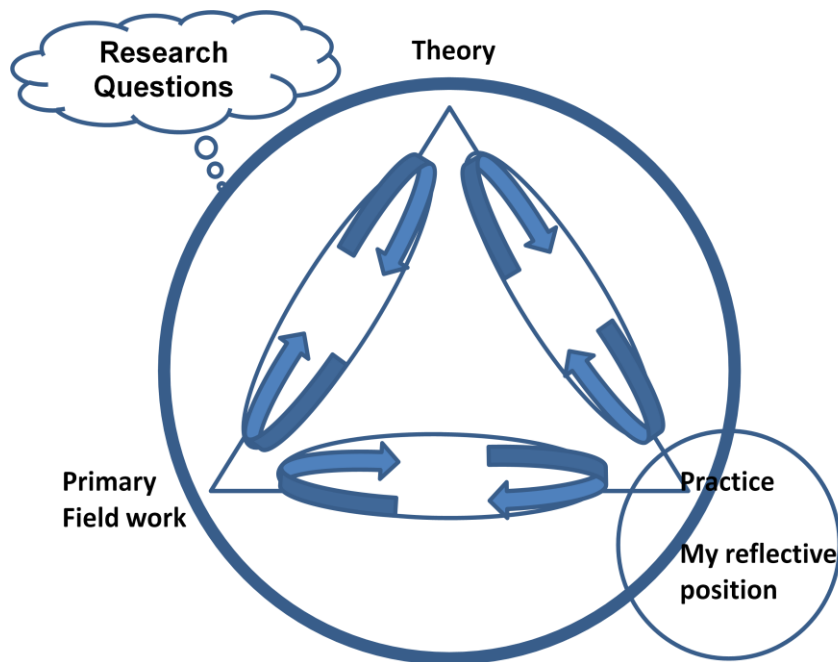
Figure 1: Research Methodology

Each of the three domains interacts in the triad, as well as in the three dyads. Each domain represents a point of view being influenced by, and influencing, the other domains. The field study developed and was re-shaped and influenced by organisational and societal changes, something I did not have any impact on. However, this revealed new perspectives and unexpected possibilities. Initially proceeding as action-based research undertaken together with the union branch, it transformed into an explorative study understanding 'identity work' from the perspective of participants. I attribute my extensive reading to the fact that I became theoretically aware of 'identity work' as a phenomenon, while at the same time it also emerged from observations and interviews, grounded in data (Morse et al., 2009).

From the theoretical domain, the gestalt paradigm did not offer any coherent explanation, which meant the research design incorporated a comparative theory approach (Greenwood, 1974) used to juxtapose theories of 'identity work' with each other, as well as with data from the case study. The gestalt paradigm adopts a process view on 'self', seeing behaviour as a function of person and environment, thus context dependent. I contend that this applies equally to organisations. Hence, trade unions as a particular form of organising, with institutionalised regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive influences (Scott, 2001), must be taken into account exploring identity work as situated.

Summing up; the intention of the thesis is to make a contribution to the development of an empirically informed organisational gestalt theory through a study of 'identity work' in an organisation, a trade union, as it underwent change.

The work attempts to address the following research questions:

1.   How does the existing literature, particularly the literature relating to gestalt theory and practice, explain "identity work" and organisation?

2.   How does the organisation, a trade union branch, resemble organisations, institutions or social movement organisations more generally, to be exact the ontology of trade union organisations?

3.   How do the employees and elected officers make sense of their experiences before and subsequently, when their part of the organisation is being closed down?

4.   How do the experiences of the employees and elected officers compare to experiences identified in the literature on identity work and organising, particularly from a gestalt perspective?

5.   To what extent can gestalt thinking illuminate 'identity work', particularly in organisations?

The *first* question is rather straightforwardly answered by reviewing existing literature and research on 'identity work' in its various forms. It has been suggested that the study of identity thrives in theoretical pluralism "while encouraging clarity and transparency in the articulation of definitions and core theoretical suppositions."(Corley, Harquail, Pratt, Glynn, Fiol, & Hatch, 2006). Applying a comparative theory approach where 'identity work' is the pivotal point within many different theoretical and situational contexts allows for making ontologically and epistemologically aware choices. From a field theoretical perspective,

assuming behaviour is a function of person plus environment, 'identity work' is situated. Hence, the *second* question concerns the context in which the informants act and interact. It is addressed by reviewing accounts of trade union history, organisational, institutional and social movement theories. Beyond answering which of these theories best applies to understanding trade union organising, this review also focuses on perspectives concerning change and identity work. The *third* question is addressed through participant observations conducted prior to the termination of the branch followed by in-depth interviews from 2007 and again in 2009-10. Prior to its closure, this particular branch had initiated an internal merger which affected many aspects of their organisational structure, how they organised, their internal relations and self-definitions. As became evident in the observations (and subsequently confirmed in the interview statements) the impact of continuous organisational change make 'identity work' salient. The *fourth* question is answered through adopting a constructivist grounded theory development approach analysing the experiences, mine as participant observer, and as reported by the union employees and elected members in subsequent interviews as reported in chapter 6. The *fifth* question is addressed in the discussion chapter 7 by contrasting extant literatures, the created analytical framework and the abdutively generated accounts.

Some concepts and delimitations

The focal point of this thesis is 'identity work' in the context of radical organisational change, albeit observed through a particular lens. As Gestalt psychology has amply documented, we pattern our environment (Koffka, 1935). This knowledge is now mundane; however it must recursively be recalled, not least methodologically. The gestalt paradigm belongs within the overarching interpretive paradigm as described by Burrell and Morgan (1979), although with variations amongst gestalt scholars when it concerns perspectives on change, partly rooted in historically inspiration from anarchistic individualism (Höll, 2003) and French existentialism (Masquelier, 1999). This means that the functionalist and structuralist perspectives of Burrell and Morgan (1979) will not be attended to. What the critical realists' term that which is *artefactually real,* for example buildings, machines, indoor office material, is open to various interpretations. However, at the same time there are interpretative limits established by the materiality of the entity itself (Roberts, 1999). While organisations and institutions are satiated with these artefactual objects shaped by human craft and influencing the interdependent field forces (Lewin, 1997a) through perception, interpretation and language,

social movements are less so. I am not implying that these perspectives are unimportant in understanding organisational work and human enterprise; they simply demand another ontology and epistemology. In the literature review chapter 3, however, I do include references to a few functionalist (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) conceptualisations casting light on the contrasting process perspectives, particularly in addressing organisations and institutions. The distinctions are difficult to maintain at times, due to our western languages and their inbuilt tendency to reify. One example may be Albert and Whetton's (1985) seminal triadic perspective of organisational identity as those features that organisational members consider *central, enduring*, and *distinctive*, where 'central' denotes "essence" and/or an instructionally based perception of an organisation's role or position in comparison with other "actors" in the field (Corley, Harquail, Pratt, Glynn, Fiol, & Hatch, 2006;Glynn and Watkiss, 2012). The conceptual diversity (others might say chaos) when applying 'identity' on an individual level is no less when applied to an organisational level. Corley et al.'s (2006) undertook the task of reviewing the last decade's contributions. They proposed a "nomological net" distinguishing organisational identity from other related concepts. I found their proposal sensible, thus in this thesis *organisational-based identity* is reserved for describing that "part of the self-concept that defines one's connection with an organisation" and *organisational identification* defined as those "processes through which individuals come to attach their self-definitions to their perceptions of the organisation" (Ibid: 88). During the participant observations and first coding the account of informants suggested that an interpretation of a trade union as an organisation might be too narrow, and elements of social movement conceptualisation as well as of institutionalism became relevant. I considered the consequences of comprehensively covering three such major theoretical domains while also having to reduce them to a manageable and meaningful contribution, rather than staying with my predefined beliefs about unions as organisations. Informed by a process view, I claim that it is all about organising; that the categorisation into these three domains explaining human activity is a practical scientific construction, thus a humanly constructed divide. Social movement theory contributed in rich ways through its understandings of identity work and change. Organisational and institutional theories, particularly neo-institutional theories, contributed to critical reflection (Alvesson, 2003), stirring up my taken-for-granted assumptions. Scott (Davis et al., 2005;Scott, 2001) seems to be the persistent integrator of theoretical perspectives, and became a foundationally inspirational source. Thus, my intention

is not focused on seeking to understand unionism and unions in particular, but rather on the situated identity work of human beings.

As will be illustrated in the literature review, the gestalt paradigm selectively includes reference to a number of existential philosophies. The prosperous literatures, where existential philosophies are made prominent as therapeutic outlook, are part of my epistemic luggage. In colloquial modern parlance I had, during the research, to "kill your darlings", which means that I needed to scrutinise my "belief system" and investigate how existential philosophies had been applied to organisational settings as well as what justifications were made for this.[5] Hence, for the purpose of this thesis I take a pragmatic stance in relation to existential philosophies and do not claim to belong to any particular existentialist movement, nor do I claim that I have extensively studied the source works of existential masters.

The change perceived by the union employees and elected officials was experienced as radical. But then, in terms of theorising, what is "radical change"? As Burrell and Morgan (1979) point out in their overview, the order-conflict debate is better replaced by notions of regulation and radical change. Researchers interested in how, for example, organisational change is implemented or how 'identity work' contributes to cohesion, adopt a regulative perspective about the nature of society. The regulation perspective, furthermore, can be functional or interpretative. The radical change perspective explores why change happened, it is interested in possibilities, emancipation, modes of domination etc. rather than "what is". Anarchistic positions permeating the book of Perls, Hefferline and Goodman (1972/1952), henceforward abbreviated PHG, posit that men and women, without constraint, pursue their own individual interests, assuming this will release them, hence human freedom will be attained – a union of egotists will make a better world. In gestalt literatures, regulative change (Beisser, 1970) is most often referred to. Radical change is in this thesis expression of the participants experiences.

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[5] In this period I attended a five day seminar on "Coaching, Kierkegaard and Leadership", offered by the University of Copenhagen (www.summeruniversity.ku.dk). Furthermore, in collaboration with an existential therapist and constructivist-inspired psychologist, we developed a leadership training programme based on the gestalt paradigm with the existential underpinnings made salient as well as drawing upon the constructivist approach to organisational complexity. Three of the twelve days were spend on ethics. Still, I do not have a clear answer to use and misuse of psychological technologies, other than that, in the end, it too is a matter of shared responsibility.

Glossary list of key terms

Abduction: the process of forming an explanatory hypothesis, suggesting that something *may be,* moving iteratively between inductive and deductive reasoning. It is often a response to an observation of facts that are initially surprising but which require an explanation.

Awareness: both ability to perceive, feel, and the state of perception, or to be conscious of events, objects, or sensory patterns. Awareness is "open minded" rather than attentative.

Confluencing: a neologism developed from "confluence" meaning enacting of identification/merging/union.

Constructivism: assumes the mutually dependent relativism of multiple social realities and recognises the creation of knowledge by both "the viewer" and "the viewed".

Contact: particularly used within the gestalt paradigm as the function which synthesises the need for union and for separation.

Contact dynamics: particularly used within the gestalt paradigm as perceptually bounded and patterned manifestations of the synthesising process,

Deflecting: contact dynamic enabling situational perceptual closure or diverting with or before awareness.

Egotisming: a neologism developed from "egotism" meaning enacting of differentiating/separation/isolation.

Enacting: denotes "committed interpretations", emphasising that action guides sensemaking processes rather than the other way round.

Field theory: behaviour of a person, dyad, or group is understood as a function of the person, dyad or group plus the phenomenal and ontological environment at any given moment.

Grounded theory development: utilising a constructivist grounded theory approach in combination with reflexive methodology.

Gestalt: the essence or shapes of an entity's complete form. A Gestalt is perceptually primary, defining the parts it was composed from.

Gestalt therapy: an existential/experiential form of psychotherapy that emphasises personal responsibility. It focuses upon the individual's experience in the present moment, the therapist-client relationship, the environmental and social contexts of a person's life, and how they enact their overall situation.

Ideographic: denotes the commitment to understand the uniqueness of each single case in detail.

Iterative: a process for arriving at a decision or a desired result by repeating rounds of analysis in order to bring the desired decision/result closer to discovery with each repetition.

Introjecting: contact dynamic enabling situational "taking in", being open, identifying, with or before awareness.

Life space: the person and the psychological environment that exists for him or her, associated with energy, at any given moment.

Pragmatism: social utility as an outcome of research constitutes the criterion of "truth".

Projecting: contact dynamic enabling situational imagination/identification, ascribing traits or qualities to "the other" with or before awareness.

Reflexive methodology: breadth and variation in qualitative research by having four different levels of interpretation interact; through philosophical reflection and problematisation of the researcher's assumptions, interpretations and interactions with the empirical material.

Retroflecting: contact dynamic enabling situational holding back or turning an impulse back on oneself with or before awareness.

Reification: regarding or treating an abstraction as if it had concrete or material existence.

Self: the system of contacts in the organism/environment field. As a "substantial phenomenon it is a grammatical fiction, but in modernity, man has interpreted himself as having a substantial self, which is important for our identity" (Brinkmann, 2008 :33).

Sense-making: the process of creating situational awareness and meaning in complex or uncertain situations. It is a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act "effectively".

Teleological: the explanation of phenomena by the purpose(s) they serve rather than by postulated cause.

Vectors and forces: are used interchangeably, to denote the direction/valence - towards a desirable state or away from a noxious state - and amount of energy that is interdependently attributed to each element or part of a given life-space.

Clarifying terminology

Since there is considerable confusion in the literature how scholars use 'gestalt' in their texts, I will clarify how they appear in this text.

- When I use 'Gestalt' alone and capitalised as other German nouns, it means organised form, shape or pattern. The German word also relates to the appearances of persons,

connoting locations of energy and spirituality, a meaning I do not use in this thesis. When spelled "gestalt" in brackets it highlights the ambiguity in mundane parlance.

- I use the 'gestalt approach' and the 'gestalt paradigm' interchangeably. I acknowledge there are gestalt scholars who argue that gestalt therapy is based on a theory, in which case I write gestalt therapy theory.
- I write 'Gestalt psychology theory' in full and never 'Gestalt theory'.
- Gestalt psychology is capitalised, and gestalt therapy etc. written with a lower-case g, in order to avoid confusing the two.

I will use *participants* denoting the union branch employees and elected members, and *informants* when refereeing to those persons included in the interviews.

All names are changed and substituted with a letter, for example the union is called X and the union branch Z.

The Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis partly reflects the research process, albeit there is some different sequencing in order to support its readability. Adopting a second generation grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006;Charmaz, 2009) which embraces theoretical sampling and sensitising (Corbin and Strauss, 1990), that is, a parallel processing of data and literature, calls for an inductive approach. Firstly, "the field kicks back". In other words, doing field work is impacted and constrained by the environmental situation and does not follow the planned design. Secondly, in accordance with my research purpose I posed both a theoretical and an empirical question, consequently adopting an abductive approach. Therefore the structure is:

Chapter 2: The chapter is intended to provide the reader with an organisational overview, hence situating the research by a brief introduction to trade unionism in Denmark. It then continues by describing this particular white collar trade union, its structure and major functions, as well as the branch that participated in the research.

Chapter 3: Gives a comprehensive literature review that starts by describing the thinking and process behind the review and then moves on to outline three theoretical clusters. By 'clusters' I intend to emphasise each section seen as loosely coupled and mutually impacting frames. The first is identity and identity work, reviewed through different scholars' conglomerate interpretations and then through formal theoretical positions ending with

research on identity work. The second cluster is centred on the gestalt paradigm, starting by considering its historical development, paying particular attention to its Gestalt psychological sources of inspiration. On these grounds, the self-concept is scrutinised and related to concepts of "contact", "contact resistances" and the notion of "boundary", finalising by drawing the contours of identity work. The third cluster concerns the ontology of trade unions, searching for an answer in historical accounts, then moving to organisational theories and research, institutional theories and research and ending with social movement theories and research. The selected order is justified by the theoretical width and depth of identity and identity work that provides a solid base within which to distinguish the gestalt paradigm's reading of the self.

Chapter 4: Here I discuss and take a position on the material presented in the review in order to create an interim analytical framework. When I say interim it is to underscore the methodological implications of adopting an abductive approach which conflicts with a reader friendly presentation. The analytical framework is provisional because the final discussion is undertaken following presentation of the empirical part of the thesis.

Chapter 5: Concerns methodological reflections and choices. I begin by describing the research process. Then I present and discuss the underlying theoretical assumptions made in studying subjective experiences, organising as identity work within various frameworks, particular organisations as fields of identifications, instruments of social functioning, and as networks of relatedness. Adopting a gestalt paradigm within which to study identity work manifestations in the context of radical organisational change (as did the unexpected research re-design, when the branch suddenly was closed down) required a mixed-methods approach to the research. Various methods within an interpretive methodology are considered, and a rationale is provided for the choice of a constructivist and grounded approach. Techniques used for data collection and analysis are described, followed by quality assessment reflections and concluding with ethical considerations.

Chapter 6: Aims at presenting the empirical material from participant observations in such a manner that the reader gets a sense of the participants work environment. The presentation is structured in two phases, each covering a specific period in life of the trade union, and correspondingly, the specific positions I hold. The presentation is followed by discussion,

concluding with the extraction of six themes depicting organisational situation in which the participants act.

Chapter 7: This chapter 'makes sense' of how the elected officials and employees 'make sense' of their experiences when their part of the organisation was closed down, and how this compare to identity work literatures in organisations, particular from a gestalt perspective. The accounts from the informants are presented under each of the six themes emerging from coding, and attuned with the participant observations cases. The analysis, discussion and subsequent theory development is based on abductive inference.

Chapter 8: Is the concluding chapter where I encapsulate the findings and theory development. I consider all contributions and proceed to suggest how the research results can benefit different facets of organisational practice. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the study and propose some important directions for future research.

Chapter 2 – Situating the research, the trade union X

This chapter starts with a brief overall presentation of trade unionism in Denmark, moving on to introducing a particular white collar union X and the branches with which I worked following their merger into one branch, and which then became the research participant.

During the twentieth century the trade unions contributed to Danish society by stabilising the labour market through negotiations with the Danish Employers' Confederation (DA). Being successful, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and its constituent unions increased in power and size (Due and Madsen, 2005). The market conditions of society, presumably driven by the mega trends of globalisation, individualisation, digitalisation, and value orientation, changed (Baccaro et al., 2010), and so did the expectations of the trade union members. This shift in cultural attitude from solidarity to individualism affected the raison d'être of the unions who had to act differently, since members were leaving; and by doing so, were eroding the trade unions' financial foundations.
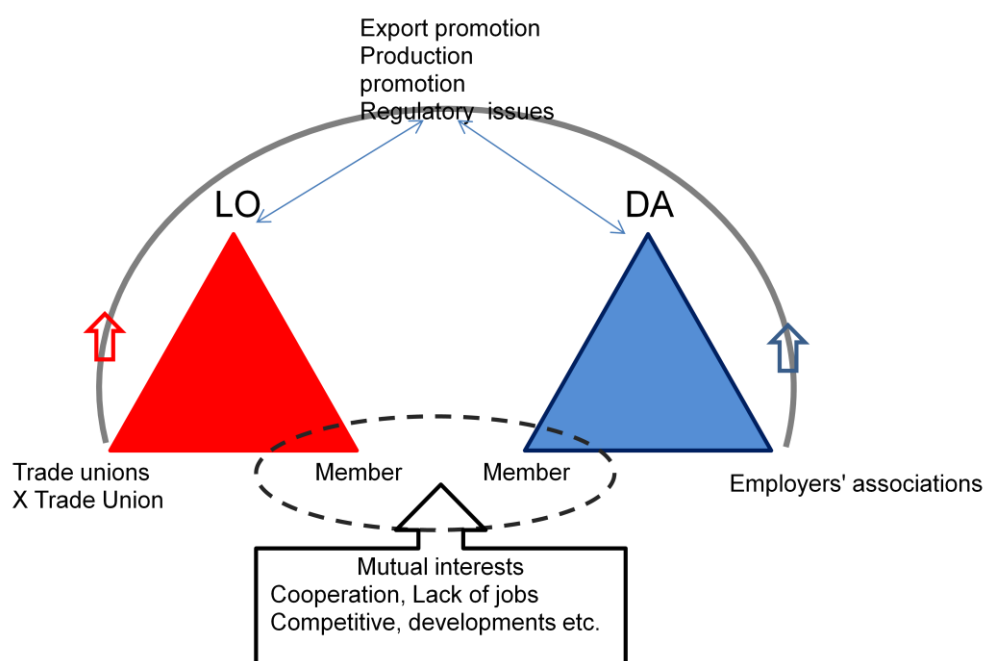
Figure 2: LO and DA, Counterparts in Collaboration

In 2004 more than 70% of the people between the ages of 16 and 67 years were active members of the workforce, which comprises 2.86 million of the 5.3 million Danes. Approximately 80% of the working population were organised in a union.

What would later be named the Danish Model was the creation of collective agreements which has been an important "tool" in the labour market since 1899 when the Danish Employers' Confederation (DA) and the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) were forced to recognise each other after a six-month long strike/lock-out. The main principle is that the collective agreements are nationwide. The partners usually negotiate without government intervention and schedule the period of duration for the agreement (normally a 2-year-period). No strikes may occur while the agreement is in force (neither partner will employ strike or lock-out) and disputes or disagreements about interpretations are to be settled through negotiations or arbitration (at the request of either partner). As a supplement to the bargaining system, the Danish Parliament and government have established the Conciliation Board on Labour Disputes and the Industrial Court.

Normally, the agreements contain the following:

- Persons covered by the agreement, period of duration,
- Wage conditions and guidelines describing how wage issues are to be negotiated at each workplace during the period of duration,
- Conditions for apprentices and trainees
- Working hours and the organisation of working hours
- Holidays and holiday pay
- Working environment provisions
- Election of shop stewards
- Supplementary training course provisions
- Rules governing the employers' financial contribution to the unions' shop stewards training programmes
- Pension schemes

After each collective negotiation, a ballot on the contents of the agreement is taken among the members of the unions, and among the employers. If one of the parties rejects the result, it can lead to a large number of the employees going on strike or being locked-out. However, the collective bargaining seldom ends up in a dispute. In preparation for a possible dispute, both the employers and various trade unions have set up large dispute funds (Nielsen, 2003).

Presenting the second largest trade union in Denmark - X

X ("a white collar union") was founded in 1900 with the purpose of organising commercial and clerical employees in order to improve their salaries and working conditions. At the time the conditions for these retail trade and office employees were often humiliating, with a 12 to 16 hours' working day and a small or no salary. During its first 30 years the union succeeded in securing the first collective agreements and establishing an unemployment fund. In spite of vehement opposition from the employers and the non-socialist parties, X joined the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) in 1932. This strengthened the union's work on behalf of its members. In 1938 the first Act on Salaried Employees was passed by Parliament, and in 1948 the first national collective agreement was negotiated with the Danish Employers' Confederation (DA).

X belongs to the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), which consisted of 22 affiliated unions with a total of 1.5 million members. Furthermore, there were the Salaried Employees & Civil Servants Confederation (FTF) with 426,000 members and the Danish Confederation of Professional Associations (AC) with 220,000 members. LO, FTF and AC co-operate in all essential trade union and political issues.

As times have changed, X's work has changed accordingly. Today most of their activities are aimed at securing equal pay for equal work for women and men, and supplying personal consultancy services to their members on issues such as salary, employment conditions and supplementary training. They take to court several trade union cases where members are in conflict with their employers, negotiate a great number of nation-wide agreements and support X shop stewards in their work at their workplaces. X finds social engagement important and seeks political influence - for example in securing a high level of employment, equal employment rights, and employer funds for maternity leave.

X's organisational structure, 2006

X consisted of 41 regional branches in addition to the head office in Copenhagen. X employed more than 1,000 people at that time. The role of the head office was to co-ordinate the activities of the branches; to serve as information centre for all the branches; and to co-ordinate and carry out collective bargaining. It provided legal assistance for its members and sought political influence in the Danish Parliament, in the EU and internationally. In order to co-ordinate the trade union's activities in the best possible way, it was divided into four

sectors, a division which handled general trade union and political tasks and, finally, its unemployment fund.

The four sectors were:

- X/Retail and Wholesale Trade
- X/Private
- X/Government institutions
- X/Municipal authorities
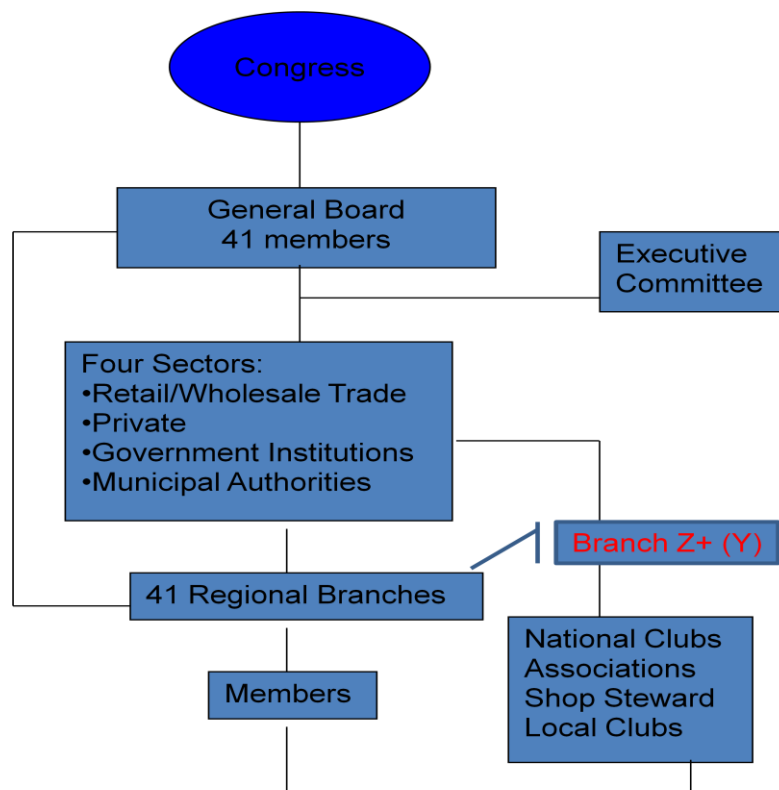
Figure 3: X's Organisation Chart, 2006

A growing number of problems are difficult if not impossible to solve at a national level and need therefore be addressed at an international level. Through the social dimension of the EU, European trade unions are constantly developing and increasing their co-operation at all levels. Furthermore, European trade union members of all nationalities are members of the European Works Councils.

In addition to the EU, Danish trade unions and X have developed close relationships with unions all over the world, and are involved in numerous co-operation and solidarity projects with unions in Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and South America. X still wishes to have influence and an important role in the globalisation process for the benefit of the wage earners of the world.

The General Board and congress meetings

The General Board is X's highest authority and consisted of 41 members. 36 members were elected by the Union Congress, and 5 were elected by separate congresses in the sectors. The Congress elected a president, two vice-presidents and 33 members representing the regional X branches. They were all elected for a four-year-period.

Furthermore, the president, the two vice-presidents and the five representatives from the sectors comprised the union's Executive Committee which was responsible for the daily management of X.

The General Board appointed a number of sub-committees which deal with various issues such as labour market politics, organisation development, working environment, etc.

X's overall aims and functions

An important aim for X was, and still is, to obtain the highest possible employment rate in Denmark. Consequently, X invested in developing their members in order to provide them with adequate qualifications and skills at all times. For more than 10 years, X carried out one of the largest private educational projects in Denmark. Through 22 centres all over the country, members of X received free computer training from basic levels to advanced user levels. Along the way the activities have been changed. In 2004, X offered and carried out targeted training projects for their members, and advised members on relevant offers regarding supplementary training courses and further education. A large number of these projects were carried out in co-operation with the employers. One example was a project where unemployed members were employed for a limited period of time, hence maintaining and developing skills while permanent staff members improved their educational qualifications at (for example) business colleges. These activities involved the entire Danish trade union movement, and so far the result has been a rapidly decreasing unemployment rate in Denmark. However, for members who have lost their jobs, a membership of X's Unemployment Insurance Fund is a safeguard against economic and social ruin.

The Unemployment Insurance Fund (henceforward called the "A-fund") is largely government subsidised. However, unlike unemployment funds in many other countries, it is controlled by the individual trade unions in accordance with parliamentary acts which are administered by the Ministry of Labour. All employees are entitled to join the union's unemployment scheme. After one year's membership and 52 weeks of full-time work within 3 years the members are eligible to receive unemployment benefits. The unemployed are then entitled to 90% of their wages from the previous 13 consecutive weeks, i.e. there is a maximum limit for both full-time and part-time employees.

Their principal aims are set out in the constitution of X, and are as showed below:

- To unite all commercial and clerical employees, apprentices and trainees in order to promote and protect common interests
- To procure optimal conditions for our members economically, socially, culture as well as within the areas of educational, employment and environmental conditions
- To secure that our members enjoy good and safe working conditions, and the maximum amount of benefits and influence at their workplace
- To secure that technology is applied in a way which improves our members' working situation
- To work for equal treatment of all parts of the population, comprising the work for true equality between men and women regarding wages, employment conditions, representation on committees and boards, inside as well as outside the trade union movement
- To work for the implementation of democracy, participation and co-operation in all workplaces, and for wage earners' participation in the ownership structure of the enterprises
- To strengthen international co-operation

The aims are taken directly from X's homepage when the trade union branch existed. When young people embark upon an education within the commercial and clerical field, X makes them an offer they "cannot refuse": a free membership for the duration of their study period. This means that about 80% of all the young people who attend a business college in Denmark are members of X. The informants tell vividly about their first meeting with X represented by the workplace shop steward. The institutionalised form of recruiting union

members at that time did not offer the person a choice if he/she wanted the job. The trade unions had divided up their right to recruit members based on disciplines and work type, which reduced potential competition among the various unions and solidified solidarity.

The regional branches are in principle autonomous. Each branch consists of their membership, the elected voluntary officials and an elected paid manager, the employees and their administrative manager. The branch's operations are largely based on the local members. They have two main tasks; firstly, that of carrying out the union's policies agreed upon at the congress and made operational by the Central Board. Secondly, that which concerns of local members' interests either as an employee or as an unemployed person. Furthermore, each branch initiates other local activities that are assumed to be beneficial to their members. The structure depicts a basic democracy; but opens up for local branches to implement activities and hold views that may be in conflict with the main federation's strategy.

The organisation of the branches is commonly structured in an unemployment fund entity taking care of the unemployed, a group of consultants trained in commercial law, caseworkers who handle specific member issues, and service persons. The organisational structure of the elected officials in each branch is divided into four sectors, however there might be variations. Each sector has a sector chair who is being asked if he/she is willing to take the position for a specific period. In most branches the consultants act as secretary to the sectors.

The merged branch participating in this research comprised 33 employees in 2006, working in two premises, situated in the selfsame cities where each branch had its domicile before they merged. They had one administrative and one political manager. The elected officials were divided into sectors according to their professional field:
X/Retail and Wholesale Trade: One sector chair, one vice-chair and 8 elected officials
X/Private: One sector chair, one vice-chair and 6 elected officials
X/Government institutions: One sector chair, one vice-chair and 4 elected officials
X/Municipal authorities: One sector chair, one vice-chair and 8 elected officials

An account from the second interview round is very illustrative both on structure, the downsizing process and attitude: *"Retrospect one may say that from 43 branches and a couple of civil offices on a national basis, they decreased it to 21 branches on a national basis before we went down to 7. There is nothing easier than being wise after the event. I believe*

that the process had been easier to tackle and recuperate if it had been done in one blow. If we cut straight to the bone in the first place, and then it would be seven or teen or what was defendable. It was very confusing, also to our members. It was costly in member's resignation. Firstly, we had just fallen into place after one merger and then came bloody one more, right. We lost much on that, which we had to rebuild afterwards. Those who made these decisions had presumably believed in that the branches left were the right numbers. This showed not to be correct, that it not possible to know before afterwards. They have, I assume, done so based on their best conviction".

Chapter 3 - Literature Review

Having presented the trade union and its organisation I will now present the results of my literature review on the subject of the research. Contrary to my actual review and reflective processes, which were not "linear", the review below is structured into three main theoretical "clusters" providing a natural reading flow. I end each cluster by summing up. Before presenting the clusters, however, I will discuss my approach to the review process.

The literature Review Process

My literature review was initially serendipitous, and later developed into an iterative-recursive process. This became inspired by Lars Sørensen (2005) who, when writing on how to conduct critical literature studies stated that trying to find commonalities within otherwise conflicting views "choosing the right strategy for the literature review is of critical importance as it has impact on the research project, the construct developed, the method applied, and the conclusions arrived at" (Ibid, :1). While this statement at first appears straightforward, it clearly hinges upon the interpretation of the term "strategy". My approach to this strategy is similar to that of Mintzberg (1987), namely that of "situated planning" by which I mean starting out with a intended or espoused strategy which gradually develops into a strategy-in-use as some elements move into the background and others become more salient. The ground elements blend with environmental incentives, emergent empirical and theoretical strands and are finalised in the actual realised strategy.

With a research design like mine, including longitudinal empirical observations, it is necessary to take into account the speed at which new research articles are produced and new perspectives launched; even new word constructions must be considered. Identity in all its flavours is a popular scientific construct. For example, in *the handbook of Identity Theory and Research* the editors noticed that a search in Psyc-Info and Sociological Abstracts literature databases documented that, while scientific publications in general had increased by a factor of 7.4 during one year, identity literature increased by a factor of 49.5 during the same period (Vignoles et al., 2011 :2). Sørensen's (Ibid) two element approach[6] was helpful, precisely because the research question in this study involves extensive material both in terms of organisational and identity studies. I iteratively completed element one (Appendix I: figure 9),

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[6] Please see appendix I, p.220 containing: Figure 9, Process model for literature study and table 1, Strategies for performing literature studies

designing and performing a literature study three times during the research period in order to evaluate contributions and check for literature completeness. The second element (Appendix I: table 1), of choosing a strategy consistent with the epistemological position in the overall research design, heightens awareness of the applied strategy in relation to each step in the designing/performing process. Sørensen cautions that combining study strategies "confuses the requirement for the overall literature study, and disqualifies the credibility of the study if not addressed" (Sørensen, 2005: 6). I applied a mixed strategy in which, at the beginning of the research, I used a domain/trust based strategy. Subsequently, I let the data "speak" and searched literature that gave meaning to the data in the interviews. This grounded theory strategy is not taken into account in the table (Ibid :5) even though there are elements of a snow-balling effect in the search, letting important references on the focal issues lead to the next search.

Given the enormous amount of literature and diverse perspectives on "who we become organising ourselves", I follow the advice of distinguished organisational identity theoreticians. Believing there is no one best approach they "advocate pluralism in the studying organizational identity while encouraging clarity and transparency in the articulation of definitions and core theoretical suppositions" (Corley, Harquail, Pratt, Glynn, Fiol, & Hatch, 2006 p: 85). Despite having been published now some time ago, I still find Burrell and Morgan's (1979) model with its two dimensions and four paradigms useful providing both overview and transparency[7]. Burrell and Morgan are more definite than Corley et.al. (2006). Even though their two dimensions are interpreted as individually continuous, the authors underline that it is not possible to claim a "both-and" position. The two key dimensions outline four paradigms for analysis of social theory: the functionalist, the radical structuralist, the interpretive, and the radical humanist paradigms. My review focus on the latter two subjective perspectives, based on the assumption that "reality is socially constructed and the sociology of knowledge must analyse the process in which this occurs" (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 13). Van de Ven & Poole (1995) provides a typology which I mainly used

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[7] Burrell and Morgan's (1979:17) intent at the outset was to organise organisational theories in relation to their wider sociological environment. What seemed to be an "innocuous idea" turned into an intense review, accompanied by creation of a structure by which it was, and still is, possible to analyse organisational theories based on their implicit or explicit assumptions about the nature of society, change and social science. The model consists of four opposing views, two on each dimension. The horizontal line depicts assumptions about the nature of social science as a continuum placing the subjectivist and objectivist view as polarities. The subjective-objective dimension contains sub themes as ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology. The vertical line depicts assumptions taken by scholars on the nature of change with radical change and regulation as polar.

to sort out the many perspectives on change. Further refining of literature and questions of completeness are dealt with in the discussion chapter 7.

First review cluster – identity and identity work

In this, I review literature and research on identity and identity work. At the level of methodology, epistemology or ontology, identity (whether individual or collective) has not solidified as a universally accepted concept. Much of the literature on identity involves varying degrees of conceptual reification, which resonates poorly with a more dynamic perception of what goes on in and around organisations. I have, therefore, particularly searched for literature addressing 'identity work' and its manifestations. This cluster starts by reviewing the term identity, moving on to how identity is theorised as a multilayered concept and ends up by presenting research studies on identity work within different theoretical frameworks.

Second review cluster – The gestalt paradigm and self/environment

Secondly, I review relevant literature about the gestalt approach since this forms the observational, reflective and analytical basis for the thesis. From the start, and as I will subsequently expand upon, I have considered "gestalt" as a paradigm, a set of axiomatic assumptions that in spite of 60–70 years of existence has not yet solidified into one coherent body of theory. "Gestalt", however, is also a loose network of globally dispersed, more or less influential and interacting "schools" and institutes, each imprinted by different cultural perspectives and local ideas which form the basis for the performance of therapeutic, social and organisational practices, influencing and influenced by further conceptualising in journals, conferences and local meetings. In order to prepare the basis for an explicitly formulated analytical framework, this cluster takes as its point of departure reviewing different perspectives from gestalt scholars on the gestalt paradigm, viz. a belief system, a philosophy, a theory, or a paradigm, including their different views on the nature of knowledge. I end this cluster by reviewing "self" and its relation to its "environment" in order to set the ground for a definition of identity and identity work commensurate with "gestalt".

Third review cluster – trade unions

Finally, the literature on the type of organisation (a trade union) that is the subject of my empirical exploration is presented in terms of ontological views – in other words a trade union as an organisation, institution, or social movement. I stress questions of change, identity work

and the nature of knowledge proposed by the authors within each sub-heading. Social movement theory scholars were the first to introduce the term 'identity work' with a lot of other research subsequently utilising and developing the concept. This is the reason for its length in the literature review, despite a trade unions are less seen as social movement organisations.

Identity and identity work – Review cluster 1
In modernity

The first impression, while reading the comprehensive literature on identity, is that everybody agrees upon 'identity' as an ambiguous, albeit powerful construct. It is ambiguous by virtue of the many and often contradictory viewpoints the construct has been used to explain leading critics to say that " the social sciences and humanities have surrendered to the word 'identity'" (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 2). By surrender they mean that scholars let the term 'identity' control their research or phrased differently, let the word shape the meaning. While Brubaker et.al. acknowledge the practical use by lay people they object to how the term is (over)used for analytical purposes. Identity is powerful, because of its timelessness. Human beings have always been concerned with who they were, how they were seen and, not least, categorised by others. Identity is by no means a new concept, tracing its origins back to as early as 600 B.C.E (Leary & Tangney, 2005 :4).

Within academia, 'identity' seems in some respect to have taken over the position of the 'self' construct[8] utilised to provide the interactional glue of human societal complexities. The increasing interdisciplinary interest in exploring identity as such, and in particular in relation to other phenomena, human or material, is often explained by reference to the effects of globalisation (Adams, 2007;Giddens, 1997) with its destabilising effects on establishments (Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005), deconstructing social life and institutionalising individualism (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2004;Lawrence and Dodds, 2007), challenging agreed norms of gender (Neuhouser, 2008) and confronting intimate traditions (Jensen et al., 2011). While this reading might resonate with everyday experiences of infinite flow of unexpected changes, Jenkins (2004) takes a more recumbent view about identity as a sign of the times. He doesn't object to the proposed effects of globalisation; however by invoking the influence of

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[8] Regarding processes related to identity, Pratt holds that organisational identity theory "is impoverished because it rarely considers the role of the self" (Pratt, 2012 :21), proposing a model showing how organisational identity and processes about 'self' can be linked.

the media and market forces he turns attention to market brands, image and categories of consumers identifying with, or differentiating from, "the other" in their self-shaping projects, a view supported by Brinkmann (2008), who explores identity challenges in the context of a consumer society. Regardless of which explanation one prefers to emphasize, it is a fact that academic contributions involving identity on different societal levels have exploded (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011 :2). Given these many perspectives I continue by reviewing different understandings and definitions.

Identity understandings and definitions

In mundane language, the term 'identity' is used about "those features regarding a person, which in total characterise or define the person as different from others" (Gyldendals Åbne Enclyklopædi, 2013, my translation). In this sense the concept in many ways appears similar to 'personality' and 'character'. Personality and identity have been distinguished by associating 'personality' with essentialism and 'identity' with constructivism (Kenny et al., 2011). To these authors, 'personality' is more commonly used within psychology denoting something given by birth or formed early in childhood. "Who we are" constitute relatively stable individual traits, attitudes and beliefs and can be investigated by the use of quantitative measures. 'Identity' is rather used within sociology and social psychology denoting lifelong learning. "Who we are" is experience-based and emerges in interaction with groups and society, which can be explored using qualitative approaches (Ibid, 2011: 4). If followed, their suggested categorisation would certainly bring "order into chaos". However, self-concept, identity or identities, person and personality, character and traits are often used interchangeably and are assumed to have analogous meanings. They involve people's explicit or implicit responses to the question: "Who are you"? (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011) as well as their self-reflections considering "who am I" (Giddens, 1997). Pratt (2012) offers the metaphor of an 'air bag', indicating that 'identity' is activated whenever "life hits you", this being very much in line with existential philosophy saying that identity questions become salient in life-changing or threatening situations (Cooper, 2003).

The etymology of 'identity' (Anon, 1998) traces back the Latin word *Idem* which means 'same' and *Identitas* as the 'quality of being identical'. A distinction, however, must be made between:

1. The same one (numerical identity). An object's sameness with itself, distinct from other objects; self-identical. It is about unity in space and continuity in time.

2. The same in some respect (qualitative identity). An object's uniformity with other objects being similar in one regard, however unlike other objects that it does not resemble in this regard.

3. The same kind (generic identity). An object's sameness with all other objects of the same kind, type, category or class of things (Brinkmann, 2008: 20;Fink, 1991)

Fink (1991) takes a philosophical interest in identity as a concept, exploring its utility regardless of what is under scrutiny, e.g. organisations, human beings, materiel things etc. All things can all be described in relation to the three meanings listed above[9]. His approach differs from general sociological identity understandings in that, for example, he claims that 'identity awareness' or 'sense of identity' are not particular kinds of identity, but special kinds of awareness and sensations (Ibid: 221).

Snow and Anderson (1987) in their definitions of identity, distinguish between:

- The self-concept as being the person's overarching view or image of himself as physical, social, spiritual, or moral being.

- Personal identities as meaning ascribed to the self by the actor, and

- Social identities as attributed or imputed by others in an attempt to place them or situate them as objects.

They assume 'self' to be a working compromise between idealised images and imputed identities, whereas personal identities are viewed as the person exposing indications of the consistency, or lack thereof, between social identities and the self-construct. In their understanding, morality is part of the self-concept, usually referring to personal or cultural values, codes of conduct or social customs. It can be descriptive or normative. Interesting as it is, I will not go further into ethics and morals, but identity literature and research is permeated with morality issues, which necessitates some familiarity when we are to navigate in the field of identity theories. I thus prioritise writings that have a particular intention in explicitly underscoring moral and identity, starting with a robust, albeit inclusive definition in the context of modernity and then presenting two major approaches, which are 'character' and 'social cognitive' perspectives.

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[9] Jenkins' (2004 :4) starting point is also the etymological translation "the same" and deducing two basic understandings from that. Firstly, the sameness of objects (A1 being identical with A2 but not B1). Secondly, the question of how we comprehend distinctiveness of something or somebody, which takes place in time and space as consistency/continuity. However, his main aim is showing that identity as meta-construct "is strategically significant for the structure-action debate in social theory". Furthermore, and in line with Fink (1991), that it can be applied individually as well as collectively in process terms, avoiding the trap of reification.

Identity with moral connotations

Brinkmann (2008) quoting Fink, states that "identity is never identical with identity awareness", rather people interpret or are conscious *about* their identity. However, from a psychological and sociological perspective (as a practical discipline, my addition) it is legitimate to employ numerical identity, not as self-identical (A=A), but as an ability. Utilising Giddens' self-identity understanding, Harré's self taxonomy and Taylor's "social imaginary"[10] and identity formation as main building blocks, Brinkmann defines:

- Identity as "a person's moral self-interpretation, which gives him a sense of belonging and enables life choices",

- A person as "social life-atoms, which we ascribe psychological capacities. People are actors who know they are actors" and

- The self "as a substantial phenomenon it is a grammatical fiction, but in modernity, man has interpreted himself as having a substantial self, which is important for our identity" (Ibid, 2008 : 33)

Brinkmann (Ibid) constructs these definitions through his understanding of the human challenges of this century as those of consumption, placed in a historical perspective. We live in a consumer society where experiences are emphasised, not the shaping of a solid life, by acquiring material goods, education and position, which was valued in the past century. The "consumer-man" resembles Kierkegaard's aesthete (Garff, 2000), living in the here and now, moving from experience to experience, from need to need. The aesthete lacks memory about his own life and consequently a sense of continuity. "He does not lead his life; he is led through life by his changing preferences" (Brinkmann, 2008: 45), indicating that the aesthete doesn't make choices in the existential implication of the term where choosing is a genuine and rigorous expression of the ethical dimension. A choice requires normativity; it commands a distinction between right and wrong.

Even though Brinkmann´s identity definition has morality[11] as its core he does not propose a 'moral identity' theory, "involving the importance or salience of morality to a person's

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[10] Charles Taylor (in Brinkmann, 2008 : 27) defines social imagery as "the way people envision their relations to each other, their shared norms and ideas of existence, and how that collective sense provides legitimacy to their surroundings".

[11] Morality explained in (Grøn et al., 1990) is the differention of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are "good" (or right) and those that are "bad" (or wrong). Morality is derived from Latin: m*oralitas* meaning

identity" (Hardy and Carlo, 2011 :496). In their review, Hardy and Carlo structure the literatures intersecting moral and identity into two major groupings, which are 'character' and 'social cognitive' perspectives. The character perspective describes moral behaviour as "a trait-like individual difference in the degree to which morality is central to one's identity and unified with one's personal values and goals"(Ibid, 2011: 496). Much of this theorising is rooted in Eriksson's neo-Freudian work (1968), assuming a core-self and posits a personal identity maturation model. When people mature they not only appropriate moral identity contents through which they are able to manoeuver in a situationally flexible way, their actions are motivated by needs for actualising their core-self. More process oriented approaches are introduced by interpreting moral identity as a self-narrative.

The social cognitive perspectives assume cognitive mechanisms as being fundamental to moral functioning. Hardy et.al. (2011) structure these perspectives under following headlines, conceptualising moral identity as:

1. *Chronically accessible moral schemata*: Schemata can be described as organised patterns of thought or behaviour. The Gestalt Psychologists' research (Humphrey, 1924) introduced the first ideas of schemata based on their holistic principles of perception. The main idea is that through the use of schemata, everyday familiar situations do not require processes that entail awarenss or effort. Individuals become more responsive to situational moral aspects as well as quickly organising new perceptions into schemata and they act without forced energy.

2. *Self-important social identity*: A person's conception of what a moral person is and does is seen as the most influential schema. However, as individuals figure in many relations (individuals, groups, organisations and societies) over time, they organise social identity schemata according to those particular interactions such as personal identities (how we want to present ourselves to others), role-identities (Stets and Burke, 2000) (the roles we participate in or volunteer for) and group-identities (Hogg et al., 1995) (the various groups we belong to and/or identify with). These social identity schemata are prioritised, and some are seen as more important than others with this being articulated in moral reasoning (Kroger and Marcia, 2011).

'manner', 'character' or 'proper behavior'. The explanation connotes both a descriptive as well as a normative interpretation.

3. *Commitment to moral social roles*: This approach is related to role-based identity, rather than ascribing it to the individual. For example, Hardy et.al (2008: 499) refer to a study about donating blood, where the blood donor role is ascribed an altruistic identity. In social movement theory (Reger et al., 2008) moral aspects are rhetorically up-graded or downgraded in the struggle for change giving the social movement participant an altruistic status.

4. *Moral self-representations in autobiographical memory*. In this approach the self is assumed to be the organiser of stored mental representations of self, including time, space, role and emotional information (Tangney, 2003). Particular emotions infused with moral meaning guide decision-making and motivate actions (Damasio, 1999;Elliott et al., 2004).

5. *A moral ideal self*. Ideal self-schemata motivate future behaviour based on the idea of possible selves. The self-constructs we hope for or fear are incorporated in the schemata and act as vectors pulling against or avoiding those images, values and goals (Dweck et al., 2003).

Most of the research presented by Hardy et.al is based on a positivist understanding of moral identity as objective and measurable, which often implies an essentialist attitude. They raise this methodological issue entirely consistently with other identity theorists in searching for potentially integrative theoretical approaches. While Burrell and Morgan (1979) propose four paradigms, in the following I will concentrate on two of them, the essentialist and constructivist perspectives, because this terminology is frequently used in identity literature.

Essentialist versus constructivist perspectives

The human tendency to reify in the effort to make sense of social reality, includes the existence of a "truth" or core identity, which can be found and determined e.g. a frequently used mundane phrase "to actualise oneself". Frello (2012) takes a particular interest in critical perspectives on collective identity, in which the essentialist – constructivist debate is inevitable. She points out that the critique of the essentialist attitude concerns its unreflective expectations stating that "something" is "the basic truth" and consequently unchangeable. By taking this attitude for granted it automatically omits certain parts of the identity discussion which also hinders academic enquiry into the subject matter. Frello, for example, parallels the perspective of individual essentialists with the collective in which categories (men, women,

gay etc.) are ascribed characteristics as givens ahead of how the individuals act or think. "Essentialist identity concepts thus take everyday categories for granted. Bluntly put, one can say that essentialism is not so much a theory of identity, as it is a lack of theoretical reflection of what identity is and how it can be understood" (Ibid: 19, my translation). As described in the section below discussing social movements, essentialism can be reconciled with a critical position when it is used as a deliberate viewpoint and not assumed to be neutral and generally valid. In that context 'identity work' is the conscious adaptation of specific identities in order to change an existing balance of power. Frello underlines that this kind of essentialism is "critical" on a political level when the concern is particular identities, for example, gay or homeless, although not "critical" from the perspective of identity theory. Essentialist identity projects are meaningful from a perspective of political struggle.[12]

What has been presented up to now is identity as:
1. Core/essence or a construction
2. Identity as a holistic unity, as a composite of aspects or as multiple identities
3. Individual/person or collective/social including moral as institutionalising identity
4. Static, stable or pure process
5. Mainly cognitive, bodily or relational

The review above is based on scholars' *conglomerate interpretations* of various philosophies and theories relating to 'identity'. In *Understanding Identity & Organizations* , (Kenny, Whittle, & Willmott, 2011) take a different starting point by offering six [13] commonly recognised theories utilised in organisational studies such as Psychoanalysis[14], Social Identity Theory and Symbolic Interactionism[15], Micro-Interactionist, Foucauldian, and Narrative approaches. They pose three questions to each theory in order to compare and contrast them

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[12] (For two different studies on unionism and womenhood, see Cunnison, 2002 ;Roth, 2008b).

[13] Kenny et.al. (2011) do not comment on the sequence of their chosen theories why I assume it is a random placement. I prefer the above sequence, which is attempted located in historical order in addition to the degree of their connectedness.

[14] The core hypothesis in psychoanalysis views identity as something only partially conscious and identity formation as a continuous process that continually revises the resulting identity from both current and contemporary experiences and experiences that go back to childhood.

[15] Social psychological and Interactionist perspectives are often used together to explain different aspects of identity formation and processes. As one it places emphasis on communication in broad sense between people, and how personality, character and identity are formed through relationships with others. This school of thought goes back to the America psychologist William James, George Herbert Mead and the Chicago school. Their ideas influenced a great range of later scholars, amongst others Henri Tajfel and John Turner social categorisation and intergroup discrimination theory and the sociologist, Talcott Parsons, who expanded the same basic ideas about the communicative relationship to also describing the organisation of society.

and their relative strengths in conceptualising identity. Furthermore they offer a short historical background and some major studies drawing on each of these theories. In their concluding section they say that some perspectives work well together but underscore that it would not make sense to try to combine all, e.g. a Foucauldian view on identity as a "thoroughly social process, linked with the historical emergence of certain discourses, and imbued with power" (Ibid, 2011: 34) is incompatible with most Social Identity theorisations which posit identity mainly as something that goes on in people's heads making sense of social information, that is, a cognitive phenomena. I sympathize with the authors in their struggle about which theories to include or not in order to convey their message to the reader as concisely as possible. Still, their presentation would have been stronger by adding three more perspectives, namely 'identity theory' (Stets & Burke, 2000), the humanistic phenomenological approach (Philippson, 2009;Stevens, 1996) and the above mentioned constructionist approaches (Cerulo, 1997;Frello, 2012;Gergen, 1994). Juxtaposing theories and transferring concepts from one field of practice to another is not only normal practice, it is also considered sensible or even important to look at a phenomenon through different lenses (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). The phenomenon takes shape according to the lens in use. In the following I will present two well known identity theories which use similar terminology with different meanings.

The challenge of language in identity construction

Even though Jenkins (2004) suggests omitting the 'social' in 'social identity theory' - since in his opinion identity can't be anything but social - not everyone agrees with this. Identity theory and social identity theory both disdain perspectives that treat the self as independent of, and prior to, society. Both consider 'the self' as carrying situated multiple identities (Hogg, Terry, & White Katherine M., 1995). The language used is similar but the meaning is not, which is what leads to Hogg et al. stating that "the two theories occupy parallel but separate universes, with virtually no cross-referencing" (Ibid: 255). The differences exist especially in their respective theoretical roots where identity theory is inspired by micro-sociology explaining role-based behaviour and social identity theory by psychology explaining group processes and intergroup relations. Consequently, the main differences are found in their level of analysis, their view about inter-group behaviour, relationships between group and roles, and the importance of identity formation and the salience of context. With a general warning not to try to reconcile theoretical perspectives that are too different, Hogg et.al (Ibid)

nevertheless give a proposal for how these two theories could build on the strength of each in future research. Identity theory is strong in analysing "the impact of chronic identities on (mostly individualistic) outcomes, and in its emphasis on interpersonal social interactive contexts". Social identity theory is strong in "its elaboration of social cognitive processes and in its emphasis on intergroup relations" (Ibid: 267). A first step, they suggest, might be to explore differences in identities that arise in behavioural roles within groups, from group membership[16] and from membership in large-scale social categories. It seems trivial to conclude that language and the act of reification provide part of the ambiguity problem, however to quote Brubaker et. al. at length stating: "Even in its constructivist guise, the language of 'identity' disposes us to think in terms of bounded groupness. It does so because even constructivist thinking on identity takes the existence of identity as axiomatic. Identity is always already 'there', as something that individuals and groups 'have', even if the content of particular identities, and the boundaries that mark groups off from one another, are conceptualized as always in flux. Even constructivist language tends therefore to objectify 'identity', to treat it as a 'thing', albeit a malleable one, that people 'have', 'forge' and 'construct' (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000 :28). Acknowledging the 'truth' in this criticism, by the recognition of having done exactly that and the probability of doing so again, Pratt (2012) rhetorically ask how we meaningfully can talk about identity processes. However, only talking about identification is insufficient, as it does not always result in identity change (Pratt, 1998). Thus, researchers writing about identity as process need a verb. He reflects on which verbs have been used in combination with identity, and the list is long. There is no best word and his concluding remark is that it is important to pay careful attention to the connation(s) of the verb being used. Since I adapted 'work' as my process term it is relevant to review how identity work has been defined and researched. I present research from different schools, many of them from social movement scholars, elaborating on Snow & Anderson's (1987) micro-level framework.

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[16] I my opinion Schutz (1994) in his research with soldiers in small groups proposed such ideas, which I develop further down in the gestalt cluster.

Identity Work and its manifestations

Identity work refers to "all activities involved in creating and sustaining identity" (Snow and McAdam, 2000), specified as procurement or arrangement of physical settings and props, the arrangement of personal appearance including face work, selective association with other individuals and groups, and verbal construction and assertion of personal identities (Snow and Anderson, 1987: 1348). Identity work in their understanding is therefore the generic processes within which identity construction and assertion are variations. They researched how homeless people at the bottom of the social ladder attempted to generate identities that gave them some dignity and self-worth. Their methodology was based on interpretative anthropology and ethnography, living together with the homeless gathering data through behavioural observations, conversational dialogues and in-depth interviews with six persons. Snow and Anderson (Ibid) found 'identity talk' to be the primary form of 'identity work', since homeless people do not have much access to other resources. From identity talk they extrapolated three generic patters: distancing, embracement, and fictive storytelling, each with sub-patterns.

A study explored 'identity work' performed by a group of protestant ministers who were institutionally marginalised as homosexuals (Creed et al., 2010). These scholars draw on new institutionalism as a framework, in particular the concept of institutional contradiction bridging endogenous agency and institutional change, albeit taking a micro level perspective. Methodologically, they assumed the ministers to be "extreme cases" of institutionalised contradictions and selected them through "hearsay". They then proposed a model of identity work based on ten in-depth interviews undertaken over a two year period and by utilising inductive, thematic narrative analysis. As an analytical construction, and in line with Brinkman's (2008) identity definition, they posit the self "as its most basic level as a reflexive narrative process that regulates the acting, agentic human being" (Ibid: 1341). Working from narrative statements, their identity model outlines eight first order constructs which is narrowed down to three second order constructs: Internalisation of institutional contradiction, identity reconciliation work, and role claiming and role use, leading to primacy of identity work (Ibid: 1345). In their second process model they show how identity work is an "enabler of endogenous change agency by marginalised insiders" (Ibid:1357). Their work has several implications that challenge institutional theory: (1) the "overly narrow treatment" of identity work. (2) the neglected role of embodiment and emotions, and (3) "the central role of interests

in the political theory of institutional change in which change agents skilfully interpret and exploit contradictions within and between institutional arrangements to further their self-interest" (Ibid: 1359).

Watson (2008) presents a longitudinal study of one manager's identity work in one particular organisation recognising the structural constraints involved. He notes that managers always have to act in the spirit of the corporation as knowledgeable, authoritative and being in charge. In addition, and particularly in western cultures, they must also appear as credible human individuals. Watson's methodology is based on sociological imagination avoiding reductionism by not focusing only on "'what goes on in people's minds' at the expense of attention to the part that is played by the social structures, cultures and discourses within which the individual is located" (2008:122). His case study approach is grounded in a combination of ethnographic, autobiographical and interview material. Watson is interested in the interplay between managerial discourses and managerial self-identities and suggests a definition of identity work as: "the mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives" (2008: 129). While empirically there are differences among how individuals display identity work according to their life circumstances, it is theoretically generic, everybody does it.

Staying in the realm of management and the constraint of organisational structure, albeit from an identity control perspective Alvesson and Willmott (2004) consider identity regulation as an mechanism producing the "appropriate individual". In their proposed model, organisational identity regulation, self-identity and identity work[17] are considered as three equally important interacting forces. In the spirit of modernity Alvesson et al. paint an image of identity work as constant relatively conscious work, almost a work load. "Conscious identity work is thus grounded in at least a minimal amount of self-doubt and self-openness, typically contingent upon a mix of psychological-existential worry and the scepticism or inconsistencies faced in encounters with others or with our image of them" (Ibid: 444). They suggest nine means,

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[17] Identity regulation is defined as "discursive practices concerned with identity definition that condition processes of identity formation and transformation. Self-identity is defined as precarious outcome of identity work comprising narratives of self. Identity work is defined as interpretive activity involved in reproducing and transforming self-identity (Alvesson and Willmott, 2004:445)

targets, and media for enacting identity regulation. The first three summed up are defining a person either directly or indirectly through placing emphasis on characteristics of others. These are closely related to ascribing a person (or persons) to a category. The signalling of the right way to behave can be done through providing a particular interpretive framework (4), explicating moral and values (5), defining the context (6) including a distinct set of norms (7). Education and professional affiliation is powerful settings altering employees' self-definitions (8), and finally how power issues are communicated in the organisation (9).

The above mentioned cases all emphasise the importance of constraint of different kinds, thus identity work must be researched as situated. The last three studies touched upon concerned work organisations. The following studies that will be examined are classified as social movement research.

The eleven studies presented in *Identity Work* (Reger, Myers, & Einwohner, 2008) are structured under two headings, doing identity work, that is, "the kinds of activities involved in the construction and strategic use of identities in social movements" and 'working through identities', that is, the challenges and struggles involved in identity work" (Ibid: 3). Taking a closer look it is hard to find profound differences in the two meanings, although the editors add some supplementary explanation. Doing identity work is explained by how movement participants actively work to create a sense of who and what they are. Key to this explanation is the notion of "sameness" and "differences", referring to activists' similarities to, and differences from, targets, opponents, and even each other. The second - 'working through identities' - seems to emphasize phenomena related to being part of, and apart from, a group in terms of the group purpose and goals, also indicating that "disagreements about who 'we' are – or should be – can become quite costly, taking time and resources away from other activist tasks and even alienating participants or fragmenting the movement" (Ibid: 3). From these explanations one might think that the first part addresses 'self-in-relation' work, and the second part deals with group-in-relation work. It would have been interesting if the editors had used their workload model more specifically in the layout of the book.

However, in searching for commonalities across the studies, given their very different contexts of a poor urban community in Brazil (Neuhouser, 2008), a trade union in United States (Roth, 2008b) or drag performances (Kaminski and Taylor, 2008), identity work manifests itself through an ongoing, dynamic and complex process of identifications and

differentiations, matters of sameness and differences. These might at first appear as trivial findings, or we may have to agree to these terms as being best suited to explain identity processes across different contexts (Jenkins, 2004). When it comes to situated identity work, it will necessarily require analysis and interpretation in more detailed language. Most frequently used is Taylor and Whittier's (1992) definition of collective identity grounded in explorative research undertaken on feminist lesbian movements in United States, probably due to their aim of providing a definition broad enough to encompass a large range of mobilisations (Ibid:105). Their three-pronged framework consists of *boundary* work, developing political *consciousness* including definitions of interests, and the *negotiation* of symbols and actions as strategic means; they do not, however, explicitly mention 'identity work'. Dugan (2008) examines the ways opposing movements compete for display of identity portrayals, achieving their respective goals and disempowering the other. She fuses the above framework with Bernstein's (2008) identity *empowerment* and *deployment*. Identity work in this case consists of the discourse of 'make believe' identities where the winners are those who capture audience attention and identification. Music and song is used as a strategic tool in drag shows to build solidarity, critiquing dominant culture, expressing grievance, and educating the audience (Kaminski & Taylor, 2008). These researchers found that identity work with drag performance as context evokes four causal mechanisms, i.e. *ritual*, building solidarity amongst lesbian and gay by playing insider music; *educational*, aimed the heterosexual audience; *dis-identification* and boundary drawing through teasing and ridiculing established heterosexual norms; and *interactional* involving everybody in the show. Reger (2008) emphasizes environmental influences while understanding how the many variations in multicultural feminist movements are created. Identity work engaged in by activists includes enactment, monitoring and maintenance of boundaries. Through 'identity framing' three groupings are identified in their community: the *protagonists*, who are members or potential members; the *audience*, who are observers such as the media or bystanders from the general public; and *antagonists* - those perceived as the enemy or the 'other'. Identity work is this framing activity, especially the collective creation of antagonists through processes of intersubjective definitions of "reality" minimizing the idea of multiple realities as an option (Ibid:104). Reversing a social label as "bad" requires identity work beyond mere projections. White Racial "Love Groups" utilised the internet since they could not rely on public media in order to change their image (Schroer, 2008). Drawing upon *strategic framing, frame*

alignment, and particularly that of *frame transformation,* Schroer presents five overlapping frames used by the groupings to justify why they should be perceived as legitimate members of society, a redefinition of the racialist identity, a reframing of the movement opponents, a normalisation of the racialist identities, a professionalising of their organization and a reframing of their motives. Collective action is the enactment of identity because it corresponds to people's self-definitions, both the desired and the achieved. 'Passing', however, is adopting another identity by looking like 'the others' as a strategy to hide who you are in order to obtain your aims. Einwohner (2008) shows how this kind of identity work is carried out by analysing various texts from the Warsaw Ghetto during Second World War. She concludes that identity work in '*passing*' draws on sameness and difference very consciously, behaving or more appropriately *acting* non-Jewish. Furthermore the Nazi-environmental influence on the activist mental scripts and identity performance is hard work – in other words one faces serious consequences if one fails and one cannot reveal any emotions. 'Passing' differs from 'identity talk' (Snow & Anderson, 1987) conducted by homeless people creating, presenting and sustaining personal identities congruent with and supportive of their self-perception. In the former the 'approved' identity is hidden enabling the passer to present a contextual demanded identity; being your-self in disguise, so to speak. When women struggling for their children in a poor urban community in Brazil speak about themselves as "being both the man and the woman in the household" they very deliberately display various gender roles depending on situations. This kind of identity work belongs within the realm of identity workload (Einwohner et al., 2008). In order to comply with norms of motherhood, they have to balance their femininity in order not to repel their male allies and partners while at the same time they must compete with the surrounding community in order to secure the family's livelihood. Neuhouser (2008) concluded that the emphasis on motherhood identity did impact their feminine identity. He draws on identity deployment (Bernstein, 2008) and finds identity work is manifested by (1) the women acting as men in order to get what they needed as mothers, (2) the creation of alliances with men through gender neutral language, and (3) displaying a non-political framing strategy with emphasis on motherhood.

Cluster Summary

This cluster presented a review of identity and identity work. The interdisciplinary exchange of ideas and concepts in modernity has both enriched theorising and increased the use of

'identity' with or without supplementary verbs. Critical voices (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000) consider the term analytically demolished in the battle between essentialist and constructivist spokesmen, leaving it either to mean too much or too little; Brubaker et al. even suggest that the term 'identity' is deserted in social research. Since "the ghost is out of the bottle" (Jenkins, 2004) meaning that 'identity' has come to stay and cannot be ignored, I find Brubaker et al.'s criticisms very precise and useful when scrutinising own taken for granted views.

First, identity is described in the context of modernity, and then various definitions are presented influenced by either a conglomerate of theories and ideas or general recognised schools of thought. For analytical reasons a relevant basic distinction is the etymological definition. A reasonable second distinction is found in collective-, personal -and social identity perspectives. The third and polar distinction is essentialist and constructivist perspectives.

Second, identity (in all the above mentioned shapes) and morality is considered. Identity with moral connotations is distinguished from moral identity theory, the latter being divided in two categories: 'character' and 'social cognitive' perspectives, each with its sub-groups underscoring specific aspects of morality and/or processes that create and sustain identity

Third, essentialist and constructivist approaches are given particular attention, both from individual and collective perspectives, touching upon analytical consequences.

Forth, the language used when speaking about identity is highlighted both in terms of denoting process perspectives on identity by adding a verb - however also the utilisation of a similar terminology with different meanings, for example personal identity and social identity theory.

Fifth, identity work manifestations are described in different contexts, organisational, institutional and social movements.

The gestalt paradigm – Cluster 2

As the headline shows, I have arrived at an understanding of gestalt as a paradigm. "Paradigm" is an ambiguous concept that I take to mean a coherent set of axiomatic assumptions about a subject matter; a 'worldview', used to describe the set of experiences, beliefs and values that affect the way an individual perceives reality and responds to that perception or, in the words of Guba (1990: 17), "A basic set of beliefs that guides action,

weather of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with disciplined inquiry".

In this cluster, I present my reasoning through different ontologies of "gestalt", viz. as a philosophy, a theory, or a paradigm, including their different views on the nature of knowledge. As previously mentioned 'self' is the preferred term within the gestalt theorising paradigm, rather than identity. This review, therefore, also aims to establish an arguable and defendable ground on which I can build my analytical framework in chapter 4. I argue that it is possible to read two opposing definitions of 'self' in PHG (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951). These dual meanings leave room for ambiguous theorising, hovering between an essentialist and a constructivist perspective. This contention has been advanced slightly differently by various gestalt practitioners (Cahalan, 1983;Gaffney, 2010;Hycner, 1985;Wheeler, 1991;Yontef, 1988), but not in as far-reaching a way as I believe to be necessary if the self-construct is to have a bearing on a process-focused, non-essentialist perspective. I therefore begin by substantiating my claim that gestalt is a paradigm, followed by an historical account with a comprehensive review of the Gestalt psychology contributions. I then review PHG's (1951) understandings of the 'self' and 'self-dynamics'. Reviewing contemporary gestalt scholars' contributions on individual, group and organisational levels, I substantiate a view on contact and contact dynamics consistent with an overarching constructivist view, which leads to the understanding of identity work from a gestalt paradigm perspective that is explained in chapter 4.

A gestalt paradigm?

The most recent proposal for a generic description of gestalt is "Gestalt philosophy of being" (Levin & Bar-Yoseph Levine, 2012). This is based on decades of experience in the use of the gestalt approach not only in therapeutic settings but also applied to couples and families (Wheeler and Backman, 1994;Zinker, 1994), societal work (Burrows and Keenan, 2004;Lichtenberg, 1990;Melnick & Nevis, 2009), as a personal and professional development framework taught globally (Woldt and Toman, 2005), research (Barber, 2006;Brownell, 2008) as well as utilisation in organisational contexts (Nevis, 1987;Nevis et al., 1996). Apparently there are two motivations for suggesting 'gestalt philosophy' (Levin et al, 2012 : 1). One is that gestalt conceptual development, grounded in field theory, phenomenology and dialogue, gives "a unique epistemological and ontological position". There are however

concerns about this suggestion saying: "Philosophy has certain limitations for at theory of therapy. Philosophies are inherently moralistic, and in their search for universals, then to be experience-distant in their formulations" (Hycner and Jacobs, 1995: 146), which might apply to therapy, but not necessarily to organisational work (Kirkeby, 2001). The second rests on an attempt to reconcile various professional gestalt practitioners. Gestalt therapy concepts and principles have been utilised by other professions, often called the gestalt approach (Nevis, 1987). As time passed, "gestalt" was used without an explanatory noun. This everyday contraction adds to ambiguities since "gestalt" also denotes Gestalt psychology and its theory, which influenced gestalt psychotherapy, however, they are not homogeneous. Gestalt paradigm consultants are thus left without a valid foundation in terms of ground on which they work.

In *Handbuch der Gestalttherapie* (Fuhr et al., 1999), the editors set out to find a common frame of reference, by making explicit divergent trends in the gestalt approach. In order to structure the vast and sometimes contradictory material, they suggest three tendencies in how contemporary gestalt *therapy* is being implemented as:

1. "A theoretically substantiated methodological approach.
2. A comprehensive epistemological and philosophical approach.
3. An overconfident ideological and scientifically minimally argued self-realization process". (Ibid :3, my translation).

Of these, the latter is based on a "quick-fix approach" by an eclectic and serendipitous combination of methods and fads of the day, which the editors claim have nothing in common with gestalt therapy. By "theoretically substantiated methodological approach", the editors understand gestalt therapy as an approach close to the psychoanalytic tradition and the established health system, by its use of diagnoses, its view of health and pathology, symptoms and symptom elimination. The approach is concerned with finding the best and most efficient treatment of mental problems and disorders, and is often seen as combining gestalt therapy with other methods such as psychodrama, systemic family therapy, hypnotherapy etc. This foundation does utilize genuine gestalt therapeutic terminology, albeit also an alternative understanding of central gestalt concepts. Finally, the "comprehensive epistemological and philosophical approach" is understood as the most similar to the intent of the founders' theorising, which in its ambiguity is open to different readings, thus open to questioning its

theoretical cogency. In the gestalt literature, the editors point out, it can be difficult to separate the ideological from the philosophical approach due to the ambiguous use of terminology. They hold both of the two former approaches legitimate, provided they are methodologically robust and substantiated. The Handbook of Gestalt therapy provides a weighty contribution of 1220 pages and includes both gestalt therapy's development and its historical context, philosophical, sociological, political and psychological dimensions as well as practice. The practice section contains therapeutic principles and the use of the gestalt approach to special work areas, including organisational work, and including research presenting the underlying principles of gestalt and several empirical research projects. Brownell, Meara, and Polák (2008) introduce a handbook for theory, research, and practice in gestalt therapy. They advocate an "organized and systematic approach to the evaluation of gestalt therapy that includes theory and research as means by which *warrant* is achieved" (Ibid: 4, my emphasis). Most contemporary gestalt scholars argue that the gestalt approach synthesises three philosophies: *Field theory*, *Phenomenology* and *Dialogue* (Levin & Bar-Yoseph Levine, 2012;Mann, 2010;Yontef, 1988). Some emphasise existentialisms (Falk, 2006;Fuhr, 1993;Masquelier, 1999) or inter-subjectivity (Hycner & Jacobs, 1995) or social constructivism (Fodor, 1998;Wheeler, 2000), and an experiential approach (Fuhr, 1998;Melnick, 1998). In the words of Brownell et al.(2008:16) "When these two approaches (existentialism and phenomenology) joined together and applied to the phenomena of human psychology, they create a suitable philosophical starting point for that form of practical psychology which is psychotherapy"[18].

By theory I understand a supposition or a system of ideas intended to explain a segment of experience, especially one based on general principles independent of the thing to be explained. Thus, a theory consists of a set of interrelated concepts with explanatory and predictive powers (Ginger, 2004;Hatch, 1997;Punch, 2009). I sympathise with the proposal of Levin et al. (2012) calling gestalt a 'philosophy of being'. By philosophy I find two understandings valid. When considered as an academic discipline it is the study of the

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[18] Brownell (2008) define psychotherapy as a form of practical psychology. In Denmark and several other European countries therapy is not a protected profession. Training documentation is not required by authorities. However many training institutes have voluntarily been accredited. In general psychotherapy "aims to increase the individual's sense of his/her own well-being. Psychotherapists employ a range of techniques based on experiential relationship building, dialogue, communication and behavior change that are designed to improve the mental health of a client or patient, or to improve group relationships (such as in a family)". I find it important to recall these underlying aims and assumptions every therapeutic tradition use guiding their practice, when applying it to other kind of organising e.g. organisations.

fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence. It may also be that it is as a quest for wisdom - in other words, a certain insightful and serene way of life (Dictionary in Philosophy, 1990). Particularly the last understanding corresponds very well with Fuhr et al.'s (1999) second definition - an epistemological and philosophical approach. Gestalt practice is also pragmatic, experiential and experimental. Drawing on several axiomatic 'truths' or warranted beliefs informing practice I find 'paradigm' a more precise expression.

A history account of "the gestalt"

It is nearly impossible to comprehend 'gestalt' without explicit reference to the life of Fritz Perls, the personal development journey of whom created the foundation for, primarily, gestalt *therapy*. Interesting as it is, however, I consider his life-long meandering outside the scope of this thesis and refer interested readers to two biographies[19].

Gestalt therapy found its first explicitly formulated voice in the book PHG (Gestalt Therapy, Excitement and Growth in the Human Personality (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951)[20]. Gestalt therapy was an encounter with societal norms and values of that time in USA; it was anarchistic and existentialist at its core and practical, implying a focus on action (Bowman, 2005;Höll, 2003;Smith, 1976 P: 3-37;Stoehr, 1994). According to Bowman the Zeitgeist carried a rising resistance to the establishment, including the two leading psychological schools of thought, psychoanalysis and behaviourism. Hornstein (1992) describes how the American psychological establishment dealt with 'incoming' streams of theories, whether psychoanalysis or Gestalt psychology. The differences were visible on several levels; on epistemological grounds, how it was practiced, academic superiority, and not least power. Gestalt therapists were among the rebels: in Shapiro's words: "Not only that Gestalt therapy interfered with intellectualizing[21] in terms of self-understanding, it also did not believe in being an intellectual" (Wysong, 1985: 19). The intent of the founders[22],

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[19] Fritz Perls (Clarkson and Mackewn, 1993), Fritz Perls in Berlin 1893-1933 (Bocian, 2007)

[20] Perls, Hefferline and Goodman figure as authors. F. Perls' previous ideas as they are presented in Ego, Hunger and Aggression (Perls, 1947) permeates the theorizing. Hefferline was responsible for the experimental work, where various awareness-raising exercises were tested among his students (volume 2 in some releases and volume 3 in others). Goodman is credited with enhancing the book's level philosophically and in terms of language (Perls et al., 1951P: vii;Stoehr, 1994).

[21] F. Perls emphasised intellectualisation as one of the resistances to change. Those who imitated F. Perls style embraced this as a guideline, which is inconsistent with the gestalt therapy's fundamental principle that therapy is "of the situation"(Wollants, 2007) and therefore can't be performed following set guidelines or with fixed techniques. The anti-intellectual image, however, has clung to gestalt therapy for a long time and is still to be found amongst those not familiar with the theory and practice.

[22] Among the founders I include Laura and Fritz Perls, Paul Goodman, Isodore From, Paul Weitz.

themselves academics, was to generate an approach that focused on human growth formulated in a language understandable to "the man on the street"; an approach that made sense to him and was applicable to his everyday life, as an aware, alive and responsible entity (Yontef, 1991). PHG is by no means easily read because of its "conversational nature" (Spangnuolo Lobb, 2005) or, as argued in the book and buttressed by later gestalt practitioners, that "in order to understand the book he (the reader) must have the 'Gestaltist' mentality, and to acquire it he must understand the book"(Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951: viii). This paradoxical statement is justified, firstly, by assuming that all human beings from birth posses such a mentality, although during the process of growing up in a dualistic environment we little by little give up part of our 'wholeness', integrity and spontaneity in the service of being part of society. The 'Gestaltist' mentality, then, can be retrieved through awareness and contacting 'what is' in the 'here and now'(Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972;Perls, 1978b). Phrased in an existential context the founders spoke about a human existential condition, the continuously experienced dilemma of oscillating being oneself and being part of groupings, sometimes experienced as a conflict between the 'I' and the 'We'. This ongoing conflict cannot be resolved, but it can be *managed* in how we relate to our situation (Spinelli, 2008). Secondly, PHG cannot be 'swallowed': it demands to be read word by word, section by section, discussed and tested out such that the theory is internalised and assimilated, coloured by the interpretation of the individual gestalt practitioners (Bloom, 2004), and the influences of the institution(s) where they completed their training and to which they belong[23]. This has resulted in numerous definitions of gestalt therapy as well as amalgamation with other theories, some of which were unambiguous in ontology and epistemology, and some contradictory (Bowman, 2005). This heterogeneity, however, kept theorising alive and developing (Perls, 1992).

As early as 1951, gestalt theory was itself a 'gestalt', a conglomerate of several different theoretical, conceptual, and philosophical sources. The main pillars mentioned in PHG are Gestalt psychology, Existentialism and natural phenomenology, Eastern philosophies, and Psychoanalysis, mostly the classical Freudian but also by psychoanalysts who took Freud's

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[23] Bloom does not speak explicitly about the influence of being part of a specific training institute/group, however he stresses the importance of an international development of Foundational Gestalt therapy, and the avoidance of "one-track" institutes moving in different directions. Bloom proposes the term 'Foundational Gestalt therapy', meaning a practice of gestalt therapy consistent with its heritage, while still embracing novelty (Bloom, 2004).

thought in new directions (Barber, 2004;Laborde, 1979;Perls, 1947). Wilhelm Reich, and especially his character-analysis (Frager and Fadiman, 1984), also impacted upon their theorising. Other neo-psychoanalysts mentioned are Alfred Adler, Anna Freud, Karen Horney, Eric Fromm, and Paul Federn (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951). Ernest Schachtel is credited for his review of classical psychoanalysis, analysing Freud's affect, action and pleasure principle (Ibid), Sandoz Ferenczi inspired through his "*active method*", objecting to Freud's method of free association and neutral interpretation (Ibid). Frenczi collaborated with Otto Rank, whose work on 'creativity with a here-and-now perspective', contributed to their intent of building a therapist–client relationship, rather than keeping focus on past history, transference and the unconscious (Ibid). Harry Stack Sullivan is emphasised for his contributions to psychiatry as 'interpersonal' and the influence of cultural forces upon the health of human beings (Ibid). I will elaborate on the influence of Gestalt psychology. Firstly, there have been disputes about *how* it influenced, however also 'property rights' to the name, which leads to theoretical confusion when only 'gestalt' (with lower- or uppercase g) is used in a text. Secondly, modern scholars draw upon their theorising, emphasising different parts or aspects of Gestalt psychology (Parlett, 1991b;Parlett, 2000;Tønnesvang et al., 2010).

Existentialism implicit in PHG

As previously mentioned, existentialism is vaguely addressed in PHG, in fact explicitly only in relation to when the interaction of humans and society is experienced as 'extreme situations', positing that it's in an emergency that mankind 'stands naked' and authentic, stripped of all his roles, assumed characters and verbal personalities (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951). Fritz Perls underlined that in gestalt therapy "we are Existentialists, in contrast to being moralists or symbolists" (Perls, 1978c), which meant, phrased in his straightforward tongue, as going for the obvious, following the client's process, and setting 'social introjects' in parentheses. Laura Perls read Kierkegaard and Scheler as well as the phenomenologist's Husserl and Heidegger. She studied with Paul Tillich, professor in theology, and Martin Buber, honoured professor in philosophy and who was socio-politically engaged, particularly in the realisation of an Hebraic humanism (Humphrey, 1986;Rosenfeld, 1978 :22). It is impossible to do justice to each philosophical work in this thesis. On the other hand it would be a debasement of the overall understanding to ignore its influence. Not all of Kierkegaard's works were translated into German at that time (Schulz, 2009), and it would be rather speculative enterprise to guess which of them L. Perls read and what meaning she made

of it. Much of Kierkegaard's work is occupied with how one lives as a 'single individual' (hin enkelte) in the context of 'an other' (hin anden) (Brandt, 1955;Garff, 2000). The theological existential aspects of Kierkegaard's writing are absent from gestalt texts. However, if guessing, one might assume that his ironic eye for the countless forms of delusiveness and dissimulation made an impression as did his giving priority to concrete human reality over abstract thinking, and highlighting the importance of personal choice and commitment. Subjective responsibility, defined by freedom of thought and belief and depicted in the character Johannes Climacus, is not an easy accomplishment, manoeuvring through the existential reefs of ambivalent anxiety (Kierkegaard, 2004). Kierkegaard was, in that, respect a front runner by his reflecting on 'angst' understood as "the reality of freedom as the possibility of possibility", meaning that angst manifests itself solely by the notion of what one might do. The paradoxical hope of Kierkegaard, that the making of a kind of religious democratisation was possible, is in some respect shared by Tillich[24] and Buber. Tillich is placed amongst the theological existentialists because of his creation of a particular Christian existentialism inspired by the emerging ideas about phenomenology and the ontology of being at that time. Buber did a creative German translation of the Bible and a literary retelling of Hasidic tales, revitalising Jewish religious awareness. However, most cited in gestalt literature is Buber's dialogical 'I and Thou' principle. Friedman (1990) combines Tillich's emphasis on 'the really real', or the totality of humanness, and Buber's dialogical principle when, for example, he works therapeutically with couples, stating that a "couple is more than the sum of two psychic states. It is a genuine we" (Friedman, 1990: 9). He addresses the ontology of 'the between' which cannot be ascribed to either of the persons and which has no continuity. In Buber's words Friedman objects to psychologism, where phenomena are attributed the individual and perceived as an intra-psychic. The prime reality is 'the between' framed by 'the subjective' experience and 'the objective' analysing or categorisation. Friedman's point is that we are so used to ascribing phenomena to persons because they are embodied. He takes 'love' as an example, stating that people equates 'love' with feeling, which is but a by-product. Love is the response of an 'I' to a 'Thou', accompanied by feelings of different kinds. If Sartre was not contemporary with F. Perls, then it would be more obvious to imagine

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[24] Paul Tillich, Kurt Goldstein and Martin Buber were associated with the University of Frankfurt at the same time, where Tillich mentioned being friends with both.

that Fritz Perls was inspired by Sartre's humanistic anarchism (Sartre, 2004), however he is not referred to[25].

L. Perls was introduced to phenomenology in very different ways, by Husserl and Heidegger but also by Tillich and Scheler. McConville's critiques gestaltists' often de-contextualised accounts when describing the use of the phenomenological method (McConville, 2001). If one assumes that the gestalt paradigm is strictly based on Husserl's philosophy I agree with his critique, however contemporary gestalt theorists tend to build on different phenomenological constructs, such as Heidegger, Scheler, Merleau-Ponty or Sartre (Cannon, 2009). A few gestalt therapists [26] refer to Scheler, building on his particular phenomenological philosophy and intuitive method, or what some might call a lack of method. Scheler objected to Husserl's prescribed analytical method, the eidetic reduction. Firstly, his predisposition was moving straight to the most profound or deepest of insights, rather than to developing levels of phenomenological analysis. Secondly, this 'choice' of human being as person in contrast to Husserl's transcendental ego, Heidegger's Dasein or Merleau-Ponty's lived-body gives a particular directedness to Scheler's thought, an emphasis on the personal dimension of experience. Husserl's philosophical method, disclosing universal knowledge, has been transformed in conjunction with the critics of the latter mentioned philosophers into an approach "applicable psychologically to bring clear understanding to experience as it presents itself" (Burley and Bloom, 2008: 152). These authors explain how Husserl's method is 'correctly'[27] used in gestalt therapy without losing the philosophical context, exactly by their exemplification how it has been altered though the combination of the natural attitude, the notion of figure and ground dynamics and the therapeutic situation. It has been suggested that modern gestalt therapy applied a "more mature existential attitude", by embracing the

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[25] L. Perls explains in an interview with Edward Rosenfeld (1978), that F. Perls and Goodman wanted to call their mutual approach Existential therapy. They abstained because Existentialism was then identified with Sartre, and closely associated with a nihilistic approach, which had them search for another name. "I thought that with Gestalt therapy, we could get into difficulties. But that criticism was rejected by Fritz and Paul" (1978:20). Time would show that L. Perls was right.
[26] Miller point at Scheler's investigation of the connection between idealism and phenomenological intersubjectivity as important reading for gestalt therapists "because of its emphasis of emotional knowing" (Miller, 2000).
[27] I placed correctly in inverted commas to express that if one adhere to Husserl's approach I find their explanation precise, however if one move in Scheler's direction, then the prescribed method becomes overriding.

dialogical notion of inclusion, a renewed focus on the client's phenomenology and keeping track of continuity (Yontef, 1988: 106)[28].

It probably makes more sense to speak about the existential position in PGH and leave the choice of a particular existential favourite to the individual author. As Dyhrcrone says "the existentialists confront us unsentimentally with the boundaries for human existence, expressed through "the imperative fact, that we are mortal – and death makes no exception" (Dyhrcrone and Ribers, 2010:33). The knowledge of finiteness is closely interwoven with the ability to reflect on the act of experiencing; what Stevens (1996) call reflexive awareness. We are able to monitor and evaluate our own feelings, thoughts and acts. Besides experience of time and finiteness Steven mentions existential concerns such as meaningfulness, choice, autonomy, freedom, authenticity. Drawing on Spinelli's 'three principles of existence' , Yalom's 'four ultimate affairs' Dyhrcrone talks about existential conditions in terms ontological polarities, for example Freedom – Necessity, Meaning –Meaninglessness, Separateness – Connectedness, and Inclusion – Exclusion, to mention the most common polarities between which the human being is "tensioned".

The Gestalt psychology pillar

Gestalt *psychology* (in its pure form a laboratory-based perceptional psychology) is currently seen as being a part of cognitive psychology (Christensen, 2002). Lewinian field theory (Marrow, 1969) , and Goldstein's holistic approach to the Organism (Goldstein, 2000) are other contributions, often just mentioned an aggregated way as "the Gestalt psychology pillar", even though each field in its own right contributed with different insights about human growth (Bowman, 2012). Explicitly mentioned in PHG are the Gestalt psychologists Wolfgang Köhler, Max Wertheimer, L. Whyte, Alfred Korzybski, Kurt Goldstein and Kurt Lewin. The impact of gestalt *psychology* on gestalt *theory* has been debated (Rayne, 1980). Perls et al. said about the integration of Gestalt psychology: "The full application of Gestaltism in psychotherapy as the only theory that adequately and consistently covers both normal and abnormal psychology has not yet been undertaken. The present work is an attempt to lay the foundation for that"(Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951). The Gestalt psychologist Henle (1976/ 2003) concludes that these two approaches have nothing in

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[28] I agree with this view if one only focus on what F. Perls did "on stage" in his later years, however carried to excess when looking beyond. For example, Laura Perls' or Isadore From drew from existential, experiential, experimental and phenomenological sources in their personal approach to gestalt therapy.

common: "What Perls has done has been to take a few terms from Gestalt psychology, stretch their meaning beyond recognition, mix them with notions – often unclear and often incompatible – from the depth psychologies, existentialism, and common sense, and he has called the whole mixture gestalt therapy. His work has *no* substantive relation to scientific Gestalt psychology. To use his own language, Fritz Perls has done 'his thing'; whatever it is, it is *not* Gestalt psychology"(Ibid: P:21). There have been extensive, interesting debates on this matter (Barlow, 1981;Shane, 2003;Wheeler, 2004). For the purpose of this study I quote Wheeler who, in a reply to Shane, argues that Gestalt psychology and gestalt therapy are connected through "the gestalt epistemological stance of *constructivism*, particularly in the work of Lewin and his followers "(Wheeler, 2004: 83). Wheeler is the first scholar to embrace constructivism in which clothing he revises key gestalt concepts such as contact and resistance (Wheeler, 1991) and 'self' as subjectively, utterly relational (Wheeler, 2000: 86-90).

In the same mission, albeit re-introducing "the Gestalt theoretical insights, principles and applications of the Berlin School" in the philosophical framework of situation-totality and that of interaction, Wollants (2007) notes that the insights from Gestalt psychology were so groundbreaking that they are absorbed in modern theories and therefore no longer quoted[29]. Gestalt psychology as described above has contributed greatly to the gestalt paradigm. There is however divergent views both in how it influenced and who of the Gestalt psychologists are perceived as the most influential for which reason I will elaborate some of the Gestalt principles.

Gestalting principles

As opposed to Wundt's associationistic experimental psychology, Gestalt psychology had its roots in phenomenology and functionalism. Both schools of thought had perception as their field of interest but the Gestalt psychologists, in line with the functionalists, objected to associationism's fragmentation of complex mental functions (Koffka, 1935). Adopting a holistic stance they researched how the subject processed incoming sensory impressions. The Gestalt, or the overall experience, was regarded having experiential primacy in relation to those elements of which it consisted. The well-known dictum that 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts' is partly incorrect. What Wertheimer actually said was "there are wholes, the

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[29] Some writers taking a constructionist or constructivist approach to social reality and nature of knowledge use the term 'gestalt' however without references to the Berlin school, e.g. (Berger & Luckmann, 1967;Searle, 1995)

behaviour of which is not determined by that of their individual elements, but where the part-processes are themselves determined by the intrinsic nature of the whole" (1924). The ability to actively construct impressions is an innate human ability, located in the nervous system, consisting of organising principles, which the Gestalt psychologists named the laws of organisation in perceptual forms (Ellis, 1997). The fundamental principle is 'the law of prägnanz' or 'the law of good form' as Zinker translated it into in his development of gestalt therapy with couples and families (1994). The law of Prägnanz posits that we tend perceptually to order our environment in a manner that is simple, orderly, regular and symmetric. Key principles in gestalt formation are multi-stability, emergence and reification.

Multi-stability or the figure/ground principle is probably best known from Rubin's vase[30], depicting both a vase and two faces depending on how the observer organises his perception. For some it is possible to move back and forth between the images. However, when a picture becomes more complex – for example the composite black/white print of two images, one of a hag and the other a fair young women, some individuals cannot move back and forth even after considerable support. They either see the young woman or the hag. *Emergence* is the ability to form complex images from simple forms. Seeing the hag or the young women in the first place is an example constructing a pattern. *Reification* is the ability to construct 'contours' and to make them real. Stated differently it is the treating of an idea or concept as something concrete. From the prägnanz law and key principles, the Gestalt psychologists formulated refinements: for example to mention a few, the law of proximity, of similarity, of closure, of continuity, of symmetry. Gestalt psychology is critiqued for providing only descriptive research (Mather, 2011). 'Insight learning' and 'productive thinking' are other terms from the Berlin school research, based on the discovery that problem-solving often takes place by means of the recognition of a gestalt organising principle (Humphrey, 1924). We tend to experience, not the thing in itself, but things in their mutual relation. When the gestalt is 'shaped' as meaning, it becomes experience. The Gestalt psychologists' idea of psycho-physical isomorphism was less easily accepted. Isomorphism, from Greek, isos (equal) and morphe (shape), is studied in abstract algebra in order to describe the relationship between two sets of elements, and how the members of one set can be projected onto members of the other set (Koffka, 1935). Applied to other fields the implication is that in an

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[30] Edgar Rubin, a Danish professor of psychology, had his doctoral thesis 'Synsoplevede figurer: Studier i psykologisk analyse' (Visually Perceived Figures: Studies in Psychological Analysis) accepted by the University of Copenhagen in 1915

isomorphic relationship, the elements/structure within one set can also be found in the other. In Gestalt psychology it was used to propose the hypothesis that in experience, the brain 'carries a map' of the same structure as the experience itself. Lewin's topological theory was in some respect such a map, however representing a person's life space (Lewin, 1997a). Kurt Lewin is quoted twice in PHG, from his earlier writings on psychical energy, will and needs (Lewin, 1997b/1926).

Field theory and the Life space

There are gestalt scholars who claim that Lewin and Goldstein did, surprisingly, not influence the founders' theorising, arguing that the model of self would look differently if they had (Wheeler, 1991). I am of another opinion; there are statements in PHG and in later texts that claim the opposite, for example in this quotation: "the whole *field* is one unit which is *dialectally differentiated*. It is differentiated biologically into the organism and the environment, psychologically into the self and the otherness, morally into selfishness and altruism, scientifically into objective and subjective" (Perls, 1978a:50, my emphasis). I do, however, agree that there are inconsistencies in PHG's (1951) theorising, eventually leading to two self constructs, a matter I will return to when reviewing theorising about the self. Lewin took on the challenge of exploring and expanding gestalt psychology to human daily life and within a broader range of human behaviour, which also made him a pioneer of applied psychology (Marrow, 1969). He was particularly interested in understanding human *energy*, however taking quite a different route than most psychologists at that time. A 'life space' is a person's subjectively experienced environmental totality including the psychological past and future (Lewin, 1997a: 162, 208). Stated differently, it is the in-the-moment experienced 'gestalt', consisting of needs, goals, desires; a 'map' of the experienced boundaries of those goals and needs, related with vectors indicating strengths and directions of forces. Another way of formulating the figure-ground principle is that the life space includes all facts which have existence, that is, are associated with energy for the person at that particular moment, and excludes those which do not. "Lewin postulated a theory of psychological tensions, in which tensions function as a form of energetics", consequently understanding human behaviour as a matter of "psychic readiness" operating in a psychic field (Marrow, 1969: 31). Being interested in human energy, how it originated, how it was used and handled, setting up associating intent with energy (tension) and releasing it (need

satisfaction) he posited needs or desires as "upsetting" the organismic equilibrium[31] and motivating action by which need satisfaction could be attained and organismic equilibrium be reached (Patnoe, 1988). Lewin used the terms life space and field arbitrarily. Field theory was an inspirational source to him; although developed within the realm of physical sciences Gestalt psychologists juxtaposed it with their research on perceptional responses. Lewin expanded those ideas by including 'all psychological activity'. Field theory, in this respect, "is probably best characterized as a method; namely, a method of analyzing *causal* relations and building scientific constructs"(Lewin, 1997a:201)[32]. Field theory offers a theoretical steppingstone in system theory parlance, moving from the individual to group and an organisational level, or rather as aspects of a field (Stivers and Wheelan, 1986).

Field theory – the interrelatedness of individuals and collectivities

Field theory claims that a person's behaviour is derived from a totality of coexisting facts, expressed in the symbolic equation $B=F(P,E)$, meaning that behaviour is – and can only be understood as - a function of *both* a person *and* his/her environment. Lewin applied the same formula to groups, theorising the group as a dynamic whole with its unique structure, goals, relations to other groups etc. (Lewin, 1997a). Whereas Lewin had more focus on how the social group impacted each individual's life-space, others have expanded his thought to posit that behaviour of a group is a function of the group and the group environment (Agazarian in Stivers & Wheelan, 1986: 101 -113). Agazarian fuses Lewinian concepts with psychoanalysis (Ibid). Huckabay (1992) refers to Lewin's understanding of individual behaviour, with the group as environment including the dynamics of the group. Huckabay's goal, however, was not to determine the ontology of the group as a whole, as was Agazarian's, but to integrate gestalt therapy theory and "group-as-a-system perspective with gestalt group practice" (Ibid:13) in order to provide a theoretical framework for group dynamics including leadership. Kepner (1980) seems to treat systems and field theory as homogeneous or even equivalent constructions; for example when saying: " Perls, like Lewin, saw the individual from a systems perspective..." (Ibid: 8) or "these systems processes account for the whole being

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[31] Equilibrium is used in general system theory as a mechanism explaining movement within closed systems, where such a system by legality must attain a time independent equilibrium state (von Bertalanffy, 1950). Open systems, on the contrary, interact with its environment and may or may not reach homeostasis (balance). The notion of equilibrium has been imported into organisational theory through utilisation of open system theory, however often without clarifying whether it is used as a analytical construct or as an empirical reality (Burrell & Morgan, 1979: 47).

[32] Field theory as theory or method or both is discussed by Gold (1992), Latner 1983), and by Argyris (1992: 310-322)

greater than the sum of the parts" (Ibid: 14). There are different views about the correlation between field and systems theory. Huckabay (1992) finds that general systems theory lends the explanatory undergirding to group work, particularly five system concepts: (1) holism, (2) systems as open and closed which introduce boundaries, (3) energy management in terms of entropy and negentropy, (4) homeostasis (self-regulation), and (5) equifinality, the notion that "living systems display purposeful, teleological, or goal-oriented behavior" (Ibid: 309) . Mentioned, but less obvious, are Lewin's direct contributions, rather than those of some of his successors[33] , having group dynamics as a particular lens through which work is being monitored (goals and outcomes, norms, roles, stages of group development, and levels of system). Linked to the category of *level of system*, trichotomised into individual, group, and organisation, is the question of *causality*, which can be categorised as simple, circular, or complex[34]. This Field-Causality Matrix (please see appendix III p.222) provides an overview and understanding of how these, by some seen as opposite paradigms, might better be understood as a nest of Chinese boxes, where field theory contains the others[35].

Gaffney (2010) proposes a group developmental model based strictly on the gestalt theory he teaches. He found it "confusing and even unnecessary to use *non-Gestalt* developmental models from group dynamics, psychodynamics and other sources" (Ibid: 187). Gaffney builds on organism/environment reminiscent of PHG's presentation on the individual level. From field theory and the utilisation of life space he reinforces the organism/environment concept to explain the complexities of the field, which persons make sense of as well as give sense to saying: "[..] each person in the actual group having each other person, each dyad/triad or subgroup, all others together, the *group gestalt*, the facilitator and external others, as the environment of their personal life-space" (Ibid:191). Three simultaneous groupings are considered, the actual group of individuals; the imagined group, as the collective presence of the introjects and projections of the entire actual group, and the group gestalt, that which this actual group is always becoming and is at any moment. The lack of references makes it hard to see how he reaches his conclusions, and his random use of capitalised "gestalt" ads to the difficulty as it is unclear when Gestalt psychology theory or gestalt therapeutic concepts are being referred to. However his creative thinking is inspirational and I will draw on his

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[33] Huckabay refers to Bradford, Gibb and Benne's (1964) writings about T-group theory and learning.
[34] Ivan Jensen, personal communication.
[35] Yontef (1988) does not use the metaphor of Chinese boxes. He claims that field theory include system theory, but not the other way round.

conceptualisation of the 'how' of contact later in this chapter. Energy and vectors provide important elements in a non-normative framework, where unfinished tasks or problems received special attention as energy "guzzlers".

The notion of the unfinished situation

Lewin is acknowledged for his experiments on memory and tension (Perls, 1947: 116) as well as his field theoretical position on how to determine the boundaries within one's field of investigation when studying whole phenomena(Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951). Is it, however, possible to find his ideas about tension systems implicit in PHG's theorising, especially that on unfinished situations. The gestalt formation through awareness, utilising one's senses in the here and now, letting a clear and vivid figure emerge and letting other impressions fade into the background, mobilising towards what is needed or wished for in order to satisfy ones need is seen as sound functioning. An incomplete gestalt, vibrating for attention, does not allow for new figures to emerge. Unfinished situations lead to stagnation and regression. Most referred to in gestalt literatures is Zeigarnik's (1927/1997) study testing Lewin's thesis that an unfulfilled goal keeps drawing organismic attention, but also Ovsiankina (1928) and Dembo (Lewin, 1997a) confirmed Lewin's tension thesis through their experimental research. The non-normative approach is also evident in Goldstein's theorising. Even though he was a physician and worked with severely injured soldiers his writing demonstrates a useful combination of sober clarity and human compassion. In the last section I include his thoughts on existential crisis, which I find relevant for understanding identity work in radical change situations.

Holism, the notion of self-regulation, and scientific paradigm shift

Kurt Goldstein's holistic theory of organismic self-regulation (Goldstein, 2000) is referred to in PHG as "*magnificent*". Goldstein conducted research among severely brain damaged soldiers during the First World War. He called his method a holistic, organismic approach in that, as he said, he could not neglect the need for scientific rigour and at the same time as his observations confronted him with an epistemological problem. He had to acknowledge each individual's unique recovery process in its totality, leading him to the application of the *phenomenological method within neurobiology*, stating: "Thus organism and world realize themselves simultaneously and grow from the sphere of potentiality into that of actuality"

(Goldstein, 2000: 388)[36]. Goldstein challenged the positivistic scientific view which dominated then. His insistence on analysing the organism in terms of the totality of its behaviour and interaction with its environment, the holistic, organismic approach is evident for example in PHG in the chapter addressing the structure of growth: "Our approach ... is "unitary" in the sense that we try in a detailed way to consider *every* problem as occurring in a social-animal-physical field. From this point of view, for instance, historical and cultural factors cannot be considered as complicating or modifying conditions of a simpler biophysical situation, but are intrinsic in the way the problem is presented to us (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972: 277, 281). The phenomenological methodology applied as natural method (McConville, 2001) to therapeutic practice is spelled out by emphasising "in a detailed way" and "every problem as occurring". The holistic approach is also obvious; in this quote. However, it is more in keeping with Goldstein's organismic approach than Jan Smuts'[37] holistic ecology, in that no systemic hierarchy is assumed. Goldstein did not reject Smuts' ecological notion of "Holism as an operative factor in the universe", but he found the categorisation into "prototypes" problematic. Furthermore he did object to the establishment of a hierarchy of life, from the less developed up to the super-organism since it was based on the supposition of prototypes of the totality of living creation (Goldstein, 2000: 388,392). Goldstein presents an almost Kiergaardian existential view in his characterisation of human-in-being, saying: "In man alone, the privation of essential performances and limitation of world can be mitigated, because he has the capacity to bear insufficiency, that is, suffering" (Ibid: 392). Being himself a doctor surrounded by suffering soldiers Goldstein developed a definition of normality that was interesting at that time, stating that "all performance is normal or 'adequate', if it shows an adequate temporal structure" (Ibid: 387, 275). This definition clearly illustrates his ingrained holistic conviction because not only does he see his subjectivity as part of a whole, in that all observations are temporal and coming from a specific point of view, but also that the organism and its environment can't be separated.

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[36] Bowman (2005) indicates that Goldstein's impact on the development of gestalt therapy theory and therapeutic practice was just as much a matter of connecting influential people as it was his writings; for example Goldstein engaged Goodman as an English tutor, when he arrived as a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany.

[37] During the Perls' stay in South Africa, they became acquainted with statesman, general and philosopher Jan Smuts (1926). His holistic evolutionary philosophy impressed the Perlses. Building on Clements' super-organism concept, which suggested that ecosystems progressed through regular and determined stages of serial development analogous to the developmental stages of an organism, Smuts placed the Personality as a whole as the highest form of Holism, however reminding us that: .."this Personality in all its uniqueness is still but a function of Nature in the wider sense; that in it we see matter itself become somehow aglow and luminous with its own unsuspected immanent fire.."(Ibid:304).

Consequently, behaviour expresses itself differently over time, a process view that broke with the then current functionalist paradigm. Goldstein's view on human nature as well as methodological approach is mirrored in a gestalt definition of "the self is flexibly various, for it varies with the dominant organic needs and the pressing environmental stimuli; it is the system of responses; it diminishes in sleep when there is less need to respond to (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972: 235). While this quotation reads as rather sterile, Goldstein managed to maintain a non-judgmental neutrality in his description of human behaviour, as his scientific statement appears essentially humanistic in how it strives to understand human real-life phenomena. Goldstein operated with two scenarios in the person/environment situation, being-in-order (in adequate stimulus evaluation) and being-in disorder (in catastrophe – an inadequate stimulus evaluation). Goldstein compared catastrophic shocks with existential traumas and claimed that:

1. They emerge due to the specific organism/environment interaction in time and space
2. Signifying equally conclusions about the organism and the environment
3. Represent a disequilibrium that must be reversed if the organism shall maintain its existence.
4. The reversal process is a mutual environmental –organism adjustment
5. Is realised when the organism is able to find its "milieu" in the world (Goldstein, 2000: 388)

Seeing human growth or self-actualisation in this way, as an ongoing process where person/environmental clashes are normal and inevitable, being descriptive in curious exploration of *how* this unique organism enables itself to find its "milieu" is core in the gestalt paradigm. Self-actualisation is integrated as a congenital ability, when healthy consisting of organismic-environment interaction, where the most dominant need becomes figural on a situational background. The organism scans the environment in order to satisfy the dominant need. When the need-satisfactory requisites are found, motion is in favour of assimilating them. The gestalt figure (the prominent need) dissolves into ground as it is "digested", making energy available for letting the next need emerge. In accordance with Gestalt psychology, our selective ranges of factual events from memory are subjective. F. Perls himself writes that he did not grasp what Goldstein meant by self-actualisation while working for him; however it made sense in Maslow's later conceptualising (Perls, 1969). Bowman (2005: 11) suggests that Perls' aha-experience happened while reading Friedländer's philosophical ideas of differential

thinking. We can say with certainty that F. Perls caught interest in and used Friedländer's conceptualising while revising Freud's theory and method (Perls, 1947). It was particularly this fusion of Friedländer philosophy with Gestalt psychology, Goldstein and Smuts' holism, which formed the basis for his criticism and revision of Freud. The thorough review of the contributions from the individuals categorised as the Gestalt psychological school provides the ground on which self/environment understandings in PHG will be presented.

Self/environment in PHG (1951)

'Self' is probably an even more ambiguous construct than 'identity', which on sober consideration and in the words of Olsen (1999: 49) "leads to troubles otherwise avoidable". Olsen objects to the self as problematized within philosophical debates, though not to the word as it appears in communication. He states that there is no problem because there is no self (or selves for that matter) – who has ever seen one? Rather, debates about 'self' are about other matters such as personal identity, moral or cognitive psychology, semantics, and epistemology (Ibid: 59). Psychology and psychotherapies are by definition devoted to the understanding of human beings and their existence, conceptualised as 'self'. In 1951 the gestalt approach did take a radically different attitude to what it meant to be a person and to develop in sound ways, revolting against established institutions. In hindsight gestalt therapy, unwittingly, became one of the carriers of individualism through its insistence on "being yourself"; a subject matter that contemporary authors are trying to counteract by stressing that humanity is fundamentally connected (Hycner & Jacobs, 1995;Wheeler, 2000). Keeping the existentialists' polar view of mankind as both interrelated and distinct I will turn to PHG (1972/1951) and its understandings of self.

 'Self' in PHG (1972/1951) has two main definitions[38], from four different domains or paradigms. The two definitions of the self are:

1. Co-created in the moment, emergent of the field of 'self/other' or 'person/environment'.
2. A fixed psychological entity.

The four domains from which assumptions are drawn are:
  I.   Philosophy
              a.   The nature of change and movement (Aristotle)

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[38] Seán Gaffney, personal communication

        b. Existentialism

II.   Biology (Kurt Goldstein)

III.   Human ecology (Jan Smuts)

IV.   Psychology

        a. Gestalt psychology including Lewin's field theoretical emergent self

        b. Freudian psychoanalysis with self interpreted as a fixed entity

The first definition permeates PHG (1972/1951), for example in its understanding of the 'self as actualisation of the potential' (Ibid: 274), the 'self as a complex system of contacts necessary for adjustment in the difficult field' (Ibid: 373) or the 'self as the system of contacts in the organism/environment field' (Ibid: 367). All three understandings of the self are imbued within the four domains, except the Freudian idea of unconscious and fixed self. These definitions take a constructivist view on selfing, as I prefer to call it in order to avoid reification. Lewis and Schilling (1978) suggest it is inspired by eastern philosophy, in which both Freud and Perls took an interest.

The second definition expresses 'self' as a fixed psychological entity. It is possible to interpret this definition as either a reminiscent of "the Freudian neurotic self", isolating the self in fixed boundaries (Ibid: 387), or as that structure of the self, named the 'personality function[39] which displays our self-definitions and habitual behaviour, an interpretation in line with the self as emergent. I find that the ambiguous self-conceptualisation mirrors the vacillation of those days between (1) an essentialist and a constructivist view, (2) an intra-psychic and trait oriented or a relational view, and (3) the view of change with a knock-on effect on concepts by which the self is assumed to interact with its environment, such as creative adjustment, boundary, contact and contact resistances. Particularly retroflection, projection, introjections etc remained relatively unchanged from original usage in psychoanalytic thought (Lewis and Schilling, 1978). Lewis et al. emphasize the misfit by saying: "In gestalt theory, life is in fact viewed as a process, yet incidents are isolated for which the individual is responsible" (Ibid: 274). With this very plain remark I think the authors capture an essential causality dilemma within the gestalt paradigm, the choice between a deterministic cause-effect and a subjective process perspective of higher-order causality. It is not remarkable in a text book on

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[39] The 'self' in PHD is assumed (for analytical therapeutic purposes) to consist of three interacting functions, the Id-, the Ego-, and the Personality function, not to be confused with psychoanalytical terminology. I will not go further into these 'self' functions, which I argue are not relevant for the purposes of this study.

psychotherapy to write extensively about health and ill-being, which in PHG is gathered in the notion of neurosis. I do not find 'neurosis' relevant for my study, however the processes by which contact dynamics are conceptualised are relevant when considering identity work, which necessitates a minor attention to PHG's neurosis conceptualising.

Creative adjustments, contact resistances, or contact boundary dynamics?

The self is assumed to possess neurotic inhibitions that "do not seem to be a work of creative adjustment" (Ibid: 371). Having the activity of the self as a "*temporal process*" presented in "stages of fore-contact, contacting, final contact, and post-contact" (Ibid: 371), neurotic behaviour is the interruption of contact. "Neurosis is a fixation on the unchanging past" (Ibid: 375), by which is meant that a person, who keep going back to the past, keep repeating events that happened perhaps long ago does not attend to the present. A better formulation might be that the person construct the past as unchangeable, through binding energy to the experience and recall it as it was in the here-and-now. There are other and different understandings of neurosis in PHG in the section of reality, human nature, and society where neurosis is defined as "the creative adjustment of a field in which there are repressions" (1972/1951: 287). This makes Wheeler (1991) rhetorically ask how we then can decide what are "good" creative adjustments or "bad" contact resistances. In my interpretation it reveals the conflicting paradigms, the field theoretical, constructivist perspective and a psychoanalytic, essentialist perspective.

According to PHG (1972/1951) it is not the person, that is neurotic but the 'self', and "it is only the self that is really available for help [in a therapeutic setting]. The social norms cannot be altered in psychotherapy" (Ibid: 366). "Perls's conceptualization makes the individual unduly responsible for meeting his or her own needs and simultaneously fails to account for peculiarities in the moment that counteract or conflict with the individual's need" (Wagner-Moore, 2004). According to identity theory (Kroger & Marcia, 2011;Mead,1934) and social identity theory (Jenkins, 2004) we are transformed social norms as well as the creators of the very norms. PHG proposes a typology from the experience of the actual situation – in other words, interruption of energy (excitement) through the stages of creative adjustments. The typology is said not be used for character-analysis. It intends to help "the patient to develop his creative *identity* by his ordered passage from "character" to "character"."(Ibid: 449, my emphasis). The "characters" (in quotation marks) are explained in five contact resistances:

confluence, introjection, projection, retroflection, and egotism and as character by: introjector, projector, etc. Polster & Polster (1973:71) added deflection, left out egotism, and called them diverted or resistant interaction. These authors write about persons, not selves and apply the former "characters" as 'channels' of which some become habitual (favourites) to the individual. The channels are outlet for a mass of energy (frustrations, anger, disappointment, etc.) when individuals cannot satisfy their personal needs. Since they no longer see "reality" they are caught in a deadlock, increasing emotions. This 'trait' and essentialist reading only partly reflect what Polster et al. for example write later in the book: "What the individual fears is the rendering of the accustomed I-boundary. He may feel that his very existence is at stake in severe ruptures of the I-boundary, and the threat of such rendering arouse the emergency function of the individual. The emergency function includes both great arousal of excitement and its antithesis, the suppression of this excitement, which is experienced as anxiety" (Polster and Polster, 1973: 111). They clearly speak about the persons/environment interaction with focus on energy as field forces, however still from an intrapsychic perspective. In later writings Ervin Poster (1995) defines the 'self' as "the interplay among whatever aspects of the person come into focus, crossing the line between surface experience and depth" (Ibid: 5). In line with Berger et al (1967) the self is thought of as a reified construct composed by the human inclination "forming characters out of characteristics"(Ibid:10). Polster does not speak about 'confluators' but how simple moments of merging with another person might provide learning, friendship, and the experience of belonging.

Focusing on the 'how' of present behaviour, Burley and Freier (2004) propose a gestalt model of character structure and function based on juxtaposing gestalt process theory and cognitive-developmental theory cf. Tulving's (1985) procedural memory. Character is perceived as "how we do what we characteristically do" (Ibid: 322). They acknowledge the notion of a fixed self in PHG (1971/1951), although they emphasize that fixed form should not necessarily be seen as unhealthy. Their model describes both "the development and operational function of character as a dynamic responsive system modified by procedural memory, which has an impact on current process" (Ibid: 328). Contact styles are accordingly seen as being developed early on, stored in procedural memory and hard to access. However experiential and experimental approaches are particularly efficient.

A general movement towards a relational and constructivist view is approached by contemporary gestalt scholars who aim towards paying more attention to the role of society (Cahalan 1983), utilising a constructivist view of self and contact resistances (Wheeler, 1991), a re-conceptualising of human development and psychopathology (Hycner & Jacobs, 1995), and a revision of contact dynamics as polar (Gaffney, 2010) to mention some. Cahalan (1983: 39) finds that there is a "lack of attention to the inextricable social nature of all behaviour and experience" and "there is a tendency to stay with one person's perspective, when understanding and working with these [contact boundary] disturbances". Wheeler (1991) critiqued what he found to be a positivist, dualistic world view favouring an individualist autonomy over our communal participation, a view he further develops philosophically (Wheeler, 2000). Here I focus on Wheeler's critique of placing contact and resistance as opposites in PHG. According to Wheeler contact resistance means 'to maintain a difference'; to which the polar opposite is maintenance of difference as accommodation, "relaxing that difference at the [contact] boundary" in order to assimilate what has been judged as appropriate "nourishment". He finds this polar process true whether applied to "an individual person or an organized system of persons" (1991:110), a similar conclusion to Jenkins' (2004) notion of identity processes (identification and differentiation) , although Jenkins states "The theorisation of identification must therefore accommodate the individual and the collective in equal measure "(Ibid: 16)

Wheeler's argument is based on Lewin's field theory, Goldstein's notion of self-actualization and Gestalt psychological perception principles. According to them contact is a truism when talking about living organisms. That translates to a tautology – "no contact, no life" - thus precluding contact interruption, which is not entirely Wheeler's conclusion. He describes 'contact' versus 'various degrees of seclusion', including nonexistence. In the presented "model" (1991: 119) contact resistance/differentiation is placed as a polar opposite to confluence, which in Wheeler's terminology is accommodation, or degrees of it. Placed below the resistance column are five of the former resistances (projection, introjection, retrofletion, egotism, and deflection), each having their polar opposite accommodating aspects. His underscoring of resistance/differentiating *in* contact and not *to* contact is important (Ibid: 120), also advancing that these polar suggestions are altered in the actual situation. Wheeler's thinking is a step towards a clear epistemology; language both complicates and simplifies an intended dynamic human interactional model. Nevertheless, a person can resist by

accommodating behaviour, perhaps silently differentiating. That blurs the distinctions, a matter that Wheeler himself acknowledges. Individuals perform, or pretend, according to the their situation at every moment (Goffman, 1959). Wheeler suggests omitting resistance and only talking about 'contact'. Resistance defined as forces that counteract progress, whether in therapy or in organisational work, seems almost an axiom.

Others have expanded on Wheeler's ideas; Bentley (Bentley, 2002) takes a learning perspective to contact, claiming that it is beneficial for everyone to assess their "contact styles tendencies and moderate them" (Ibid: 202). The best place to "operate" is on the middle ground, which is between the two polar extremes. Contact styles are conditioned early in life leaving us with favourites. It is however possible to moderate them through awareness. In Bentley's (Ibid:204) figure he has six contact styles (introjecting/over-questioning, projecting/over-owning, deflecting/staying with, retroflecting/aggressively expressive, confluence/highly differentiated, and desensitising/over-sensitive) and their counter poles, which are different from those of Wheeler.

Gaffney (2010) applies the "core constructs as awareness, contact boundary and *contact styles or functions, or modalities or interruptions or disturbances*, as well as aspects of field theory" (Ibid: 188, my emphasis). The many labels Gaffney humorously uses about contact styles etc. express very well a paradigmatic change in the abstraction of this core concept. He states that 'contact' is "the essences of group life". No matter which level of system is figural, there are interactions on all levels. He deploys the terminology I also use (Blom, 2009), having confluence and egotism as limiting concepts at each end of a continuum, between which an ever-present existential ballet is choreographed: being part of or apart from the group/the other. As I interpret Gaffney's Proposal One, he finds movements along the continuum, where group participants position themselves and each other as generic for group processes. In his Proposal Two, he says, "it is always structuring the ground of that process" (Ibid: 197). The use of Gestalt psychological term as figure/ground is ambiguous as it is unclear whether he talks about utilising a particular lens by which he as a consultant observes the group, or this is an ontological field phenomenon of the group including himself. If it is the latter, conceptualising 'group-as-a whole' (Agazarian, 1986) working out, i.e. negotiating, positions in terms of: "who am I in this group"? thus invoking inclusion and exclusion questions (which I think he implies) then I find 'structured ground' to be misplaced in this context. However,

the assumed pattern that we associate with these basic human dynamics may be of a different character or the group and its members might for a while have accepted who they have become. Instead of talking about resistance or neurosis, Gaffney speaks about awareness as out of/before and with awareness. I find this reassuring, in line with the process perspective I claim. Chancing the contact resistances to contact dynamics and placing them as polar opposites of a continuum is in line with a gestalt paradigm based on process and constructionism.

The Gestalt paradigm applied on organisations and society, the letting go of therapy?

Gestalt theorising is sparse on the levels of organisation and society. What Nevis (1987) uttered years ago is still valid, "gestalt is a micro level approach". Most writings about organisations address dyadic interaction and small group work (Kepner, 1980) or give advice about how to practice leadership/consultancy from a gestalt approach (Rainey and Hanafin, 2006). There are several articles in which the authors have adopted the gestalt cycle of experience as "navigation tool" for organisational change (Matthew and Sayers, 1999) and the learning organisation (Ikehara, 1999). The gestalt paradigm is also adopted as a normative framework in achieving "good enough" organisations and work atmosphere (Smith and Sharma, 2002). In their writing 'contact' has become 'communication' and the former contact resistances are transformed into six communication interruptions or blocs (Ibid:200). A qualitative case study with participant observation of a management team followed by interviews used 'paradox' and 'impasse' as explorative framework (O'Connor, 1993). Gestalt therapy concepts are included in psychologies that have been applied on a organisational level (Leland Gilstrap, 1999), particularly mentioning Merry and Brown's (1987) conceptualisation of organisations behaving neurotically. They want to understand organisational decline as seen through a gestalt therapeutic lens (theory and methods). Merry and Brown (Ibid) list those concepts on which both therapists and consultants draw: "(1) here and now, (2) humanistic concerns, (3) tapping unrealized potential, (4) an organic, holistic approach, and (5) experimentation" (Ibid: 53). Furthermore, system theory plays a major role in their theorising, less than field theory do. The latter is mentioned as a more subordinate clause to systems theory; for example, contact is defined as "the point where the boundaries of the individual meet other boundaries, such as those of social systems" (Ibid: 75) and not the co-construction of boundaries. Withdrawal is understood as the polarity of contact by transferring what is contacted to internal processes. "The individual's ego boundary can be widened by

healthy identification, to include other social systems" (Ibid: 75) Pathological identification is defined as the inability to differentiate self from the organisation. Perls' propositions on how neurotic behaviour develops are transferred to the organisational level or organisational sub-systems:

1. "The organization is in constant interaction with its environment
2. The interaction tales place within the context of a constantly changing field
3. As the field is constantly changing, the forms and techniques of the interactions must change
4. If the forms and techniques of interaction must change, the organization itself must change to survive
5. When the organization becomes incapable of changing the conditions for organizational interaction, neurosis may develop
6. The organization that cannot change may be unable to satisfy its members needs and organizational goals" (Ibid: 87)

Instead of taking 'neurosis' as a lens, Rainey and Stratford (2001) reframe previous understanding of resistances to change in a organisational context seeing it as the manifestation of multiple realities and consequently of multi-directed energy. Beisser's paradoxical change theory is applied starting with accessing the client's "reality of what is" instead of what ought to be. In Lewinian terms, any change is associated with both promoting and opposing forces (Lewin, 1997a). Resistance is polar, containing forces promoting and counteracting change. When leading a change process, Rainey and Stratford (2001) contend that resistance is most useful when it is given several meanings – "as an event, a pattern, a specific behaviour, a style, an interruption, or a modulation or enhancement to contact" (Ibid: 328). Six resistances (introjection, projection, desensitization, retroflection, deflection and confluence) are exemplified at the individual level and then at an organisational level. The resistances are seen as intra-psychic on both levels and predominantly as "a problem" or dysfunction, even though the authors stress the focus on function (does it work) avoiding judgment (good and bad). There are many implicit assumptions from realm of therapeutic endeavour, which may be an approach if made as a deliberate and articulated choice. I don't think therapy belong to an organisational habitat, perhaps exceptionally as "organisational

therapy" (Kirkeby, 2001) based on philosophy and ethics. There are, however, in previous "gestalt" theorising strands that point in a non-therapeutic direction.

The contours of identity

The word identity has not been comprehensively defined in any gestalt texts. It is used four[40] times in PHG, the first of them in the section explaining withdrawal of the self in post-contact. Depending on what has been contacted and the transformation of energy-matter, the growth accordingly "has various names: increase in size, restoration, procreation, rejuvenation, recreation, assimilation, learning, memory, habit, imitation, identification. All of these being the result of creative adjustment" (421). The first quote is very open to interpretations stating: "The basic notion underlying them [the various types of growth] is a certain unification or *made-identity* in the organism/ environment interaction".. (421). The list of growth options is puzzling, especially assimilation, which is explained previously as being fundamental for healthy growth. In their further explanation assimilation does form part of many of the other growth results. However, the main conclusion must be that an exchange at the boundary has taken place resulting in growth. The self is changed, and we may assume, so is the person. The unification or made-identity must point to what the *person* has become, since the self only exists at the contact boundary (373). The next sentence in which identity is used states: "We need only help the patient develop his *creative identity* by his ordered passage from character to character" (449). This sentence captures the beauty of gestalt *therapy* as pure existential based process. The typology developed characterising or even stereotyping five contact resistances is dissolved, stating that when the person gets enough support to explore his/her situation including the experienced difficulties and how these are handled they compose an identity of that moment. The creative is grounded in creating a feeling of who I am in this relation while I also learn that who I am with you is perhaps different from who I am in another situation – a creative and flexible identity. The last sentence: "For want of a better term, we call this attitude "egotism", since it is the final concern for one's boundaries and identity rather than for what is being contacted" (456). First, egotism has a certain cultural flavour of bad manners, which is implicit in the start of the sentence. Setting that aside what do they mean here in relation to identity? Egotism is explained as a characteristic of the interruption of final contact, preventing growth. If I attend

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[40] One of the times identity is used is in an excerpt taken from Freud's writing on dreams. I did not find it relevant in this context.

more to myself than to what is going on, do I not grow? Normal egotism is said to be delaying spontaneity, neurotic egotism is the act of isolation, exclusion and self-conceit. I believe we might conclude that if a person wants to stay the same he/she becomes egotistic and does not change. This can be with or without awareness and evaluated as normal or neurotic by the therapist, not necessarily by the person. So far identity has been related to post-contact and egotism.

To fully understand the implied flux I will briefly mention the phenomenon of boundary in the words of an early F. Perls "Wherever and whenever a boundary comes into existence, it is felt both as contact and as isolation" (1947). It is where the 'me' comes into existence but only because it stands in relation to something that is not 'me'. Polster and Poster (1973) relate identity to contact in general saying being human is risky business; Contact might be lively, however, "inherently involves the risk of loss of *identity* or separateness" (Ibid:103). Here, identity is also connected with, to use a stronger word, isolation as in PHG. A better understanding is found where they explain why it might be frightening to step into unknown waters: "The threat is that we would lose our identity, and in a sense this is true, since we inevitably lose the identity we once had. Our evolving identity is what we need to discover" (Ibid: 122). In the early years as a child dependent on its family "the child's confidence is depleted by external authorities whose judgments set in, eroding his own clear *identity* and opening him to adult conquistadors who tale over the territory" (Ibid: 72). The child knows who he is, having a clear identity, which is gradually being taken over by parents and societal values. These introjected values, habits and beliefs might work for the child then in particular situations, however out of awareness in procedural memory they may be dysfunctional in other situations. "The introjector surrenders his sense of *identity*, the projector gives it away piecemeal. Restoring to the projector his squandered bits of *identity* remains the cornerstone of the work-through process" (Ibid: 79). Projecting, as it is explained in this quote, indicates disowning certain part of your behaviour, placing parts of who you are in your environment, with or without awareness I may add, due to the last part of the sentence. Working through process is the becoming aware of what that person "heretofore obliterated from his own self-awareness, this loosens up and expands his too-rigid sense of *identity*" (Ibid: 79).

Having worked with many clients over the years, Polster (1995) finds that each person consists of a population of selves where "each self had an *identity* of its own, rather than a

substitutive role in the person's makeup" (Ibid:6). He also turns the old Perls' dictum "I am I" and "you are you" into "we are together"....creating a larger *identity* than what is felt by any individual alone" (ibid: 180). As social identity theory posit we are always in groupings, virtually or factually. Schutz (1984; 1994) created a framework understanding group dynamics, based on his research with submariners. He noticed the behaviour of the individuals when they entered into groups and categorised his observations in three clusters: (1) affiliating or belonging (2) autonomy (3) affection. He also observed that although intertwined, the needs tend to manifest in a sequential order (as above). For example, when questions round affiliation emerged they were emotionally connected to identity issues displayed by a particular and dependent behaviour. Autonomy was related to power and challenges of influence and affection to issues about intimacy. Schutz's (1994) work has been transformed into tests and is very frequently used for teaching in different organisational settings. Kepner (1980) developed her model of gestalt group process by integrating Cleveland's gestalt (therapy) theorising, her own experience and the framework of Schutz. This established some background for her view of identity, still not explicitly defined. Identity work creates dependence, because of how each person present him- or herself, how they are "perceived and responded to by every other member of the group, including the leader" (Ibid: 17), and I will add sub-groups and group-as-a-whole. Kepner (Ibid) lists three sets of questions relating to the affiliation process of each individual. The first is questions of 'me' and 'who I am here' – in other words, identity. The second is about identification. The third is about interests, goals and leadership. Kepner follows Schutz's (Ibid) sequential order, assuming a normative group phased development, which I disagree with. Each group exists in time and space, hence unique according to field theory, and for that matter to existentialism too. The rapidly changing organising, where wage-earners, managers, roles and positions, not to mention structures are constantly changed, might lead to other observations. It seems, however, that the identity work described in Schutz (1994) and Kepner (1980) in sequence one and by Gaffney (2010) as an ongoing basic existential position is always present, either figural to the observer or as background.

Cluster Summary

This cluster began by giving reasons for adopting gestalt as a paradigm. Then a brief historical account was presented, in particular by highlighting events that carried symbolic and cultural artefacts. The theoretical and inspirational sources were reviewed in order to

provide a background on which the self-construct could be unfolded. Gestalt psychology was identified as an important inspirational pillar in the creation of gestalt therapy, particular the gestating principles. Some Berlin school representatives, such as Kurt Lewin and his theorising/research, (life space, field theory and unfinished business), Kurt Goldstein and his theorising/research (holistic, organismic self-regulation, the application of the phenomenological method within neurobiology) are presented. The unfolding of the self construct took first place in its foundational constructions (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951) and then through contemporary writers. Part of the self-concept was reviewed under the headline of creative adjustments and contact resistances or contact boundary dynamics, raising critical voices arguing conceptual inconsistency, but also suggesting other models. The essentialist – constructivist debate was emphasised. The gestalt paradigm applied to organisational work on different levels was presented, however predominantly grounded in therapeutic terminology. Finally, on the basis of quotations from various gestalt scholars the contours of identity and identity work was presented, compared and contrasted.

Trade unions – Cluster 3

Is a trade union an organisation, an institution, or a social movement? Is it, furthermore, to be understood as (primarily) an object, or as an ongoing process, which I choose to call unionism?

In the New Oxford Dictionary (1998) "a trade union[41] is defined as an organized association of workers in a trade, group of trades, or professions, formed to protect and further their rights and interests". Although this definition may encompass all three ontologies, I believe that most would think of unions as an organisation or, on a second thought, perhaps as an institution, however not as a social movement. From a time perspective it is historically incorrect, presently it seems obvious. Looking into the future, however, trade unions might turn into a social movement – again. Thus, even the question of the ontology of a trade union may be seen as a question of identity. Since ""organisation", to a variable extent and over time, are transformed into "institutions""(Scott, 2001: 23), a process that also social movements undergo (Davis, McAdam, Scott, & Zald, 2005) I will start with a short historical account.

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[41] I use the British term 'Trade Union' and not the Canadian 'Labour Union' or the American 'Labor Union'.

A historical account

A trade union is defined as "An organization of workers in the same skilled occupation or related skilled occupations who act together to secure for all members favorable wages, hours, and other working" [42]. In Collins Dictionaries[43] the "how" of union action is emphasised; through its leadership, it bargains with the employer on behalf of union members (rank and file members) and negotiates labour contracts (collective bargaining) with employers. The most common purpose of these associations or unions is maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment. The term 'workers' is used but what is 'a worker' in this day and age? An early definition states "A trade union [...] is a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives" (Webb and Webb, 1920:1). "Wage-earners" may define union members better than "workers" and I shall continue to use this term.

The three definitions referred to above, although they cover a time span of some ninety years, are quite similar. The latter, however, does not emphasise political work and influence gained as do the two former, although the authors in a footnote remark that the unions during the last decades had aspirations towards a revolutionary change in social and economic relations. Acknowledging the many revolts and strikes that have arisen over the years in response to various working conditions, Webb, et al. (Ibid.) distinguish these spontaneous reactions and deliberate union formation as an attempt at improving those working conditions under which they voluntarily entered. There are two main trends in the "organisational" interpretation of how trade unions arose, or their organising principles. One postulates that the professional associations, the Craft Guilds and the Association of Journeymen, gradually transformed into trade unions. The other argues that trade unionism grew out of spontaneous labour movement opposition against the exploitation of men, women and child workforce during the rise of industrialism[44], with no indication of former influential institutions (Silver, 2003;Webb & Webb, 1920: 12). In their thorough investigation of English trade union history Webb, et al. conclude: "If we examine the evidence of the rise of combinations in particular trades, we see the trade union springing, not from any particular institution, but from every opportunity for

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[42] http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Trade+Union

[43] http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/trade-union

[44] The underlying cause-effect assumptions drawn from the Marxist literature are that bringing the masses of workers into contact and interdependency with one another would heighten group awareness, ultimately to solidarity, and that individual identity markers such as nationality, gender, sex etc. would dissolve (Silver, 2003)

the meeting together of wage-earners from the same occupation" (Webb, et al., 1920:23). They bring evidence[45] that the earliest durable combinations of wage-earners (in England) precede the factory system by a whole century, which weakens the industrial revolution and exploitation hypothesis (Ibid) but does not diminish the fact that the rise of factories which separated workers from the means of production further fuelled the trade union movement. Silver (2003) underlines the importance of adopting a long historical and wide geographical frame to fully understand the dynamics of contemporary labour movement, offering "a narrative of working-class formation in which events unfold in *dynamic time-space*" (Ibid: 31). Returning then to 1830 in Britain where a newspaper article describes the 'Power of Darkness' loosely in relation to *trades* (sic!) union; the Marxists ideal unifying working class members in one single universal organisation. The significance of trade with or without 's' rests in a understanding of trade union being an aggregation of members from one trade, whereas trades union is a aggregation of different trades in one union, in modern language termed Federations. The ideal that workers would voluntarily enrol in one universal association regardless of their profession, nationality, race etc. did not happen. The trade union movement continued to organise itself in professions with local presence as an important argument for recruitment and provision of service to members. Paradoxically, the current decrease in union membership forces trade unions not only to merge in order to achieve economy of scale, but also to merge various professions (Waddington, 2005). In England the consolidation of trade unions through the 1850s took place based on a new strategy, "if you can't beat them (employers) then join them". Riots, strikes and verbal assaults were frowned upon. As Webb, et al. (1920:204) notice: "During these years we watch a shifting of leadership in the trade union world from the casual enthusiast and irresponsible agitator to a class of permanent salaried officers expressly chosen from out of the rank and file of trade unionists for their superior business capacity". Thus, the trade union movement organised itself, and became imbedded in and influenced by relatively slowly changing institutions. Silver's research, taking a world (space) – historical (time) macro-perspective, casts light on the global labour movement crisis, and postulates different hypotheses as to why that is. She is particularly interested in differentiating what may be fundamental new patterns in "the trajectory of world labour unrest" and what may be seen as recurring patterns

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[45]   The Journeymen Hatters' Trade Union of Great Britain and Ireland can trace its ancestry to 1667.

(Silver, 2003: 168). Her macro-perspective calls forth the power of institutional structures when analysing the interacting forces shaping or restructuring patterns. She found that "workers' bargaining power in the twentieth century was founded at least as much on workers' centrality within the world power strategies of states as on their centrality within complex processes of production" (Ibid:173). She concludes that the geographical relocation of production did not globally weaken the labour movement. With the diffusing of industry, strong workplace bargaining power diffused as well. However, "workers in each new low-wage site of investment were able in no small measure to rely on their own structural bargaining power". (Ibid: 169). It appears that technology implementation was believed to reduce bargaining power, but paradoxally it may have increased because of sensitivities to interruption of workflow in production. Silver takes a process perspective claiming that the working class disappearance did not cause the union crisis. Historically, she talks about the working class as a continuous making and remaking of the frame of changing industrial circumstances in production as well as spatial fixes. The bargaining power is thus differentiated amongst sectors and industries, which is reflected in the way workers organise themselves, that is, how dependent they are on other constituencies in providing associational bargaining power ("trade unions, political parties, and cross-class alliances with nationalist movements" (Ibid:172)). The Marxist dictum of one *trades union* might come true as an emergent enterprise union suggested by Benson and Gospel (2008) in their comparative and conception analysis of unionism across six western countries.

Organisation? - Perspectives and definitions

An organisation is the result of someone's organising "something" according to (organising) principles including constraints, whether these exist outside of, or with awareness. At the highest level of abstraction, Scott & Christensen (1995) posit that an organisation is "a collection of cognitive, normative and regulative structures and processes". At a more practical level, a working definition of an organisation is: "(1) A social entity that (2) has a purpose (3) has a boundary, so that some participants are considered inside while others are considered outside, and (4) patterns the activities of participants into a recognizable structure" (Senior and Fleming, 2006:5). Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld (2009) view an organisation not as a noun but as a verb, shifting the gaze from structure to process by utilising the term "organising". They assert that human beings organise by processing information aiming at reducing uncertainties they face in everyday life. Specifically, organisational members make

sense of, as well as give sense to, the complexities of life in order to be able to act. They propose the term 'impermanent organisation' in order to capture the "generic existential strategy" of organising. This fluid way of defining organisations captures the complexities of trade unions very well with its multiple constituencies and, at least for outsiders, complex ways of making up membership content. Aren't we all potential members? Open system perspectives applied to organisations incorporates 'boundary' as means of distinguishing what "we are talking about" (Scott, 2003) thereby reducing the complexities to a manageable level (Searle, 1995).

The reduction of complexities – boundary construction

Reification of boundaries seems just as natural as turning identity into 'a thing' or 'something'. Robbins (2005: 223) illustrates the creation of boundary-less organisations in the quest for maximal flexibility, but still speaks about boundaries. Vertical boundaries separate based on hierarchy, status and rank. Horizontal boundaries encapsulate and separate functional units. They can be seen either as barriers that must be abolished, or as constructive structures providing stability and order. The comprehension of organising also involves the classic social actor/collectivity debate; does a collectivity exist independently of its members? If yes, how can we then speak about the individual, social actor and subjectivity? Kurt Lewin's field theory dealt with this issue, changing from a focus on individuals to field forces (Lewin, 1997a). Juxtaposing Lewin's field theory and psychoanalytic theory Agazarian et al. (1981) wrote about visible and invisible groups and later abductively conceptualised "group-as-a-whole as a system separate and discrete from the individuals that are its members" (Agazarian, 1986:101). Greenwood et al. (1996:1033) underscore the precipitating dynamics in organisations, saying that "every organization is a mosaic of groups structured by functional tasks and employment status". Exemplifying their definition, the 'mosaic' of the trade union branch consisted of functional groups providing bread-and-butter services such as 'unemployment', 'pension', 'education', 'consultancy', and 'casework'. Within each of these groups there were managers, consultants, elected secretaries, and case workers[46]. Barth (1969) was particularly interested in the ontology and epistemology of collective forms. Based on his important studies of ethnic groups, he concluded that ethnic identities are folk classifications, unfolded as ascriptions and self-ascriptions, interpreted and held by the participants in any given situation. Barth objected to assuming culture as given. He found that only those cultural

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[46] In this example, I have restricted the categories to employed staff only.

features which the participants regarded as significant were taken into account and applied as signals and symbols of differences. In some relationships and situations even radical differences were deflected or denied (Ibid: 14). Advancing this de-essentialists' view, some scholars have appointed Barth as a forerunner of social constructionism (Frello, 2012).

One of the ways by which the organisational field has been demarcated is through membership definitions. Historically, from Bernard who maintained individuals were not enclosed within the organisational boundary, to Pfeffer & Salancik (1978) who remind us that in organisations certain activities and behaviours of the individual are important, not the person him/herself, to present day theorising of membership in terms of identification, where members' shared cultural-cognitive understandings draw boundary perceptions (Scott, 2003). Defining organisations as "bounded networks of people – distinguished as members from non-members – following coordinated procedures: *doing* things *together* in interrelated and institutionalised ways" Jenkins (Jenkins, 2004:145) places the process of identification and differentiating as the pivotal point, individually and collectively. These identity processes shape and maintain the collective (and organisational) boundaries, which "persists despite the flow of personnel across them" (Barth, 1969:9). Identification makes a difference in the construction of social reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Identifications of a trade union member differ if made by employees, for example, categorised as one who pays fee, or a poor wretch who needs help, or given a customer status; identifications which might be acted upon. From the perspective of an elected officer, the members might be the foundation, the pillars, or possible recruits. Furthermore, the elected officials are also members and so are the employees. In the end society consists of potential members. Defining 'who is who' is a matter of power as are the act of categorisation, which takes us back to Jenkins (2004:158) who argues that "organisations are first and foremost groups". A paper researching a Norwegian trade union proposes the setting-aside of unitaristic assumptions of organisational learning, that is, assumed shared visions, values, conceptions or identities (Huzzard and Östergren, 2002). These authors hold that political organisations with dispersed power *must* be governed by managers who display inconsistency in their talk, actions, and decision making in order to balance diverging and even conflicting norms. They label this organisational behaviour 'hypocrisy' which is not meant derogatively, but rather as a necessity in order to implement changes. Identified difficulties originated in different perceptions of identity threats at the national union and local union level leading to the

centrally initiated change processes were largely ignored. The local branches held on to their own preconceptions and ideologies (Ibid: 57). I find it worth here noticing, however drawing on an institutional framework, that theorists have documented that professional identity is a significant driver of action. It can be an important reason why actors resist institutional change, especially when autonomy is threatened (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010). Kreiner, Hollensbe & Sheep (2006ba), much in line with social movement theorists (Reger, Myers, & Einwohner, 2008), are concerned with the well-being of individuals and what Reger et.al call "hard identity work". The former are interested in the "in between" individual and organisational identities, particularly the notion of boundary, aiming at a better explanation how individuals negotiate complex identity demands at their work place. They outline propositions that suggest boundary dynamics as a source of identity change. They propose a model (Ibid: 1321) showing how individuals construe or make sense of identity boundaries within themselves (intra-identity boundary interfaces based on Kurt Lewin's (1997a) life-space concept), how they perceive identity boundaries within the collective organisation (inter-identity boundary interfaces) and how they negotiate a fit or lack of it, between aspects of their own identity and perceived organisational identity (Ibid: 1317). Kreiner et al. hypothesise three levels of identity aspects, the individual, the organisation and the in between, where boundary dynamics emerge. When two of the dynamics are in conflict the rate of identity change is high. These dynamics are *intrusion*, when the boundaries are too permeable and *distance*, when the boundaries are too rigid or thick. The last dynamic is *balance*, the nature of this dynamic is complementary and the identity change rate is low. In their shift from intra-identity to inter-identity boundary dynamics, they change terminology from *within-identity* intrusion, distance and balance to *work-self* intrusion, distance and balance; a shift that I find unnecessary, blurring their message. The permeability of interface boundaries both at the individual and the organisational level decide which 'identity' becomes salient. Impermeable boundaries promote differentiation and reduce integration of other identity aspects or exclude unwanted elements. Individuals have identities in plural, so have organisations, leading Kreiner et al. to define organisations as "a collective comprised of various aspects of identity, some of which organizational members may perceive 'do not fit' with individual aspects of identity (Ibid:1322). Kreiner et al. were critiqued for ignoring issues of power, discourse, and subjectivity. It is not clear if it is the boundaries or identities that are being negotiated.

Trivial, possibly, but organising is imbued with change just as change is imbued with organising. Much effort is based on the assumption that change can be managed and controlled, however questioned by some (Weick et al., 2009). Open system theory postulates that organisations adapt to their environment if they are to survive (Samuel, 2010;Scott, 2003), while perspectives which view organisations as ruling society are less dependent on their environment than originally presumed. Change is inherent in organising. The following is focused on understandings of radical change as context to identity work. I begin by presenting change frameworks, including their established models and epistemological positions, and end with research on radical change.

Organisational change

By default, change and organising appear as interdependent twins, but change and the movement toward the (by some) desired end tend to become categorised and then polarised as attractive or repelling, as in the research case above, introducing resistance to change including concepts such as values, interests, power, vectors, identifications, and emotions (Nevis, Lancourt, & Vassallo, 1996;Senior & Fleming, 2006). Senior et al. state in their concluding chapter that change is a matter of perspective, giving a coarse-grained divide into the *modernist* (change is continuous, linear, incremental, evolutionary), *sophisticated modernist* (change is transformative, revolutionary, periodic, and circular), and *post-modern* views (change is random, chaotic, emerging, and by complex temporalities). In the modernist view thinkers believe that change can be planned and controlled. The sophisticated modernist "trust the process", and moves back and forth between what emerges. Obtaining such a "strategy" the process inherently contains the possibility of changing the goal along the route. The post-modernists, rather that proposing change models which they reject, offer metaphors of organisations being "organic, flexible and niche market-oriented" (2006:417-418). In their four paradigm model (mentioned in the review process section above), Burrell & Morgan (1979: 29) place theories of radical change and those of regulation as polar opposites maintaining that they "reflect fundamentally different frames of reference". The radical change – regulation dimension consists of seven polarized dichotomies (Ibid:18):

1. Radical change vs. the status quo
2. Structural conflict vs. social order
3. Models of domination vs. consensus

4. Contradiction vs. social integration/cohesion
5. Emancipation vs. solidarity
6. Deprivation vs. need satisfaction
7. Potentially vs. actuality

Van De Ven & Poole (1995) recognise the need for scientific stringency, at the same time acknowledging the complexities of organisational life. They offer a typology of four ideal-type theories of organisational development and change, based on an impressive review of the interdisciplinary literature: (1) life cycle, (2) teleological, (3) dialectical, and (4) evolutionary. Radical change belongs to the dialectical ideal-type, following a recurrent, discontinuous sequence of confrontation, conflict and synthesis between contradictory values and events (Ibid:514). Van De Ven et al. (Ibid) purport that the study of organisational change hardly can be contained within one of their ideal-types, rather you will find a combination depending on sequences among events and how it is described, that is, "prescribed a priori by either deterministic or probabilistic laws, or whether the progression is constructed and emerges as change process unfolds" (522).

Greenwood & Hinings' (1996) model for understanding organisational change utilises a neo-institutional framework, and they are particularly interested in how an organisation maintains, adopts, and rejects templates[47] for organising, given the institutionalised nature of organisational fields. They conceive that institutionally originated templates of organising structures the organisation, consequently having radical change being problematic due to normative institutionalised entrenchment of the organisation. The heavier the entrenchment the more likely a revolutionary change will result, *when* it occurs. Greenwood et al. (Ibid) define radical organisational change by contrasting it with convergent change. The latter denotes incremental adjustment to environmental changes in order to fine tune organisational structure and performances. The former they also name "frame bending" which involves the "busting loose from an existing "orientation" and the transformation of the organization" (Ibid: 1024), that is, revolutionary. Greenwood et al. discuss on which ground a particular template is used and how it changes. They conclude, and I quote at length because of the density of content: "The action of values, interests, power, and capacity within an

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[47] Template is defined by Greenwood et al. (1996) as archetypal patterns reminiscent of an interpretive scheme. "Convergent change occurs within the parameters of an existing archetypal template. Radical change, in contrast, occurs when an organization moves from one template-in-use to another" (Ibid:1026)

organization must be brought into play. *However,* this action has to be located in the groups that make up any particular organization. Action is not disembodied; it comes from organizational actors who have positions, skills, commitments, and histories that are primarily found in the groups of which those actors are members. Change and stability are understood through the ways in which organizational group members react to old and new institutionally derived ideas through their already existing commitments and interests and their ability to implement or enforce them by way of their existing power and capability"(Ibid: 1048). I not only find this quotation particularly expressive of Scott's (2001) analytical institutional framework mentioned in the institutional cluster below but also adapting a holistic view on organisational change processes.

Research on radical organisational change

Thurlow & Mills (2009) found in their research review three common assumptions about change. One is that change is essential to organisational survival, the second that change is characterised as a threat to organisations and the third, that change is represented as an issue of leadership. These assumptions are articulated in former X communications director's book bearing the ironical title: "As long as it last my time out; trade unions past or future?" (Valentin, 2002). His main message is that "the trade union structure is based on internal power constellations rather than members' expectations for a present, service-oriented union" (Ibid: 24, my translation) and it must change in profound ways if unionisms are to survive. The ideas he purports appear as revolutionary[48] rather than reconstruction of the union and in line with what Greenwood et al. (1996) define as radical change. Researching organisational change (downsizing and moving to a new hospital) from employees' subjective perspective Jones, Watson, Hobman et al. (2008) found 12 key "issues" that the employees were particularly concerned about. These 12 issues were categorised into three themes: (1) Emotional and attitudinal aspects, containing 5 issues. (2) Change process aspects, containing five issues. (3) And, outcome aspects with 2 issues. The second question explored how employee positions affected attitudes towards the change. The positions hold were executives, supervisors and non-supervisors. Positivity and negativity scattered equally amongst the three groups, however there were differences between each of the 12 issues. Since Jones et al. did

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[48] Based on Balogun & Hailey's (2004) four quadrant model, with 'the nature of change' as incremental or "Big bang, and 'the end result' as transformation or realignment. Incremental transformation produces evolution, and incremental realignment adaptation. Big bang transformation produces revolution, and Big bang realignment reconstruction.

utilise social identity theory as framework, it is not evident how they use it in their coding, analysis and subsequently conclusion. They do mention that intergroup dynamics raised issues about power, conflict, and politics. In the recommendations for future research they say "other organizational identities are also important in shaping perceptions of change. For example, in a hospital setting professional group identity is an important predictor of perceptions, particularly where the proposed change threatens established professional groups" (Ibid:310). Weick's (1995) theorising how individuals' sensemaking is triggered by experienced shock is utilised in Thurlow & Mills' (2009) research. They explore employees' current change experiences ten years after a merger of two regional small hospitals, focusing specifically on how organisational talk is enacted, maintained and constrained within a sensemaking framework. By interviewing fifteen persons, representing a cross-section of the organisational employees they show that "the language used in organizational talk about change has become meaningful for employees, through a process of sensemaking that is closely connected to the organizational identities of the two former hospitals. What we found was that these separate identities have essentially remained intact despite a change initiative aimed at a unified organization" (Ibid: 475). Furthermore, the organisational climate in terms of workplace morality, stress and fear was visible in speech and action.

Institution and institutionalising?

I start this section with a general introduction to institutional thought and continue with definitions within the different schools of institutional theorising. I continue by reviewing perspectives on institutions and change, and finish by presenting micro level research.

 "Of all the schools of thought considered in this book, the institutional school is the closest to a truly sociological view of organization*s "*(Perrow, 1986: 157). Selznick (1957: 17) wrote that institutionalised organisations, being "infused with value", become ends in themselves, and thus operating within essentially moral frames of reference. Zucker (1983) wrote a decade later that "Organizations are the preeminent institutional form in modern society. They organize and structure the daily activities of most people"(Ibid: 1). These three quotes are hard to get round when pondering about the ontology of unions, even with the awareness that much research in those days was based on the structural-functional understandings of organisation, also clearly seen in Burrell & Morgan's (1979) writing. Perrow's enthusiasm, however, seems grounded in the holistic view of the institutional school, i.e. the nesting of

processes into a situational totality[49]. Institutional theory, in other words, shows firstly, how "organizational behaviors are responses not solely to market pressures, but also to institutional pressures (e.g., pressures from regulatory agencies, such as the state and the professions, and pressures from general social expectations and the actions of leading organizations" (Greenwood and Hinings, 1996: 1025). Secondly, their use of case studies allowed documentation of the interchange of structure and function including the historical account. Thirdly, their utilisation of the exposé tradition, i.e. looking for explanations beyond the "obvious" provides new insights. Selznick's view of institutionalised organisations frames very well Valentin´s (2002) considerations of the union he worked in. Zucker's (1986:1) remark simply makes sense when she says: "Organizations are everywhere....even "social movement organizations", structure segments of life at some point", hereby drawing treads between organisations, institutions and social movements.

Institutionalism covers a broad range of underlying theories and concepts. A first rough subdivision is historical based in early-, new-, and neo- institutionalism (Scott, 2001). Each of these subdivisions was inspired by different scientific schools, broadly corresponding to economics, political science, and sociology, with not necessarily an unequivocal ontological or epistemological line in their writing (Ibid). Furthermore, adding to complexities, contemporary scholars return to the early institutionalism, drawing on what they term a "old" institutional framework (Kroezen and Heugens, 2012). Also a micro-level perspective is being promoted as 'Institutional work' (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010;Lawrence et al., 2009), reclaiming embodied social actors.

Perspectives and definitions
Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy offers this definition: "An institution is any structure or mechanism of social order and cooperation governing the behaviour of a set of individuals within a given community — may it be human or a specific animal one. Institutions are identified with a social purpose, transcending individuals and intentions by mediating the rules that govern cooperative living behavior" (Miller, 2011). Historical institutionalists

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[49] Personally, I prefer the institutionalists' holistic approach to human organising, also when it appears as problematic or unsuccessful, rather than to label the situation, utilising terminology borrowed from the field of psychiatry. For examples see: (Hatch & Schultz, 2004;Merry and Brown, 1987;Schwartz, 1999). Samuel (2010) reasons his choice of frame describing the life and death of organisations as 'organisational pathology' in people's reactions: "This is really sick, what is going on here". Except for one page referencing Kets de Vries & Miller's five types of neurotic styles manifested by certain strategies, structures and cultures, he explores human activities struggling in the tension between 'being part of' and 'being apart from'.

define institutions as" the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy" (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 938). They tend to associate institutions with organisations. The formal organisation proclaims rules or conventions, ranging from standard operating procedure of public government to the governing conventions, such as trade unions or bank-firm relations. These definitions ascribe the influencing power to environmental forces. Early research found that institutionalising was effected through two interacting processes: "(1) the gradual legitimation of a new procedure, position, or element of structure; and (2) the requirements established by a hierarchically superior element of the institutional environment (generally another organization)" (Zucker, 1983: 10).

Miller (2001) reaches his definition by delimitation from other social forms, namely those having a less or a more complex form. The less complex form is constitutive elements of institutionalisation exemplified by social norms, roles, conventions, rules and rituals; the latter by more complete social entities such as societies and cultures influencing institutions rather than the reverse. Sociological institutionalists tend to redefine 'culture' itself as 'institution', thereby depicting culture as a network of routines, symbols, and cognitive templates, more so than values and beliefs (Scott, 2001). Greenwood et al.(1996) include values and beliefs of the social actor as important.

Although formal organisations, commonly identified as 'institutions', may be deliberately and intentionally created by people, the development and functioning of institutions in society in general may be regarded as an instance of emergence; that is, institutions arise, develop and function in a pattern of social self-organization, which goes beyond the conscious intentions of the individual humans involved (Miller, 2011). This argument moves in the direction of Zucker's (1983) proposition that organisational form has become "taken for granted, as the way things are". Organisations interact primarily with other organisations, which Coleman's study of unions supports. Unions are established in times of conflict. However, once formed unions reduce such conflicts, an observation that is also advanced by Webb et al. (1920). Neo-institutional theory is one of the main theoretical perspectives used to understand organisational behaviour as situated in and influenced by other organisations and wider social forces—especially broader cultural rules and beliefs (Scott, 2001). Initial scholarship theorised and documented how the construction of broader cultural rules constituted actors

and facilitated organisational isomorphism—the growing similarity of organisations in a field. Subsequently, the scope of the theory was expanded to account for the transformation and change of institutions, as well as the heterogeneity of actors and practices in fields. This has spawned new strands of theorising such as that related to the institutional logics perspective. While neo-institutional theory is most closely informed by ideas and debates in sociology and management, it also draws from cognitive and social psychology, anthropology, political science and economics (Ibid). On these theoretical grounds Scott proposes an analytical matrix framework consisting of normative, regulative and cultural-cognitive pillars, embedded in four types of carriers (symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artifacts). One of the pillars and carriers might be more salient that the others but often, if not always, they interact or even reinforce each other[50].

Scott (2001) acknowledges his specific interest in organisational fields, consequently losing sight of the subject's lived experience in and around institutionalised structures. 'Identity work' applied as a variable or phenomenon of interest is sparse, probably due to institutional theorising often are focused on the organisational field. However, 'institutional work' as a specific approach has been launched recently (Lawrence et al., 2011). "The study of institutional work takes as its point of departure an interest in work—the efforts of individuals and collective actors to cope with, keep up with, shore up, tear down, tinker with, transform, or create anew the institutional structures within which they live, work, and play, and which give them their roles, relationships, resources, and routines" (Ibid: 53). Their inclusive definition resembles that of Wenger (1998) on the basis of his study of communities of practice, in which the value of social learning and human capabilities are explicitly expounded. Changing the focus from grand narratives to everyday life, 'institutional work' pays attention to action, how and why people do what they do in their effort to create, sustain, or ruin institutions. Actions are defined broadly, encompassing institutional reproducing habitual actions as well at those that deliberately try to alter institutions. Lawrence et al. (2009) propose that 'institutional work' is seen as 'effort', even when social agents are replicating existing institutions; they are not to be seen as "cultural dopes". They also combine intentionality with institutionalisation, confronting previous theorising that emphasises the emergence of institutions independently of intention. Based on early thoughts

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[50] In his first edition, Scott did not emphasis the interrelatedness of each factor in his model, which I prefer to call a matrix model. For a critique se Hirsch (Hirsch, 1997).

about social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) Lawrence et al. wish to shift the balance of previous understandings of intentionality as more or less tacit and taken for granted schemas to that of action and effort. "Key issues in the study of institutional work are understanding how and why institutional work occurs and with what effect, and so tracing that work alongside changes in institutions could provide insight into the recursive relationship between forms of institutional work and patterns of institutional change and stability"(Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2011:55).

Institutions and change

Institutional theory is not usually regarded as a theory of organisational change, but rather an explanation of the similarity ("isomorphism") and stability of organisational arrangements in a given population or field of organisations. In his definition of institutions Scott (2001: 48) state they "connote stability but are subject to change processes, both incremental and discontinuous". Understanding institutional change within the analytical framework provided by Scott is a matter of which of the pillars and carriers that becomes salient, to whom, when and for how long. He refers to construction, maintenance, diffusing, de- and re-institutionalisation mechanisms, depicted in a model as top-down and bottom-up interacting processes (Ibid:195). Scott provides three examples, a micro-, a meso-, and a macro-level study of institutional change. Taking unions as an example, we can look back to 1987 when Thomas Nielsen, the then head of the Confederation of trade unions, somewhat sadly stated: "We have triumphed to hell", in recognition of the good standard of living in Denmark. The irony was already then, that trade unions were facing membership decline, union privileges were eroded by European governmental politics, political alliances between the social democrats and Danish trade unions vacillated, to mention some of the factors. Those employed by or politically engaged with unions had only experienced growth since the establishment of the Danish model, never an economically-argued redundancy. In this brief account it is possible to explain the organisational move from a social movement via a movement organisation to a trade union organisation being empowered as well as constrained by institutional forces, diffusing into what Hannan and Freeman (1977) call organisational populations defined as "classes of organizations that are relatively homogeneous in terms of environmental vulnerability". Thus, each of Scott's pillars and carriers can be used as lenses explaining a segment of what is going on, including reducing complexity by choice of level. Drawing on new institutionalism in their micro level research of institutional marginalised

employees, Creed at al. (2010) found that institutional change can involve creation, maintenance, and diffusion as overlapping processes. Furthermore, they found that social actors can be dispersed, utilising themselves as change-levers, slowing altering institutionalised role expectations (Creed, DeJordy, & Lok, 2010). Their research explored the significance of identity work related to the concept of institutional contraction, on the ground of: "Institutional theorists are increasingly recognizing the importance of identity as a mechanism through which institutional change can be effected or blocked" (Ibid:1338).

As argued by Lewin (1997a) in his field theory, institutions privilege some of their members and by default carry seeds for change. Each group may adhere to a set of institutional norms that is different from other groups, producing competitive commitment. (Greenwood et al., 1034). Taking an endogenous change perspective, Armstrong & Bernstein (2008: 85) say: "Challengers are often members, customers, or clients of the institutions they challenge—individuals structurally linked to the institution in question. True outsiders lack the knowledge needed to identify the vulnerabilities of particular institutions". They outlined four characteristics determining the "vulnerability" of institutions as: "rapid organizational growth, the level of centralized control present, the link between clients and professionals, and ties to the state". (Armstrong et al., 2008: 90). Even though their focal point is power and the promotion of a multi-institutional politics approach, they demonstrate through empirical examples a variety of contemporary change efforts. I use it here as a gradual transition between institutions and social movement theory. Their model involves institutional change, in that they propose domination being organised around the state, other institutions, and culture, where culture is constitutive. Seen as the origin of power, these are defined at movement targets. Social movements seek change in the roles of game, policy changes, change of benefits, inclusion, or cultural changes (Ibid: 76).

Social movement?
"Social movements can only be understood by genuinely linking social psychological and political sociology concepts and traditions, not by trying to rename one group in the language of the other"(Oliver and Johnston, 2000). Most social theorists build on these mentioned theories, but differ in their emphasis on which, and some draw on other elements. Armstrong et al. (2008) were motivated to re-compose the political process model because of noticing "awkward movements", that is, those movements that did not fit previous definitions. Snow et

al. (2004) consider us to live in a 'movement world'; an observation based on the increase of local and (new) types of large collective movement actions, both in terms of actors and form. Previously, social movements were mainly based on labour unrest. Modern movements seem to thrive in democratic environment and then migrate to less democratic countries (Tilly, 2004). New theories have been juxtaposed with "old" concepts in order to understand these emerging social phenomena. Before looking at the new theoretical understandings, I will give a very brief introduction of "old" theoretical perspectives.

Social movement definitions and distinctions

"Social movement theory is an interdisciplinary study within social sciences that generally seeks to understand why social mobilization occurs, the forms under which it manifests, as well as potential social, cultural, and political consequences"[51]. Most conceptualisations within the social movement tradition involve aspects of extra-institutional collective action and institutional activity, focus on empowerment (either change oriented goals or as countermovement), organising and temporal continuity being ascribed a lifecycle (Snow et al., 2004;Snow and Oliver, 1995;Tilly, 2004). Social movement theorists have proposed a range of definitions in accordance with their field of interest[52]. These different ideas have been fused into other theories as well as inspired new angles within social movement theory.

Tilly (2004) applied a historical-political perspective in his definition of social movement, seeing it as a particular form of 'contentious politics' by which ordinary people make collective claims on others. He implied that these claims, if realised, would conflict with the interests of others. When it came to 'politics' he found that "government of one sort or another figure in the claim making" (Ibid : 3). Viewed in this frame, social movements and trade unions have certain overlapping political interests and thus exhibit a relative uniformity in their fulfilment (Ibid: 4). Trade unions in Denmark consist of elected voluntary politicians, employees, members and shop stewards organised in rather homogeneous ways. Members might disagree with the bargaining results of their unions and take to the streets protesting. Employees might form informal groupings within or across union branches in order to change conduct. Politicians seek influence within political parties, locally or in the government. Employees in cooperation with shop stewards hold information meetings at the end of the day

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[51] http://global.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/551335/social-movement
[52] A good example can be seen reading the list of contributors in Blacwell Companion to Social Movement, edited by (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004)

on factories or offices. Most research tends to differentiate between social movements and more spontaneous gatherings such as demonstrations, mobs, fads and the like (Snow & Oliver, 1995: 571). The distinction is often based on degree of durability, goals, extra-institutional action, for example, streets protests or institutional action such as political influencing. As noted below, some researchers define social movement involved with institutional activity as social movement organisations (SMO) (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). Phenomena such as *deprivation, grievance, strain and breakdown* were utilised to explain why people join movements, which in relation to material conditions drive actors to exceed social norms and legislation (Buechler, 2004). By posing the question why some movements succeeded and grew while others failed and vanished despite of similar grievances, these psychological micro and meso perspectives[53] were critiqued for being too narrow in their explanations of social movement, particularly the handling of durability of movements. *Resource mobilisation and aggregation* became an answer (Snow & Oliver, 1995) with two cardinal points: the first is that resources are not equally dispersed in society; therefore movements emerging within different societal groupings that parallel this distribution. The second is that resources are many different things and not always articulated in research[54]. The opening up for different theorising introduced wider environmental influences, for example '*political opportunity'* came to be seen as an important factor (Kriesi, 2004), and large scale *multi-institutional politics* (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008) as analytical context.

Like the changing view of organisations as subordinate to institutional forces, the view of participants in social movements changed from victims to active energetic individuals, capable of making *rational choices*. Rational choice theory added a strategically and tactically dimension, applied to different actor levels (Koopmans, 2004), however critiqued for deflecting *emotional aspects* in how actors decide for example the power of revenge or

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[53] The tendency to favour micro-meso level studies understanding why people joined movements developed 'personal trait' explanations such as psychological deficits, personal efficacy or relative deprivation explanations. Close to the personal trait explanation was the socialisation processes theorised as "across generational transmission of activists orientations" and intra-generational beliefs and values, worldview and identity (Snow & Oliver,1995:579-580).
[54] A fivefold typology is proposed covering moral, cultural, social-organisational, human, and material resources (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004).

indignation (Goodwin et al., 2004). The notion of '*framing*'[55] aimed to bridge the experienced gaps between social-psychological and structural-organisational aspects in previous movement research. The concept is adapted from Goffman's frame analysis (1974/ 1986), a term similar to 'ground' in Gestalt psychology or 'context' in mundane language. Framing denotes "defining the situation"; the interpretation of what is going on here, including how to act or react to the interpretation. Goffman aimed at the development of general classifications to be used to understand concrete examples of the interactional order carried further in the concept of schemata, that "enable individual to "locate, perceive, identify , and label" occurrences within their lifespace and the world at large" (Snow et al., 1986: 464). Framing became such a popular construct that one of the authors (Benford, 1997) a decade later found reason to critique the existing literature and, one might say in the spirit of Goffman, reinforcing his own frame of reference. Oliver & Johnston (2000) critiqued the conceptual contamination of ideology and framing saying that "ideologies can function as frames, but there is more to ideology than framing" (Ibid:37).

Snow et al. (2004) draw on various definitions in order to specify what differentiates social movements from collective action, defining social movements as "collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based in the group, organization, society, culture, or world order of which they are a part." (Ibid:11). This definition only partly clarifies the question if the labour movement and its organisations can be thought of as social movement. However, the non-institutional criterion suggests no, in that, stable political entities such as interest groups or political parties which have institutionalised access to political power are not a social movement per se. What about the volunteers then? Are the political elected and shop stewards to be categorised as interest groups, collectivities or social movement organisations?

The rise of new movement forms – and trade unions

The novelty of movement conduct gave rise to *new social movement theories*. In Buechler's (2000:46) words, new social movements are a "diverse array of collective actions that have presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution" - and many new

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[55] I am intrigued by the lack of references to Gestalt psychology, especially that of perceptional organisation, insights, and meaning making, of which much of the theorising seems heavily influenced. Furthermore the concept of lifespace is used without reference to Kurt Lewin.

theories correspondingly. The decline of unionism is partly reasoned in their success. Shared *grievance and generalised beliefs* about the causes and possible means of reducing grievances are assumed to be important ingredients for the emergence of a social movement in a collectivity (Carthy and Zald, 1977). However research has demonstrated that the assumed cohesion between deprivation and movements did not always appear. Carthy et al. (1977) propose to lessen the emphasis on grievance and collective beliefs and focus on *resource mobilisation*. They use three parameters by which they compare and contrast the two concepts: (1) the support base, (2) strategy and tactics, and (3) relation to the larger society, which lead to a new definition: "A social movement is set of opinions and beliefs in a population, which represents preference for changing some elements of the social structure and /or reward distribution of society" (Ibid:1217). The authors include the notion of countermovement as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population opposed to a social movement" (Ibid:1217), obviously indicating that a movement cannot emerge without the materialisation of countermovement. This claim is supported in later writings crystallised in the view of "the labor movement as a fluid and multidimensional social formation that is produced and reproduced relationally, along the continuum between direct action and institutionalized power, between democracy and bureaucracy" (Fantasia and Stepan-Norris, 2004: 557). These authors deplore that trade unionism have not been exposed to scientific scrutiny for the last decades. Therefore, they aim to demonstrate why trade unions are important as well as interesting for social movement research. The particularities of unionism "embedded in a set of institutional relationships" require a different analytical lens than is normally provided within social movement research (Ibid:556). They draw on the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu and 'essentialist avoidance'. Importantly they note: "the organizations that constitute a labor movement are not simply (or even frequently) organizations mobilized to engage in direct action or social combat" (Ibid:557). They also act as countermovement exercising membership constrains which add the flavour of institution and institutionalising to the overall picture, for example, joining forces with threatened firms to secure legislation (Vogus and Davis, 2005). Fantasia et al. (2004:562) offer five historical vignettes showing how American union mobilisation and action generated counteraction on behalf of the employer and how this counter mobilisation was supported by America institutions, concluding that "organizational relations within the labor movement and between labor and capital ought to be viewed from the perspective of the mutually constituting actions of each,

in relation to the other". As Clemens (2005) remarks, our tendency to see organisations as bounded entities ascribed trait such as rationality, centrality and hierarchy conflicts with theories of social movements as networks, emergent and entailing power diffusion. However, the "current engagement of social movement theory and organisational analysis is structured by the combination of a shift to field level analysis with attention to non-authoritative coordination" (Ibid:357). This quote specifically targets one of the four quadrants in a research frame taxonomy proposed by Clemens, in which unions are mentioned as "formally organized political actor" (Ibid:358).

The quest for identity is (sometimes) hard work

The idea that a collective shared belief or ideological justification, combined with a vector (force of energy) when being the drive shaft to movement rise is remarkably close to the ideas of identity and identity processes[56]. Identity became an alternative to material incentives attempting to answer the questions as to why people join movements in the first place; successively, what made them stay and act. Social movement are characteristically "involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; [and they] share a distinct collective identity" (De la Porta & Diani, 2006:20). Social movements, then, can be thought of as rather organised yet informal social groupings that are engaged in extra-institutional conflict and is oriented towards a goal. These goals can be either aimed at a specific and narrow policy or be more broadly aimed at cultural change. The notion of collective identity opened up for cultural effects on social movement and more interactive process oriented perspectives, some arguing that changes in collective identity captured movement impact beyond institutional reform (Roth, 2008a). Collective identity is also argued to anchor positions in dominant resource mobilisation theories and political process models (Polletta and Jasper, 2001).

Taylor and Whittier (1992) in their study of lesbian feminist community found three distinct, yet overlapping, components of collective identity:

1. Boundaries (markers of difference between movement participants and dominant groups)

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[56] Values and shared beliefs are seen as closely connected or even inextricably linked with identity creation, -construction, -maintenance, or –work. Consumer society influences on the construction of personal identities, belief and values (Brinkmann, 2008), social identification (personal identity and social identity) and the construction of organisational identity (Ashforth and Mael, 2004).

2. Consciousness (interpretive frameworks that emerge from a groups struggle to define and realize members common interests in opposition to the dominant order)

3. Negotiation (various actions through which participants oppose the status quo).

The conceptual enthusiasm grew to levels that lead Polletta et al. (2001) to find the term analytically overused, a critique which Brubaker & Cooper (2000) also raised. Polletta et al. define "collective identity as an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution" (Ibid:284). Their definition resembles that of 'social construction of reality' (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), albeit not referred to, assuming individual perception and meaning making including interpreted shared status and relations inform the *how* of connection. It is a subjective endeavour. Collective identity is expressed in cultural materials (narratives, symbols, verbal styles, dress code, etc.), however, differs from structuralist rational-actor approach by questioning that 'interest' call forth a "rational calculus for evaluating choices" (Polletta & Jasper, 2001: 285).

The focus on identities in social movements had critical voices pointing at power issues such as "how much does awareness about collective identity help oppressed people"?, or "how far can people come in altering power structures by their subversive identity work"? (Kenny, Whittle, & Willmott, 2011: 66). These relevant questions are addressed in the work of Poletta et al. (Ibid) reviewing sociological construction of the role of identity structured in four phases[57] of social protest: the creation of collective claims, recruitment, decision making processes, and outcome of action. The interpreted lack of action (we are sitting in a circle and discovering ourselves) that is raised in the criticism above focus on outcome and success of action. However success depends not only on each phase's individual progress, but also on sequence and coherence of each.

Identity work in social movements explores the construction, maintenance, and renegotiation of collective identity in this particular context, consequently referring to all activities occupied with the creating and sustaining of identities (Snow & McAdam, 2000). The term 'work' underlines that being part of social movements might be rewarding, albeit also at times such hard work that it has been associated with 'workloads' (Einwohner, Reger, & Myers, 2008: 6). Manoeuvring in and out of many different groupings with different interests seems to require the skills of a chameleon, but who wants to be a lizard? At the same time the

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[57] These four stages are reminiscent of what in gestalt organisational terminology is called 'unit of work' depicted in 'cycle of experience' or 'contact cycle', applied in organisational work as a awareness heightening device in order to, for example, hinder stuckness, promote change (Matthew & Sayers, 1999) .

movement must keep track and direction. Einwohner et al. (Ibid) have developed an intersectional model that shows how you can predict the experience of workloads. Contrary to lizards, activists make strategic, and discrete choices how to present themselves in different situations (will I be alike or different from - principle of sameness and differences), at the same time as they consider at which level of system (micro, meso, and macro) they must, ought to, or feel obliged to focus on. Furthermore, they must consider if they relate to internal or external audience. Identity work becomes identity workload in the intersection between the negotiation of sameness and differences simultaneously being aware of public and private identity construction (Ibid: 8). I argue that identity work load is present in trade unions precisely because of their complex membership, shifting roles, affiliations and identifications depending on situations and perceptions. The dynamics of participation is defined through three concepts where "*instrumentality* refers to movement participation as an attempt to influence the social and political environment; *identity* refers to movement participation as a manifestation of identification with a group; and *ideology* refers to movement participation as a search for meaning and an expression of one's view" (Klandermans, 2004: 361).

Silke Roth (2008b) is interested in social movement organisation. In a case study she explores how "identity work can successfully promote the integration of a diverse group of women into a labor movement organization" (Ibid:213). The particular organisation CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women) had 'social injustice' as a driving force, a value which attracted many diverse groups, associations and unions. However, it required an organisational structure that reflected the diverse constituencies if unity should work. Building mostly on Tayor and Whittier's (1992) framework, she finds the structure of the organisation to be an expression of collective identity depicting diverse leadership on all levels, state of candidates, actions that differentiated according to perceived needs amongst members and celebrating ethnic identity, age, union memberships etc. A less successful account on circumventing injustice is provided in Jane Ward's (2008) research about diversity discourse and multi-identity work in two lesbian and gay organizations aiming to explore how societal diversity ideas are manifested in organizational practices and how these practices influence collective identity. She grounded her research on feminist intersectional theory involving micro as well as macro levels especially interested in social movement organisational processes concluding, as in the study above, that collective identities are linked to organisational structures and dynamics (Ibid:235). Ward found that implementation of corporate diversity management models

combined with increased effort of funding driven approaches to diversity and representation, reinforce structural inequalities; that of white dominance in one organisation and male dominance in the other. She uses the term 'corporatization', an amalgam of corporate and bureaucratisation, which she claims happen when social movement organisations "grow old" and institutionalised. The ideas and symbols, values and beliefs become a figure of speech rather than lived. Recruitment of leaders from corporate sectors also adds to implement systems producing unequal measures such as "managerial hierarchy, competition, and meritocracy" (Ibid: 236). Institutionalised practices prevented any work done that challenged "the matrix of domination", revealing a gap between rhetoric and structural realities. A multi-institutional politics approach proposes a broader perspective by including 'power' as offered in political process models (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008). Armstrong et al. compare two political approaches on seven dimensions; model of society and power, definition of social movement, definition of politics, social movement actors, goals, strategy and key research questions. Projected onto the framework of Burrell & Morgans (1979), the political process model is functional/structural, whereas the multi-institutional politics model is interpretive. Davis and Zald, Armstrong et al. argue that "as corporations have become increasingly multinational and encompassing, they have taken on the character of polities whose 'citizens' may engage in collective action to challenge policies with which they disagree, which also implies that power manifestations are better theorised as 'of the field' than organised round the state" (Ibid:78). The complexities are very well described in 'Labor Movement in Motion' (Fantasia & Stepan-Norris, 2004) in which they state, "To adequately understand the twists and turns of labor in the US, we must consider not only struggles between the main protagonists (the labor movement and employers), but the social and institutional struggles within the ranks of each of the camps of the protagonists (and the interaction between them)" (Ibid: 556). They contend that social movements often develop bureaucratic behaviour and are likely to exhibit institutional as well as extra-institutional tactics. "Moreover, if we consider the relations between bureaucracies (both as organizations and practices) and social movements (both as organizations and practices), we see that they are not separate phenomena, but tend to represent the reciprocally opposing products of the unequal and shifting relationships that prevail within unions (between workers and the union leadership) and in society (between labor and capital)" (Ibid: 557).

Cluster Summary

This review cluster posed a question at the very beginning, namely that of the ontology of a trade union. I will argue for my choice of perspective in chapter 4, my frame of reference. In this cluster I started by looking back at trade union history, presenting different accounts of its genesis and definitions through time. The industrial revolution and exploitation hypothesis was weakened by Webb & Webb's (1920) research showing that the earliest durable combinations of wage-earners precede the factory system by a whole century. The institutionalising of unionism as well as de-institutionalising was described.

The first section addresses *organisational* perspectives and gives various definitions of organisations as systems and as process, that is, organising. Then the notion of boundary and membership is launched as important concepts in terms of both structure and process, influencing identity work. The essentialist and constructivist debate is also active in organisational theories; however, I argue as to delimit my review mainly to constructivist approaches and research with trade unions. I discuss whether trade unions are able to change and, if so, whether hypocritical behaviour is an inevitable consequence. Four organisational change frameworks are presented, enabling a better understanding of organisational change, succeeded by research, especially radical change and its short and long-term effect on organising, work climate and employees.

The second section begins with a very brief historical introduction to *institutional* perspectives, in that modern research reaches back and utilises old institutional frameworks. The intersection between organisations and institutions is highlighted, the processes by which institutions are created, maintained, and diffused. Various definitions from different schools are presented. Scott's (2001) neo-institutional framework is accentuated. Most institutional research takes a macro level perspective; however 'institutional work' also offers a micro-level account. These scholars are especially interested in the efforts of individuals as social actors, and the recursive relationship between forms of institutional work and patterns of institutional change and stability. Institutional change and de-institutionalisation are described with trade unions as example. Finally, a gradual transition between institutions and social movement theory is made through a research case.

The third section presents *social movement* and *social movement organisation perspectives,* with its different definitions and distinctions, categorised in old and new approaches. While

organisational boundaries are difficult to "establish", social movements are even more slippery, which is demonstrated in the difficulties of defining social movements, differentiating them from other collectivities. Trade unions only peripherally relate to social movement definitions, but new social movement theories, reviewed next, tend to include movement organisations such as trade unions. Finally, social movement and identity work is considered.

Chapter 4 - Frame of Reference

"Gestalt" means many things to different people, and this chapter aims to bring some coherence and stringency to its presentation and subsequent use in this thesis, by which 'identity work' in the context of radical organisational change can be understood. The plethora of concepts used in the literature, with or without capitalisation ("Gestalt", Gestalt psychology, gestalt therapy, gestalt approach, gestalt practice, gestalt ideology, gestalt paradigm, gestalt philosophy, Gestalt (psychology?) theory, gestalt toolbox, Gestalt in organizations, Gestaltist, Gestaltism) certainly suggests ambiguity, or at least a temporal 'scope drift' over three quarters of a century, in our understanding of "gestalt". The appearance of the two other clusters, identity and identity work, and trade unions in its various organising "suits", is similarly declared open to multiple interpretations. In such a diverse social and social psychological field, the best approach it that of "cultivated uncertainty" (Staemmler, 1997) which concerns methodology addressed in chapter 5. However, it does also permeate the frame of reference I work from. Following the advice of Corley et al. (2006), complexity reduction manoeuvre is to "demonstrate clarity and transparency in the articulation of definitions and core theoretical suppositions" (Ibid: 85), when researching in such a diverse territory.

In this chapter I start by articulating the main characteristic of my ontological assumptions about the intersections of the three clusters reviewed in chapter 3, moving on to outline the epistemological stance taken accordingly. From this background I define concepts commensurate with the ontological and epistemological positions.

Ontological proposition

I think that 'identity', 'gestalt' and 'trade unions' are "fiction *and* fact[58]" (Case, 2003). This is not a confession of a countermodernist (Ibid:157), but of a gestalt paradigmatist. The *and* denotes a "conservative" constructivist's position, rather than an radical ontological (Wheeler, 2000) which does not comply with existentialism and phenomenology[59]; however closer to critical realism (Fleetwood, 2005). The crux of the matter is articulated in Berger et al.(1967) stating that the act of reification in which we apprehend products of human activity as 'things-in-themselves', and by forgetting they are man-made, creates a dehumanised world submitting to these constructions. I believe the strength of the gestalt paradigm, among other things, is the unravelling of reifications through heightening awareness and phenomenological exploration, followed by whatever choice of action emerges based on figure/ground perception.

As described in the review chapter, I have contextualised my approach in three analytical/reflective clusters of interest: identity and identity work, gestalt paradigm, and organisations/trade unions. These three clusters, individually quite disparate, but collectively meaningful, present an ontological challenge. Rather than discussing the ontology of the three clusters individually, I will predominantly discuss and postulate the ontology of the intersection of the clusters in the aggregate as follows: *Teleologically organised, interdependent processes, structures, and forces influencing the field in every moment, patterned and made sense of through embodied perception, cognition, and action.* "Fiction and fact", thus, are the organising of 'we' in the 'other', the recursive movement between you, me, us, them and it. Utilising the system-causality matrix (Appendix III, p.222) as an analytical lens, the perspective taken in this thesis is placed in the right-hand column. It is complex and immaterial. Before turning to conceptual definitions, I will enlarge on my proposition.

The ontological proposition in the gestalt paradigm

I take the gestalt paradigm to be grounded in psychological field theory (Lewin, 1997a) and consequently a situation-totality (Schultzer, 1964). That is to say, experiences are viewed as

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[58] I find Case's argument grounded in etymology convincing. Based on the Latin roots of fact and fiction, he concludes that these terms can be treated as "interchangeable provided we stick with the arcane usage of fact to refer to "action" as opposed to the more recent semantic accretion of "a thing that is known to have occurred, to exists, or to be true" (2003:158). Case does, however, believe organisations to be "more fiction than fact".
[59] A critical reflection on Wheeler's (2000) perspectives is given by (Kennedy, 2001).

unfolded in time and space, reflective or not. Experiences are context interactive, meaning a continuous figure-ground exchange. Thus, different perceptual figures may emerge based on the life-spaces of the individuals, their environment and circumstance. In groups and collectivities, figure/ground formation might lead to a joint figure of interest at a group level (Gaffney, 2010), resulting in mutual action towards some common teleology. I argue that beyond the apparent joint figure there are issues of inclusion/exclusion and belonging, of power and influence, interests and motivations; in Lewinian terminology, energy issues, field forces and vectors. Thus, the joining motivation varies amongst group members. This perspective on embodied individuals interacting and organising in time and space does not correspond with a sequential group development perspective (Kepner, 1980), nor does it apply to "diagnosing", no matter which "level" you prefer attending to, or which patterns emerge. Working within a gestalt paradigm indicates a main focus on "the in-between" or metaphorically speaking, the notion of boundary (Kreiner et al., 2006b). One vivid metaphor depicting boundary visualises it as where the sea meets the beach and the beach meets the sea (Latner, 1983). The metaphor of boundary is one of the key concepts in PHG (1972/1951). Psychological field theory (Yontef, 1988: 317) "assumes phenomena are ordered and have a methodology for discovering more about this order", thus aiming at the nature of knowing and lawfulness. These words capture the relatedness of field theory, existentialism, phenomenology and Gestalt psychology, in its insisting on being and knowledge are inextricably bound up with each other (Macquarrie, 1972).

Epistemology - the constructivist debate

I find constructivism conceptually ambiguous, with or without the qualifying adverb 'social', since it covers a kaleidoscopic range of ontological and epistemological assumptions and postulations. I believe the gestalt paradigm to be commensurate with the 'epistemological category' of social constructivism as explained by Wenneberg (2000:97), thus assuming a slightly more radical position than Roberts (1999). The epistemological position taken has methodological consequences, which I will elaborate on in the methodological chapter 5. Below follows a brief argument.

The constructivist – essentialist debate as described in the review chapter is common, denoting dichotomised positions, following Burrell & Morgan's (1979) advice of taking an either-or analytical position. Wheeler (1991) introduced constructivism in his book *Gestalt*

Reconsidered. He did not define constructivism, but rather used it generically. The gestalt paradigm as put forth in PHG (1972/1952) assumes a nominalist, relativist and voluntarist position[60], thus predating constructivism. "One of Gestalt therapy's major contributions to the current flowering of constructivism, social constructivism, postmodernism etc. is *our* historical insistence upon holism, including affect, sensation and 'character' in tracking the meaning-making organisational processes - not limiting organisation to cognitions" (Resnick 1996: 51). Conversely, according to Fodor (1996:34) the gestalt paradigm ought to integrate constructivism, "proposing using schema theory/constructivism to try to understand the nature of the lenses the experiencing person is using to encounter/make sense of the field". Roberts (1999) agrees to the insights of Gestalt psychology , e.g. that perception, as an intentional act involving interpretation which then becomes "reality", spurred early constructivism. He objects to the idea that "reality is whatever we construct it to be" (Ibid: 35) and raises questions about the lost significance of the field, stating: "The field is lawful, nuanced, precise and intricate. The laws to which it conforms are its own laws. We *do* not construct them" (Ibid:35), thus taking a mid-ground social constructivist position[61] (Barlebo Wenneberg, 2000), or what I termed conservative constructivism above . That Gestalt psychology informed gestalt therapy, cognitive approaches and social constructivism is common knowledge. "It seems to follow directly from the premises and implications of phenomenology (the study of how existence becomes experience) and Gestalt (the experimental and clinical elaboration of those processes). That is, the insights of phenomenology led to the study of the structure/process of experience, which is Gestalt; and Gestalt quickly yielded constructivism" (Wheeler, 2002: 46).

Trade union as organisation, institution or social movement organisation?

A few additional comments on the above ontological proposal are appropriate both in relation to trade unions and identity work. In what resembles an epistemological constructivist perspective, organisations, institutions and social movements are categories constructed to

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[60] Recalling from the literature review, there are to be found what might be called ontological oscillation in PHD (1972) e.g. when contact and 'character' are described in terms of social structure and function.

[61] A division based on constructivist assumptions is proposed by Wenneberg (2000), suggesting four positions of social constructivism, as a (1) critical perspective, a (2) sociology theory, a (3) a epistemological theory, and (4) a ontological position. Taken in this order, number one represents a general accepted scientific position, and number four represents radical relativistic position. Wenneberg warns that the movement from one to four may be a slippery slope if not heeded properly. They do, however present different perspectives with rather different consequences. The "slope phenomenon" is very well described in "the self as intended" (Hansen,2001:15-23), referring to Gergen's (1994) ontological position.

signify a particular meaning. Meaning is constructed based on experienced phenomena, bounded through differences and similarities (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), patterned through individual life-spaces. There are organising differences as laid out in the review, which unravel our natural reifications and claim a process approach turning these constructions into a matter of organising,.

I contend that trade unions in Denmark historically began as social movements, however quickly transformed into social movement organisations. Recalling the definition of Web & Web (1920:1): "A trade union [...] is a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives". This definition holds even today. The trade unions are their members, however firmly organised and institutionalised over the years. I contend also that the major downsizing taking place in 2007-2008 at the organisational field level was an identity maintenance change, experienced by those having their branch closed as a radical change. Furthermore, I believe trade unions are in a process of de-institutionalisation, where what we call organisations becomes prominent (figural in gestalt terms). It is, however, clear from the interviews that trade union members hold images of social movements as well of organisations and institutions.

Identity work

We are always part of and apart from in the existentialistic sense (Spinelli, 2008). The unaware or conscious movement between a 'We', and an 'I/Me' position, actualises Sartre's notion of 'being condemned to freedom', as positional choices, which may be negotiated, verbally or non-verbally. The person/environment exchange is an ongoing boundary creation and destruction, influencing environment, person and the in-between. "Individuals carve out different patterns in their life space and differentiate aspects of their lives by creating, dismantling, and/or maintaining boundaries of varying permeability"(Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006ba :1322). I find their work useful in highlighting the notion of boundary as a metaphor on which identity work manifest itself. What is puzzling is that Kreiner et al. did not use their research on 'identity work' in their proposed 'boundary' model (2006ab), which might have spared them the critique from the discourse analytics[62]. I see their identity work research as inspirational, building on Lewin's theorising. Identity work is defined as dual

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[62] Critiquing researchers for working within a particular and articulated perspective is rather gratuitous; however Kreiner et al. (2006) refer to Hofstede's research on cultural differences, which has an essentialist connotation, a realist ontology and positivist epistemology.

function tactics aiming at an optimal balance between work, work roles, and individual selves. Unlike the participants in this study, the participants in the study of Kreiner et al. (Ibid ba) were not challenged by the likelihood of losing their jobs. Thus, I do not believe an optimal balance to be generic in identity work. The uncertainties in everyday life described in the introduction call forward existential questions such as 'who am I' (Spinelli, 2008;Yalom, 2001). Since 'who am I' is both a matter of constructed self-definitions over time, as well as who I identify with or differentiate from in the here and now, it follows that 'who I am' is context depended and situational (Mead, 1934;Spinelli, 2008;Wollants, 2007). The process of identifying with and differing oneself from "the other" initiates group dynamics, that is, those I perceive myself as being similar to, or those who are being perceived by others as similar to me, which necessitates that there is something/someone I distance myself from, or am being identified as different from (Jenkins, 2004). These processes are mundane and often fully outside awareness. Adding valence to "the cocktail" such as different interests and needs for human meaning-making including predictability, the identity dynamics get attention and can be observed as patterns of the field (Lewin, 1997a). To make things even more complicated, which aspects of the identity dynamics that become figural are part of dynamically negotiated 'who am I', 'who are we' and 'what are we here for'.

Concept definitions

The term field carries several meanings (Staemmler, 2006:65); a plain meaning as in 'a corn field', an extended meaning as 'a battle field', and a figural meaning as 'the field of research'. In addition to its more colloquial usage, the term field is utilised in physics, organisational, and psychological theorising. It is the latter meaning that I focus on; when used otherwise I will make that clear.

Field theory is applied as in social-psychological theory by which the behaviour of a person, dyad, or group is understood as a function of the person, dyad or group plus the phenomenal and ontological environment at a given moment. By this is meant that behaviour takes place in the present, however "includes the "psychological past", and the "psychological future", which constitute one of the dimensions of the life space" (Lewin, 1997a:189). Methodologically it is ideographic concerned with the particular, that is how particular experiential phenomena are understood from the perspective of particular persons in a particular situation. It is also a dynamic approach assuming changes resulting from

interactional psychological forces. Thus, "all behaviour (including action, thinking, wishing, striving, valuing, achieving, etc.) is conceived of as a change of some state of a field of a given unit of time" (Lewin, 1997a:161).

Life-space is a social psychological explanatory model, and when utilised in therapy or organisational work requires "epistemological consideration"(O'Neill and Gaffney, 2008:242). Life-space is defined as 'that which has existence' (Lewin, 1997a), meaning the person and the psychological environment that exists for him or her at any given moment (Staemmler, 2006). Stated differently, whatever is attributed energy emerging from the total field, perceptually figure – ground formation, is part of the life-space of that person at that moment. The physical body, the organism, is part of the surroundings, however the experienced body and own appearance, dress, etc. is part of the person's phenomenal life-space. Hence, the description of a situation totality implies a loyal version of "those facts that make up the field of that individual" (Ibid:213) and "habits of the person at a given time are treated as parts of the present field" (Ibid: 208).

Vectors and forces are used interchangeably, to denote the direction/valence - towards a desirable state or away from a noxious state - and amount of energy that is interdependently attributed to each element or part of a given life-space.

An organisational field is understood here as the collection of interdependent organisations operating with common rules, norms, and meanings systems, arising in interaction, preserved and modified by human behaviour (Scott, 2001:49). Organisational fields are themselves organised. Hence, the notion of field incorporates the concept of 'industry', a "population of organizations operating in the same domain as indicated by the similarity of their services" (Ibid:83), however including other interacting forces such as competing organisations, regulating systems, exchange partners, etc.

Boundary is understood metaphorically and defined as the point or area at which one experiences the 'me' in relation to that which is perceived as 'not me'. Boundaries are experienced in interaction between people who identifies and differentiate themselves in various ways regardless of the situation. Boundary-zone in life-space conceptualising refers to the sphere of contact between certain parts of the physical/social world affecting the life space of the individual at that time.

Contact is understood as "the function which synthesises the need for union and for separation. Through contact each person has the chance to meet the world outside himself nourishingly" (Polster & Polster, 1973: 99). Hence, contact is closely connected to the notion of boundary and life-space and differs from PHG's biologically-based model.

Contact boundary dynamics are perceptually bounded and patterned, that is, manifestations of the synthesising process, categorised in six dynamics, the existential dual existential dynamic of egotisming[63] – confluencing, maintained and changed by introjecting, projecting, deflecting, and retroflecting dynamics. The contact boundary dynamics are not attributed normative values such as good or bad, healthy or unhealthy; any dysfunction is situational, experiential and relational.

Creative adjustment, a common concept in the gestalt literature, is avoided for two reasons. Firstly, adapting the above understanding of contact and contact dynamics, 'creative' adds a particular valence which might not be subjectively experienced as such; sometimes contacting the novel can be a painful or even life threatening experience. Secondly, creative adjustment conceptualising contains many conceptual/theoretical compromises, and for those reasons, I chose not to use it.

The Awareness continuum is understood as the ongoing flow between figure and ground, the free real-time 'Gestalt' formation. Awareness is a relative concept meaning that a person may be partially, subconsciously, or unaware of an event; awareness can also be found at different levels of abstraction, such as sensory, figural, or reflected. Awareness may be focused on an internal state, such as an emotional feeling, or on external events by way of sensory perception. Awareness provides the raw material from which individuals develop subjective ideas about their experience.

Studying complex situations from the gestalt paradigm

From its very beginning, gestalt paradigm conceptualisation was aimed solely at *therapy*, designed to improve the mental health and well-being of a client or patient. This must constantly be borne in mind, particularly when studying organisations, for five reasons. *Firstly*, "Gestalt" as a paradigm defined as a coherent set of axiomatic assumptions about a subject matter; a "worldview", used to describe the set of experiences, beliefs and values that

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[63] I changed the word 'egotism' into 'egotisming' to stress the dynamical and relational aspect. Egotism in mundane parlance is normally attributed a person as his/hers personal traits.

affect the way an individual perceives reality and responds to that perception, necessitates constant critical reflexions (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000) on inherent assumptions. *Secondly*, pathology[64] is not necessarily a relevant or beneficial lens to use; dysfunctional organisations need not be 'ill'' or 'sick', no matter how one would define these words in an organisational context. *Thirdly*, the risk of anthropomorphising organisations is ever present; partly because of the historical background for the development of 'gestalt', and partly because the anthropomorphism (seductively) offers a way of reducing the dynamic complexity of an entire organisation. *Fourthly,* being a paradigm positing a process perspective, a regrettably anonymous author has given words to my own understanding :"I argue that whenever a pathologizing label is used with regard to a person (or group or organisation) - for example, neurotic, narcissistic, needy - the natural dynamics of continuous change are temporarily suspended, and the other is objectified in a fixed position". *Fifthly*, most contemporary literature utilising the gestalt paradigm is involved with therapy or therapeutic research[65], which leads us back to the first sentence. Language is remarkable influential (Berger & Luckmann, 1967:49-61), not only reinforcing terminology, but also taken for granted assumptions. I do not consider this a problem, but rather an issue requiring vigilance.

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[64] Gestalt therapy when practiced (Fuhr, Sreckovic, & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1999) can be categorised in a diagnostic and non-diagnostic approach at each end of a continuum. All psychotherapeutic approaches requires a theory of human behaviour to guide their practice, questions about mental health and illness, about functioning and motivational factors, maturity and its occurrences, growth and its ends (Latner, 1986:2-3). The answers to these questions color the psychotherapeutic differences (Hougaard et al., 1998). Still, the questions remain the same. I am not saying that diagnosing is bad or wrong, only that it frames your experience and fixates or objectifies the other for a time, which in turn triggers issues of status and power.

[65] Perusing three gestalt journals from their first year of publication to year 2009, 7.5 % of the content covered individuals and groups in an organisational context and 6.8 % covered community, learning and research issues. The remaining 85% addressed therapeutic matters (Appendix II, p. 221).

Chapter 5 - A Methodological and Reflexive Account

"As the complexity of a system increases, our ability to make precise and yet significant statements about its behavior diminishes until a threshold is reached beyond which precision and significance (or relevance) become almost mutually exclusive characteristics. It is in this sense that precise quantitative analyses of the behaviour of humanistic systems are not likely to have much relevance to the real world societal, political, economic, and the other types of problems which involve humans either as individuals or in groups" (Zadeh, 1973:28)

The first chapters established the subject of inquiry for the study. They transmitted the apparent problem that the gestalt paradigm, beyond its original primary reference to therapeutic practice, has been successfully applied to the realm of organisations, in management as well as organisational consulting, without any body of accepted, coherent and explicit theorising. Furthermore, even beyond the gestalt paradigm, notwithstanding the existence of many theories on identity, there is a conspicuous absence of theoretical perspectives on identity in the context of perceived radical change. The lack of previous empirical research and theorising justify grounding the research study of the organisational phenomenon in a qualitative theory building approach (Heldbjerg, 1997;Weick, 1989;Zadeh, 1973). This chapter presents the research process, and discusses research designs, methodology and methods; research design plural, since a restructuring was necessitated by the closure of the organisation which I was studying. Although the original design was based on a particular action research approach, the Echo approach, and the first interviews were undertaken with this in mind, the participants were highly influenced by the news about the closure, which is already apparent in the transcripts. Their accounts became decisive for the new research design which was then developed to take the research forward in the light of the new context for what was being researched brought about by the planned closure of the union branch.

I build on Heldberg's (1997 :24) research model presented below. Thus, boxes 1 and 2 in figure 4 below have been addressed in the previous chapters, however as the model depicts, governs the methodological choice, influenced by the field in which the research takes place, as well as practical and ethical circumstances.

1. Purpose of the Study: Development of an empirically informed organisational gestalt theory	2. Main theoretical perspectives: Gestalt paradigm Various Identity Theories Organisational theory	3. Work conditions for conducting research, time and resources

4. Selection of methodology and Methods:
Constructivist grounded theory approach, Reflextive methodology, Abduction, Participant observations
In –depths-interviews

5. Delimitation of the empirical field	6. Selection of data generation methods	7. Planning of the research process

| **5.a.** Delimitation of a social system Specification of a social system Sampling of informants | **6. a. Primary data:** Interviews Field notes Memos **Secondary data:** Observations Documents Magazines | **7.a.** Access Social Accept Autonomy Adaptation Sorting data Clearing | Pilot project Data collection Data analysis Report writing | Dialog Dissemination Intervention |

Figure 4: Resolving methodology and methods, an interactive research map
Source: Andersen et al. in Heldbjerg (2001: 24)

I start by describing the process of the study and how I met those unforeseen changes in relation to the organisation and the participants (boxes 3 and 5). Secondly, I focus upon methodology and the methods applied which I label 'the methodological toolbox' (box 4), denoting pragmatism. Thirdly, my long time engagement with the union branch requires reflection on my different roles and relationships (boxes 2, 4 and 7). Fourthly, I describe data and data collection, including sampling, participant observation, interviews, and analysis (boxes 5, 6, and 7). Finally, I elaborate issues of quality assessment and ethical considerations (boxes 7 and 2).

The research process

In retrospect the research process began in 1999. As described in the introduction I worked as a consultant with the two X union branches (later merged union branch Z) during a four year period. The process is depicted below from the first interaction to the written outcome in 2013.
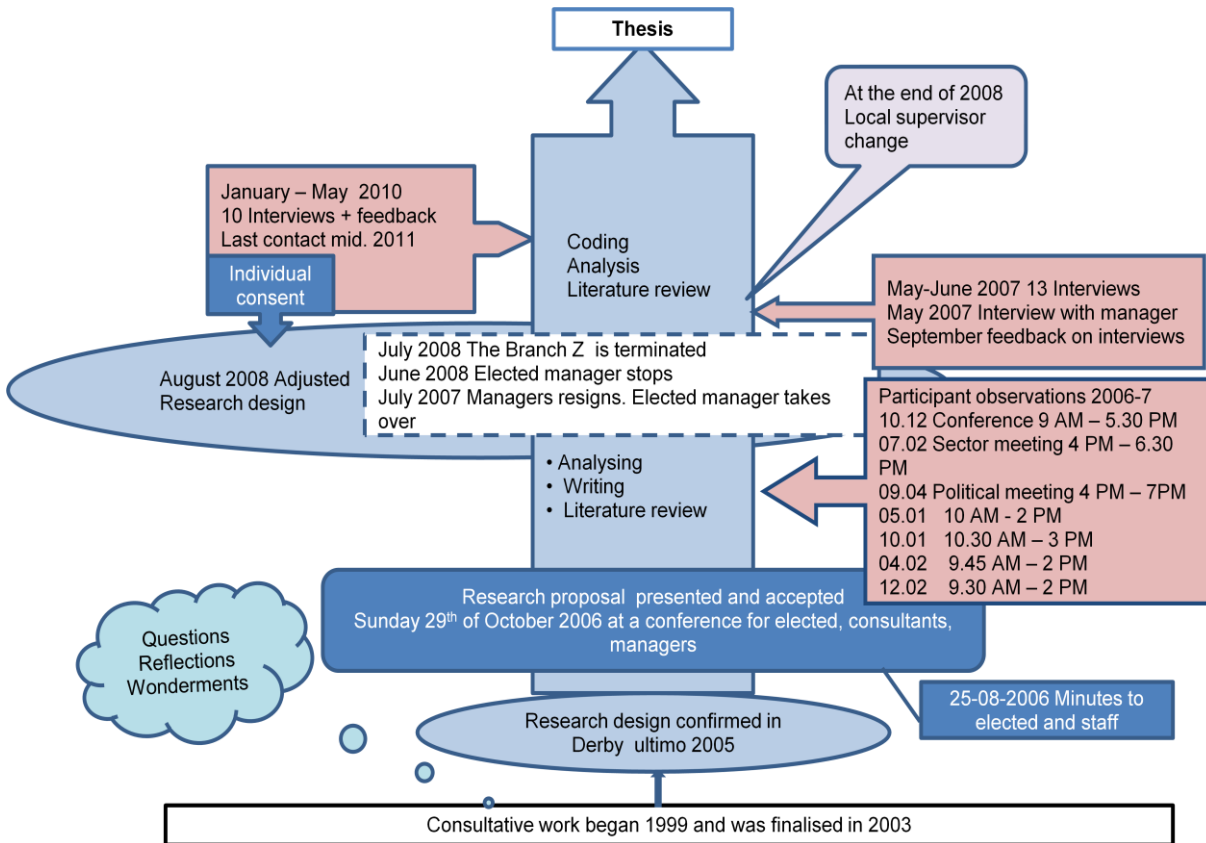
Figure 5: The Research process overview

In 2005 I enquired in X headquarters if they were interested in being part of a research project. The main federal X office declined a research proposal, because they had just started a consultancy- supported change process in the main organisation investigating issues of loyalty[66]. The two branches I worked with previously were interested, and asked me to write a proposal. This was presented at a meeting by the elected officials, from which they returned suggesting that I present a fuller review of the project at a conference taking place in October

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[66] I mention this here because it turned out that loyalty was a word that both I and the participants brought into play during the interviews. I became intrigued by their introduction of loyalty when the most common word previously used and associated with unions was solidarity. My curiosity round issues of loyalty versus solidarity was grounded in what the union staff and elected identified with as well as where they had their inspirational sources for change. In 2002 Prof. Ole F. Kirkeby published a philosophical work about loyalty devoting chapter five to the destiny of unionism in Denmark (Kirkeby, 2002), which might have inspired X head office.

2006. During my previous consultancy work, I had become familiar with their *decision culture*. Decisions would be debated locally, negotiated and decided upon before bringing them out in "the open", for example at an Annual General Meeting, or at a conference. Therefore, I felt that my presentation was a formality. I had already been allowed entrance when invited to the conference. More doubtful was the question of who objected to or agreed upon the research, which I hoped to develop a better feel for at the conference.

The X branch would benefit by joining an exploration of the research theme: "How does the trade union branch workplace maintain its organisational identity during organisational change, explored within a gestalt theoretical frame", in several respects:

- There was a shared understanding of the fact that identity questions played a major role and had to be addressed. My observations showed how energy dispersed around several identification issues caused the formation of fractions.[67]
- Action was needed to reverse membership decline. Action research, with its practical methodology and high degree of participant involvement, has a strong problem-solving component.
- Gestalt paradigm's view on change as paradoxical is based on 'what is' and not what ought to be, aiming to heighten awareness and making informed choices.
- There was obviously enough mutual trust to invite me in.

The research theme expressed a paradox in that it identified organisational identity maintenance as important, while at the same time organisational change was a necessity (Beisser, 1970), which stimulated my interest in getting a more profound understanding of "organisational identity" in relation to the gestalt paradigm. On one hand, a trade union can be seen as a social movement grounded in voluntary effort and principles of solidarity; the union *is* its members. On the other hand, trade unions, especially in Denmark, can be organised to such a degree that they have become institutionalised, leading to a degree of alienation on the part of their members. All the efforts trying to counteract the societal effect (members were leaving) led me to ask to what degree an organisation can change and still retain its identity or identities (Hatch and Schultz, 2002)? When is a trade union a trade union? – and decided by

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[67] A research paper about a Swedish union having the learning organisation as its framework, showed how collective identities manifested themselves in the old conception of the traditional representation as well as three new conceptions as insurance company, as coach and as competent partner (Huzzard & Östergren, 2002). This tendency of "grouping" around what you believed in identified with or found beneficial was also manifest in my observations and in the interviews.

whom? Thus, members constitute a quite diverse category which made me reflect on theoretical concepts such as *organisational boundaries*, *inclusion/exclusion*, and *identification/differention*. Below is a diagrammatic presentation of influences (including reflections) on the first research design.

Philosophies

Modernism ⟷ Postmodernism

Sociology ⟷ Social Psychology ⟷ Psychology

Sociological social psychology ⟷ Psychological social psychology

Convincing overviews??

Research practitioner
Role, identity, power
Action research

Preunderstanding?
Observations
Themes

Gestalt consultant
Methodology
Methods

Process?
Dynamics?
Mechanisms?

• Data collection methods
• Participant Observation
• Open structured Interviews
• Workshops

Power
Roles
Relation-
ships

Theories on Organisations

My thesis

Towards a gestalt organisational identity theory

Organisational Identity Theories

Literature review
What others have found
How they theorised?

Self

Identity

Role,
identity
Power?

Gestalt therapist
Methodology?
Methods?

Gestalt therapy theory?

Literature review
What others have found
How they theorised ?

Field Theory, Existentialisms, Phenomenology, Gestalt Psychology

American Pragmatism, Psychoanalysis, Anarchism,

Figure 6: Diagrammatic representation of influences on research Design 1

Based on my previous observations that change was initiated and implemented locally, albeit with profound disagreement on "what/who are we here for", I termed the processes by which decisions were made as *lobbyism*, which also *formed alliances* and stimulated *group-dynamics*. How and why employees or elected officials "left" or "entered" figured in my observations; for example, some consultants with a long seniority reported ill and resigned;

they could not identify with the new ideas about the function of their union. The *inclusion/exclusion* dynamics involving the elected officials were more subtle. Officially, they were based on the rules of democracy and majority vote. However, there were other processes, which involved getting people to attend in the first place and vote as a special favour. I noticed that these dynamics stirred up *moral issues* for myself as a researcher and resulted in me paying attention to matters of *values and beliefs* alongside themes of *power, roles* and *relationships*.

The initial research design was presented at a conference for the elected officials. After my presentation, they were encouraged to ask questions and give recommendations. No one asked questions, although a few enthusiastic or critical comments were offered. To me, these reactions seemed a way of *positioning* the responders in the group, more than as actual reflections upon the nature, scope or goal of the research design. This could possibly be an expression of their position in their previous debate behind closed doors; to me, their reactions became data to be saved for future reference.

The design was also presented to and discussed amongst the union branch employees. I solicited their viewpoints. Having received access to and contracted with the trade union branch I started the first phase of data collection in the end of 2006 by conducting participant observations, analysing the data, working with different groups and having them respond to my observations. At this point, rumours circulated about how many branches would have to close and which ones would survive. The employees of this particular branch, now merged, were certain they would remain on the union map after the downsizing. As they said, "*they* had changed; *they* had taken the first steps towards what was needed to reverse the situation". I had just begun my interviewing when the employees were informed that the branch would be closed down at the end of June 2008. In parallel with breaking the news about the termination, the elected manager had informed the administrative manager that he was not assigned to any of his desired positions in the union. The manager and his co-manager, in solidarity, gave brief notice and left their positions shortly after the information was released in July 2007.

Faced with such a critical situation, where nobody knew what would become of them, I interviewed those, who already had signed up to be interviewed. I transcribed the interviews, had them confirmed and then paused for reconsideration; was I to terminate my study? During

the spring of 2008, I began re-reading the transcripts and became increasingly fascinated by the content, becoming aware of aspects that I had not noticed initially when I transcribed the interviews. I attributed this unexpected outcome to the open question framework I used, which was inspired by the reflexive approach (Alvesson, 2003) and the Echo method (Cunningham, 2001). It illuminated the implication of "standing in the open" (Thorbjørn Hansen, 2008), that is, the existential attitude towards uncertainty.

In May 2008, I was invited to the elected manager's farewell reception. There were only a few people left to manage the final closure at the end of June. The date of the closure was negotiated between the elected manager and the head office. The branch would remain open for a year and the employees would be compensated if they stayed until then. The utmost effort was made to redeployee employees. At the reception, there were heated discussions as well as sad voices in the room. People did ask about my research and encouraged me to continue, which made me search for and contact some of the previous informants. In August 2008, I had my revised research design ready and contacted officially all informants. It was not easy to find all of them; two had resigned, one retired, and one was on long-term sick leave (however employed by another branch within X). The rest had been transferred to jobs in the remaining four X branches on Sjælland. Only two elected officials were still active out of 38. During the spring of 2010, I concluded the interviews and kept contact with several of the participants in order to enlarge on previous questions.

The methodological tool-box

The reading and interpreting of transcripts was at first inspired by a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), by which close reading and searching for common-sense categories provided new insights. However, such a strongly empiricist and anti-theoretical stance did not correspond with my intentions of what a new design[68] might look like. What I had was my previous work in terms of 6 incidents of full or half days of observations and a following workshop; 13 transcripts based on interviews, of which 11 were carried out just when the termination news was out in the open, 9 of them being after the administrative manager and his co-manager resigned; my experiences from previous consultant work and from the work done as action researcher, not to mention literature review and burgeoning ideas on

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[68] The change of research design facing me aroused a feeling of "nothingness", except for interesting observations and interview texts, as I was moving away from action research with its focus on empirical data in dialogue with theory during the sense-making process in close collaboration with the union branch.

organisational identity issues. The impact of the environmental change (Lewin, 1997b) was salient in the interviews, both in terms of informants' accounts and my way of responding and placing questions. I took out my questions and responses from each interview and assembled them into a document to analyse my approach in isolation from the informants' contribution, which gave rise to further reflection on my affiliation with the people I interviewed. Working in NVivo allows for experimenting with visual representation of text by creating models[69], subsequently writing memos. The model below shows the transition between the first thoughts about factors influencing the tendency to utilise energy in activities and those identified in the data.
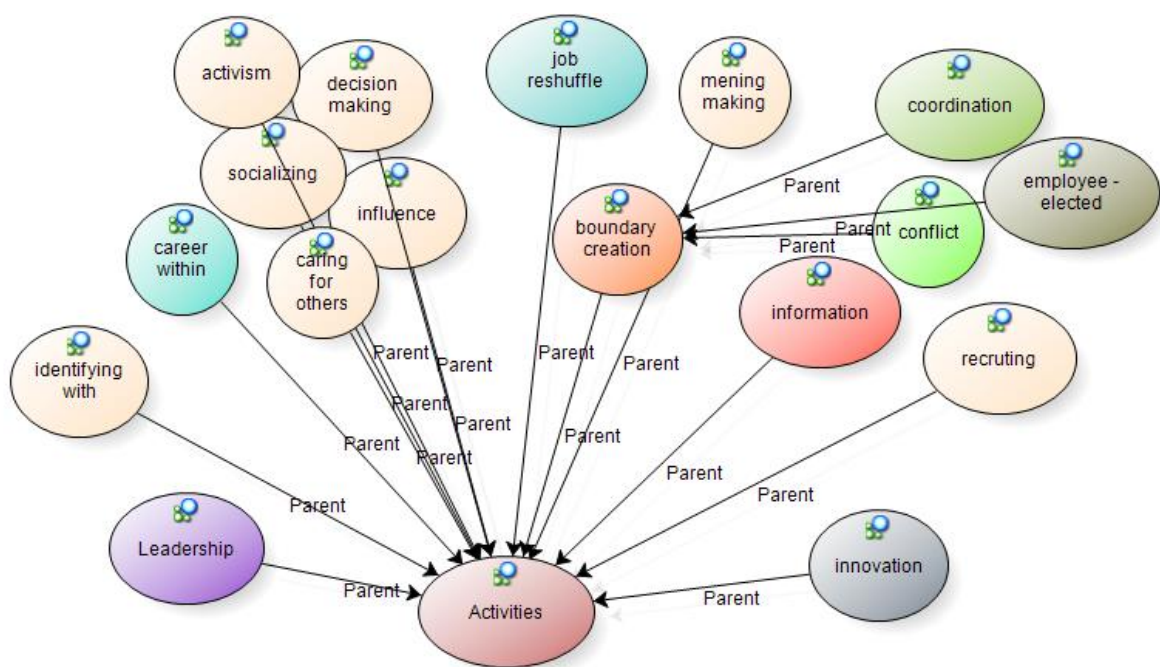
Figure 7: Diagrammatic representation of themes from coding in NVivo

"Activity" functioned as "parent node", covering various dynamics of interaction, for example influence, caring for others or innovation, themes which both were present in the observations and the interviews. Moving the themes around and placing them in relation to each other can stimulate "hypotheses on probation[70]". For example, caring for others, I noticed, was also a way of getting 'influence', thus manifest in both 'decision making' and 'socialising'. Corbin's (1990) research, which began with *one* interview transcript made by Strauss in dialogue with

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[69] The colours in the model are used to highlight different constellations; however, the disadvantage is that they provide a slightly too static image.
[70] In a later version I found that 'boundary creation' had a more central position close to influence, identifying with, caring for others, meaning making and conflict.

a Vietnam veteran, inspired me to re-scrutinise my transcripts. I aimed, however, also at critically reviewing the gestalt paradigm contributing to a framework more suited to organisational work, which had led me to lean towards a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006;Charmaz, 2009) combined with reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). Combining these approaches by positioning the research relative to the social circumstances impinging on it and continuously questioning my own perspectives and the categories that I developed in relation to several theoretical frameworks is more appropriately termed abduction reasoning (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000:17;Flick et al., 2004).

The emerging research design 2008

This thesis is grounded in a qualitative, in-depth study, based upon a previous professional relationship, participant observation, field notes, local journals and 13 and 10 interviews, respectively, conducted two years apart, as well as numerous memos. As argued in chapter 4, the ontological and epistemological positions taken require an ideographic methodology, getting close to one's subject and a detailed exploration of informants' experiences. Parlett (2005: 47) says about field theory applied to research: "… it is a set of principles, an outlook, a method, and a whole way of thinking that relates to the intimate connectedness between events and the settings or situations in which these events take place." This attitude is not unique within qualitative research (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) but there are, however, various ways in which this is dealt with according to the underlying assumptions about the nature of human reality and knowledge. The inspirational sources influencing research design as illustrated in figure 6 combined with a close reading and coding of transcripts formed a new Gestalt, illustrated in figure 8 below. This revised symbolic illustration indicates clarity in detail when compared with figure 6. Figure 8 consists of perspectives reviewed in chapter 3, which form the basic understanding of trade unions organising, and thus provide the link to identity work. The union is symbolised with a scroll (or banner) coloured red denoting institutionalised identifications, still alive, however under great strain[71]. In my work with the union I found phenomena, which needed a broader theoretical perspective than merely organisational theory to fully grasp unionism. Hence including institutional and social movement theory gave a better basis for understanding identity work. Assuming a process view is in keeping with the gestalt paradigm, which influences methodology and methods

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[71] By strain I not only indicate the unions' historic socialist orientations, but also the pressures of global environmental changes as described in chapter one and three

choices. The researcher (me) is illustrated as a moving, smiling magnifying glass. I identified with this symbol in many respects. Firstly, I had several roles in my interaction with the union branch. Secondly, I had respect for the people working within this trade union branch and I also sympathised with a number of trade union values. Third, reflexive methodology (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000) provided a sound approach for scrutinising, not only "out there" but also "inside". Finally, I felt that I had to move, mentally as well as physically, in order to stay alert and sufficiently critical, now that my contact with the union branch was individualised.
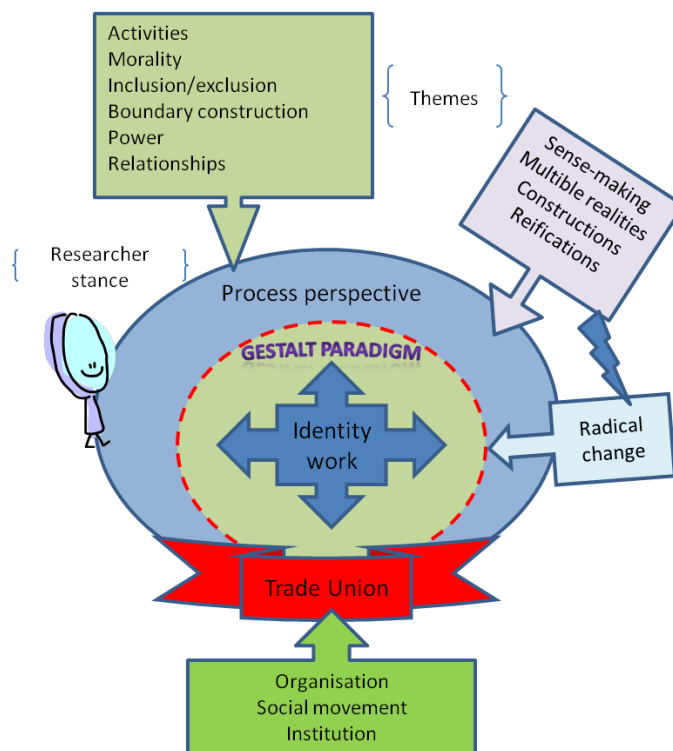
Figure 8: Symbolic representation of influences on research design 2

The close reading of the first round of interviews led to my interest in identity work, understood as a dynamic, ongoing process, however imbedded in previous incidents of participant observations focusing on "organisational identity". At the beginning of the research process I had reified the change taking place as radical change. However, I realised that by assuming a process perspective, change is the norm and "radical change" then is a matter of degree, interpretation, and a co-construction. Existentialism in the gestalt paradigm provided the philosophical basis on which I understood the interview texts from both the first and second round of interviews. In analysing the second round of interviews much of what I

termed activities I found 'enactment' and 'energy' covered the meaning within the quotes better. The gestalt paradigm employs 'energy' as a unifying concept for vectors and forces embodied in observable activities. 'Energy' is a value-neutral concept, which I find useful in this context. This will be elaborated in the analysis section below.

Second Generation Grounded Theory offers interesting perspectives addressing the dilemma of "well-reasoned logic in interaction with the empirical material, the use of rigorous techniques for processing the data" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000:7) and the primacy of interpretation. Being characterised as ontological realists with a positivist epistemology Corbin says about the analytical journey undertaken by her and Strauss that people change and so do methods (Morse, Stern, Corbin, Bowers, Charmaz, & Clarke, 2009:36). Especially interesting is Corbin's educational presentation, in which she starts with an interview transcript issued by Strauss on a nurse's experiences during the Vietnam War. She had no predefined questions that she put to the material; just an intuitive feeling that this was important. From this one text she developed questions and obtained new knowledge about what it was like to be a Vietnam veteran. She ended up with a sample of three, and then turned to reading memoirs. Following her lead, I read about the closure of workplaces, interviewed union members, and read newspaper articles about union engagement and change perspectives. I questioned colleagues who work in an employers' association and who, by virtue of their positions, have close relationships with elected union officials and employees. Charmaz (2006) explains her journey from what was then officially agreed upon being grounded theory to a constructivist approach. Metaphorically she sees grounded theory as an umbrella covering several different ways of approaching data, that is to say, a constellation of methods. Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory assumes "a relativist epistemology, sees knowledge as socially produced, acknowledges multiple standpoints of both the research participants and the grounded theorist, and takes a reflexive stance towards our actions, situations and participants in the field setting – and our analytical constructions of them" (Charmaz, 2009:129). My literature review on identity work led me to Charmaz's research about how people relate to chronic disease and bodily impairment. This was a different kind of loss, compared with losing a workplace, nevertheless involving uncertainty, suffering, hope, change of goals, and obviously identity work. She takes a symbolic interactionist perspective to identity and literature on the body in order to frame her research. Both Corbin (2009:40) and Charmaz (2009:133) mention reflexivity as an important method, when

assuming degrees of relativity towards the understanding of real world phenomena. They do, however, describe it in pragmatic terms, as scrutinising parts of coding or memos in order to reveal contradictions or tensions in the material. To Charmaz (Ibid) reflexivity is part of the overall research process.

Reflexive methodology is permissive with respect to the interaction between empirical research and theoretical framework (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000). It constitutes a "gestalt" of four main qualitative research traditions, namely:

1. Data-oriented methods (grounded theory, ethno methodological research, inductive ethnography)
2. Hermeneutics
3. Critical theory
4. Poststructuralism and postmodernism

Alvesson & Sköldberg (2000) thoroughly review each of the four research strategies and their sub-groupings, demonstrating advantages and disadvantages, and then use the benefits and relate actively to the drawbacks in the design of their reflexive methodology. They suggest that three major intellectual streams, those of discourse analysis, feminism, and genealogy, might be regarded as the fifth analytical level. However, since all three permeate our everyday social life they are better addressed in research as complementary dimensions and specific perspectives in each of the four levels (Ibid: 224). Reflexivity[72] differs from reflectivity by the breadth and variation in interpretation, in that the researcher not only directs his/hers attention on one level or method but lets the emphasised level also be reflected in the other dimensions. Interviewing, enlarged later in this chapter, is imbued with low-abstract interpretations; it would not be possible to ask questions in meaningful ways were it not so. Instead of aiming for "true knowledge" which is delusional, or staying so close to the empirical material that the results become trivial, it is preferable to let the multidimensional aspects reflect the complexities of human life as transparent, and thus give the reader insight into the choices made by the researcher during data generation and analysis (Flick, Kardoff, & Steinke,2004).

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[72] There seems to be inconsistencies in what reflective and reflexive means. Alvesson et al. (2000) mention that scholars use the terms in a similar way. Reflective practice can be traced back to the writings of John Dewey exploring the interrelatedness between experience, interaction and reflection. Kurt Lewin (1997a), interested in experience and learning, became a precursor for experiential learning and reflective practice later developed into learning models. To Alvesson et al.(2000) reflexivity mean that serious attention is paid to the way different kinds of linguistic, social, political and theoretical elements are woven together in the process of knowledge development, during which empirical material is constructed, interpreted and written (Ibid: 5).

Silverman (1993) cautions about over-theorised and speculative topics, which the reflexive methodology may lead to, as a worst case scenario. With a topic as complex as 'identity work manifestations' curtailment is required, which I did in my literature review. Alvesson et al. (2000:287) do not offer any advice on this matter, just state: "the individual researcher must carefully consider how these demands can be handled, what level of sophistication in terms of reflection can be managed, and how".

The Echo approach was adopted as action research methodology and therefore informed the framework of the first interview round, and a brief review is therefore relevant. There is, however, also another reason, namely in its focus on value and belief systems, which not all identity theories emphasize. The Echo approach (Cunningham, 2001) is based on the theorising of the Gestalt psychologists and Kurt Lewin. It is an action research method by which values and beliefs embedded in a particular culture (group/organisation) are raised to joint awareness in order to be worked with. "A research process using the Echo approach usually relies on input from people in the group or organisation who are interested in having a problem explored. The measures and methods are not predefined at the beginning of the process. They grow out of interviews, question sessions, and other procedures that are used to echo the issues or problems that people are experiencing" (Ibid:12). People are assumed to have the ability to sort events based on their values. Getting insight into people's values and beliefs are pivotal to understanding how people organise themselves. The approach holds two basic assumptions about human beings, irrespective of their actual situation. The *first* is that people feel, express and act based on their conceptualising of good and bad. When we agree or disagree with events, other people's ideas, etc. we are displaying our values and beliefs; verbally or non-verbally. We identify with particular values and reject others. Values are normative and express what 'ought to be' whereas beliefs are assumptions of 'what is' or 'will result'. For example, an informant said in the interview that she found demonstrations for better working conditions very important, however she did not believe that it would impact work conditions in general. If we define organisations in process terms as organising, consciously or unconsciously[73], based on one or more organising principles such as growth and profit, survival, ideology, tradition, then values and beliefs are exhibited in any of them. The *second* assumption holds that values and beliefs originate in different ways, through

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[73] Personal communication Dr. Ivan Jensen

influential persons or important events in our lives. In the flow of everyday life, they often manifest themselves outside our awareness. When reflected upon, these people or events may be recalled as influential, however as part of a new construction of reality (new gestalt). Many values involve social obligations or prohibitions (Ibid: 5)[74]. Literally, the social moral code becomes orientation points, which are necessary for the creation of identity and conversely, our sense of who we are (Brinkmann, 2008).

Researcher's roles, relations and self-reflections

Awareness of personal identities at play during the research is an important aspect of interpreting; however social identities and roles are also an important aspect of interacting with the participants/informants during changing circumstances (Silverman, 1993:83). One cannot control other people's interpretations and categorisation of oneself. I have chosen to highlight three time-points (2003, 2005, and 2008) as pivotal for changes in my role/function, the focus that I had, the philosophical/theoretical basis from which I worked, and the personal change I underwent. Susanne, the person, obviously, was not only in three discrete modes, roles or functions while working on the thesis for six years; although erratic at times, my development was gradual, continuous throughout this period. The time-points I have selected, therefore, represent significant role/function transitions. In table 3 below I have included a representation of the research journey depicting the tree time-points. Besides describing the roles I have inserted other main research constructions in order to provide a simplified, however coherent overview. The text in the table is elaborated on the following pages.

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[74] The Echo method is in many ways similar to Argyris (1990) theorising finding that human beings hold two types of action. One is based on their exposed theory consisting of attitudes, beliefs and values. The second is their theory-in use, which he explains as the one they actually use when they act. Argyris, however, is dedicated to reveal defence patterns preventing organisational learning whereas Cunningham's focus is on involvement, inclusion and to "echo" what takes place.

Year Content	2003	2005	2008	2010
Pre-understanding	Movement from consultant to researcher	Pre-understanding 1	Pre-understanding 2	
Literature review	Organisational identity theories Gestalt therapy theory	Research methodology Methods	Identity and identity work Social movement theory Institutional theory	New contributions in research
Research design		Research design 1	Research design 2	
Role/function	Gestalt organisational consultant	Practitioner researcher	Researcher	Researcher
Methodology	A gestalt paradigm Phenomenology	Action research Echo approach	Constructivist grounded theory approach Reflexive methodology	Constructivist grounded theory approach Reflexive methodology
Interventions	Completion of consultancy work	"Contracting" with union branch Participation observation Interviews	"Contracting" with informants	Interviews Theoretical sampling
Themes	Metaphor: The competent negotiator Symmetrical and asymmetrical relationships. Group formations and alliances Negotiating identities Influence on union values Contact dynamics and boundary creation Intimacy versus strategy	The competent negotiator Membership Power Group formations and alliances Negotiating identities Influence on union values Contact dynamics and boundary creation Solidarity – loyalty Union reason d'être Radical change	Activities Relationships Contact dynamics Boundary construction Power Inclusion – exclusion Identifications - differentiations Sense-making Morality Unfinished situations Emergency	Energy and vectors Contact boundary dynamics Boundary creation Positioning Inclusion – exclusion Sense-making Construed change

Table 3: Overview of the research journey with selected time-points and main constructions

In 2003, I completed my consulting collaboration with the union branches. My focus had been on patterned behaviours that hindered change, which I captured in the metaphor of "the competent negotiator" (Blom, 2009). My role during those initial years was that of the "paradoxical change agent". I was engaged in working through increasing participants' awareness of "what is", enabling better informed choices, followed by action that was directed towards the desired change. I worked with gestalt concepts on an existential basis, utilising a phenomenological approach. At the end of 2003 I identified that the risk of "going native" and becoming culturally blind was increasing. The implementation phase needed "new eyes". During my work the patterned dynamics in the union X and its branches led me to examine "organisational identity theory" as a sense-making device. The period, however, also increased my supposition that gestalt (therapy) theory's ability to explain complex organisational phenomena was limited. In retrospect I worked from an optimistic position, which means that I noticed what people did "well", rather than what they ought to do, or did "wrong". I measured "well" in terms of the smoothness of flow and grace in interaction. I believed that people always did their best given the circumstances. I liked the people with whom I worked and found union values important for the welfare of society. Inclusion, equality and solidarity were themes which for me carried energy; power and alliances. I found blaming and the imposition of guilt counterproductive; a personal theme of mine, which I deliberately took care to explore in personal supervision. Between 2003 and 2005 the union branches merged, consultants were educated in process consultancy, the team work emphasised and the elected officials re-organised. I concentrated on my ambivalence towards the gestalt approach.

By the end of 2005 my first research design was accepted by the University of Derby. My focus was on how a union maintained its organisational identity during change, as seen through the lens of a gestalt paradigm. Despite the inspiration that it takes from symbolic interactionism, the gestalt paradigm does not speak much about 'role' but rather "the use of self", conceptualised as an instrument of influence (Nevis, 1987). The field is assumed to be co-created in every new moment. How skilled you are; how you use your awareness for meaning-making; how you collect data from your environment and from your bodily sensations; how you reflect; what your preferred behavioural style looks like; all of these skills and experiences become part of role management. Nevis (1987: 126-140) proposes modes of influence as a continuum from evocative to provocative "use of self" as a strategy.

The former is described as an emergent approach in that it aims at enhancing the consultant's as well as the client's awareness of "what is". Thus, it is a matter of evoking the clients' interest in themselves, by asking questions or offering phenomenological observations, which gain attention. The latter is aimed at making something happen, that is, asking questions or making confrontational remarks to which the client hardly can avoid responding. The 'use of self' conceptualised in this manner is applicable to the research situation both when doing participant observation as in interview situations. The gestalt paradigm suggests that the method of cultivated uncertainty planning is good.

I was aware that my former consultant role, and the relationship we had back then, could cause problems due to different interactional expectations. However, the research question combined with my previous relation with the union branches made action research an obvious choice. By assuming the role of practitioner researcher, constraints could eventually be worked with, utilised and turned into data. I used personal supervision to reveal bias. There was indeed role confusion at times. Especially during observations, people would turn to me for advice or conversations. Twice I was called to help in a critical situation, which I did. According to social identity theory (Jenkins, 2004) and gestalt perception principles (Koffka, 1935;Mather, 2011) categorisation happens with or without awareness. I am sure that, at times, I was being associated with management, and being ascribed influential power that, as a researcher, I did not have or want. Also during analysis of the transcripts discursive structures exposed role uncertainty, role testing, and at times role confusion. In retrospect I kept an optimistic stance, however with a more varied view on union activities. Emotionally, I was upset, angry and sad when I heard about the termination; unfair was the term I used. Cognitively, I saw it as organisational identity maintenances, where the forces aiming for traditional union work were strongest, however rationalised. My own change stimulated a new interest in how these people, who had worked so hard to change their branch into something they believed in could identity with that part of their organisation that closed them down. What happened between 2005 and 2008 described earlier in this chapter and additionally in chapter 6.

In 2008 'identity work' became the focus of my research. I no longer had access to an organisation, thus my role shifted to that of a researcher, and was more detached from the informants who signed up for a second interview. I tried to compensate for aspects of the previous interaction, and any bias of which I was unaware at the time, by writing extensive

memos about my feelings and thoughts when visiting the different union branches, to which the informants had been transferred. Interestingly, I felt I knew their context, "the union", as it was an entity one could get to know. I became aware of this, while reflecting on the differences between visiting those, who left the union, and those who stayed. When interviewing the former I did not have a "feel" for their work situation. This bodily embedded experience reaffirmed, not only Gestalt perception theory, however also Weick's (1995) concept of enactment; in fact every moment is unknown.

I compared before-and-after, being both nostalgic and interested, but what did the informants think, feel or do? In one way, it was a relief to "enter" as a researcher. I came and did "my thing", and then left. The nostalgic part was letting go of a long and positive relationship, and the influence I had. In my transition process, reflexive methodology became a personal stabilising tool, making it possible to look at the transcripts in a meta-perspective. I needed a structure beyond a constructivist grounded theory approach.

Data and data collection

The collection of data took place from December 2006 until September 2011. Data is based on participant observation, field notes, interviews and extensive memos. Participant observation took place on six occasions, 27 hours in total, as well as 13 in-depth interviews carried out in 2007 and 10 interviews again at the beginning of 2010, followed by email correspondence with 6 participants, and one meeting. Even though both participant observations and the first round of interviews took place within the original research design, I found the material very valuable in relation to my preconception of culture and internal cooperation, as reflected by the participants' behaviour and in their accounts. In addition, the two 2-hour seminars we held to discuss what I had observe heightened credibility (Corbin & Strauss, 1990: 302), echoing the participants' views. The interviews are all included in the analysis.

Coding the 2007 interviews in NVivo 8 (Bazeley, 2007) was helpful, however it also left me with an impression of missing something important. I found it difficult to capture the many levels while interacting with the material, despite the many memos I wrote. Therefore, I designed a table in which I placed each interview. As can be seen, I let my questions or interruption of speech frame the structure vertically. Horizontally I placed four columns, each allowing me to follow text segments interpreted from different theoretical frameworks,

including my own spontaneous embodied reflections (Please, see appendix VI, p.223). Thus, the combination of memos, coded in NVivo, the practical paper-on-the-wall collage and working with the tables enabled me to utilise a reflexive approach as described above. It did also provide me with an overview both in terms of discovering new patterns as well as my own "biases".

Preparation and sampling

The initial selection of participants was based on an action research design. While the informants in the first round were selected purposefully based on their representativeness of particular "perspectives" and volunteer criteria, the second round was selected on the basis of convenience (Punch, 2009). The voluntary aspect is delicate in action research[75]. It is however possible to make power issues more prominent when preparing interviews. All informants were sent mails with present-day connection to the now merged branch, elected officials, employees, and managers. The mails informed about what I requested from them if they participated. I underscored that participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time, should they so wish. They were asked to reply just by putting a tick-mark in the box stating either a yes or no *without* any explanation, and a mark if they wanted further information. I will elaborate on the voluntary aspect of the research further down in the section about ethics. Of a total population of 83 individuals approximately half said yes, 10% no, and the rest did not reply. I did send out another email to the last group resulting in 5 people saying no, including a rather angry response from one elected, who felt her personal boundary infringed upon. Among the 50 %, I wanted a group of 14 persons with as varied representation as possible in terms of age, gender, position, and seniority. It was also important to have fair representation from the two former branches, which still existed in people's minds. I wrote to those who signed up, thanked them, and explained my selection of informants, and what would happen next. This information was conveyed to all staff, mediated by the union branch secretary. Of the fourteen participants one pulled out because of the announced closure.

Below in table 4 I include detailed demographic data about the informants.

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[75] In action research your primarily contacts are "those in power", even if you manage to sub-contract there will always be a power issue in the field. There will be participants that conform, those who predict advantages to show enthusiasm etc.

	Name	Time 1 Location	Time 2 Location	Position 1	Position 2	Education	Membership/ When	Employed Affiliated	Represen- tative deputy title	Pervious elected title/position
1	Female 40-50	June.07, Ø	April.10 S	Employee	Employee	Commercial education	1977 As trainee	1992	Safety rep. Shop Stuart	Club member/chair Sector member Sector chair
2	Female 30-40	June.07 Ø	Left	Employee	Employee	Higher education	? As student	2005	None	none
3	Female 60-70	May. 07 Ø	Left	Employee	Pension	Commercial education	? By appointment	1983	None	Club member
4	Male 40-50	June.07 Ø	June.10 S. H	Employee	Self- employed	Higher education	1980's As student	2005	Shop Stuart	Club member
5	Male 40-50	June.07 Ø	Martz.10 R	Employee	Team- manager	Environment al engineer	1988 As student	2006	Shop Stuart Convenor	Club member Sector board member + chair
6	Female 50-60	June.07 Ø	May .10 CPH.	Employee	Employee A-found	Commercial education	1975 By appointment	1991	None	Club member
7	Female 40-50	June.07 Ø	May.10 CPH	Team manager	Manage A-found	Commercial education	1977 By appointment	1986	Shop Stuart	Club member
8	Male 50-60	May .07 Ø	Febru.10 G	Employed Manager	Consultant Private company	Higher education	1976 By appointment		none	none
9	Female 50-60	May .07 K	June.10 K	Elected official	Shop Stuart	Commercial education	1974 By appointment		Safety rep. Shop Stuart	Sector board member
10	Male 60-70	June.07 H	Left out	Elected official	Elected	Commercial education	1982 By appointment		Shop Stuart	Sector board member
11	Female 40-50	June.07 Ø	April.10 K	Elected official	Elected official	Middle-range education	1980 As student		Shop Stuart	Sector board member
12	Female 40-50	June.07 Ø	April.10 K	Elected official	Elected official	Commercial education	1988 As trainee		Shop Stuart	Sector board member Sector chair
13	Female 60-70	June.07 Ø	May.10 H	Elected chair	Pension	Commercial education	1977 By appointment		Shop Stuart	Sector board member Chair

Table 4: Demographic data about the informants

Most of the participants were educated within the service and trade industry; two employees had a higher education. I sensed that this was a sensitive area, indicated through different types of narratives displayed in the interviews. Furthermore, the breadth of the jobs you could get would probably be limited which most of these people knew from their current job that provided advice to the unemployed. Most of the participants had "grown up" in the system, recruited during their apprenticeship or when they entered a job where X had the collective bargaining right.Preparing the second interview round, I e-mailed those whose e-mail address I had. The others I contacted by phone. Nobody seemed offended by my contact. I asked for permission to use the interview and to involve them again with a different research design, which they agreed to. I then emailed an overview of my research design and my expectations. At the interview I brought a flyer listing what they participated in, which I made them read before we started the interview and which I asked them to sign. The interviews were completed at the beginning of 2010.

Participant observation

"The most obvious device for learning about the nature of individuals or groups is to watch them in action" (Cunningham, 2001: 101). Being present in the natural situation when participants interact attending to "their business" enhances your ability to observe how identity work is being done, how people position themselves, who supports whom, and what is being promoted. I used an unstructured approach, letting what happened in the room impact my observations, but always framed by the overall question of how organisational identity dynamics are manifested in this branch. I decided not to bring a tape recorder because of the particular milieu, which meant many note books. In fact, some recommend not writing field notes in the presence of participants because they might feel awkward being observed (Kristiansen and Krogstrup, 1999: 153). I decided to write openly and respond honestly, when people asked me what I saw. In the design, I considered six rounds of observations to a start; two lasting four hours at each office (in two different towns), and two amongst the elected officials. An unexpected opportunity arose to participate in another elected official meeting in which the union representative also attended, a possibility that I gladly took. The forums of the elected officials were difficult to access in many respects. Firstly, they were imbued with negotiations and potential conflicts. Secondly, the Sectors spoke about each other, a natural in-group/out-group phenomenon. Thirdly, at the Sector meetings usually only 4-5 people attended, which meant my presence would unduly impact the field. Bigger meetings were

easier to melt into. The first participant observation took place at the end of 2006, not long after the merger and re-locations. This was a conference aimed at informing, involving and dialoguing. The employees were in charge of the arrangement, which the elected officials participated in. There was a program, which contained introductory presentations, group discussions and work in different groupings. The program was not followed rigidly, but allowed for - occasionally heated - debates. I soon felt forgotten. At breaks, I went to those persons involved in events I would like to inquire further. In that manner, I had my interpretations tested, confirmed or rebutted. At the end of the day, a few people expressed sympathy that I had to work so hard; however also subtly inquiring into what I had observed. I carried out two sessions at each branch office during January and two again in February. Now I had the possibility to observe how they interacted with members at the service desk. The main branch building in Øred had many small offices where the staff could talk with members, when coaching or giving advice. The building in Åsted had one big room with 6 desks and a small waiting space for members. Here I sat down in a corner and was able to see this type of interaction too. Two persons were laid off just before I came on the second visit; something that influenced the atmosphere, but less so than I expected. The remaining employees spoke with me about what had happened and how they felt about it. In February and April I attended two elected official meetings. One was a regular meeting, the other an extraordinary summoned meeting where most of the elected officials showed up. The shop steward was also present at this meeting.

Between the meetings, I had the opportunity of structuring my notes and write memos. Memoing was very important, especially writing what I had experienced and felt during the observation periods as close to the events as possible. I noticed how my impression changed when I started to structure my written notes. I structured my reflections under memo-headlines such as personal, methodological, substantive and theoretical (Punch, 2009: 180), which made it possible for me both to move back and forth between descriptions, conceptual content, and structure.

Interviewing

"If you want to know how people understand their world and life, why not talk with them about it?" (Kvale, 1994: 15). Kvale uses two metaphors, "the traveller" and "the miner", to articulate the coherence between research question, methodology, method, and who you are as person. I concentrate here on the traveller metaphor and use of open-ended interview, as

applied to my study. The traveller metaphor depicts the interviewer as a traveller on a journey exploring unknown territories while he enters into dialogue with the people he/she meet on the journey. *Inter View* is an interchange and exchange of thoughts between two persons who talk about a topic of common interest (Ibid, 1994). The metaphor assumes equality in the relationship, liberty to engage in and withdraw from the interview situation and that the topic is of mutual interests. This is an ideal account. "The aim is largely to facilitate an interaction which permits participants to tell their own stories, in their words"(Smith et al., 2009). In order to get interesting data it is important to establish a trustful contact and provide "active listening" (Silverman, 1993). Alvesson (2003) offers a sobering account of the matter in his critique of qualitative interview approaches. Based on eight interview metaphors he describes how perspectives of neo-positivism, romanticism and localism influence each of them. I used his model as a reflective guide. As a gestalt practitioner, I am trained to focus on moment to moment contact without "going native" and merging with interviewees. In interview situations this means that I shift between what is being said, how it is being said, bodily expressions and what is going on with me, cognitively as well as affectively. This is visible when analysing the transcripts; many of the informants were emotionally upset and some cried during our dialogue. I found it easier to let the interview continue when people expressed anger than when they cried. "An interview exploration is a moral enterprise" (Kvale, 1994:115). He states that no clear rules can be provided when ethical/moral issues become salient during the interview. Once I turned the tape recorder off since the person F kept crying and I felt a personal responsibility to concentrate fully on F. After ten minutes, F wanted us to continue the interview. Researchers have learned from therapeutic non-directive approaches. The "therapeutic interview is experimental from moment to moment in the sense of try it out and see what happens"(Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972:15). In therapy, some authors shun interpretation, placing emphasis on phenomenological descriptions. I do not believe this is possible, refuted by Gestalt psychology in the principle of figure-ground formation. In Fischer's words "Interpretation, however, was not the problem; rather, it was the depersonalization and the distancing from actual contact. If you give someone an interpretation with high quality contact, so much the better" (2009 p.226). I used this approach during the interviews in order to validate my interpretations. The lines between a therapeutic interview and the unstructured research interview can be hard to draw, especially when the research focus is a perceived radical change and identity work. Both interview

approaches can lead to increased understanding. I applied the criteria that a research interview emphasises on gaining intellectual knowledge, whereas a therapeutic interview focuses primarily on the client's personal change (Kvale, 1994).

The interviews, 2007 and 2010

As agreed, the interviews were carried out either at the participant's office or mine. Each interview lasted approximately one and a half hours. I taped the interviews while also writing notes. I began each interview by explaining the purpose of the research, and what I expected from them. The participants reacted quite differently during the interview; some informants were so talkative that I had to interrupt; a few I had to ask many questions. The transcripts were e-mailed for approval and additional comments. I had responses saying it was interesting to read, and one also reflecting on her use of language.

The second interview round began in early spring, 2010. The power aspect had changed. The former organisation was disbanded and merged into a new structure. I had no management to ask or turn to. The only contract I could make was with individuals. Time and place were appointed by phone and confirmed by mail. Although doubtful, I decided to re-send the earlier transcript, since I read them in preparing for the interview. Now they had the choice to do likewise. Furthermore, if there was something they disagreed with they had the opportunity to tell me, which might be easier than writing. Similar to the first time, I framed the interview situation by explaining the purpose of the research and what was going to happen now. This time I had them read and sign an information document. I did not find that our mutual conversational atmosphere had changed. In that respect it was reassuring, aiming to provide "an interchange and exchange of thoughts between two persons who talk about a topic of common interest". I recorded the interviews, lasting roughly one and a half hours, while simultaneously writing notes. This time I also used an unstructured approach, starting out having them imagine their old branch two years back and then letting them talk. Some had difficulty staying in the past, remembering and reflecting on what had happened to them then. They moved into the present or the future many times where I had them turn back once more.

The transcripts were sent to the informants for verification. Again, they were encouraged to respond in any way they liked, by giving critiques, making corrections or providing additional views. Three persons offered additional comments in writing and two called me. One of the three persons who replied via email wrote that she felt that I had misunderstood some of those

things she said, as Danish was not her mother tongue. She promised to return to me with further information but never did in spite of several reminders. I listened to and re-read these two transcripts several times, with particular attention to any inconsistencies in questions and answers. As I found the interviews coherent and consistent, I decided to keep them.

Analysis

Inspired by grounded theory approaches (Morse, Stern, Corbin, Bowers, Charmaz, & Clarke, 2009), especially Charmaz's (2006; 2012) constructivist approach, I took one text at a time trying to grasp what this particular person was telling me, while writing down all my reflections and emotional reactions in memos. I searched for answers in theory, returning to read the text again with "new" eyes. Contrary to the recommendation of theoretical sampling (Corbin & Strauss, 1990: 145-149), it felt unethical asking more questions after the first interview round, both out for the employees' situation, and because I did not know if I could proceed with the research.

My inquiry framework was informed by organisational identity theory and influenced especially by Hatch et al.'s (2004) process model and a gestalt paradigm under scrutiny. Therefore I was not surprised to find informants pondering about identity. I was, however, surprised by the intensity and openness I read into the accounts. 'Identity work' as an overall frame, though, emerged through the first readings and propelled the idea to the second research design, but not in a narrow personal identity (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995) conceptualising. Social movement theories (Snow, Soule, & Kriesi, 2004) as previously mentioned have dealt with 'identity work', thus taking a broader frame into account involving issues of power and strategic identity deployment. For example, 'membership' became a theme I inquired into. Everybody in the union was members; however had very different roles, functions, and powers. Furthermore, inclusion and exclusion of the diverse sub-groupings of members required different activities or routines. Take the elected officials, for example. It was common practice being headhunted into elected official positions. If a person showed interest in union work including attending to meetings that person would be approached and subsequently asked to run for election. Once a person had undertaken a union position, other tasks and positions followed, which led to it was "the usual crowd", as they said, who lifted the burdens. A member in everyday speech was the "customer", who the employees and elected officials tried to retain, and if possible to involve in voluntary union

work. Through my focus on the large, however diverse category 'member', I was lead to 'activities' of membership, 'identification' and 'differention processes'.

While I treated the first interviews and observations as one entry into the understanding of identity work during radical change, I approached the next interview texts as placing identity work of the individual in context of personal change and perceived organisational change. I coded all the interviews from 2010 in a separate file. I wanted to get a sense of the "total picture" of 2010, which NVivo is perfectly designed for, and then compare this "picture" with that of the interviews from 2007. I found that the coding from 2008 and that of 2010 had many overlapping themes. The memos, however, I wrote in 2010 gave an almost therapeutic analytic impression. That surprised me, bearing in mind my focus was the understanding of identity work manifestations, not understanding particular persons. This bias of mine, namely that I had 'personal change' as a given before coding, just as I in 2005 assumed radical change was a different *kind* of change, became an important insight and break-through in my analysis. Obviously, the disappearance of the union branch combined with individual informant contact, had me for a while loose the broader context of my research. I placed each of the 2010 transcripts in my self-designed matrix in order to conduct a critically review without losing a sense of cohesion (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996), hence highlighting how well the accounts could be captured by identity theories and by gestalt terminology. In 2008 I had four gestalt practitioners helping me to group "post-its", on which I had written themes from my coding. I watched them and listened to their discussion, while they were interpreting what this particular theme meant and how it could be understood in relation to the others. They created the "parent" nodes, which I later compared with my coding. I returned to this method at the end, where I together with a consultant colleague covered the wall with quotations cut out from the transcripts, together with themes from the observations and interviews. It was *then* the "big picture" emerged as 6 themes covering the organisational situation, four statements of fundamental conditions for identity work, and six propositions explicating identity work from a gestalt paradigm perspective.

Quality assessment

All research occurs in a context of time, place and history. This becomes especially relevant for studying embodied experience, since what is experienced is located absolutely within a context. Context is however individualised and situated (Stivers & Wheelan, 1986). Rousseau

and Fried (2001) assert that research on human behaviour in organisations is strengthened when it is contextualised, and it is through this that results can be validated for accuracy or robustness. Rousseau and Fried suggest that contextualisation pays attention to those factors which contribute to observed variations, or the effects of variants upon the situation being studied, and can be conducted at three levels: rich description of the setting and meanings made of observed behaviour; direct observation and analysis of contextual effects; and, comparative studies.

This is not a study of organisations but of those people identifying with and interacting within them, thus of the organising. Context in this study relies on direct observation, interaction and rich description of what is both observed, talked about and experienced (Barber, 2006). The research conforms to these parameters while at the same time noting contextual factors of the "entity" being studied. These factors included changes in political power and structure, "business" effort, geographical location, employment conditions, and relatedness to other institutional sectors, all of which either are mentioned by the informants and/or by me. The risk in contextualising the research too strongly to one case study is that development of a broader theory, generalisability, is more limited. What is lost in this respect is gained, however, in depth and accuracy of results and a reduced risk of generalisation error (Rousseau et al., 2001). Below, I use the "checklist" of Kvale (1994) to structure my reflections about the quality assessment.

1. **Thematisation and conceptualisation of the research topic**

   It is obviously difficult or even impossible to gauge the quality of result if the purpose or objective of a study has not been explicitly articulated. This, however, needs to be done within a context. For this thesis, it is clearly laid out in the initial chapter. Organisations are important in this day and age, because they influence the lives of the people within them – not only financially - remuneration of the individual the profitability of plurality - but also in terms of their psychological wellbeing. The foundation for the theme and conceptualization of this study is the intersection between organisations, organisational identity and identification, as well as gestalt paradigm as a toolbox. The results, therefore, are of interest to practitioners who teach or work in or with organisations, and equally so for those interested in dynamic

process perspectives.

2. **Formulation of research questions**

The overall aspiration of this thesis – "to contribute …" - is explicitly operationalised in the five distinct research questions that can be found in chapter 1, which are considered individually relevant and necessary, but only collectively sufficient, for the study's purpose: the development of an empirically informed organisational gestalt theory through a study of identity work in the context of organisational change.

3. **Design of the study so that it targets the research question**

The study design, and the methodological rationale have been laid out and discussed above in this chapter, firmly anchored in an explicitly identified ontology and epistemology.

4. **Knowledge construction and ethics - and moral implications**

As well as ensuring that a proposed study is on methodological firm grounds, in other words has a fair chance of answering its research question(s), ethics/morals in research involving people must be conducted under the headline, borrowed from the world of physicians, of *primum non nocere* – first and foremost do no harm. As in biomedical research, this principle of non- malfeasance can be operationalised through due consideration of three facets, to be discussed below. In general, research should contribute to improving human and social conditions without doing harm (Kvale, 1994), balancing predicted utility and the impact of potential damage. According to the Policy and Code of Practice on Research Ethics of the University of Derby, these concerns are cornerstones upon which the various individual concerns must be evaluated. An un-reflected living up to the general ethical principles is not sufficient. Ethical issues related to this research project were tabled and discussed at a meeting with three supervising professors present, during which other research projects also were scrutinised. The peer discussions provided a much greater awareness of potential ethical issues associated with this specific project, the organisation and the participants. Later, when the branch was closed down, I had the advantage to present and get my second research design tested at the Copenhagen Business School in 2007.

The beneficence principle as I applied it in my research is not only that the results will benefit specific groups outside the project. I also wanted the participants, who gave their time, to have tangible results from their efforts. Action research, therefore, was the initial platform, but when that was no longer possible, I discussed this with my informants. Some, I believe, wanted to do me a favor, while others found the project worthwhile in a larger context; as they said: "That is what we work with, people being redundant and moved around". The non-malfeasance principle was a particularly important concern, because the publication of the study results might be detrimental to some of the participants and /or the trade union, especially because I did not have any legal entity to confer with after the termination of the branch.

- **Informed consent**

Have the informants really been given *all* the information which is required for them to make a truly informed decision about participation in the research? Informed consent is not only about *giving* potential informants the necessary information, but also about creating the opportunity to *digest* the information, ask questions about it, and probe/challenge it should they so wish. Have the researchers done all they could to mitigate any risk associated with participation in the study, and have the informants been informed of any irreducible, unavoidable risks associated with participation in the study? A standard approach, also followed as a guiding principle in this thesis, is never to report information that may be attributable to an identifiable informant but, wherever possible, only in aggregated, supra-individual form. Where information is or may be attributed to individuals even when they are anonymous, e.g. "the manger" or "the secretary", these informants must be asked for their consent to use their input in general *ex ante* but also specifically *ex post*.

Informed consent was difficult to obtain in large group situations, however unproblematic in interview situations when the structural ambivalence is taken into account. Some of the informants even grumbled about having to acknowledge that they had read the information folder and accepted its conditions. This an extra opportunity for explaining the purpose of seeking informed consent; that is not only to safeguard their privacy and emphasizing their choice of saying no (Kvale, 1994), but also a means to protect the researcher of having informed sufficiently. Limitations

with informed consent may also arise as research is a process and the researcher develops the research along the way as the process develops the researcher. Firstly, the knowledge that the researcher currently holds might differ from the depth of insights of eventual consequences at the end of the research process. Secondly, it is not always possible to tell the informants how their contributions will be presented in the end. They might recognise themselves, and feel misrepresented or misunderstood.

In 2008 I decided to continue the research. It might be ethically questionable to conduct research with the people attached to that part of an organisation about their experience of being closed down by another part of their organization and, again two years after, how they made sense of the event in terms of self-identity and identity. I decided against assembling the staff and elected officials in focus groups, or even combine them in groups in general. Firstly, I imagined that if they were assembled, their attention would be focused on current events. Secondly, it would mean that I might end up in my consulting role, not as a researcher. Thirdly, I desisted talking with them as a group because that might take them collectively back into the termination situation, which was emotionally challenging for most of them. Fourthly, the employees were offered new positions in different union branches, should they so wish. For the elected officials the situation was entirely different; only one of them ran for office, and was elected, in the new district. This meant there was no formal organisation I could meaningfully contact. Therefore, I wrote to the people I interviewed in 2007 and explained the new research design seeking informed consent. I was sensitive to any sense of hesitation or ambivalence in their answers, both when they returned my e-mail and later when talking to them on the phone. Each of them was sent both transcripts together, and I asked if they found the transcripts correctly representing what they said during the interviews and encouraged them to inform me of errors, omissions or additions they wanted to make.

- Anonymity and confidentiality

In organisations, information often evokes projective fantasies, not least about what is being said behind the closed door of an interview room. Is the person in there with an interviewer gossiping about me or our organisation? Without a credible promise of

anonymity, informants will not necessarily speak their mind, or even report factual information, in which case it will be detrimental to the quality of the research findings. Confidentiality may not be perceived as important to informants, which necessitates thorough information, especially information about the researcher and non-knowledge about the ultimate presentation of the results (Flick, Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004:338). What I promised was that they could not be individually identified in the text. Not only would their names be changed, but I would also change or leave out particular data that revealed recognisable traits. When writing up the thesis I discovered that for sake of quality assessment I had to include the interview matrix which then exposed the individual. Furthermore, there were persons that held special positions that had to be mentioned to give meaning to the research, which could lead to exposure if read by persons from the union branch. I returned to these three persons to get their permission, which I got. I have, however left out particularly sensitive passages. Confidentiality concerns the organisation as a whole. It has been a particular challenge to manage this issue, since the entity I previously contracted with is gone, but union X still exists in another form, with another structure and different managers in charge. Thus, I do not believe the thesis to be of a character that in any way could harm the trade union's image.

- **Unconditional withdrawal**

Objects, relations, information, and power change in organisations, and sometimes very rapidly indeed. What was informed consent yesterday may well be associated with ambiguity, uncertainty, hesitancy, or fear today. Respecting the integrity of the informants must mean, however annoying it may be to the researcher, that they are free to opt out of their participation in the study at any time, even just before the report/thesis goes to print.

Uncontested withdrawal is sometimes difficult to obtain. When the original research design was presented and participants were asked about their willingness to engage, I was aware that exactly because management found participation in the project valuable it could be difficult for both the politically elected, but perhaps especially the staff to say no, which meant I had to be particular sensitive to an elected official's or employee's refusal to participate. They could not refuse to participate in the overall

process by which they entered into groups and responded to my observations. I was, however, aware when selecting informants for interviews. When I e-mailed them, asking them if they would participate, I asked them to tick a yes or no box without any explanation. I assured them that no one would know who said what, unless they spoke about it. In all my information material I wrote that participation was completely voluntary, and anybody who felt any kind of pressure could feel free to contact me for further explanation.

5. **Interviewing**:

The conduction of interviews is described in detail above. I raise two issues with respect to quality assessment:

   a. According to Lewin (1997a) behaviour is a function of person and environment, consequently during an interview the informant became my environment and vice versa. According to constructionism, reality is mutually co-constructed (Charmaz, 2006). As a trained gestalt practitioner I shift in paying attention to our interaction, the informant's body posture, voice, expression, my own sensations, and the content. The fact that I knew most of the informants from prior interaction made the interview more like a dialogue. I worked with an open interview frame with five topics I was interested in exploring with the informants. Some of the informants I believe used the interaction to get frustration off their chest. A few cried during our conversation, and some responded in the end that they had acquired another insight. The open conversational nature of my approach was conducive for our contact, however requiring that I pulled all my questions out of the texts and placed them under the five topics. During this work other themes emerged, which led my on the track of 'identity work'.

   b. Interviews offer an indirect representation of informants' experiences, not truth. The intent is to show how what is being said relates to the experiences and lives being studied (Silverman, 1993:131). Not all of what the informants told me in the first interview corresponded with the second, something I discovered when scrutinising the recordings and transcripts. These observations are "data" as well. Silverman mention two interrelated

phenomena during an interview, that of "identity work" and "cultural stories". Providing an example of my interpretation of identity work in an interview situation was, when one informant asked me if he spoke too much and if he said the right things, hence adjusting to the situation and adjusting the situation to him and us. I found "cultural stories" told by several informants, often nuanced in detail, however with the same moral intonation. A sub-group of cultural stories I categorised as 'union rhetoric'. When listening to an informant I had this particular sensation and knew that now he/she delivered "the speech". I also noticed in retrospect my personal identity work in some of the reactions and responses I had to the informant's accounts.

6. Transcription and coding

Transcribing text is the first interpretation (Silverman, 1993). I used head phone and foot switch which enabled me easily to move back and forth. Not all said was easily heard, and how it was said required dual attention, moving from context to content. I used Silverman's transcription symbols (Ibid: 398). Coding in Nvivo is part of the analysis process but not a substitute for the analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996:26). At first I coded each sentence which did not work for me. I lost the feeling of the overall material. Then I let my "interruptions" as I prefer to call my questions and responses, frame each meaning, even if the topic continued. This resulted that our interaction became more visible. I coded all the employees first, next the elected officials and last the managers. I did so in order to notice first hand if their responses generated different coding, which they did, however much less than I had expected.

7. Analysis

Described in detail above. In brief, all texts were coded, placed and worked with in my self-shaped matrix and finally as paper post-it on the wall. As themes began to emerge I searched literature that dealt with this theme. Working with data and discover what themes emerged, while holding an ambition to critically review the gestalt paradigm was quite a challenge. I solved this problem by making my process explicit in the matrix, utilising abductive reasoning. I did also take advantage of letting other gestalt practitioners work with my themes and listening to their interpretations. Where I heard

interesting discrepancies, I went back and checked the underlying quotes. By identifying a particular phenomenon, termed identity work, and then working my way "behind" it and locating it in different theoretical frameworks allowed me to disconfirm parts of the gestalt paradigm and at the same time come up with a new configuration of ideas (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The "reflexive methodology" suggested by Alvesson et al. (2000) encourage a multi-theoretical approach as quality assessment.

8. **Verification**

Verification of study results is concerned about the goodness of the outcome of a study process. In quantitative research within the natural sciences, verification is usually covered by the two concepts of validity and reliability, sometimes also referred to as specificity and sensitivity, or accuracy and precision. Validity is the formal examination of whether the study actually examines what it is meant to study, and reliability is concerned with how well it does that. Replication is a key tool within quantitative research; other researchers can repeat the experiment and verify or falsify the original findings. This, obviously, is not possible within the realm of most qualitative research, because exact replication is not possible. Kvale (1994) has suggested criteria for judging or estimating the goodness of qualitative research.

- Credibility

As the perceived reality of the study context is co-created by the informants and researcher(s) only those who have contributed data to the study is in any position to judge the credibility of the raw and interpreted data is credible. In this study, this was ascertained by a workshop in with a group of participants worked with the first observations. Each trio had an observation statement presented and 15 minutes to discuss it; if it was identifiable, if it made sense, and what it meant to them. The answers were presented to the total group and responded to by the other triads. The work was supposed to contribute to the overall action research identifying an organisational identity. Later, in the course of the research the informants had the transcripts sent by mail and response asked for. I believe that the second round of interviews, where I send the first transcript once more strengthened the credibility in that I received several comments by mail, which I did not do the first time. This

criterion is called 'fit' by Corbin et at. (2008). I will not be able to present final findings to the participants, but I have talked with a few informants about reflections I had after the second interview round

- Dependability

The researcher is the "instrument" that "measures" and interprets data – an interpretation that is always based on an individual pre-understanding/bias/ignorance/ intentionality etc. Thus, some degree of "self-declaration" of the interest, motives, experience, bias etc. of the researcher is often necessary for a comprehensive "calibration" of the reader's understanding of dependability. In this study the memos and matrix provide such a critical reflexivity. I had two persons who did not know each other, fill out parts of three matrixes, which I compared with my interpretations. One of them is a trained gestalt consultant and the other works in an employers' association, familiar with trade unions through cooperation. While the division of the matrix into 3 parts (identity theories, the gestalt paradigm, and own reflection) was awkward for the non-gestalt trained person, it was uncomplicated to the other. However, when formulated in everyday language most interpretations appeared consistent with respect to meaning.

- Confirmability

The criteria of confirmability concerns if the reported results and final outcome of the study can be considered so researcher-independent, that it is meaningful to believe, as far as possible, a replication of the study in other relevant contexts. This study cannot meet such a requirement; a conclusion I draw mainly due to the closure of the branch in the middle of the research process, subsequently changing the research design.

9. **Reporting**

There are several challenges involved in reporting results. In most respects, they are interrelated and the choices made during the research process. For example, the research questions required an ideographic methodology and assumed voluntarism. A key note in "life history interviews" is 'active listening', which allows the informants more freedom to speak following their own line-of-thoughts. The work done to transform voluminous transcript texts, including my memo material, must be precariously balanced between readability, and the impact on the verbal precision of

the single informant's account. Should I, for example, remove slang or swearwords from the presentation? Staying with the swearword example, are they important for the overall understanding aimed at in the thesis, or the overall impression of how it feels to be in such a situation? These were but some of my considerations while writing up the thesis; and when forced to make a choice between one or the other I decided to err on the side of the clarity of utterances in a thesis context. An additional argument is that some of the phrasings of the original utterances in Danish cannot be isomorphically translated, but had to be expressed with some artistic license in English. Features of a good research rapport, however, are often build over the same last. I used several inspirational sources for different reasons, for example, Silverman (1993) as a practical guideline, Corbin et al. (2008) as inspiration for an "immersion in the particular", Darmer et al. (2010) because of their present "application of methods for the study of organisation and management processes" in two scientific divergent clusters, realism and constructivism, and not least Katzenelson (1979) in his general guidance in writing scientific works.

Chapter Summary

This chapter is devoted to methodological issues and scientific robustness. First, I describe the research processes in chronological order involving the interrelatedness of structural circumstances and altering of research design. Next, I describe how the altered design required new reflections on what became to be a methodological toolbox, that is, the consistency between research question, methodology, and specific methods. The researcher is always an intruder. However, having a previous history with the union branch a more varied perspective is required, on the possible roles I could take or be ascribed – primarily researcher, consultant, or friend. The data collection, including sampling, participant observations, interviews, and analysis is described and the chapter concludes with issues of quality assessment and ethical considerations.

Chapter 6 – In-depth presentation framing identity work

In this chapter, I present a descriptive account of my observations and reflections, a process which informed my first interview round. The presentation is followed by discussion, concluding with the extraction of six themes depicting the situation totality in which the participants act[76]. Hence, after establishing a short overview, I structure the presentation in two phases, each covering a specific period in the life of the trade union, and correspondingly, the specific positions I hold and methods applied. Working with and structuring the field notes aiming to understand identity work in an organisation undergoing radical change staying close to the phenomena I decided to present the material as a narrative, in chronological order, allowing the reader a personal experience of the changing context.

On a small scale, one perceptible impact of change was what to call the "entities" after merger. The choice I made is interpretative rather than based on official announcement and will be seen in the text below. I found the merger to be a "takeover" (rather than a cultural fusion into a total new entity) with one big main office and a satellite, the two managers remaining from one branch and governed by the outlined strategy. The vernacular in this chapter is by design quotidian. I end by discussing my observation and reflections in relation to the literatures in chapter 3 and extract six themes.

The two branches that I consulted with were the first in union X to implement a massive developmental change designed to reach their local members, stop the membership decline, and avoid downsizing or closure. Over a period of 5 years, the branches changed in several respects: They contacted their members differently, changed their internal structure from functionally divided task execution and control to self-governing teams, implemented changes in the political structure, values and beliefs, and finally went through a self-initiated merger in 2003, which was the year I stopped as their consultant. I believe that the trade union struggled with their organisational identity, for example, "who we are, what we will become and how" (Hatch & Schultz, 2004). The duration of the struggle was based on their democratic governance form, the many political groupings and extensive union branch autonomy, which led to various organisational self-definitions, lobbying, fractions, hypocrisy, and ' hard

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[76] I use "act" in the existential inclusive meaning (Macquarrie, 1972), avoiding dualisms such as mind and matter, self and the world or body and soul. Hence, sense making is included in action and taken to be one mode of being-with-others-in-the-world.

identity work'. Furthermore, the de-institutionalising of the last decades made the organisational identity question particularly salient.

Phase one – the union branches pre and post merger

Observations and reflections during the consultant period

Branches Y and Z (henceforth called Z, situated in Øred city and Y, situated in Åstad city) were both located centrally in their respective cities, close to public transport and in municipalities bordering each other. *Branch Z* operated from a beautiful old multi-storeyed patrician villa. Next to the villa was a building matching it in appearance, however newly built with conference facilities on the ground level and a few offices on the first floor. When entering the villa you sensed a homely welcoming atmosphere, created through the aesthetic interior and friendly working noises. Not all employees had their own offices. Some shared one, which they had furnished individually, albeit with the same artistic modern art line. Likewise in *Branch Y*, that operated from a modern two level building with a grand view through large windows. When members entered the house they went right into a bright and pleasant room with the service desk placed in one end. The rest was furnished with modern comfortable chairs and shelves with folders, blankets and union magazines. The floor was made of light birch wood, leading you to the office premises, all with glass walls facing the hallway. When members had meetings with the consultants or case workers they would pull the blinds down to provide privacy. Each office had personal, however not dominant items. Modern art in bright colours decorated the walls. In the basement were a large and a smaller meeting room, a store room, and a kitchen where the staff held their breaks. Meals were important; not big fancy meals, but rather the interaction they had when of eating together seemed important; something to unite around, I imagine.

Each branch had an elected official as well as an employed manager. In branch Y it was the same person who was responsible for both positions. Mirroring X's organisation chart, the elected officials were assigned to four sections, each with its chairman. It is important to mention that only the elected managers receive a salary. The employees were functionally divided into sections: unemployment-fund ('A-fund'), case-workers, consultants, and service workers. The consultants had the highest status and privileges, case-workers came second, then the A-fund staff, and lastly the service workers. The consultants served as secretaries to the sector groups, which meant they had direct access to the elected officials and vice versa.

The two branches managers realised the necessity and took the opportunity of working together, changing their work methods and reducing costs. There was no declared merger plan, which some informants seriously doubted, as expressed in the interviews, in spite of the insistence of their managers. In the interviews there was a tendency to perceive the governing body as corrupt and duplicitous, expressed as part of sense-making during the closure. While this can never be verified, I do not believe the managers intended a merger at the very beginning, but continued membership decline required cutting-back, thus finally leading to a merger.

During my work with branches Z and Y, I witnessed battles between people and groups of people concerned with "who we are" as an organisation, and to an even greater extent "who will we become" and how to get there. Conflicts are natural during organisational change and implementation of new work forms. However in this case several additional factors influenced the emotional depths of people's responses. Firstly were the uncertainties of the effect of the proposed change strategy. Reducing costs to match revenues is hard, however manageable, whereas developing a strategy to get more employees to join a union and not just an unemployment fund is much more uncertain and unpredictable. This involves looking at core services, representative democracy, and institutionalised organising. Secondly, environmental challenges such as the European parliament decisions were not favourable to trade union rules in Denmark. Finally, given a decade with a conservative government and altered relationship to the Social Democratic Party. At a personal level this triggered existential reflections and doubt, as expressed in interaction and interviews; for example, "is this really what I believe in", or "is there a place for me here in the future".

The change strategy required a view on how to organise the two branches based on the need to reformulate and express the reason d'être of the trade union as a kind of process consultancy, keeping more firms, that is to say, workplaces, to remain in Denmark, ongoing training of the wage earners, providing better workplace environment, etc. The underlying assumption was that modern members and their firms had a much closer relationship. Thus the members were loyal to their company rather than to their trade union. Living up to this reasoning, all staff would work in autonomous teams with meeting-forums where the teams could share knowledge and information. The consultants should no longer function as secretary to the elected sector groups, but together with the case-workers being far more

proactive in offering companies and X members their assistance. I found the change reflected in status change; those union employees who embraced the ideas were educated in process consultation etc., whereas those who showed no or only lukewarm enthusiasm slipped into the background. Some employees found the changes very stimulating, but a few left the organisation; one because he did not believe in the idea, and two due to illness, assumed to be caused or contributed to by psychological and physical change in the work environment. Reactions seemingly depended on whom and/or what you identified with and how you made sense of what you experienced, thus supporting Jenkins' (2004: 17) assertion that "the world experienced and constructed by humans can best be understood as three distinct, however interrelated, orders"[77], the individual, the interactional and the institutional order – individually necessary but only collectively sufficient. However, each individual attends to the order or level(s) of system which is figural and relevant in his or her own sensemaking process, irrespective of the needs of the significant others.

The union branches merged or more correctly, branch Y merged into branch Z, which happened after I no longer worked for them. The administrative manager became the manager of both branches; the elected manager from branch Y remained as a full time elected official. In 2005, branch Z sold both houses and moved into rented facilities. Besides the merger between the branches, the elected officials had also merged the two public sector groups. My work with this and other unions inspired me to review organisational identity theories. On the one hand, the trade union is a social movement organisation grounded in voluntary effort and principles of solidarity[78]; the unions *are* their members. On the other hand, trade unions are organised to such a degree that they have become institutionalised, frequently leading to an alienation of member affiliation. All the efforts trying to counteract this societal effect had me ask to which degree an organisation can change and still retain its identity or identities; an internal change dynamic perspective (Hatch & Schultz, 2002)? Equally relevant, in an external perspective, will society allow unions to change radically? The institutionalised notion of unquestioned membership which was a reality two decades ago has been challenged

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[77] Jenkins (2004) uses the term 'order' to emphasise that the human world is ordered or patterned even though it does not appear as such. The three perspectives *are* perspectives, akin to the gestalt paradigm's level of system.

[78] I mention this here because it turned out that loyalty was a word that both I and the participants brought into play during the interviews. I became intrigued by their introduction of loyalty when the most common word previously used and associated with unions was solidarity. My curiosity round issues of loyalty versus solidarity was grounded in what the union staff and elected identified with as well as where they had their inspirational sources for change. In 2002 Prof. Ole F. Kirkeby published a philosophical work about loyalty devoting chapter five to the destiny of unionism in Denmark (Kirkeby, 2002), which might have influenced Union X head office.

by new legislation, leading to the emergence of competing organisations not burdened by the old trade unions' institutionalised rights, that is, negotiation of collective agreements and improved working conditions in general.

Phase two - Union branch post merger and before closure
This sections deals with two discrete parts: i) participant observations as action researcher, office 1 and 2 and elected official meetings, and ii) interviews as action researcher during the transformation.

Moving affects people; that is mundane knowledge. We identify with where we live, our cars, workplaces, what is on the book shelf, each other etc. When I visited the two new locations, now both rented premises situated on the first floor in shopping malls, I reflected upon how this change in premises affected the people working there. I call the merged branch call Z and its two offices invented city names, one in Øred city and one in Åstad city.

Øred office is close to public transportation. It is easy to find since the well-known union X symbol hangs over the entrance door and a corresponding mark shows which bell to press to be admitted. The door is not open anymore as it used to be, since the entrance is shared with other companies. Walking up the staircase I wondered if this move would result in members getting the "final push"; searching for a union with a cheaper membership fee, now that they were faced with travelling to another part of the city; a development feared by some of the staff. Entering the office I was pleasantly surprised. Somehow they had managed to furnish the rooms as cosily as the last place, again with modern art on the walls. The division of the floor space seemed functional. The entrance was small, with a couple of chairs, a table and selves with folders and professional magazines. No one was waiting. The room was "member empty" expect for two service workers, one hidden behind a PC screen, the other standing behind the desk instructing a member on the telephone. I gave her a smile and entered the common room with its eight work places. People were sitting by their desks working, or moving around talking with each other. The desks were the latest model in office furniture, ergonomically correct, purchased by the safety representative after adoption in the Staff Club. I could hear the service worker talking which, combined with the other activities, felt rather noisy. I asked those present in the room how they felt in their new premises. A couple found

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the noise bothering, while others liked being close to their colleagues, sitting face to face with their team members or just turning their chairs and then having the option of contact. Walking across the room turning left through a door, there were four offices and a kitchen with a large dining table. The administrative staff including the administrative manager had their offices here. The elected manager had her office further down in combination with a large conference room. On the other side of the entrance was a long corridor with offices at both sides. These offices belonged to the unemployment fund team and the case workers, for use with their many member meetings. The sound level was fine here; only a few staff sat in their offices. I settled down in the waiting room. A few members arrived, all greeted with a smile and chitchat, while at the same time handling what they came for; efficient and with a good relational energy. When one needed to see a case worker, it was easily arranged. Usually these meeting had to be scheduled in advance, however today there was some free time. One of the service workers picked up the phone, which was quite busy. Some phone calls she just transferred, others she finished herself as a "mini case worker", I thought. She told me that today was peaceful and that I ought to come on a Mondays, which was a different matter altogether. I went back to the common room and sat on a table in the corner. One person worked with a new IT program, wanting to schedule her meetings for the next month; however, she could not make it work and asked for help, which she got instantly. I enquired into their cooperation that appeared to be informal peer training, and she replied: "we always ask those who are here". Two consultants entered the room. They had been conducting outreaching activities. As one consultant K said: "It costs nothing to ask and usually something comes out of it. Rather than preventing .. well, you know what I believe in, and it works. C is more of a stickler for the letter of law and I am the one who asks all the questions and listen. We are a jolly good team, the two of us". C adds: "I am more for law and regulations. I have been sitting on the other side and know what is lacking, not to mention, if we want people to join union X then we must show up". They told me that they were about to arrange an evening meeting down south. "It was fixed within a week", they said, "about stress management and competencies. Then there were some unorganised people who came forward and wanted to join and inquired about the price. I asked why they weren't organised and you know what, he said! That it was too expensive and that unions were careerist autocracies". Rather proudly K reiterated "too bad, if you are not organised then you can't attend; there is indeed a correlation between price and quality; either you join or you are on your own". They

explained how important it is to be visible and to act fast from "problem" received to solution proposed. The main tasks in their team up till then were coaching, teambuilding, competence development and stress management. By and large they were offering the management prevention rather than "fire-fighting".

It was difficult observing what was going on at the other end of the office because when they were on the phone or had a member meeting they closed the door. At lunch break most of the staff showed up little by little. I remained silent and tried to vanish into the background. They did not seem to care much about my presence, since they talked about what I believed to be sensitive matters, amongst them an email that had arrived today concerned with union X's strategy process and who was to attend. They commented about the process, that "it must be the wrong persons sitting there". And, "we must act upon this, informing the board to hear their opinion on the matter" – who is taking an initiative? The atmosphere was hectic with loud laughter when something a bit cheeky had been said. The mail also contained information about savings and cuts. Suddenly a conflict emerged between two consultants discussing trade union values, obviously connected to the cutting down proposals. J stated that "we must have a common position on what they (main federation) says", whereas K replied that she couldn't be bothered and that they have involved people who are supposed to take care of those matters. "You don't even know my attitude, now do you" J challenged K, who smoothed it out and left. The remaining persons then discussed what to do, "It's an affront to our values about transparency and involvement – shall we put pressure on or wait for the main board? The club is not represented – there are no employees – it is the management who has decided who should attend", and so continued the discussion. Finally, two of them volunteered to speak to the shop steward and left the room. One of the service workers then entered: "Our members, they only look at the price. Unions are an insurance policy to them and the yellow members[79] are just interested in a low price, however expecting us to be around when they need us for more serious cases, which the yellow unions don't have the capacity to handle". I asked how she sees the mission of their union today; a question she did not know how to answer. Walking around after the lunch break there was a meeting in the shop stewards office, door closed. Three people worked quietly, each at their desk. Phones were ringing and voices rose in the neighbouring rooms.

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[79] "The Yellows" – new trade unions are considered as unfair competition by the old guard because they offer reduced services at significantly lower fee, however market themselves as "unions", indicating they are equal to those unions, that for example negotiate wages.

Second observation in Øred office took place in the beginning of December. When I entered the reception it was Christmas, decorated in a very homely atmosphere. There were candles lit and pepper-cakes for common use on the desk. L was in the reception and we small-talked. The phone rang and I moved into the common room. Here as well, it was decorated with lit candles. Some desks had Christmas stuff on them, others not. This was a personal choice. I was told that they do the "pixie game". On the wall a calendar with gifts was hanging, where people took turns opening, one each day. Entering, I was met with greetings from the four persons in the room. J worked from K's desk as she was out working in the field. "That is great you came today" was J's first remark. "There are two, perhaps four that will be sacked". I inquired further into the matter. Everyone was talking at once with high energy, telling me that this was just their own budget showing deficit and not the strategy project, which comes later. Tomorrow they will know more, because there will be an orientation meeting. I noticed that they laughed and cracked jokes; they were not just depressed about the situation, more elated. Later, writing my reflections down, I was aware that I did not comment on my observations then, to them. I interpreted it as an expression of dark humour, a coping strategy to allow them to continue working without cracking up; at least I did not want them to crack and myself to get too involved. I asked about the political level, if they knew about any changes there. As far as they knew, two employees would have to go if they do not cut back on the elected salary budget; more precisely the elected managers. If that is not the case, then four will be sacked, besides P who stops in six months anyway. Together they developed views on whom it might be and the only option they saw was the elected former manager from branch Y, since the others work half time, and thus are not as expensive. J told me that branch Ys' former manager was fighting for his position. A phone rang and people attended to their business again. One and a half months has passed since I was here last. They have acquired green plants functioning as partitions between the workplaces. Compared with the other office the desks here are covered with paper and dossiers. The voice from the reception desk is being transmitted clearly "She is unfortunately busy at the moment, can I help you or do you want to call back?". She is very energetically service minded. I wondered how it is like to work in this uncertain downsizing situation and then all the extra noise; a frayed nervous system, most likely? A had a flag on her table. She told me that her colleagues had put it there because she had completed her chemotherapy regimen and it has to be celebrated. We talked about her experiences with the treatment. T joked about her desk and all the papers

on it: "I must have a must have a larger desk". J crossed the room with some papers in her hand asking F for help saying: "or are you going to be sacked too?" A person from the unemployment fund entered with a paper and approached T inquiring about a member. G joined them. The elected branch Z manager entered, said hallo out in the room, noticed the flags and asked: "who's birthday"? G told her what it meant. "Right, great", she said, about to continue into her office. I greeted her. She apologised that she had not noticed me until now and moved on, determined, I thought. I imagined that she went to speak with the administrative manager about the upcoming orientation meeting. It is not an easy task deciding who they will have to lay off. If the elected manager from branch Z was amongst them, then I imagined there would be hard political struggles. T spoke out in the room, saying that her "pixie" hadn't visited yet. T guessed that it might be the former branch Y elected manager, stating polemically "then not much will happen". T had to put a "teasing pixie" on him, so he could get his act together. D, a service worker entered and they kept talking about Christmas decorations and sackings. D said that four employees will be fired if the elected branch Y manager does not resign. After careful consideration she decided that it must be in order to give me a print of the information they received. She returned with some papers and two baby quilts she made for her daughter-in-law, "then she can choose herself which one". A inquired about their relationship now, and D went back to the service desk. J was busy on the phone, handling a case where some union X's members employed in another trade union did not have any agreement and had not acted to get one. Now one of them called, dissatisfied with not having had the expected wage increase. J talked with shop steward from the other union. "There isn't any law I can use to knock him in the head with" – I will investigate the case, however it is not anything I will spend much time on. I recognise a 'no' when I hear one", she told me. The underlying frustration here, which I heard articulated before, is that some members do not take any responsibility for their own situation, and then they get annoyed when union X can't help them. In the background two persons spoke about the upcoming firing. "It is not possible to keep a person with such a large salary, I mean, that is two person's wage full time". "We cannot do a damn thing about it anyway. The only thing we can do is to decide if we will jump right away or wait and see who of us lingers". A uttered something about the firings, while reading a mail. "Gosh, A you really are behind. We spoke about that on Sunday. The proposed strategy plan will centralise and regionalise, leaving trifles to the branches". They then started a discussion about the principle of

subsidiary, and that now for certain, the members *will* leave in droves. "J: "I have started to look for jobs, what about you". A: "well, I guess I cannot apply". G laughs saying: "Well no, you are probably not the most attractive manpower just now", referring to her recent illness. J ponders: "I am uncertain if I want to remain a consultant or return as case-worker".

The administrative manager sat in his office, looking tired. I asked how things were at the moment. He replied" I am as open as I can, and probably more than many others, I believe. It calms things. They trust that I tell them whenever I know. As soon as I am able to put names on I will tell them; they won't have to wait. Politically the situation is tense. The two elected are discussing the matter right now, so then we must see". In the next office sat C, busy with figures on a screen. A member entered and J showed him to the meeting room. The white board covering most of one wall depicted the same drawings as last time, with the addition of a calendar and a comic strip about getting new knowledge. The common room was almost empty. A worked behind the screen, and a member was being served. A left the room quietly. H entered and I greeted her. She did not know that I would be here today, which reminded me how difficult it is, to not get information out, but to make people attend to it. "Figure-ground", I thought. I asked her if she believed that sitting in the common room, people were better informed. She did not think so, and she was just happy that she had her own office and did not have to sit in here. Perhaps moving into a common room would have been good for her, I thought by myself; being part of rather than apart from the others. The two service workers were busy at the service desk. I could not help thinking how important these functions are for the overall work; the functional glue if it works well. How little it is appreciated; often in words, but definitely not financially. M arrived from the other office, in order to talk with N. It was lunchtime and L asked if she could go first. D was at the phone "is it Pia I speak with?" I was impressed that she remembered the name. D told her to call the counsellors at the trade school and "if they can't help you, call back, then we will see to get it resolved". She told me that there were only few left who had worked here for many years, thus knowing many persons in the local environment. Some come in just for a chat. A couple of days ago a women came around to talk about her sick husband, she just needed to talk. A couple entered. The wife was fired because of re-organisation and she has never been unemployed before. D asks them to sit down, offers them coffee and pepper-cakes and shows her the forms she has to fill in. "When you are ready there will be a caseworker, who will speak with you". At the lunch break four persons plus I were sitting in the kitchen talking, when an unemployment

staff member entered to fetch her lunch box. "The unemployment staff never joins and eat with us. They keep to themselves. They would benefit from relaxing during lunch hours, I reckon", one said when the unemployment staff member had left the room.

C introduced a report about union X responded to by A: " I simply don't use time reading all that which is changed anyway on the next meeting. I wait until the practical consequences are announced; otherwise I am just interpreting; a waste of time and paper. Likewise with the minutes, they only reveal what people want them to". In the common room J picked up her phone. It is C asking why her mobile phone is on. "Everyone here uses his or her mobile", she replies. "That is much too expensive" C ended the conversation. I wonder why C did not just walk in here less than 10 meters. J mumbled "that is f...then I just don't bring my mobile phone". C entered and J asked her how she diverts the phone. C explained again that it is much too expensive. J was backed by T saying that they were told not to let the phone ring in the open space". I could not help noticing the tension in the room. C left. Later when T and J went shopping, T reminded J to bring her mobile phone. "Hell no", she says, "let it ring".

The office in Åstad is difficult to find. You have to enter a shopping mall and in a corner of the mall is a door with the union X symbol on it; not easily noticed. Behind the door, a staircase leads to the first floor, where the office is. It appeared small, however cosy. The entrance contained two wooden chairs and a coat rack. There was a desk separating the entrance and the rest of the premises, in spite of which members were able to see everything that was going on. They had to create the barrier, they told me, because the members, when entering, went straight to the person they knew best, irrespective as to whether they were busy with other chores. The room was rectangular, with several big windows on one side and 4 desks. On the other side was one desk, some cabinets and a door leading into a kitchen and dining area. This room functioned also as a meeting room and storage place. The walls were decorated with modern art similar to the other office. The staff members had insisted on bringing the art from branch Y and were allowed to decorate the office themselves. Upon my arrival I told them to pretend "I am not here", which made them laugh, for it would be hard to find a place where I could sit without being too close to any of them. Soon some small-talked about a specific case and others joked about shopping. S volunteered to buy what the office needs; more jokes about toilet paper, how many pieces each can use until a new supply is purchased. I spoke with M about moving to the other office in Øred. "We are one big family

here, not that we meet privately, but here at work we are doing great together. It is with mixed feelings that I move but it gives room to another person to be trained and then it is better sitting here". M recalled a manager they once had and how that situation taught them to stick together. "Well, a few left, but it is us here who stayed".

A member arrived, was met at the desk and directed to the case worker. Here there was no privacy. The member and the caseworker spoke with each other in front of everybody, but it seemed to work. When the member had left, the interactions continued. Another members showed up, was greeted by L, who turned around looking at the two caseworkers with eyes signalling which of you two will serve her? They communicated non-verbally and the member was directed to S. Her phone was diverted to M. It all happened smoothly. They managed to keep the member in focus all the time. I found myself filled with admiration. Suddenly one of them said: "We know very well what is going to happen", referring to the newspapers and the strategy paper and then, correcting himself, "well not concretely, because there are lots of rumours. If there will be three unemployment entities …" and was interrupted by L who said: "five unemployment funds spread over Denmark. There are some who needs to search for other jobs". She belonged to the unemployment fund staff. Two members arrived at the same time. They knew each other and slipped into the chairs, absorbed by their chat. M had to call out the name several times before getting any reaction. I noticed how fast the staff managed to establish an intimate tone, using the member's first name, referring to previous talks and events, etc. C (normally working from Øred) had a meeting here in their kitchen/lunch room. He opened the door and addressed M. A man peeped out the door opening. M whispered to me about how many times one gets interrupted per day in an open office. C ended the meeting and saw the two persons out. He returned to the last desk and spoke in his mobile phone. Members kept coming and phones kept ringing. Somehow I got a much more busy impression here, compared with Øred office. M took a phone call from a colleague in Øred. In a slightly teasing tone she said" well, *we* are busy here". I noticed that all the women picked up phones, spoke with members and each other, but the one man did not. Even when everybody was busy with members, he did not pick up the phone. Nobody commented on that.

My second observation took place one month later in Åstad. I wanted to buy fresh bread for the morning coffee and poked my head in enquiring how many would be at work today. S answered that they were reduced by two persons, R was fired and L had been moved to Øred.

She could also tell me that H too was fired in Øred. I must have looked very serious since S put on a crying face and sniffed. "I called her several times and she is just fine; in fact much better than we are. It was exactly such a kick that she needed to move on", she explained. I made coffee and told them to grab a bite when they had time. S and I sat down and talked about the firing process. She and the other shop steward had been informed two days previously. "It was hard not being allowed to say anything. My colleagues asked me of course, but I could not tell". The two managers arrived in the morning and spoke with R. S joined as shop steward. R wanted an instant release, which she got. She wouldn't talk with anybody so she just packed her things and left. The administrative manager seemed most affected by the situation, S said, and added "He (the administrative manager) is actually OK in terms of giving the laid off staff a decent severance package". I was surprised that those who were fired had to leave instantly, but those were the rules, although I thought a trade union would act differently. P joined us. He told me about their experiences of being a self-organising team, how they organised based on principles and the struggle they had when adjusting to the changing realities. He said: "I expected that a responsible management would sit down with us and plan how we could re-organise. I mean, there are limits for our internal flexibility. The situation showed with painful clarity that we are subject to environmental changes. Furthermore we do not account for resources, thus putting self-governing in perspective". P and S reflected on their organising and interaction; how difficult it was to keep constructive cooperation. They tried several time to structure their work with an agenda, being very result oriented. It did not last, however, as they returned to talk about "the others", gossiping instead. One of them said. "We probably felt a bit isolated or abandoned here". In their reflections, the team structure became salient. They were so few sitting here trying to make their day efficient and then they belonged to teams in Øred. "It was very easy to feel like an outsider, fantasising that the others blamed us for not doing enough, so we noted all the member turn-outs we had in a month. Unfortunately, we did not register the time and complexity of each case, but we counted 130 that month, which felt good". Our talk ended with them speaking about how they could possibly run the office with their current staffing. I picked up a despondent and defeatist feeling.

Observations from the elected officials meetings

The meeting was a planned conference aimed at interaction between the different sectors with elected officials and the staff. The staff arranged the conference in agreement with the chair

manager. There was an agenda starting at nine, an hour's lunch break and close at half past five. There was no extravagancy, and the elected officials spent their Sunday here unpaid. I wondered about what the personal gains might be. (I return to this issue in the interviews, but also mention it here in conjunction with the conference) A persistent label clinging to trade unions is that of union careerists or "insider nepotism" ('pamperi' in Danish); namely that trade union elected and employees eat, drink, and travel luxuriously with the member's money. The trade unions try to counteract the claims through information on the homepages, but it seems to be an image that is hard to get rid of.

It was the first time all the elected officials met since the merger. People arrived and spoke with those they already knew, forming small groupings. During my previous work, I got to know most, but not all. An elected official approached me and spoke about how busy and stressed they were with all the mergers and re-structuring at her work place. The participants were requested to sit down. Again they grouped in their sectors, with the employees placed in the back of the room, except for the administrative managers, who sat on the front row. I focused on the presentations made by each leading person and the reaction from the "audience"; hence interaction in the room in context of the structured agenda. According to Goffman (1969), all self-presentations are situated within interactive institutionalised frameworks permeated by the positioning of bodies in relation to the physical features of settings. By closely observing the façade that each "performer" seeks to acquire in their interaction with others, the intimate connection between context of interaction and "productions of self" becomes visible. From a gestalt paradigm perspective you would rather talk about contact and the creation of common/divergent figures in the room; the grace and fluidity (Zinker, 1994) by which each person "moves" in their interactions with others in the situation totally, which might call for awareness on emerging boundary constructions and identity negotiations, reminding me of the utter subjectivity of the observer. "At the boundary we discover what we are in what we are not" (Jenkins, 2004:79). Hence, I observed the presentations, but also the validating (or not) responses, in the interface between self-image and public image.

The presentations took place in hegemonial order; the chair manager had the first words, welcoming everybody, followed by the administrative manager, who explained the purpose of the meeting and the program content and agenda, followed by a brief presentation by each person present in the room. I had 15 minutes to make a brief summary of the PhD project.

People responded by nodding and humming. I encouraged questions, but none were asked. A few did offer comments such, as 'interesting' and 'important work', and a critical remark was made about the usefulness to members. To my surprise, this was responded to by an employee who said that she personally had had the advantage of talking with me and she was certain that their self-awareness on "how they did what they did", in the end would be beneficial to their members. Some persons applauded, and I thought: "Here we go", the symbolic support utterance had people in the room identify with, not only content but also their allies (Spears, 2011), which made groupings become prominent (Vignoles, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2011). I gave a short answer as to how I believed it to be potentially beneficial to members and then left the stage to the chair manager for her presentation of what she believed to be of importance in her/ union work.

Listening to the next presentations I noticed that I changed between evaluating and observing. The evaluating contained several processes, comparing with other similar presentations; however de-contextualised in the start. For example, I found the chair's presentation rambling; I wondered what the main message was. When I looked around, however, people seemed to listen carefully. My expectation was higher, that is, where was the political dynamite; that she would be able to "sell a message". People probably did not mind, since they knew her and had chosen her for quite a few years by now. The culture was less about attempting to understand; that is to say asking enlarging questions. Instead it was more about giving one's own opinions on the matter, or lifting other issues of importance, but not relevant to what was just said. When people responded in this manner the chairman reinforced her previous statement. It seemed as if people expected this to happen and did not care much. However, I experienced some tension. I pondered about my own norms phrased in gestalt terminology as 'contact' and a mutual exploration of "figure/ground" relations. I did not observe the building of a 'we' through genuine individual questions and responses. The next presenter was the vice chair. His presentation was more fluent, content wise alike, but also without any clearly articulated main message. Perhaps neither of them had any clear "picture" about how to "navigate" the union branch through the crisis? People in the room interrupted him several times, shouting funny remarks; obviously this interaction manifested itself differently. It did not seem to bother him and he kept the line in his story. Disrupting the expected authoritative hierarchy, the vice administrative manager spoke next. She was, precise, used humour and outlined what she was going to speak about, and did it. Perhaps

being employed was easier, speaking in a political environment? The administrative manager came next. He appeared calm, spoke to people and with them. There were many questions about the organising of the branch, information flow, and tasks, but not about how he performed his leadership. 'No personal questions, yet', I wrote down. When he placed a single overhead with a bit of smeared ink, people laughed and he admitted that it was not one of his competencies.

These four speakers provided lots of information, which I would have inquired into, if I was elected officials, such as what effect will 'New X' get on the future operations, and what then are the expectations for the elected? The chairman placed a question, but then took over and talked about union X's vision and mission, recently formulated by a work group and decided by the main board. Suddenly more remarks were made, stating: "too many words, not catchier, a more straightforward style would be preferable". "That is how democracy works", she said, ..."now we must be loyal to the decision taken". "But we must fight to have it changed" one continued. The chair repeated 'we' must accept it and then 'we' might have it changed in the long term". The time keeper interrupted, and the communication ended there; in my mind, unfinished. According to the gestalt paradigm unfinished situations generate tension through retained energy (Lewin, 1997a:175). There are however many possible interpretations, a power game, a long time dyadic relationship, an individual habit, etc. The four sector chairs came next, one after the other. The first had prepared PowerPoint slides, but had problems finding them on his PC. I was stunned by the reactions, the jokes and outburst of laughter, with an undertone of ridicule, especially when the next presenters kept commenting on his difficulties, such as one saying: "My presentation isn't as large but if I fiddle enough with my papers I might spend as much time as Q (name)". Or another "If you can help me with my overheads Q, I need to expand time". Q did not try to stop the remarks; rather his behaviour reminded me of what I have seen before; withdrawal of energy, body posture shrinking a bit and him partly joins the jokes, partly deflecting them. Jenkins (2004:75) mentions deviance as part of categorisation, labelling and identity generation. Issues of deviation came to mind when listening to Q's rhetoric. He was by far the most orthodox in his employer/wage-earner attitudes; a propagandist more likely to be found in a more militant Danish union than in union X. Another perspective could be that of gender. Two thirds of the members of union X are women, which are reflected in the group of elected officials. Nonetheless, I did not observe any tendency amongst the men or women to

specifically support each other, hence creating in and out groups based on gender categorisation (Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock, 1996).

Watching the interaction in the room, I found that the individuals navigated between conflicting identity-demands, and reconciling the tensions called forth through negotiating their self-definitions amidst various roles with associated identification and relationships (Kreiner et al., 2006a). The employees presented in groupings, mostly as the formal teams, each told of an event from their practice. The teamwork was based on their mutual support for each other during the presentation, for example, by giving appreciative feedback openly, asking questions, etc. It was positive stories that worked very well, leaving the impression of innovation, new thinking and expanding work areas. A single "attack" was made on those other trade unions that sponge on union X's work. Union X negotiates collective agreements with companies, and it is this bargaining that the "yellow unions" exploit without having done anything themselves, consequently offering their members a lower fee; a total lack of solidarity. This theme could gather all, existential as it is to trade union X survival. What was not discussed in relation to the theme as if unions ought to compete, hence spending money on image and marketing?

I found that the staff introduced what they have become, both in terms of functions (what they do) and methods (how they do it) in a lively, entertaining manner. In the end of the presentations were launched in a more process oriented manner. The UC team had us play a voting game, standing up and voting with our feet. Although a little hesitant, people stood up and huddled together in a corner of the room, before the team encouraged us (I joined) to move into two groups. There was much laughter before returning back to the usual presentation. They explained: "We have moved away from management by rules and regulations and towards process, keeping increased sales in focus, what are the needs of our members". They referred to success case where a hostile business owner changed his point of view through their mutual cooperation. Spontaneous appreciative comments followed from the audience. They taught theories parallel to their presentation of their own functions. Finally, the cooperation with shop stewards was brought forth. They are to be trade union ambassadors, have a much more advanced position and better education. After the lunch break people were divided into three groups by their own preference. This resulted in one big group without any formal manager, and two smaller groups with each an elected manager. The staff went downstairs to debrief. The groups had a couple of key questions to discuss.

There seemed to be good energy and lively discussions. I noticed that I did not pick up any clues of former branch groupings, which I expected to. There were no systematic statements given from their discussion. Rather the discussion aimed at them getting to know each other. The conference ended with feedback provided from each sector, in general positive, with some future suggestions. The chair ended the day by saying: "After today no-one will doubt that you all do an excellent job. You are true professionals. We will all be better ambassadors for our branch. In the new structure we will see to it that we keep as many of you as possible". I found this remark remarkable, even more so when stripped from its context. Nobody seemed to react. Perhaps they all knew that they had to downsize and calmly waited to see what happened next, or perhaps they deflected this kind of information, convincing themselves that everything would be all right. Soft drinks, beer and wine were wheeled in, along with some snacks, enabling a smooth ending of the day letting people mingle and chat.

In the following I discuss the observations, reflections and interpretations made "over the years" selected and accounted for above in the light of literatures presented in the literature review chapter. In this part discussion I draw mainly on two clusters, leaving the gestalt cluster for the final discussion after the presentation of interview accounts. The gestalt paradigm is sparse in its formulation on identity, which became obvious when I worked with the matrix sheet. The numerous research articles on identity and identity work from established scientific schools provides a difference in precision and articulation of concepts.

Discussion part one

Social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 2004) maintains that organisational identification is a specific form of social identification. Individuals gain enhanced self-esteem not only by identifying with their organisation, but also from those work-groups to which they belong. Through classifying and categorising "the other" human beings order their social environment, thus reducing complexities and uncertainties, as they are themselves classified and categorised; often without their knowledge (Jenkins, 2004). These persons, their roles and interactions, the groupings, whether formal or emerging, their changing organisational environment and how they identify with and differentiate from what and when are illuminated in the above case descriptions. It does, however also illustrate the personal impact, when a person's self-concept contains or do not contain, the same attributes as those in the perceived organisational identity (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994) and the work done organising the fields of interest and power (Melnick & Nevis, 2009).

To my surprise the change in location did not seem to matter much. Never did I hear anyone speak about the effect of moving to smaller premises in terms of self-esteem. When I asked how it felt to move, the answers I got were practical, rather than self-referential. I based my assumptions on how they had furnished their offices, and suspected that the modern art and expensive furniture was incorporated in their self-understanding as an organisation and thus also in terms of personal status and self-esteem. The employees in Åsted did emphasise the importance of having the art from their former office and decorating the new one themselves. I interpret this as a combination of mourning their loss of branch Y, boundary establishment (Barth, 1969), and power manifestations, as much as an issue of self-worth (Alvesson & Willmott, 2004). What I found distinctive was their strategy of the changing of the trade union's reason d'être, namely what they believed to be their mission, how they explained their members' needs, the members work-place including the employers, and how these tasks should be accomplished. The initial definition of organisational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985) outlined three criteria, identity as a statement of central character, as claimed distinctiveness, and as temporal continuity. The statement of central character claimed by the branch clearly distinguished it from other union branches. However, as I learned through the interviews, boundaries in relation to, for example process consultancy services, seemed blurred. Empirically, Albert et al.(1985) state that organisations will provide an array of answers to what they perceive as essential features depending on how they interpret the nature and purpose of the inquiry (Ibid:91). This notwithstanding, what is perceived as essential characteristics influence decision making activities, and consequently leadership, which includes concerns about how future activities might impact core organisational identity.

Albert et al.'s (Ibid) second criterion addresses the interrelatedness of identification and identity. "Organizations define who they are by creating or invoking classification schemes and locating themselves within them" (Ibid:92). Proportionate uniform identity claims are made in the text above. The last of Albert et al.'s criterion concern identity over time, hence by default change. Change implies gains as well as losses, joy as well as mourning and grief, including those rituals by which people handle the change results (Weick and Quinn, 1999). As I described, some consultants left the organisation, either because they became ill or applied for jobs elsewhere. They could no longer identify with the revised organisational identity, their role, functions and status. The struggle between the teams can also be seen as

expressions of discrepancies between "what we believe we are here for and how this is best accomplished".

Organisational identity as a collective 'shared belief' is problematic. Firstly, if it is understood as a summary of the branch members' beliefs, then not everyone in the union branch agreed to the advanced identity claim. Besides those who left, other employees withdrew and kept silent as will be shown in the second round interviews. The importance of having a job surpassed meaningfulness and consistency between personal self-definition, social identities and organisational identification (Watson, 2008). The 'I' is part of a communal 'We' from quite different prerequisites. Secondly, if 'shared belief' resembles an "emerging gestalt" due to group dynamics (Gaffney, 2010) and group mind, then this development happens over time and includes issues of inclusion and exclusion, and power, which takes us back to the problem of defining or rather delimiting collectivity. Huzzard et al. (2002) call organisations where visions, values and ideologies are not shared, perhaps even conflicting, for hypocrisies, characterised by divergent norms and stakeholder identities, and suggest setting aside any "community spirit" ambitions on behalf of the organisation.

Managing organisational change involves mechanisms of control, which in post-modern times and in western societies are well executed though identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott 2004), which they define as "discursive practices concerned with identity definition that condition processes of identity formation and transformation" (Ibid: 445). I found the data from this thesis supporting Alvesson et al.'s identity regulation model, especially their emphasis on "specific events, encounters, transitions, experiences, surprises, as well as more constant strains, that serve to heighten awareness of the constructed quality of self-identity and compel more concentrated identity-work"(Ibid:444). In such difficult situations it is not only possible but natural to "swap masks" or do "face-work" (Goffman, 1969) which might be a better term denoting it's outright relational and social character. The interacting observed, interpreted and described above needs bearing in mind the political context where several and often conflicting agendas' are negotiable, thus "face-work" becomes prominent. That is to say, moral reasoning (Hardy & Carlo, 2011) supports the right to deliberately wear different "faces", justifying potentially inauthentic self experience. Clarkson et al. (1992) state that without relationships, adults cannot thrive. They offer a typology of five types of

relationships, the human motivation behind each, how each contributes to the organisation and signs as to when the relationship becomes dysfunctional. Besides the typology I would add that relationships develop over time and in different contexts. Some of the elected and employees are friends outside their organisational life, which might or might not be known by others. How friendships and other relationships that are handled inside the organisation take several forms. Often they are hidden and/or interactions are minimised or avoided when monitored by others. Social democrats and trade unions have often been accused of cronyism, hence downplaying any such possible interpretations in public. Some talk about their friendships, but cautiously in larger gatherings. Manoeuvring in a complex field like this, where several major changes have taken or are taking place, and in which people need to iteratively and recursively reorient themselves, their relations and identifications, their self-definitions and motivations, is an eminent expression of 'identity work' as I see it. This includes existential motives, such as search for meaning, inclusiveness, immortality, and empowerment, being part of the on-going identity work (Spinelli, 2008).

Extracted from the different situations and discussion above I query six themes:

1. Responding to on-going organisational changes during a decade
2. Search for and manoeuvring controversial construed organisational identity
3. Identity regulations as management control
4. Salient existential motives governing interaction
5. Salient 'I' and 'We' dynamics
6. Boundary maintenance

In this chapter I have mainly applied identity theories (personal, social and organisational) in my discussion since these theories aim at the understanding and answering of identity related questions in specific ways which a gestalt paradigm does only implicitly refer to. This is not to indicate that the gestalt paradigm cannot sufficiently inquire into these matters, which the previous exposition proved it to be very capable at within the comprehensive epistemological and philosophical framework. It is rather reasoned in concerns of quality assessment. Firstly, it is an expression of "critical reflextion" (Alvesson, 2003) in similar ways as shown in my interview matrix (Appendix IV, p.223). Secondly, "abductively discovered orders are neither (preferred) constructions nor (valid) reconstructions, but usable (re-)constructions" (Reichertz, 2004). I found it important to utilise a terminology that appeared recognisable and sensible, to the readers. Finally, and related to the two first mentioned concerns, it is reasoned

in Lucy Yardley's (in Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009: 180-183) four quality assessment principles, that of contextual sensitivity, of commitment and rigour, of transparency and coherence, less, but still, that of impact and importance[80].

Chapter 7 – Making sense of people making sense

The previous chapter described and interpreted observations derived from six circumstances[81] which are now being applied as headlines in apprehending informants' identity work. Hence this chapter elaborates the answers to the research questions 3 and 4 posed in chapter 1, how the elected officials and employees made sense of their experiences when part of the organisation was closed down, and how this compare to identity work literature in and around organisations; particularly from a gestalt perspective. The analysis, discussion and subsequent theory development builds on the interplay between theories presented in the review chapter, my previous knowledge and experiences as a gestalt practitioner, and empirical data (Figure 1. p. 8). I made a choice not to present "persons", but to let the accounts present field phenomena. As I began structuring the interviews I found myself in the "mists of analysing" the individual; mist, because my research aim is exploring identity work in the context of organisational change and not "personal identity". This gave me a genuine experience and understanding as to why so much writing from gestalt practitioners is used as guidelines for leaders. In my case the embodied individual was easier to fixate and attribute an identity. In my coding I noticed that individual "traits" did not seem to matter much. It was I who carried many impressions and feelings towards each person. In terms of categorisations, gender did matter for some and not for others. Age was a category that almost half of the informants spoke about; however not theirs, but their members' age. Their personal background did not seem to matter to them. I had the idea that upbringing in a social democrat family with attachment to union movement, for example, would make a difference in recruitment and affiliation. This was not the case.

Firstly, I present the informant accounts, structured under each of the six headlines[82] mentioned above and analysed in a way that is consistent with the gestalt paradigm as

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[80] The last mentioned of Yardley's (in Smith et al., 2009: 180-183) four principles I find more important when assessing the research in its totality in terms of adding value to society. It can, however, also be applied as a sub-evaluation particular in phase of analysis and that of presentation of results.
[81] I use the term 'circumstances' in order to include my previous long term work with the organisation and relationship with the persons working there.

contrasted with identity theories. The analysis is grounded in abductive inferencing, as argued in chapter five, "an attitude towards data and towards one's own knowledge: data are to be taken seriously, and the validity of previously developed knowledge to be queried" (Flick, Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004: 164). The subsequent discussion results in theory development based on breaking down the ontology (chapter 4) in formulations of 10 axiomatic assumptions about identity work in organisations concluding with a definition of identity work in an organisational context.

Responding to ongoing organisational changes during a decade

During most of eight years in which I had contact with the union branches, subsequently branch, it underwent many work related changes. Mergers and organisational decline are assumed to have significant effects on members' identification with their organisation, thus impacting their self-concept (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Furthermore, on-going organisational changes show mixed impact on members, not necessary leading to the desired outcome (Beech et al., 2008). I use "responding" in the Latin root translation "offering something in return" (The New Oxford Dictionary, 1998). It denotes embodied reactions to experiences before or with awareness, thus based on a broader meaning than mere reflection, albeit also including this. There were many responses to union X "behaviour"[83] during and beyond these years. In these accounts, the informants include themselves and their branch in the bigger union X. There was clear awareness of the emergency; that something had to be done to counteract the situation. However, *how* to respond *collectively* was a major challenge. This statement was made before the closure was announced: "*We need to save these many, many [DKK] millions; otherwise we will have to close this "corner shop" within so and so many years. Nothing had really happened, were it not for the economy. And that is what is wrong. It was something we ought to have done many years ago. Not because of the economy but adapting to the world we live in. This is what I so often said, that we should take part of the world. We should not be apart from it, as we have been far too long*". The sadness in this statement incorporates self-support articulating 'I' in 'WE', "*what I so often said*". The gestalt paradigm explains why people in everyday life do not notice that they themselves contribute to change; that they take part of the organising. "*Everyday*" in an existential sense is meant to

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[82] I must underscore that the headlines provide an artificial division of the otherwise prodigious and intertwined processes that human organisation represents.
[83] "Behaviour" is used to indicate that organisations do not behave; humans do. It is however ordinary parlance. Furthermore, when informants speak about union X they often move between I, them, us, we, and it.

designate habitual and patterned organising, often scheduled and performed routinely without paying attention to the inherent processes. The world of everyday life is an "instrumental world" which the existent manipulate in numerous ways out of practical concerns, potential serviceable to his/her needs (Lewin, 1997b;Macquarrie, 1972). Perceptually, the world consists of instrumental interlocking "things" (Sartre, 2004), where the one implies the other, categorised in systems and sub-systems. When life passes habitually, energy is focused on the "potentiality" inherent in "things". These modes of "being" and "becoming" are described through the self-concept (Philippson, 2009). The gestalt paradigm predicts that change takes place at the boundary between me/not me, heightening awareness of "what is", mobilising energy in order to form a clear figure of interest, scanning the environment, touching /being touched by the novel and assimilating (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972). It is when something goes wrong; when the patterns fracture, that the immense complexity comes to attention, becomes figural, and evokes uncertainties. An employee explained why some persons left due to physical reactions during the changes *"Most of us have been here for many years and has … hmmm ... lived in a particular culture for many years, so I believe it's a bit of uncertainty about that, well now it must be in a new way. Perhaps I do no longer posses the abilities to perform the task ...hmm ... in the old structure I might have been able to glide and a stay hidden because I roughly knew how things worked, without everything needing to come to the surface and so forth. So I think it was a little self-protectiveness, fear of being unable to cope. Imagine if all the others discovered that I have been sitting here for 20 years and quite inept in every respect, right"*. This is a view that contains multilevel interpretations. First of all, she utilises herself as object in the narrative, which softens the critical voice behind. There was an old norm that you did not "rat on" your colleagues. It was a management's task to find out which employees did not perform as expected. This attitude changed somewhat with the team structure and new work methods. Furthermore, this was also influenced by the departure of persons holding specific positions. They were ascribed as well as allowed to hold "laid back" attitudes. The quotation bridges controversies between personal identity theory and social identity theory (Stets & Burke, 2000) . Analytically, it might be useful, as a means of complexity reduction, to distinguish between the two; the former having a focus on roles, including processes of identification, self-verification and self-efficacy, and the latter a focus on categories and groups, including processes of self-categorisation, depersonalisation, and self-esteem. Simplistically put, it is a matter of which is assumed to be primary source of

identity construction. 'Identity work' covers both processes. I will return to this issue under the headline of 'I' and 'We', and continue with responses to perceived radical change and emotional responses.

"It's been going on for a very long time and it still goes on, you know, really compact. Now we have to get through this summer vacation and we get to learn something here in August.....well, it's almost impossible....Your head turns gray. You tread water, while you know that in a short while a wave is approaching, right! And you still can't.....I at least, can't get ready for it because I do not really know what it is". In these situations identity questions becomes salient or, in Pratt's (2012) metaphor having identity resembling an air bag. It emerges when the car stops abruptly. Beyond mere organism/environment interaction in the "here and now", *human development* is understood as ongoing gestalt formation and destruction, where each new gestalt-figure integrates in, and thus re-organises the ground. The re-organised ground pre-structures the perceptual field and so on, furthering the ability to manipulate gradually more complex phenomena. Hence, not only do we grow more sophisticated in our manipulation of the world; we change as persons in the process. The employees, unlike the elected officials, were faced not only with losing their workplace but also their income. The energy is prominent in the metaphor utilised above. This can be reasoned that the ground (who she is at this moment) does not support the described figure building, meaning-making, and desired action. However, it can also be interpreted structurally, as institutionalised constraints; for example, that union agreement procedures must be kept, or culturally as a principle of equality. Absence of leadership was a fact, since the manager resigned and left within fourteen days after the announcement of the closure. This was as obvious part of the informant's life-space, as it was influencing the field forces at that moment.

Searching for and manoeuvring controversially construed organisational identity

"But someone said" You can't call 'the Christians' a trade union". Yes, [you can], that is what they themselves say they are. So I reckon that is what they are, right". The dispute about what a trade union is, its reason d'être, has been going on for many years. The above-mentioned Christian union has existed almost as long as the "real" unions. It is labelled along with other private initiatives doing "union business" as the 'yellow unions'. In "real unions" elected officials have politically influence in various ways outside the union. This is spoken about with pride, however also in relation to the yellow unions, as unfair competition. The

latter exploit the efforts made by the former when they struggle for better work conditions through collective bargaining; a process that is costly, generating expenses which the "real union" members must pay. Increased competition necessitated organisational differention, which combined with decline fuelled a search for a new organisational identity, framed by an elected official in terms of searching for union reason d´être: *"like the good old days, Thomas said in his time, we have triumphed to hell. It fits well, even more today. Care days and ... longer maternity leave, and longer holidays. All of these benefits ... now, what are we going to achieve? What is our purpose? Our old purpose has been achived a long time ago"*. In their research conducted with a Norwegian trade union, Huzzard et al. (2002:53) found 'identity claims' similar to those I found in the Z branch, such as those that claimed an identity as 'the traditional union', 'the insurance company', 'the coach', and 'the competent partner'. The rationale for adopting a new identity conception was reflected in an observed changed employee–employer relationship, which was argued to be much tighter, and the employee more loyal to his/her employer, than their union. Societal efforts were better invested in educating the workforce and providing better work condition, thus increasing employers' appreciation of the work force in Denmark and hindering the desertion of industries. Branch Z adopted an organisational identity consisting of a mixture of roles: 'process consultant', 'coach', and 'insurance company', metaphorically speaking. The traditional union identity, representing the individual wage-earner, defending employment laws and conducting negotiations, was spoken of as matter of course, however downplaying the role of "defender". *" I would like to help to ensure the low wage people, as we have done for many years. But to me, the future of branch Z is about helping to develop our members and that we also have a duty to do so"*. This remark incorporates traditional conceptions with images of the ideal organisation; a statement that indicates the "social actor" influence to a higher degree than in Dutton et al.'s (1994) identification model. The approach towards the employers was that of "competent partners" and not as "beating the employer over the head" which was the expression of 'process consultant identity' advocates. "*Market economy mind-set, including customer loyalty, right! It is not a trade union thing; probably because my basic idea is we need to act like businesses. Now we live in free competition and there are more and more players in the field, we need to think like a company*". The inter-organisational comparison opens up for adapting processes (Lerpold, 2003). It does, however, also trigger employee and elected officials identity work; that is their re-evaluation of perceived organisational identity

and its correlation with their life-space (Lewin, 1997a). Some carried social movement values expressed throughout the change process as *"We have both the small private members out there, but we also have very great obligation to go out helping to shape this society. We are, mind you, the second largest trade union in Denmark so ...."*. The attempt to maintain the total organisation as one, while incorporating the many different ideas about what a union was and should be, is easily interpreted as an existential struggle for what "I hold dear". These interactions were about their lifeblood; deep-rooted beliefs[84]. Hence, the many autonomous branches and political groupings disagreed and no collective action was taken. *"But we don't sit down … it's probably all this struggle that is taking place throughout the organisation about who has the power. The elected officials? Is it the managers, who must try to hold things together? Is it the employees who have the power? Is it the branches or is the union in power? Is it the sectors that are in power, or all the national associations? I mean, with what are the members to identity"?* This phenomenon is understood by Hatch et al (2004) as organisational narcissism. Their organisational identity dynamic model suggests that such a dysfunction emerges from a self-referential construction of identity. Organisational members' focus is intra-organisational, or centripetal, without any serious wish neither to listen to external stakeholders, nor attach importance to "impressing" their environment; for example, through a marketing strategy, a wished for initiative which was debated down to a lukewarm compromise. Hatch et al.'s model, based on Mead (1934), is reminiscent of the gestalt paradigm's conceptualisation of 'self', in that both build on dynamic boundary understandings. Their model is strong in its specification of and coherence with those dynamics that construct an organisational identity, which, however, presents two problems. The first is that the organisation is assigned a social actor position without any consideration of environmental constraints. The second is that labelling complex phenomena fixates the dynamics, which a field model does not. There is no doubt that the diversity of union X absorbed much energy, and was perceived as dysfunctional by many. However, on an organisational level (Scott, 2001), institutionalised habits are relatively resistant to change. De-institutionalising events, such as the European Parliament's ruling of free unionising, or union X's secession from the Social democratic party in Denmark, changed not only the

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[84] This assumption of mine is grounded in the fact that elected officials do voluntary work, which excludes income motives. Other motives besides identifying with union values might be prestige, career, belonging to a social group, etc. Such motives are likewise laden with emotional energy that gets stirred up when persons feel threatened in getting those needs meet.

union's business opportunities, it impacted potential members' attitudes. Efforts were made to gain information from members through surveys or phone calls, although what members said they wanted did not make them stay, even when it was provided. The change in the attitude of members and potential members was a source of frustration to union staff and elected officials, as much as their democratic governance system. *"That is one of the disadvantages of a political system. It takes a bloody long time before we can decide anything; then seven years has passed. It is very heavy to change anything in the system, in the total union movement, as it is elsewhere. It is a very cumbersome system to change anything in".* The change initiatives of branches Z and Y must be seen in this broader light. They used their autonomy and moved ahead. On a personal level, the manager reflected after the closure: *"It was what we had to work on; constantly changing the union movement so it could sustain itself in the future that would come. That was what motivated me."*

Identity regulation as management control

Alvesson et al.'s (2004) article explicates the interrelatedness between identity work, self-identity and identity regulation. In the current context, focus is not particularly on management or leadership in its entirety, but rather on the implication of formalised power influencing identity work as part of field forces. The elected officials are those officially given decisional power when they are elected at the annual general meeting. Ideally they function as members' voices. The elected manager is paid and collaborates with the administrative manager. The democratic structure necessitates motivating and negotiating with the parties involved in order to reach decisions, however also to implement the agreed upon decisions. Identity regulation as proposed by Alvesson et al. (Ibid) captures those dynamics very well. This is an example of how an identity regulating discourse is experienced by a manager during downsizing strategy meetings: *"It was a proposal which agreed to 17 branches [remaining branches after the downsizing]. But then 10 branches united and came back with a new proposal consisting of only 7 branches, excluding all the rest of us [in compiling the proposal]. It was that which won in the end. That was not particularly an act of solidarity to decide on behalf of other branches without consulting them. So you might say that the intentions of the federal president "that now we unite; now we act together in openness and honesty" and all these fine words, did not work. Even before the Congress it failed".* The reality is that the federal president possesses very little power, and thus must try to appeal to morality and union values as well as establish a distinct set of rules. Irrespective of whether

staff accommodated the required behaviour or resisted through displaying oppositional behaviour, the context required identity work, defined as "interpretative activity in reproducing and transforming self-identity" (Ibid:445). The union power structure includes shop stewards; a position assumed to be particularly challenging, not least as union employee. Wearing different hats, having a professional role, being a person, and also to holding a highly valued position as shop steward gives access not only to information, but also to loyalty conflicts. This informant compares holding a manager position with that of a shop steward: *"That is exactly what I say; I have my middle management position. I am also one of those who sit and waver slightly. It's probably the hardest thing about being a manager and being a shop steward. I tried both. You know more than you can say and do and sometimes something that you rather not wanted to know, right"*. This is expressed in action *"Well, it is only about human decency; I find that hard. It is terrible that you have to be present as shop steward while people bargain about your colleague. But professionally speaking, which I must say when I turn my cap; this is not storage"*. First, the informant in the roles of shop steward and colleague is present when a person is made redundant. Second, putting on the "manager cap", the informant must also be aware of cost-benefits and efficiency. Excluding staff members, for example in case of layoffs, has been a rare event in union life. The shop steward recalls: "*It was awful. I can still get nightmares about it. It was on such a typical spring day. I can totally feel it still, right now. You know, the drifting clouds and a bit of sun and there were showers in between. And it was cold, I can also remember. And when the weather is like that, then the feeling comes back to me again. It was simply awful*". This very vivid description, when "the environment" impinges on the person, the past is experienced in the present, thus craving energy to be resolved (Zeigarnik, 1927;Zinker, 1994). The extensive network of relationships between staff and elected officials, combined with the fact that the elected officials never knew if they would be overthrown at the following general annual meeting provides a delicate balance of power and decision making: *"For me, there is far too much personal stuff involved. What I have seen partly as an elected official happens in great measure here too, which is why I did not fancy continuing in politics. In between we forget the task and start discussing people. Thereby the task is lost in something which concerns dealings with people and what can I do to keep my stool, and so on"*. There are several of the informants, who gave up elected official positions because of personal problems with experienced gossip. It seemed connected to the lobbying activity in which you had to bond,

often intimately, in order to get people on "your side". This is what Alvesson et al.(Ibid) call "the precarious outcome of identity work" (445). Union branch Z avoided "conspicuous hierarchy symbolism" by the establishment of self-governing teams and a management team. Some enjoyed the felt freedom to act, whereas others experienced themselves being in uncharted territory, and found that more top-down decisions were required: *"It was a model the manager wanted, that all of us were able to support each other. I think that it totally illusory. We can't. But as long as he has..[*Interrupts himself*] then it was the model that we worked within"*. The informant then substantiates his view by giving examples of how he resisted the model because he found it inefficient, thus meaningless. It did not correspond with his "life-space". When existential issues as organisational survival are salient, "hard identity work" (Reger, Myers, & Einwohner, 2008) could be expressed as in the dilemma of "being for self" or "being for others": *"I have days when I say [to self], 'this we are simply not going to survive', that is, when we run completely awry, when everyone just create war against each other. No, I think; this will not work. But I tell myself only. I kept it to myself at a staff meeting where I had it strongly on my mind. At one point (name of employee) said: 'Don't you have faith in it anymore'? 'Yes, I have faith in it'. So I said: 'When I do not believe in it, then I'll tell'. But I have days when I'm sitting here thinking: We are simply not going to survive this"*. Being torn between different moral introjects and identities, the informant reached the conclusion to tell when he/she was absolutely certain that they would not survive, leaving personal concerns covert.

Salient existential motives governing interactions

The choice of this headline came to mind through the whole transformation process of Z until the end or "organisational death" (Samuel, 2010). Although examples of leaving the organisation or being asked to leave made existential themes manifest, the knowledge that your work place is being terminated and you can't get any information about your future evokes existential uncertainty and anxiety, especially if you have been part of the same organisation for many years. Spinelli (2008) speaks about "sedimentation of the worldview", meaning that your assumptions and beliefs which have facilitated your actions solidify. They suddenly appear as the force of habit. You experience yourself left in the open:*"Simply in flux and chaos. People were just as gun power barrels. They exploded for nothing and cried for nothing"*. Then the informant returns to my previously posed question how if felt when their managers left: *"That [*names*] slipped away, I actually find sordid to these people [*her

colleagues]*, because they were just lost. They [managers] had made up their mind. They would bloody not stay. That's fact. But this whole flock had nothing. They knew nothing, and nobody could tell them whether it was A,B or C i.e. whether it was to be in Copenhagen or you were fired*". The informant was both very understanding on behalf of the managers', and angry when turning her gaze towards the "abandoned" or "survivors" (De Vries, 2006); to utilise non-existential term. Most of the employees had grown up within the union movement (Please see table 4, p.125) holding different elected official positions which either led to a career in the political system or to employment. "*I do not know if I care....I do! It has been a part of me and it....it's something I believe in, right. But I am not afraid of speaking up, you know, so I do actually. If I come close to some [of them] and then I will tell that this is my fear that....my belief that this will happen, then I do it. I bloody well don't care, really, in one way or another they need to know..the others and the elected, ought to know how we feel.*". Again, the air bag metaphor (Pratt, 2012) is vivid in these accounts. Another way of looking at sediments is through the processes of organisational identification. Dutton et al. (1994) build upon the assumption that a person's self-concept is shaped by the knowledge that he/she is a member of a specific organisation. How strong the organisational identification is manifests itself through the organisational member's identity becomes prominent, more than alternative identities, and that the persons self-concept contains "many of the same characteristics that the person believes define the organisation as a social group" (Ibid:239). The connectedness is given a strong voice saying: "*I feel like this, that nobody is to bother union X. Then I would defend them and that's because I work here. It's my workplace. It's my organisation. In fact, I believe, let's say I took early retirement and then opted out of the organisation and was involved in a discussion I would still defend X, because I would not be able to justify being employed in X and then say it was crap*". During the interviews the informants reflected on our interaction too. In this account I was for a moment categorised as outsider by the informant:"*I will not sit here and say anything bad about my workplace. I feel that I do right now. Well, I am allowed to have an opinion totally deep inside. So I'm not entirely honest, right*". The movement between her and me and "our situation"(Wollants, 2007) depicts how rapid these interactions take place. I asked questions that made her disclose issues, which she not really wanted to tell outsiders. My questions may remind her of gossiping and disloyalty to the union. Then she confirms herself, ending with self-evaluation and a new self-definition. There are different ways of handling the news: "*Yeah, I would like to influence it as far as*

possible. It's also why I said yes to join that work group, right. But if they choose a different path than mine... my values and the values of the system must correspond. If I do not believe in the project, then I can't really see any point in staying". This informant was asked to join a group given the task of organising union X work after the downsizing. He carried a strong vision of what the future union would look like, and acted accordingly. When he left the organisation he was at peace with himself. Action implies freedom, because "man makes himself through activities" (Macquarrie, 1972:176). The existentialists in general, view man as agent rather that subject, because "only in action does existence attain its concreteness and fullness"(Ibid:176). Choices are context dependent, not based on the perceptual level, but on the level of interpretation; which means that the person above did not ask for this situation to happen. He did, however, relate to it; being "response-able" in Fritz Perls parlance.

Others did not feel the pressure of the union providing a living: "*I love union X; I love the work I do, but it's not my existence. I have just made up my mind. If it disappears; if they choose a new structure and now they have no need for (her own name) anymore. Well, then somehow I'm OK with that. It ... then there are bloody other forests that burn, right. I find that I am serene with this situation*". Or those who reassure themselves: "*I am this type who says, we have to take what comes, right. Why worry myself sick about being the one that is left over. I do not want to use my energy on that. We have been through this a couple of times. Because then, I was sick, tiny-bit-sick, you know, some prolonged illness. I thought that it will bloody well be me who disappears, because I am one of the most expensive and perhaps a little unstable when it concerns health, right*." The informant had just had surgery for cancer, followed by chemotherapy, which she spoke openly about in a light tone. I experienced much ambivalence with her vacillating between wanting to be positive, trusting something good would result and falling into desolation. Altruism was also present. "*I will simply try to get them through these months until we know what to expect and.....try to keep our spirits up a little and try to get some help to them. I will simply try to get them through. That is all I am struggling for. So they too have the energy to figure out what they want*". The self is assumed to "emerge out if its decisions" made by projecting oneself into the given field of possibilities. Only the informant knows whether this is a statement of 'sedimentation'(Spinelli, 2008), neurosis (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1951), or an act of fidelity to an image of humanity that the person seeks to realise in actual existence (Macquarrie, 1972). It does,

however, point to the impact of the change and the multiple reactions and interactions it resulted in, to which I will now turn.

Salient 'I' and 'We' dynamics

The gestalt paradigm is concerned with 'the in-between' (Friedman, 1990). Its focus is on the boundary contact dynamics framed by the "subjective" experience and "objective" categorisation. PHG's foundational aspect is the organism-environment relationship, or "how human beings find out what they need to live effectively in the world that they inhibit, and how they go about getting what they need" (Nevis, 2009:38). Even though this sounds individualistic, an attitude that has often been ascribed especially to F. Perls, it is no more individualistic than many existentialists' conceptualising that draws attention to fundamental aspects of existence, such as responsibility, choice, isolation, and death. I find it important to retain the dialectic aspect in the tensions of existence. There is no separateness without connectedness, no 'I' without a 'We', no egotism without confluence. Kreiner et al.(2006a) based their identity work model on Lewin's field theory; however assuming the individuals' urge for optimal balance between their need for inclusion and need for uniqueness. While some of their findings of 'identity demands and tensions' are recognisable in the informants' statements in this thesis, I do not find support for "a search for optimal balance (Ibid)". I did however find many accounts which showed how informants changed positions, between being with/for others and being with/for self: *"She could have said: I do not agree with you [the other political managers], and then we could have fought the rest of the time; then we had fought together until we stood where the branch had to close. When she did what she did, I could not see why I should fight. She had given up. It's not the truth, but that's my experience"*. This remark relates to the management dyad when the manager was told he did not get any of the applied for jobs and did not experience his manager 'backing him up', even if she could not change the result. From a social group level: *"we do have our little safe nest, now where all of us are landed; after we have been through a lot of storms, then we landed and found out that we actually have established a good weekday and then comes big bad union X in Copenhagen, the union, and tells us this is not how things are supposed to be. Now the whole bin must be turned once more and yes....we have to be a trade union just like all the others. It is a bit like....it's to forsake us because it is undervaluing what we believed in"*. Branch Z has finally become established according to this informant and now they are included in the big X, but not by choice. According to Lewin (1997a), when the context

changes, so does the behaviour of the person. *"It is a little weird, too. The ones I thought were good old colleagues; suddenly I couldn't really use them anymore. Therefore, I made up the plusses and minuses, and now I use my resources where I want to. So they must manage themselves, which is how I feel"*. This person withdrew from particular relations she had had since they were no longer satisfactory in the new context. Withdrawing allowed her to firm her own contact boundary and pay more attention to her own wants. She utilises egotisming in this situation, thus differentiating herself, which places her in a new position. *"I believe that the process we have been through has helped to underpin...knowing that you've been involved in a process, where one can see that things work. I found loyalty had increased. Conversely, we are now in the self-same problem; now you begin to think more about yourself, than on the system; where you might feel let down by the system at the moment, but obviously it is the last months of turmoil that have created it"*. This person reports an experienced and build up loyalty, an 'us', constructed during an organisation process. However, the repeated changes might have induced an "emergency alertness" (Beech, MacIntosh, & McInnes, 2008). The account is context related and implies withdrawal or egotisming. The previous effort that she and others did to become a team and establish themselves in relation to other teams in the challenging situation of self-management was fractured in the new situation. The work required to become a 'we' seemingly had them deflect the union X *:"We did something; we made a difference. We tried to show one route on how to create a modern trade union. Without compromising, that is. It should not be modern in such a manner that it became minimalist but that we actually make a difference to people. It is very much an 'us' mindset now. Union X in the large ... uhhh ... it comes second place"*. In reflecting on how the downsizing was done and on the future structure design, some employees felt unfairly treated when compared with the elected officials. *"I just think that a political system, it is costly. And in such a reorganisation I cannot understand that they maintain the political system in the same way"*. The fact was that the elected official system did not have a separate budget. Only the manager received a salary. By projecting costliness on the elected group, which was not based on budget knowledge, the employee group distinguished themselves as different from, as well as unfairly treated in comparison with the elected politicians. Beech et al. (2008) conceptualise identity work as interactive activities, constructed through interaction between self and others. They frame identity work within a perceived risk to/opportunity for achieving identity outcomes. In this case being categorised

as costly might be a decent way of saying "union careerist"; a label the elected officials despised. Identity work then implies altering the label. Opportunity, on the other hand motivates people; for example, by gaining status as mentioned above by belonging to the social group that shows the route to the modern union. The dialectical movement between the polar contact dynamics of egotisming and confluencing is basic or even existential, however, more or less salient depending on the situation. When you do not feel that you can join the organisational 'we', then your own preferences become figural. Identification, differention from and categorisation are dynamics involved in the movement between I , We, Us and Them (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). However, consider this account: "*I do not think any of the parts can live with people just dragging themselves (chuckles) through their existence and each day is one big nuisance. I don't believe that eventually it will result in a good product. And there I believe (name of person) was. While we're talking about it there are also some of the others (name of person) who resigned in the meantime. You know that old...or old and old, he wasn't that old, that came from the former (name on closed union branch). He also choose to say that "bloody hell no, I am not merging more; I have merged three times. Now the party stops*". This person takes the position of her workplace, but it would not be correct to say she identifies with it. She identifies with one of her colleagues and differentiates from the other, but she is confluencing with her work place at this moment. The 'I' and 'We' movement involves the notion of boundary as categorisation in social identity theory does, and that constitutes the last headline.

Contact boundary dynamics

The boundary concept is utilised in many theories and schools of thought. As all intuited concepts, it is open to a wide range of ideas. Much can be said and many disputes taken. My approach is firstly pragmatic, that is, it must be judged on its usefulness. Secondly, ontology and epistemology must correspond. Acknowledging the built-in reifying tendency of language, 'boundary' in line with constructs such as 'self', 'identity' or 'groups' tend to become reified. When PHG states: "And ultimately, during close and final contact, the deliberateness, the sense of 'I' spontaneously vanishes into the concern, and then boundaries are unimportant, for one *contacts not a boundary* but the touched, the known, the enjoyed, the made" (447). To the uninitiated this sentence may appear as pure hocus-pocus. My translation is, when I am fully occupied with something/someone in my surroundings then my 'embodied self' become (part of) the background. In mundane parlance, I forget myself. I am not

concerned with who I am or what I want at that moment, which might last a second or hours. This translation is consistent with both existentialism and Gestalt psychology key principles. The boundary in the above quote is ascribed permanency but contradicted in many other places in PHG. As defined in chapter 4, boundary in this thesis is a semiotic construct enabling human beings in their identity work; thus a contact boundary. The boundary concept of Barth (1969) is used in similar ways, exploring the different processes that seem to be involved in generating and maintaining ethnic groups. With this entry I will present excerpts that illuminate this understanding of boundary. *"In that respect we are tightly knit. If someone comes from the outside, then we stick together. You should not be in doubt, then we all stick together, everybody, even if we think that some of them …you know [inside intonation]".* In this moment I am included in the 'we'. Did I feel that then? Probably, in PHG's terminology, "the sense of 'I' had vanished into the concern". I might have felt a thrill and wanted to know more intimate details about "you know", leaning forward and letting the person know intuitively, abandoning my role as researcher for a while, activating my personal morality. I might also have felt slightly uneasy, turn to take a sip of water and then pose another question, having the formal power to do so, perhaps activating a feeling of righteousness. Many other possibilities are thinkable; however by this elaboration I want to emphasise the subtleties of I – We movements and how it informs identity work. When the smooth flow of interaction is interrupted then I change my focus from 'what' to 'how'. The shift, when noticed, can be felt as interruption, a challenge and a line of demarcation. I inquired into what happened with the team structure during the change and an informant said: *"When I say,…. purely personally, it is me and my team colleagues that comes first, right. In addition, our consulting team, just apart from (name) who is in another team, but works with us, and therefore belongs to us in one way or another".* Barth's (Barth, 1964;Barth, 2010) extensive anthropological work leads to an empirically based critique of previous ethnic research, which I find relevant in general, for the study of social groups, including organisations. He noticed that "One is led to identify and distinguish groups by the morphological characteristics of the identity of which they are the bearers. This entails a prejudged viewpoint both on (1) the nature of continuity in time of such units, and (2) the locus of the factors which determine the form of the units" (Barth, 1969). Instead, he proposed that processes of boundary maintenance, including group recruitment ought to be the focus of investigation. It is not the sum of "objective" differences that are important, but only those signifiers that the actors

themselves consider relevant for the situation. Therefore it is "the interactional construction of external differences [that] generates internal similarity, rather than vise versa" (Jenkins, 2004: 97). In the above quote this person could move between teams and belong to both. Before the information of the branch termination was known I received this statement: "*It is a reaction to us having an external enemy. What has happened is what so often happens, then the support appears. I am very positive and very pleased that I have the political support. And I also met with the staff and there is support as well for me to carry this through*". People in interaction produce groups meaning identity work includes anything people do to give meaning to themselves or others (Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996).

The account below was delivered two years after the closure of branch Z. The A-fund (unemployment fund) had been separated from local union activity and gathered in two departments, however still under the union X umbrella. *"From the inside, there's a huge difference. And the gap is tremendously big now. Now we are fully ourselves. But there has always been such gap. Also when you came into the branch at that time; there was always a difference in how we were placed. Union consultants sat by themselves, had the good one-person offices. We were bloody well put together in a pile somewhere. That's why we did not participate when the great battle was fought. We stayed put and worked, at the office. [...] The funny part is that it is actually the unemployment fond, it's a claim, that paid for the union through all these years; at least for a very large part of it. That is visible now, I will say, when we are divided*". This excerpt underscores the state of affairs: "Processes pertaining to organizational identity are central to meaning, form and dynamics of organizational life – as well as to the fact that organizational life is possible at all."(Haslam & Ellemers, 2011: 715). It is quite possible to interpret the statement above from an individual, even intra-psychic level. Dyadic identity work becomes visible by focusing on the unemployment fund and the trade union consultancy. It is also possible to pay attention to those groupings that are not mentioned. It is very possible to adapt Barth's (1961) ethnic framework and pay attention to how X's structural changes influenced the interactional construction of differences between the consultancy group and the unemployment fund.

Discussion part two and theory development

The observational data provided the structure and frame within which the informants' accounts were unfolded and reflected upon through the understandings derived from literature reviewed in this thesis, hence answering research questions three and four. The six headlines

in themselves reflect the broad spectrum of identity work in an organisational context. The first three focused particularly on organisational issues such as reactions to ongoing organisational and perceived radical change, including staff members' and elected officials' imaginations of the consequences of "moving ahead" in search of a new union identity. Unions constitute a special form of organising, with roots in social movement organisation, institutionalised during the years of establishment, however now facing de-institutionalising, and thus searching for adequate responses. As the data presentation showed, and not surprisingly, the images of what was "distinctive, central and enduring" (Albert & Whetten, 1985) about union X were heterogeneous. Finally, managing within a representative democracy during change resonates well with a low power distance form of control explicated by utilising the idea of identity regulation. The following three headlines, with the organisation as background, focus particularly on existential issues and human interaction, which were prominent due to the change experiences.

In this section I will answer research question five asking: "to what extent can gestalt thinking illuminate 'identity work', particularly in organisations". I will operationalize the proposed intersectional ontology, followed by discussing each in relation to 'identity work'; how this is made sense of by participants and through literatures presented in chapter 6. Since the concept of identity is ambiguously defined, if at all, within the gestalt paradigm, my challenge has been to construe a theory that nevertheless draws upon and is explained by the gestalt paradigm. I compare and contrast the gestalt paradigm with other identity theories in order to examine their respective explanatory powers. I start by proposing four basic assumptions about human interaction followed by six propositions resulting in a definition of identity work situated in the realm of organisations. I end the chapter by discussing the strength and weakness of the definition, inter alia, by utilising Brubaker et al.'s (2000) critique of identity research.

All of the statements and subsequent propositions are grounded in existentialism, field theory, and Gestalt psychology's key principles. The first four statements[85] are general assumptions informed by my professional background as an organisational consultant, and in particular, my relationship with the union branch during almost a decade. The succeeding six propositions are epistemological statements at a lower level of abstraction. These propositions

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[85] The statements are not prioritised or in logically structured order, but rather have the properties of a Gestalt.

form a relationship by building a progressively increasing complexity explicating how identity work in an organisational context can be understood when viewed through a gestalt paradigm lens. For the sake of readability, I repeat the ontology expressed in chapter 4. The *ontology* of the intersection between the core conceptual clusters of gestalt, organisations, and identity work in organisations was previously stated as:

"Teleologically organised, interdependent processes, structures, and forces, influencing the field in every moment, patterned and made sense of through embodied perception, cognition, and action".

Breaking down or operationalizing this ontology within the analytical and empirical context of the thesis I make the following axiomatic assumptions about identity work in organisations.

Four statements as fundamental conditions for identity work:

- Human beings are, and are perceived as, *of* a context – dynamically positioned somewhere between the limiting extremes of connectedness, being a part of - the act of confluencing - and isolation, being apart from - the act of egotisming.
- Human beings strive to organise fulfilment of their needs, based on their individual life-spaces, with or without awareness, and in this way contribute to both the state and act of inclusion or exclusion of self and others.
- Human beings relate interdependently to their environment which they organise (self) and is organised by (other).
- Human beings strive to create meaning and avoid meaninglessness in their lives. The rate of meaning-making is constrained by the complexity of the situation-totality in which they find themselves, for example, the number of persons present, the nature of the salient issues and their perceived essentiality , the number and extent of the included levels of system etc.

If these four statements seem intuitively self-evident, then I believe to have satisfied the criterion of viability. On a higher level of abstraction, they cover, in their totality, the definitions of identity work reviewed. They make non-normative sense of human endeavor, as in the case presented in this thesis. Again, for sake of readability, I list the six propositions in list form, followed by a more extensive elaboration of each.

Six propositions explicating identity work from a gestalt paradigm perspective:

1. Perceptually, Gestalts are created when specific elements are attributed or attract energy and thus emerge as more or less clear figures from a ground.

2. Meaning-making is the interpreting of gestalts, based on inference and multi-sensory processing.

3. Coherence is perceived gestalts, actualised, realised, and bound to semiotic constructions such as identity, couples, groups, movements, organisations, nations.

4. Institutionalising is the process through which gestalts are attributed meaning and valence by a collectivity that, over time, becomes part of the foundation for self-understanding and may thus inform creation of new gestalts.

5. Boundaries are momentary complexity reducing constructions, the in-between someone/something or someone/someone. When reified, the processes result in categorical distinctions. These entail social processes of inclusion and exclusion whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership.

6. Power is directed energy, attributed to relations, persons or objects. Power is often reified through means of resource allocation.

Proposition 1: Perceptually, Gestalts are created when specific elements are attributed or attract energy and thus emerge as more or less clear figures from a ground.

This proposition accentuates Gestalt psychology's key principles, especially that of "multi-stability"; the tendency of ambiguous perceptual experiences to move unstably back and forth between two or more alternative interpretations (Koffka, 1935)[86]. It integrates the ephemeral interpretation of self as the system of contacts with the experience of individual permanence[87]. The proposition offers another explanation than the possession of multiple selves (Polster, 1995) or identities. The non-linear understanding presumes that I project,

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[86] I have no intention to repeat the insights of Gestalt psychologists. I want, however, to give them credit for their theorising, regardless of new research within the realm of cognitive neuropsychology and neuroscience.
[87] I want to remind the reader that the gestalt paradigm views the person holistically. The propositions might evoke a pure cognitive interpretation and reinforce a body – mind dichotomy. Emotional schemes (Elliott, Watson, Goldman, & Greenberg, 2004) for example, influence what is perceived and how it is made sense of. There are differences in different psychotherapeutic approaches which are given prominence; emotions or cognitions. The gestalt paradigm takes its point of departure by exploring the "situation ", utilising the phenomenological method.

while the field simultaneously calls particular aspects of me forth; the functioning changes as it occurs (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1985). Just like in Gestalt psychology, knowledge in existentialism has a double root; the data of the senses, which is the given, and the mental organising of the given in accordance with *a priori* forms or patterns. In Schultzer's (1964: 15, my translation) words: "it is not possible at all to comprehend the totality of experience or the situation-totality as foundation; be it directly or not, to cognition". Hence, in order to navigate through the bombardment of perceptions we receive each second, we structure our perceptions. Human development can be understood as introjected and assimilated gestalts, continuously restructuring the ground, which we then project on our world with increasing sophistication. The life-space is the momentary, energised ground, including who and what I perceive myself to be at that moment, and by which I define my environment. Without reference to Gestalt psychology or existentialism, Weick (1995:20) takes a similar position, stating: "once I know who I am then I know what is out there", and vice versa. The existent is constantly projecting himself upon his surroundings (Macquarrie, 1972: 129), "throwing himself forward into his possibilities". This understanding of the 'existent' is similar to the 'self' construct in PHG. Projection is, however, different in the existentialist tradition; it does not have any neurotic connotations. It is what we do in order to understand the serviceability of our everyday world. Identification and differentiation processes are based on this principle. Dutton et al. (1994), in their model of organisational identification, propose three principles of self-definition: self-continuity, self-distinctiveness, and self-enhancement as building-blocks, which lead to the next proposition.

Proposition 2*: Meaning-making is the interpreting of gestalts, based on inference and multi-sensory processing.*
Dutton et al. (1994 : 244) suggest that the strength of organisational identification is based on what we project on to our work organisation, and that the images we hold are dual. The assessment of the attractiveness of these two images (what we believe to be distinctive, central and enduring - and what we belief outsiders think about our work organisation) is based on identification. In brief, Dutton et al. (Ibid) find that people are drawn to an organisation that resembles their self-concept. People value exhibiting what they believe to be them, also articulated in the gestalt idiom: "to become who you are", as an expression of authenticity, in existential terminology. If it is true that people, in general, prefer to maintain continuity of their self-concept over time and across situations, then organisational change

requires 'work', either in terms of preventing the change from occurring, adapting, or withdrawing, by conforming or leaving, respectively. Gestalt psychological principles support the idea that similarity and continuity in identification (Mather, 2011) are due to perceptual inference. Dutton et al. (Ibid) delimit their definition of organisational identification to cognition, deselecting value congruence between members and their organisation, which is at variance with social cognitive perspectives that assume cognitive mechanisms as fundamental to moral functioning (2011). Brinkmann (2008) places human values as core to *who* we assume ourselves to be; whereas personality is about *what* we are. Our values provide us with a sense of continuity and intentionality for which reason he defines identity "as a person's moralistic self-interpretation, which provides the person with a sense of belonging and enable life choices" (Ibid:33, my translation). As he rightly argues, everything can in principle symbolise values. However, when a person identifies with specific values he/she attaches meaning to his/her existence. Hence, those values a person consider being of particular importance provide a "value-horizon", within which the person commits to particular moral projects, such as when an informant said "*But I thought, by virtue of… it was in fact my branch. I have been there more than twenty years, right. Therefore I wanted it to close with dignity*". She explains how hard it was watching the decline; that everything was falling apart, their stock used up, and the equipment was not repaired. When I asked about her options she said: "*Physically I could move, but mentally I am not sure that I would have felt OK with that either*".

The gestalt paradigm is sometimes ascribed as valuing spontaneous action, and many remember the advice offered, rather strongly, by F. Perls that awareness and avoidance of normative introjects such as 'should' and 'ought' was liberating, and thus healthy. Confusing theorising about the "spontaneous self" and conduct of the person might have contributed to the interpretation of 'gestalt' as a-moral, to which its historical context has obviously contributed. Considering identity work in an organisational context, values and beliefs (Cunningham, 2001) constitute navigation marks, with or without awareness, in everyday decision making (Lewin, 1997b). Values and beliefs are considered as vectors in our life-spaces, self-definitions and actions, and provide a sense of coherence.

Proposition 3: *Coherence is perceived gestalts, actualised, realised, and bound to semiotic constructions such as identity, couples, groups, movements, organisations, nations.*

This proposition explains how it is possible to claim a processual self that is constantly changing, while at the same time experiencing continuity and coherence in self and others. As depicted in appendix III, p. 222, the gestalt paradigm assumes a complex causality. Kaplan and Kaplan (1985) note that linear or deterministic causality is so deeply rooted in Western thinking, that despite the researcher's effort to assume circularity or complex causality, it is very hard to maintain. Linearity involves assumptions of the organism as a stable entity, that discrete functions and structures exist in an enduring form, and that systematic description of behaviour corresponds to actual events. We experience ourselves as stable and continuous because we function in a cohesive fashion, thus readily supporting linear assumptions about our "inner properties", not only are they enduring but it is also "them" that "make" us function. "However, the Gestaltists proposed that the experience of stability occurs as the person *functions as an organization-and-coherence creating unity.* As noted below, this proposition is consistent with a number of other ideas, particularly how processes are assumed to exist, how the organism relates to its environment, and how change processes are understood" (Ibid:9). What Kaplan et al. suggest is reminiscent of Jenkins' (2004: 16) idea that the processes by which the individually unique and the collectively shared is produced and reproduced are analogous. The non-linear principle in gestalt theorising assumes that a "person may be described as relating to his environment, but relational events are described as the same processes that constitute the person's sense of self" (Ibid:8). The concept of sense-making is exactly what makes the thinking of Weick (1995) relevant in this connection. He outlines how the individual unique and the organisational shared is intertwined through sense-making processes. The making of sense includes interpretation or meaning-making; however not vice versa, because of its seven characteristics, that is, identity, retrospect, enactment, social contact, ongoing events, cues, and plausibility (Ibid:5) . The list of words alone denotes a process perspective and non-linier causality. In brief, for this use, Weick states that what is special about organisational sense-making "is the ongoing pressure to develop generic subjectivity in the interest of premise control and inter-changeability of people" (Ibid: 170). Identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2004) utilised as a means of control corresponds very well with Weick's picture of organisational sense-making processes, underscoring the importance of identity work as interactional glue, such as when downsizing arouses

uncertainty, thus threatening sense-making processes triggering hard identity work, escalating sense-making needs, and enlarging perceived threat. The gestalt paradigm, due to its phenomenological component, is concerned with the actual happenings in the situation-totality - which is impossible (Schultzer, 1964). Parlett's (1991b) five principles (organisation, contemporaneity, singularity, changing process, and possible relevance), however, add guidance without restraining the process approach of the gestalt paradigm. Parlett utilises them as guidance for gestalt therapy. I apply them as principles for understanding identity work in organisations.

Proposition 4: *Institutionalising is the process through which gestalts are attributed meaning and valence by a collectivity that, over time, becomes part of the foundation for self-understanding and may thus inform creation of new gestalts.*

The process of institutionalising is described in the review chapter; however not with a gestalt paradigm lens and with gestalt terminology. Both Berger et al. (1967) and Searle (1995) offer excellent contributions to the understanding of construction of reality and the creation of institutional facts. Letting these two scholars form the background, I will unfold Parlett's principles mentioned above. The occurrence of an event or particular behaviour must be understood in its constellation of forces and structures (Lewin, 1997a). This is the first principle mentioned above, that of organisation. "In non-linear causality, structure and function are not rigidly separated, but both attempt to convey qualities of the interrelated whole" (Parlett, 1991a: 71). Providing an example from this case, the team structure implemented in branch Z was initially hard work for almost all of the employees. This is a social structure, which involved changes in functions and status for the team members (as previously described in chapter 6). "Fields differ along a continuum of whether their organisation is familiar or novel. On the one hand, functions may be embedded in bricks and mortar and architectural assumptions. On the other hand, structure can be newly thrown up, improvised for a present and transient purpose" (Ibid: 71). The habits, routines, roles and privileges, not to mention salaries of the employees, all provided the old social structures. Dismantling these structures meant that each person had to relate differently, not only to all other persons individually, but to persons in relation to each other, as well as in relation to different situations, different contexts, etc. That identity work becomes salient during restructuring is not surprising, recalling Lewin's life-space, that behaviour is a function of person/environment. This involves the principle of contemporaneity as the constellation of

influences in the present field which "explains" present behaviour, or in Weick's (1995) understanding, "the ongoing pressure to develop generic subjectivity […]". The constellation of influences is not assumed to have any predefined valence, such as goals or desires in preference to other vectors. The principle of singularity applies to the uniqueness of the situation and the individual. Each person has a unique life-space, thus uniquely perceives, interprets and makes sense of the "same situation", since 10 people in the same room most likely will come out with 10 different experiences. The principles of change and processes denote that experience is provisional rather than permanent as described in proposition 1. The final principle of possible relevance rests in the phenomenological methodology that everything in the field is part of the total constellation; thus potentially meaningful.

Proposition 5: *Boundaries are momentary complexity reducing constructions, the in-between someone/something or someone/someone. When reified, the processes result in categorical distinctions. These entail social processes of inclusion and exclusion, whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing participation and membership*.

This proposition builds on the illusion of there is "a there, there"(Gioia and Patvardhan, 2012), and illuminates how the sense of "we-ness", or differentiation, in social groups is created as part of identity work. Schwalbe et al. (1996) state that: "All identity work creates or maintains boundaries between individuals and groups", and apply the term 'policing' to capture the maintenances of a created identity. In the empirical part, chapters 6 and 7, it is documented how the "we"-experience changed over time. Not only did this change occur *within* the branch during their structural changes from 2000 until 2007. According to the informants' accounts, it also depended on which "entities" they attended to (relational groups, teams, other branches, professional or political affiliations, union X) and identified with or were alienated from, respectively. Some informants were aware of manoeuvring between and within several groupings simultaneously, and prioritised among them, however without revealing their prioritising publicly. Barth's (1969) boundary conceptualising, combined with the notion of boundary in the gestalt paradigm offered a different understanding of this phenomenon other than labelling it as hypocrisy. I call this "displaying contact boundary dynamics" as exemplified above under the headline "Salient 'I' and 'We' dynamics". In the observational data, especially just before the information of the closure was disclosed, people appeared united in their behaviour, and more accepting of each other's views. In the accounts, "we" and "us" were used frequently. When the closure news was announced, people were

stunned and the resulting uncertainty had the employees respond in different ways. Some withdrew while others vigorously engaged their environment trying to influence the state of affairs. Both of which can be interpreted as enacted egotisming. For example, the person who to the very end tried to seek influence and promote his ideas about a modern trade union left the organisation, as he had announced he (probably) would if things did not develop in accordance with his beliefs. Trying to gather colleagues and form unities aimed at supporting each other is the enactment of confluence. Being with somebody became important, not in terms of defining an "out-group", that is, the categorisation and labelling of others, but simply based on a strong belief that we can support each other in getting through this process. The polarised positions and individualised needs poisoned the atmosphere, most likely influenced by the absence of leadership, job reshuffling, and a changed relationship across branches. Competition between the employees, as well as between the elected officials, entered the field once more, however on much larger scale.

Proposition 6: *Power is directed energy, sometimes reified, attributed to relations, persons or objects.*

By proposing power as energy, each "situation" contains the evaluation of the power's innate tendency, in accordance with field theoretical principles (Parlett, 1991a). In Danish, power possesses two meanings expressed in two words, 'kraft' (force) with a positive and 'magt' (power) with a negative connation. Leaving aside the inappropriateness of returning to 'a self' in the efforts of reviving social psychology's focus on collective identities, I salute the argument of Schwalbe et al. (1996). Identities are signs that "refer to qualities of the identity claimant" that is, a sign that evokes meaning, signifying, for example, "power, status, inclination and feeling" (Ibid: 115). In this manner, they weave together the individual and the collective through the processes of sub-cultural identity work consisting of defining, coding, affirming, and policing. These concepts require a broad semiotic view beyond mere 'talk' (Snow & Anderson, 1987), namely the reading and creating of signs. The appeal in Schwalbe et al.'s (Ibid) conceptualising is its tangible understanding of a highly complex phenomenon such as identity work. In their interpretation of why people do identity work, they see it as a requirement of social life and existence, positing a neat and orderly side of humanity, which unfortunately cannot stand alone. Interactions, such as labelling, exclusion, agitation, and killing, to mention a few, are closely related to identity work. Hence, assuming we engage in identity work in order to maintain "emotional and cognitive equilibrium" might be half the

truth. Interestingly, issues of power do not occupy a particularly prominent place in theories of identity, apart from social movement theories, in which influence and acceptance are focal points. How come, for example, no *collective* action was taken when the trade union managers, decades back, saw the upcoming economical decline? Perhaps it could be reasoned that they were motivated to maintain a "collective calm", avoiding, at least mentally, a bloodbath. When power is reified negatively and projected onto 'the other', boundaries are established, the flow of continuous change deflected, identities are created and made salient, and there we are, 'you', and 'me'.

Identity work definition

Finally, based on the above extrapolated axiomatic assumptions, my prior organisational experience, my reading and critical review of relevant literature and my specific empirical study of an organisation in both "business-as-usual" mode and as it underwent perceived radical change, I now explicitly state my definition of identity work in organisations as:

> Identity work in organisations is a dialectical positioning, both individual and collective, between the existential polar opposites of inclusion and exclusion. The processes through which identity work is enacted are cognitive, affective, and conative, instrumentally served by the contact boundary dynamics of egotisming, confluencing, projecting, retroflecting, introjecting, and deflecting.

I claim that this understanding of human endeavour is applicable in equal measure to gestalt organisational work and gestalt therapy. The explicit emphasis on existentialism is incommensurable with a gestalt paradigm interpreted as "a theoretically substantiated methodological approach" (Fuhr, Sreckovic, & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1999) expounded in chapter 3 . This research concludes that a gestalt paradigm applicable to organisational work is predominately a comprehensive philosophical, epistemological, and methodological (experiential) approach.

Organisational work is about individuals, but not their intra-psychic conditions. The postulated structural composition of the 'self' as presented by Freud and later in PHG may be

helpful in explaining mental illness and subsequently a prescription/treatment[88], but it is irrelevant or even inappropriate in organisational work. In this context the gestalt paradigm leans towards the sociological dimension of social psychology (Christensen, 2002), hence noticing "public issues" rather than "personal troubles". The self construct enlarged and used for organisational diagnosis, even when utilised as a metaphor, is based on a different underlying philosophy and epistemology.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion, viability and further research

This thesis makes a contribution to the development of organisational gestalt theory through an empirically informed study of an organisation undergoing perceived radical change. This is accomplished by abductive reasoning, together with a comprehensive literature review and thorough exploration of the phenomenon of identity, as well as an empirical study of an existentially challenged organisation. Using methodology appropriate for studying subjective experience and interaction, the research revealed situated identity work as a dialectical positioning between the existential polar opposites of inclusion and exclusion. Furthermore, the processes through which identity work is enacted are cognitive, affective, and conative, instrumentally served by the contact boundary dynamics of egotisming, confluencing, projecting, retroflecting, introjecting, and deflecting. Such a non-normative understanding of contact as ongoing processes in service of identity work is a rupture with traditional gestalt therapy thinking (Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1972/1952). This thesis abductively shows that not only is such an understanding of identity commensurate with a contemporary gestalt paradigm based on field theory, Gestalt psychology, existentialisms, and phenomenology; it provides an important lens through which one can view organisational change. Hence, a revised modern gestalt paradigm can add value to organisational consultancy, management, and teaching, however also in general to the understanding of human organising. Chapters 6 and 7 present data, which underpin this understanding of identity work.

Recalling the situation in which the study took place - the second largest trade union in Denmark faced a financial crisis closely connected with its raison d'être - they decided to close down several of their local branches as a survival strategy. This is a unique case in a specific historical time; thus an *empirical inquiry* exploring a *developing* phenomenon within

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[88] I write 'may' since I am not a trained psychologist or therapist. I do, however, have issues listening to gestalt therapists explaining the necessity of ego, id and personality functions if they do not diagnose and predict treatment, categorically stated.

a real-life context, influenced by the researcher´s presence, theoretical constructs and aims was conducted.

The formulation of an ontology defining the intersection of the three pivotal clusters in the thesis has provided the ground for the epistemological and methodological choices presented in chapter 5. Manifest in the thesis is the elusiveness of the three main pivotal clusters: identity and identity work, the gestalt paradigm, and organisation.

The concept of identity in its various presentations is such an extensively and richly described research area that one might think a clear, shared understanding has already been achieved, categorising the different perspectives of its subject. But this, however, has proved not to be the case. The concept of identity is not easily pinned down. The dynamic equivalent of identity - identity work - provides, as established at various points in the thesis, a highly utilitarian concept in and around organisations, analytically and pragmatically, but hitherto largely unexamined in the context of an existential challenge; a partial organisational termination. Organisational theory initially seemed quite straightforward, but revealed ambiguities and inconsistencies in its ontological and epistemological foundations similar to those of identity theories, and possibly for the same reasons. The gestalt paradigm was from its inception ambiguous, which is reflected in PHG (1972/1951). The ambiguity has not been reduced by the application and refinement of what was initially an individual therapeutic paradigm to the realm of organisations, without any critical review of the applicability/relevance of its axiomatic base to complex systems, as emphasised in chapter 4. Hence, the assessment of the subject area, and subsequently the position taken in the formulation of an intersectional ontology of the three clusters became the backbone of the thesis. In the following, I consider all contributions and proceed to suggest how the research results can benefit different facets of organisational practice. Finally, I discuss the limitations of the study and propose some important directions for future research.

Key contributions of this thesis

Identifying gestalt as a paradigm applicable to the realm of organisations

The motivation behind the thesis is based on the seeming paradox that the gestalt *therapy* approach has been applied to organisational work, teaching programmes up to MSc level, and management development without any critical scrutiny, let alone extensive research. As discussed in the review chapter, chapter 3, there has been theory development at the micro-level, targeted to managers and organisational consultants (Nevis, 1987), especially the

"gestalt cycle of experience" utilised as an organisational analytic tool (Matthew & Sayers 1999) few contributions on group level (Gaffney, 2010;Kepner, 1980), one book at the organisational level (Merry & Brown, 1987), however several contributions on social work (Burrows & Keenan, 2004;Melnick & Nevis, 2009). Therefore, I trust that this empirically-based study grappling with the common interface of gestalt therapy and gestalt organisational work is of particular interest to gestalt practitioners. "Gestalt" has many designs according to how PHG has been interpreted globally and through history. It has been shaped to suit one's imagination and practice, as much as it governed the practice of gestalt practitioners. The guiding principle followed in the formulation of the framework in chapter 4 was to remain loyal to the original sources of the gestalt paradigm, which in my articulation is existentialism, field theory, Gestalt psychological key principles, and the phenomenological method. The gestalt paradigm, in line with other process approaches (Schultz, Maguire, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2012) prioritises activity over outcome, change over persistence, and becoming over being, to mention but some dualities. Furthermore, field theory is built upon an assumption of non-linear, complex causality which is difficult to articulate succinctly as each concept is presumed embedded in all of the others. Thus, the definition of the subject area of the gestalt paradigm became of particular importance as mentioned above. The gestalt paradigm, as applied to organisations, may be seen as reminiscent of a psychology of social science rather than a psychology of humanities, perhaps even a sociological social psychology, in line with Christensen (2002). When applied to organisations, the subject area is human collectivities, that is, the main field of interest is the individual-in-collectivities and institutional conditions as played out over time. Field theory and existentialism are both equally relevant and practicable in therapeutic and organisational settings. There are gestalt scholars who refute "scientification" of the gestalt paradigm; building on Lewin's (1997a) statement, that there is nothing as practical as a good theory (Marrow, 1969), I believe the paradigm is there already. I believe that extensive dialogue and argumentation is needed to keep challenging one's professional theoretical assumptions, also beyond the inner gestalt circles. Without expressive articulation how is it then possible for "non-gestalt" people, or I might say outsiders, to respond? For example, a revised gestalt paradigm can contribute to organisational process research (Schultz, Maguire, Langley, & Tsoukas, 2012), exactly because of its long experience in the understanding of processes.

Giving existentialism prominence in understanding identity work

The use of "existentialism as philosophising" (Macquarrie, 1972), leaves the many different inspirational perspectives open, and seems preferable to narrowing the conceptual approach down to one particular existentialist school or flavour. Existentialism subjects human activities to critical examination, and for that reason, is applicable to both human organising in therapy and organisational work. In the empirical part of the study, many observations called forth existential meanings, which the informants' statements later reinforced. The conceptualisation of the self in PHG (1971/1951) is imbued with existential ideas, however rarely directly referred to. Hence, having specified gestalt as a paradigm, I gave existentialisms a more explicit expression in the grounding statements on which the subsequent propositions must be understood, as laid out in chapter 7. Drawing on existentialism specifies the framework for thinking about human activity. In Burrell and Morgan's (1979) sociological framework, existentialism is categorised as subjectivist, with a nominalist ontology, and an anti-positivist epistemology. Abutting approaches are empiricism, humanism, idealism, pragmatism and nihilism (Macquarrie, 1972). At the outermost extreme, also found in radical constructivism, is solipsism – not considered a problem to existentialists, taking as they do their point of departure in the *concrete* "being-in-the-world" and "being-with-others". Basic characteristics of existence particular to man, which warrants emphasis here, is the uniqueness of individual existence; that of self-relatedness, and its emergent, ecstatic and transcendent elusiveness.

The salience of existentialism in my proposal is reasoned also beyond this study. It is foundational in my experience of more than 25 years of work as organisational consultant. I will not here enter into the debate about whether we exist in a post-modern era and its postulated consequences, or whether it is the human sciences that contribute to the postulated social disintegration; although it is indeed worth reflecting upon. In the introduction I referred to our western society and its focus on "work" as a value in and of itself (Beck, 2002). I believe that today's social "identity crisis" (to use another dubious term) is closely associated with our Western society's expectation of, and normative demand for self-realisation, autonomy and personal responsibility leading to an "exhausted self" (Ehrenberg, 2010), depressions and other kinds of withdrawals from the world. The participants in this study, and later the informants, were challenged by the on-going changes to such a degree, that some became ill, some left the organisation for good, and some were made redundant. Others,

however, flourished in their new circumstances. The managers trusted their interpretation of the future trade union's reason d´être and how they should organise to accomplish that. As one of the managers said: *"I believed in it; I worked hard to get us there; I lost the battle; I simply can't stay"*. Or as expressed by an employee: *"One had to approach it with humour. I wasn't mentally affected by it. It was the feeling...that it had to be closed decently. It was my kid who after twenty years had been forcibly removed (laughs)"*. Is this right or wrong; a sick or healthy reaction? Field theory requires a dynamic, contextual perspective, and existentialism requires the existent's uniqueness and autonomy respected as fundamentals conditions. This is the second reason giving existentialism more prominence in the proposed organisational gestalt theory on identity work. The first was to stay loyal to the gestalt paradigm as a philosophical and epistemological approach (Fuhr, Sreckovic, & Gremmler-Fuhr, 1999).

Reformulating contact boundary dynamics

As argued in chapter 3, explicated in chapter 4, and grounded in data in chapter 7, contact is a pivotal element of the "gestalt" cluster in PHG (1972/1951) which warrants a pragmatic reformulation even though some gestalt practitioners may see this as a violation of the very core of gestalt *therapy*. It is obviously inappropriate to apply the same terminology to different concepts, and I claim that a reformulation will be beneficial as to how contact boundary dynamics can be taught, interpreted, and utilised in practice, rather than as "defence mechanisms", "characters" or "personal styles". There have been several attempts to change the formulation of what contact was and how it was obtained, as reviewed in chapter 3. I did not find the reformulations radical enough to be consistent with field theory and existential philosophy. The solution, as some gestalt practitioners have sought, namely to erase contact dynamics from their conceptual baggage, is unfortunate. Contact dynamics are embodied human interaction, thus manifest in behaviour as a field phenomenon. Firstly, this is a unique conceptualising, since to my knowledge no other process theories can present a clear, articulated and observable contribution to the understanding of processes. Secondly, it minimises the risk of reifying the concept of boundary. On another errand, Barth (1969), in his study of ethnic collective forms, however, found that ethnic identities are fluid and people in interaction produce groups. Identity is a matter of boundary processes, that is, work, which may be patterned in particular situations to such a degree that they become institutionalised and reified. This is in line with contemporary "gestalt". Identity work thus bridges the

individual and the collective. The problem of changing conceptualisation is not only that teaching curriculums must be changed, etc. – with which I agree – but also that the problem ultimately rests in PHG (1972/1951) and its theory of a dichotomised theorising of the self.

Contribution to the understanding of identity work

We inherit and re-enact habits and traditions, behaviours and attitudes, without much conscious thought about how we relate to them; for example, institutions, money, work, and relationships. Whether we consciously or unconsciously adopt these shared beliefs, values and traditions, they nevertheless impact how we move through the world, as well as how others perceive, categorise, and respond to us. Becoming aware of how we engage in identity work offers a clearer picture of what influences have contributed to where 'we' are today and how that plays out in everyday life. A field perspective and "differential" thinking can contribute to this exploration, to "stand in the open" (Thorbjørn Hansen, 2008) without losing the sense of yourself in the situation. It is the gracious movement between the I and the We. The nesting of each person and his/her situated integral activities requires a spacious definition. I believe the definition of identity work identified in this thesis offers such inclusiveness without being toothless. When compared with other definitions from social psychology and sociology traditions I find the strengths of the definition to be that:

- It is applicable, both on the individual and collective level.
- It brings forth the existential fundamental tension and movement between the 'I' and the 'We' positions.
- It emphasises a complex causality between identity work and inclusion/exclusion dynamics.
- It includes power, choice and responsibility.
- It is relational and contextual.
- It is observable.

The definition of identity work in organisations, not least its translation in this thesis, may be most readily accessible to those who have trained as gestalt practitioners; after all, one of the primary target group for this thesis. Conversely, it may invoke curiosity in the gestalt-uninitiated. Evaluating my proposal against the criteria of "interdisciplinary cross-fertilisations versus strengthening of conceptualisations of identity" (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007), I trust I did both. The former is reflected in the comprehensiveness of

references; the latter by transparency in how I utilised the gestalt paradigm in conceptualisation. As argued in chapter 7, Brubaker et al. (2000) have correctly identified the dilemma social scientists face utilising process approaches to their definitions of 'identity', that is, making them "flexible enough to do the work and robust enough to have explanatory value". The definition, including its philosophical foundations and six propositions, is "elastic", precisely because it is required by its ontological basis. The definition is grounded in empirical data. However, it remains to be seen, through more specific research, if it can "do the work".

The previous sections were concerned with the key contributions of this thesis ordered by subject areas. Running the risk of repeating myself, I will briefly discuss the expected utility in relation to three main target groups: Teachers of gestalt in organisations, organisational consultants, and leaders and managers.

Teachers who are engaged in gestalt-related education, may benefit from the thorough – and compassionate – review of gestalt key concepts, which have remained largely unchanged for three quarters of a century. This review has highlighted the fuzzy, ambiguous inconsistencies in some areas of the written legacy of "gestalt", and proposed more stringent, coherent definitions of the constituent elements - identity as state, and identity as process, contact boundary dynamics, the primacy of existentialism – as well as the overarching gestalt paradigm. A primary consequence of the paradigmatic nature of "gestalt" – a coherent set of axiomatic assumptions – is that parts or subsets of "gestalt" can be challenged, developed, and refined without sacrificing the entire paradigm. The formulation of an intersectional ontology and epistemology is one such example. I believe this will facilitate both the teaching of "gestalt" in organisational contexts, and any subsequent research.

Gestalt organisational consultants may benefit from removal of the ambiguities alluded to above, as they often have to help their clients in their own meaning-making, in the transition from sensory awareness, via figural awareness, to reflective awareness of the phenomenology of their organisations. In order to do so, they need access to a conceptual framework and vocabulary, which is accurate, precise, and parsimonious; that is, as far as possible rid of ambiguity and inconsistency. Organisational consultants are confronted with a management 'reality' in which quick results are required, and hasty sense-making (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2009). Identity processes, I believe, is key to the understanding of organising. By

juxtaposing identity theory with the gestalt paradigm the explanatory strengths of both is raised. Nevis'(1987) brilliantly contributed to how to attract attention and build relationship in organisational work. What I have made a contribution to is the formulation of a gestalt paradigmatic based understanding of organisations.

Leaders and managers may benefit primarily by the insight that identity work is an eternal process, and that any existential challenge to individuals or the entire organisation, not only may, but inevitably will, make it even more figural or salient; at times to the exclusion of all other activities. Identity work requires time, (timely) information, and adequate opportunity for meaning-making; and these, in turn, require leadership. There are many other theoretical contributions guiding leaders and managers. The gestalt paradigm might be extraordinary, that is, given that it asks of the manager to attend to 'what is' instead of what ought to be. Attending to "what is" by necessity imply 'who am I' and 'who are we' questions, recalling Barth's (1969) research that people in interaction create groups through inclusion and exclusion processes. Leaders and managers, who reflectively ask themselves who they are, *and* become in an organisational context heighten their awareness of morality; that is, what are the essentials, that have value which lay the foundation of their actions. It is my hope that increased managerial insights about identity work as part of 'what is', eventually may turn leaders into experts on contact processes and enable them to handle existential angst connected with identity processes - their own and that of others.

Limitations of this study

The study is grounded in an abductive, iterative/recursive approach on the basis of prior consulting experience within this and other organisations, a comprehensive literature review, action research and empirically based on qualitative interviews. As with any study, there are some limitations which need to be noted in order to address the generalisability of findings and results. The first issue concerns the change in research design due to environmental circumstances. What initially was an unexpected event became a unique opportunity for studying an existentially challenged organisation. While the purpose of the study remained unchanged, I had to change the detailed methodological approach. As noted in chapter 5, my sampling objective was participant diversity holding different positions in the organisation and volunteer participation. A group of volunteers had already signed up when the news of the closure arrived. The sample was targeted action research; however the interviews

displayed such interesting accounts that I decided to continue. The diversity in positions, gender, age etc. was reasonable. However because of the number of informants, generalisability of the findings may be restricted. I did not find a gathering of the participants to be ethical after the closure, as explained in chapter 5. This influenced credibility in terms of getting informants' feedback in a more detailed manner, as planned in the previous design. Instead, I communicated via e-mail, which does not give the same rich response. Despite the changes I find the results methodologically on firm grounds, and theory formation meaningful. The second issue is the translation of informants' accounts. I worked in Danish both when coding and populating the matrix, and subsequently translated the statements and tables. Even though I worked hard at finding the words and phrases that would allow me to convey the essence or meaning of the spoken words in English – and subsequently had a sworn interpreter review and sanity check a sample of my matrices - I lost the "feel" for the accounts when I translated them. Although possibly not ideal, I trust the end result to be "good enough". The third issue concerns the emergent theme of identity work in the data. The interview accounts provided such rich material. I could readily have examined the various individual and group differences that influenced identity work, however given the theoretical purpose of the thesis I favoured to focus on those higher level theories and dynamics, than numerous sub-group comparisons. With this remark I will turn towards future research.

Directions for future research and development

In general, abductive reasoning and proposing a "hypothesis on probation" invites consolidation of the results through replication, where possible, or through testing the theory of identity work in organisations with a view to either falsifying or refining it. More specifically, there are two main areas which provide interesting research fields:

- The gestalt paradigm itself
- Identity work in organisations as interpreted through the gestalt paradigm.

Theoretically I have drawn the contours of a gestalt organisational theory, the first step taken by juxtaposing identity theories with a revised gestalt paradigm. A further review of the commensurability of the different theoretical clusters and how such a Gestalt might be beneficial to management, and subsequently tested in practice, could provide a next step. In therapy, cognitive approaches have gained momentum partially due to their measurability and temporality; a comparative study of gestalt and cognitive therapy by Tønnesvang et al. (2010)

shows how the two approaches can be mutually enriching. Can cognitive neurophysiology and gestalt provide a similarly enriching complementarity? Managers and consultants must be able to articulate their services in terms of added value to their client organisations, if they are to justify resource consumption, for example spent on education. Instead of withdrawing from the burgeoning challenge of measuring and evaluating a field approach such as the gestalt paradigm, I suggest further development of research methodologies and specific methods that are able to match the dynamic complexity and causality of the organisation-as-field.

Identity work from a gestalt perspective in future research may usefully examine in more detail individual and group taxonomies that influence identity work, such as professions, roles, gender, age, and ethnicity. Furthermore, assuming that people in interaction build groupings and sub-groupings, and thus create boundaries, identity work can be strenuous. I found that some people thrive in a challenging work environment, while others collapse or withdraw. From a field perspective, I believe such an exploration would be a fruitful line of research, not least considering the increasing numbers of stressed or depressed employees on sick leave. If we mutually co-create our situation, then how come some collapse while others thrive? The proposed identity work definition in this thesis is relational and field situated, utilising contact dynamics as enacted, embodied behaviour. I suggest, therefore, a closer exploration of contact dynamics, caught and detailed through video recordings, supported by qualitative interviews, where the researchers pre-understanding is challenged as a useful research strategy.

Beyond research, I will continue to utilise 'identity work' as defined in this thesis to test its practicability and utility in organisations and institutions as a sense-making device. Furthermore, a gestalt colleague and I are in the process of writing papers about management and the importance of understanding identity work during organisational change; especially that change is subject to individual interpretations and thus handled differently in different contexts. The work of this thesis is, furthermore, in the process of being included in the curriculum of a gestalt leader education offered by GestaltPartner in Sweden.

Final reflections

It has been immensely challenging and rewarding for me to have undertaken what has been both a personal and professional, academic journey during a period of 6 years. I have learned much along the way and sincerely hope that my efforts have been, or in the future may be,

helpful to people who grapple with questions related to identity work in organisations. It has been a hard struggle, at times annoying, frustrating, and cumbersome; but looking back I am proud of what I have achieved.

I am humbly reminded of the paradoxical nature of research – on the one hand by producing ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically robust results, which may claim to be "the truth" for a wee while, and maybe even shattering some prior "truths" in the process, while on the other hand expecting full well that someone else is likely to arrive at a better "truth", displacing or shattering "my truth".

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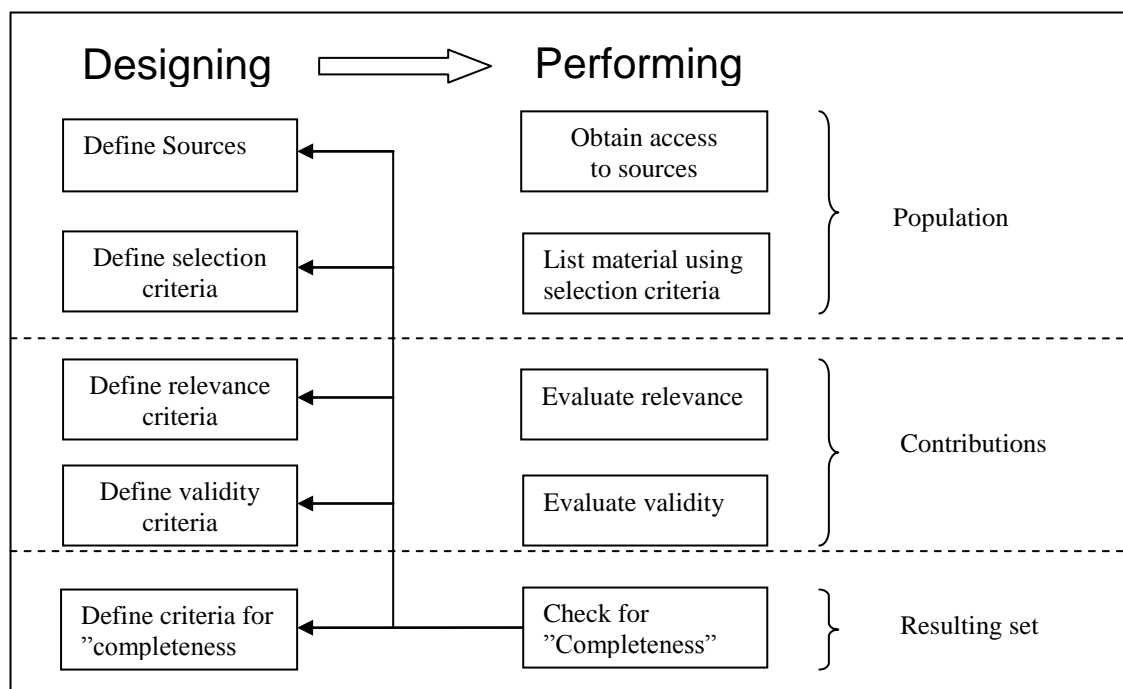
Figure 9: The process of defining and performing a literature study

Study type Steps	Domain-based	Trusted-source	Snow-balling
1. Source	Domain in question.	Trusted source, e.g. review article.	Not precisely defined, starts from e.g. overview article or "famous" article on the subject
2. Selection	Dependent on study.	All references in trusted source.	Not precisely defined
3. Relevance	"Fit" with purpose of the researcher.	"Fit" with purpose of study	"Fit" with purpose of study.
4. Validity	The subjective evaluation of the researcher.	Assumed.	The subjective evaluation of the researcher
5. Completeness	Relevant, probably using the cross-search test.	Might be relevant.	Not relevant.

Table 1: Strategies for performing literature studies

Reproduced from: A brief note on literature studies - Part ll, (Sørensen 2005) Page 1/7.
http://hdl.handle.net/10398/6295

British Gestalt 1992 – 2005 2 issues pr. year	8	1784/42	2,35%	Organizational Group/Individual
	5	1785/44	2,46%	Community Learning/ Research
Gestalt Review 1997 –2004 4 issues pr. year	16	2305/243	10,54%	Organizational Group/Individual
	6	2305/134	5,81%	Community Learning/Research
Gestalt Review 2005 – 2010 3 issues pr. year	51	1787/424	23,72%	Organizational Group/Individual
	27	1787/285	15,94%	Community Learning/Research
The Gestalt Journal 1978 – 2001 2 issues pr. year	2	5304/37	0,69%	Organizational Group/Individual
	4	5304/290	5,47%	Community Learning/Research
International Gestalt Journal 2002 – 2004	0	865/0	0	Organizational Group/Individual
	2	865/37	4,27%	Community Learning/Research

Table 2: Content distribution in Gestalt Journals

Figure 10: Complex/Field Causality

APPENDIX IV: Transcript Matrix Sheets, examples from three cases

Table 5: Transcript Matrix Sheets, examples from tree cases p.224-241

	Text	Reflections when listening/reading	Themes	Gestalt
1	*Firstly, and that is an easy question, I would like to know your age.* My age? *yes (laughs)* Yes,… but I am just so young .. *You are so right (laughs)* 47	Introduce humour sounds surprised Ironic Going with the joke Joint figure	Personal data	Establishing relation Deflection - confluence
2	*And when did you first form acquaintance with X?* I did so when I was 17. It's a lifetime.	Reflecting on time *You enter and stay there all your life?*	First acquaintance with X	reflection
3	*Yes. And what happened there?* But then a steward came and approached me saying: "When you work here then you are a member." And that was all there was to it.	Asking for example *Threat:* *Join or leave* *Recruitment through shop Stuarts*	Becoming a member	Introjection
4	*Then you became a member?* Yes, and I was accustomed to that from back home. *Ok* That's what you did.	Family culture – that's what you did	Becoming a member as conformity	Introjection – confluence
5	*So they just said, "conform" and then…* Well, my parents and grandparents have all along been involved in various,.. their various organizations. That's what you do. That's what one does. That was what you did, at least. *yes* In any case that's what you did back then.	Amplifier previous statements – generalize – Shifts in time, the standard for what you did and do She acknowledge change in culture – Loss?	Identifying with family values	Introjection Past – now – future Awareness of time Meaningfulness
6	*And it was both men and women were organized?* Yes, definitely	Gender	gender	

7	*That's how it was?* Yes. And joined.. and was in the front row ..and as politicians and everything, so it was in those circles, right.	Everybody joined the union and in the front row. Sounds proud		
8	*Yes. Which union has your family been organized in?* Jaaaaaa, mostly in the SID and KAD, FOA, the workers .... groups, right. *Yes, but still a wide range of different unions.* Yes, that's it.	Preconception: differences between X and "workers" unions Explore my preconception	Group differentiation Identification with union	Sub-group
9	*The fact that you joined X, that wasn't strange? That was what one did?* Yes	Confirmation Try to get a relaxed atmosphere		
10	*The shop steward, can you remember what happened and what you thought about her?* She was tough	Go for an example to deepened understanding of inclusion dynamics		
11	*She was tough* Yes, I tell you. Everyone was afraid of her. But it was not ... I do not think it was harsh compared to having to enroll. I think on the contrary, it was terrible ... there was some in between, farmer's wives, who just had to earn 17 kroner extra. They couldn't be bothered to join. I thought that was very strange. I do not think it was strange that I should join. It was not so much that it was tough. It was ok.	Energetic in voice… Compare with farmers' wives. They did not have to work. Contempt? Values?	In-group and out-group based on values	Introjections Projections
12	*Hmmm…. And the fact that there were some farmers' wives who did not think it was interesting to join, that was the strange part in your view?* Yes, I think it was very weird.			
13	*Why?* They did not show solidarity. That's how it was. *Ok* Solidarity was a part of my upbringing. Dad with red colours. Mum worked at home the first years, so she did not attend that many (meetings), but my father and grandfather, grandmother and grandfather ... and grandmother joined at a small scale, but it was really more to clean. It was not so much ... but the two old greybeards, they most certainly joined. Grandfather's brothers were very active.	A matter of solidarity – that's what you did. Symbols – red colours – workers joined. Women stayed home…. however when employed they became members as well	Identifying with her family values and beliefs Gender	Meaning making
14	*Have you been involved as a child?* No, I think not. I can't remember. So, no, That I did not know.	How long back is she able to remember being involved		
15	*Yeeehh ... ... you know,… because today I am experiencing the first of May as being more like a folk festival than a political manifestation. Have you any sense of how your parents looked at it?* No, I have not really. I'm not sure that there was .... Just those close, intimate (refers to her family)..actually, I don't think (they) went to the	I share with her my own views – establish symmetric relation 1st May a symbol – differences if you came from the countryside or lived in	City workers and country workers	Meaning making

	first of May… Uhh it may well be that my grandfather's brothers who were in various boards ... whatever it was called at that time .. in SID etc... they probably went, but they also lived somewhere else. We lived in the countryside. You did not bloody well take off to the first of May.	Copenhagen. There wasn't much spare		
16	*No. ..* On May Day, you were really busy in the herb garden. That was also part of what they lived on, so you planted potatoes and everything, so there was a little extra.	You worked several places to provide for your family	Survival – joining Family versus union	
17	*Well, hmmmm. So you might say that you drank it in with mother's milk, therefore you did not think it was odd that she (shop steward) came?* No, not at all.	confirmation		
18	*Did you have some conceptions about X? You had in fact some basis for comparison?* Næææ, no, not in the least. It interested me dammed not much. Well, good heavens, I was 17 years and life was fun and games, right. That was the same in X, so it was fine for me. It was X youth, who ran ...	At that age she was keener on fun and going to parties. X Youth – a constellation for young people as a mean to attract young people	No interest in union	No awareness Energy directed on her own age group confluent
19	*So you joined the X youth. Were you active?* No, no, it was not me. Ohhhh, I was apprenticed in R (town) and lived here in K (town), right, therefore, when I was off duty then I went home. I was not so .. I was on some courses, but I didn't as such take part of arranging and do ...	Did not take an active part arranging things. Reason due to travel between towns.	Identified with her own age Did what her father told her Did what she was told	
20	*When did you get employment in X?* This I did in 86 (1986) *86?* Yes, in a temporary position ……for 3 weeks. *Nåå* Yes (laughs). When I was 21 years. Holy shit (laughs).	Data for entering X as an employee. She had e temporary position – my assumption that it's hard to get access if you are not known – introduced by an insider. Reflects on time again	Reflects on age	
21	*What prompted you to apply?* Well, it was actually .. I wasn´t looking at all. I was really occupied with something else at the time. I had been part of starting the first community radio here in town and .... But it was based on municipal funds and got closed. And so there I was and didn't have any work and I had for a period worked on supplementary unemployment benefits, so therefore I came in X. ….And I can remember, that when I entered in order to sign up as vacant. …..And there I was ... uhh ... I spy back in the room 700 sheets, and so I think: "I bloody well take just one of each," and so I completed the whole lot and gave it to her, who sat where I entered and she couldn't forget that. "You must sort them yourself." She couldn't forget that. She found that so funny. When I came and signed on fully, then they just stood and needed one. Then they asked if I wanted (the position).	Tells a story. She had contact with X as vacant. She acts in a special manner which seemingly made an impression. She was remembered. Her attitude. Get a temporary position due to her behavior	You do something even when you don't know what to do Making fun	Moving to action without awareness Family introject
22	*Hmhm*	Hmmm what am I doing here??	Impression management	

	It was simply because I ... .. *You had made an impression.* Yes, I did. So that was it.	I give a symmetric response – being friends more that interviewing		
23	*Hm,hm…Being unique, ... because in some way you must have been a fresh/* Yes, it surely must be that attitude what did it, really. I did not enter as .... someone who couldn't figure out anything, where in fact I couldn't (figure it out) I completed alright. Instead of sitting on my hands then I reasoned that I just completed them....and that was obviously all what was needed.	Reflecting together Talks about attitude herself. Reminds me of Goffman's presentation of self and dramaturgical metaphor. Impression management.	Impression management	Values mobilisation Move to action without awareness Family introject
24	*Hmhm. There, the place you started, it was where?* It was in the A-fund. (unemployment fund)	Her first job as in the A-fund		
25	*And what was it like start working there?* It was fun and exciting. Enormously exciting.	Fun – exciting – emotional response		Value excitement High energy
26	*What was it that was so exciting?* I like the interaction of (the functions). I call it playing office lady (typist) with long red nails. It is both sitting and typing and also working with people. It was just so cool. And it was a bit like what I came from, to sit and make radio and at the same time conducting office work besides this work. That is the kind of variety I fancy.	She reminds in no way of an office lady in my mind – more like a handball player. She talks of playing office lady with long red nails – She values a variety of functions	Playing office lady	
27	*Your views on trade unions, what does it mean to be part of a union? And how do you think A-fund fit in there?* It is bloody important.	The interaction between the A-fund and the Union	Organisational level and sub-units	
28	*Yes??* This is where the majority of our members come from. Over the years we've had tremendous high unemployment, up to 20 .. ..20 percent and something .. or how much it was we had reached, at that point. So it is a lot of people who come in and actually meet an A-fund cashier. So if we do not sell the message, then there is nobody who can .... And if you talk with them so oooh jaaa.. they did get a magazine, but they have thrown it out. They had not even time to read it. But when they come in and hear someone who is close to so ... even if I sit in the A-fund, I'm X staff for them. That's how it is	Reasons due to member activity – what they come to get and who provide the service Selling the message You reach the member through personal contact – not through a magazine To the member everybody is X	Members don't differentiate Members as one group Members comes to get something Members must be helped	Using intimacy strategy
29	*OK* It will do nothing to them. It's just <u>me</u> who is X. And so it is with everyone, no matter what way you meet us we are X staff. And it is also A-fund. And therefore it is insanely important that we also have a bearing ... .. and know what we should talk about and things like that.	A-fund staff must have a bearing – how and what to communicate to the members See herself as A-fund staff and as having an important position in relation to the overall union	Identification with the X	Confluent with X Aware of her role
30	*Since you got employed at the unemployment fund, who trained you? I think when you say telling what you stand for /* Well, taught and taught..it came gradually…I don't know..well, I can damn hardly remember…The other girls in the fund, right. It was some	How do you get your bearings? Role models – values are past on through interaction, through behaviour. You learn by watching what others do.	Role modelling Introjects	Introjections with awareness

	old tanned girls .... Ehmmm.. one of them (name), she had been there for 100 years and a packed lunch and had been part of it in those days when they only were <u>two</u> ….and they rode around with demands and things like that. These old stories, they are fucking funny. And in this way you get something, a picture of it, a picture of what it was like to fight and ... .. stand outside and created a reputation with red banners and things like that. It was very cool to hear about	Telling funny stories. The grand narratives. Creating a reputation with red colours	Rough humour	
31	*They were from those days/* Yea, they were both from my parents' generation. It was those two old, which I clearly can remember.	From another generation – nostalgic? from the past.	Favours the past	
32	*Have you tried to stand in front of a factory with red banners?* No, I haven't. Not while I have been employed, because then I had to be there for those, who was on strike and came to get their strike money. So actually I haven't managed that.	A paradox – she stay home to take care of those on strike. Solidarity what is that here? Sympathy strike – no. The women stay home and make sure the home base functions.	What served the union best	
33	*No?* But I have been on Christianshavn several times..øhhh Christiansborg is the name.	Christianshavn is a place where you eat, drink and have fun. Christiansborg is the parliament. Attended demonstrations		
34	*Yes, and why did you go there?* Well, because I feel I must help to tell, it was under Schlüter government, I must help to explain that we were not happy with what was happening, right	Right wing party and government. Impact society by showing up and demonstrate.	Identifies with the left wing Differentiate from the right wing	Moving to action – must help
35	*Yes* And that unity, it is .... It's great to feel, I think. I like that. That we are still some who are struggling for unity	Unity is important. We are still some who struggle for unity		Confluent with awareness
36	*Do you think that it is still necessary/* Yes, *To have a union?* Yes			
37	*And here comes the unexpected question, why is that*? (laugh) If people ask me about it, then I say: "We might not join, but then we get social conditions as in England and American and I find that simply .. we have a welfare society based entirely on the whole, this particular construction where the union is a huge part of it. If that disappears, then what? Then there is only one half back and we lose all the weak. There is no place for them. There is only room for all of us with elbows. I can't use that for anything.	Welfare society based on tripartite negotiations where the union is one part. Union takes care of the weak.	Emotional Passion Identify with egotistical people	
38	*Solidarity is still/* Yeahhh *Is still important to you?* Yeahh *There must be room for all?*	I bring solidarity in here again – I prompt her. I interpret it as such – which she might not! How come I become that directive here?	Value support Belief in solidarity	Inclusion

	Yeah			
39	*You recognize yourself among them with elbows?* Yes, at the moment I do. But it might happen that I end up at the other..that I don't know, right	Those who can make a living – have a job compared with the weak	Realise that things shifts	
40	*No* And therefore it is important that there is somebody who can pick me up, if I suddenly can't do that myself.	She might herself become a weak person	Week – strong	Embracing polarities
41	*That is was you consider being the real union mission?* Year….	Union mission		
42	*Socially, this is..øhh .. what might we name it?* One can call it .... uhh, I do not damn ..... Well, it's society's welfare guardian..in one way or the other.. I think. We need someone to take care of what we have. If nobody is taking care of what we have got it will be eroded without our noticing it. And then it is suddenly gone.	Society welfare guardian – that's her metaphor. The union is there to guard the welfare that is here right now in society. It's a rather stable view – to keep things as they are as nothing else is changing.	Mission to keep societal welfare Union as stabiliser	
43	*Hm ….. pause* *So you're saying is that the union will at all times have such a role as the guardian of society.* Yea .. I can't imagine who else who is able *No ?* In my world it is. I've almost been at a conference where we discussed among other things what it to be helped. There was one from a job center who… he had some rather peculiar views on things. It was something like "in the old days people could fend for themselves. You did not get help in the head and ass ..and now you can just walk into a job center in the municipality or the A fund and all sorts of places, no. There I was damn need to ... I was a little bit ... so I said: "Now you stop, bloody hell. I remember when they went around and begged for money and slept in haystacks and .... So, played in the courtyards and the like. They may have eight children who had nothing, right!. And we bloody hell not going back to that, are we!".	Interesting that she can't see anybody else take on this role/task Union has grown the last decade and spend money on themselves. Internal discussion on the topic "receiving help" – mirroring societal stances. The right wing liberalistic perspective: "his own fortune" and the left wing socialistic perspective: "equal opportunities for all". The individual and the collective.	Stopping critique Mainstream union values Maintain union values Living in the past	Autonomy versus dependency
44	*And what was the answer to that?* Well he is .. the answer was, probably speaking, .. or virtually almost all the others said I was right and then he said no more. That's typical in such a large forum, right.	Group pressure – most of the people present valued or assumed a value of equality	Closing opposing views	Aware of group dynamics
45	*Would you say that there are many who share your views?* Yes, or they do not dare say anything else, I do not know. The places where ...... næææ, there are not many who share them. There are also many who say the opposite, right. If you consider how many votes for the Danish People's Party, then I think probably there are many who have the opposite view. It does scare me a little, I reckon.	That was a surprise to me that she mentioned group conformity. Danish people's party is considered right wing; however it carries social democratic values as well. They draw workers' votes. Who and what do they identify with	We and them In group and out groups	Identification and differentiation

46	*The fact that you lose members, it's not just X, it is in general. What do you believe that is an indication of?* Well, it's about self-sufficiency… that we are closest to ourselves and we can manage by our self. And we do not have room for or do not want to take care of those who cannot. It only happens for the neighbour, right. I think it is heartbreaking that it's the whole community eventually. Also the way we treat refugees and immigrants, the way we address them, talk about them. I simply think it is so inhumane and undignified. I cannot understand that one can be so cold and cynical.	The liberalistic perspective but not only. Self-sufficiency as egotism or as reduction of complexity. Self-sufficiency as inhumane Cold and cynical Including yourself in a critique you can't be blamed for labelling or for placing yourself as a saint	Generalising Characterising	
47	*You connect your experience with being cold and cynical?* Yea, it bloody is. Nobody asks to be put in such a situation, to become unemployed or fugitive or any of the kind. It is not anything you do on purpose. There is always somebody to say: ÅHHHH we know somebody, who…. Yea, damn there are those who can't be bothered. Let them be. But they are so few, after all. But the others should not be punished because of it, right!	She differentiates: doing on purpose and what happens to you by fate or coincidence. People become inhumane because of the "bad cheating examples". Those are few and the many are being punished.	Differentiates Values	Stay close to phenomenology
48	*Another issue I've heard many places inside and outside X is that it is an insurance, a kind of insurance you buy and you (X) are someone who will provide the service. Do you agree?* Yea, some of it. There is a small part of it, the part where you get money. It's your insurance. But there is a very big part of our work, which is certainly of service component. The conversations I've just been sitting in now, I have helped people to move on. The last one I had, she could not figure out what to do and she could not get a job and she was nervous and her, I have now been forwarded to a conversation with a consultant. So maybe she can get a new picture of how she looks and what she can do and all those things, right. And that is not something insurance policies do, for I shall also at the same time make sure she gets some money. It is helpful, it is a service so that it succeeds maybe she gets a new job. She walks away and is happy, just so that she could get some help, do not. So isn't just an insurance.	X as insurance is a small part Provider of service is a big part – helping people to move on. The way she explain this sounds more like therapy or coaching.	Union as insurance Union as social office Union as therapy Responding to people's needs	Phenomenology description Giving examples
49	*It's combined, that you are insured and getting a subsidy at the same time. But what is it you do that municipality does not? Or a consultant firm or outsourcing?* You notice that yourself. It happens. What I am doing here, you surely can do elsewhere.	How come she agrees with me? She can't articulate how the union differs in their products – they had monopole for many years	Loosing of organisational identity	
50	*But is there anything of what you are doing that is unique?* (pause …….) I bloody don't know. .... I do not know if it is unique, but we're good at it. And I think it is,…. that we are skilled. We have many years experience. It should of course not be sneezed at. ………(pause)I cannot give you a straight answer.	She can't give me a straight answer. I experienced that several time working with unions – they couldn't explain their raison d'être		Loosing up introjected values
51	*It is a combination of branding and image, but also your culture and ... how everything works together, right. How do you believe ordinary*	I try to prompt her in order to hear her response. Teach and ask the next	Insurance policy identity is self-sufficient people (on	

	people experience you (X) today? Hmmm, that's different. Those, who are on their way out, they see us just as an insurance policy. If you cannot go anywhere, then you have to stay, right.	question in a different manner. She sighs – how does she believe others look at them. Insurance. If you can't go anywhere... wonder if that is a projection of own situation?	their way out) Societal watch dog identity is people who can't go	
52	*Those, who typically will change to the yellow?* Yes, for example, right. So ... .. I find it hard to say how people perceive us. It's ... I have my lens on. I belong here, so ... but of course I hear something, but the group I'm in .... Ohhhh ... . there they are so used to I'm here , I almost said, so it's not something we discuss or talk about so much. Sometimes I rush into a situation where we discuss a little ... ... I do not know how they perceive us. There is no general perception. I think it is different.	I ask about members – the yellow who are non-LO members. She takes long pauses and thinks – It's interesting that they don't discuss how others might perceive them.	Image isn't important	Multiple realities
53	*Just a wide range of what you've heard or think?* Yes .... There is someone who sees us as a very large behemoth with feet of clay ….with a lot of "fat cats". And even you yourself can also sometimes get that impression, when one hears and sees what is happening around. Those who get to know us and enter into our house, get help and leave and are happy and ... .. have got something out what they entered with, they don't see us like that. They see us as somebody they know, somebody they dare have confidence in. It is not just an insurance company. It is a human being, it's faces.	I pause to give her time. The organisation as a very large behemoth with clay feet People attached to the organisation as Fat cats "To know us is to love us" – phrase. She point to contact – if members see for themselves and get help then their image changes	Union identity as a large behemoth Union identity as a human being	Powerful relational contact impacts labelling
54	*Do I get you right if I say that you are able to provide intimacy?* yes *Commitment to the individual?* yes	Confirm my interpretations with other words – I am reminded of critique of psychological technologies – Brinkmann		
55	*So it's only people who really do not know you who have an idea /* Yes it is .. I think it is so. Just now I am sitting here with what I saw today on the retina .... and the last few days as well. There are people, who know us, who come in here and leave and who are mostly satisfied with what they got, right.	People come to get help and become help they are satisfied.		Cycle of experience
56	*If we are to stay out in the world, like you said. You can once in a while get the impression that it is one big "fat cat". What made you say that?* Well, it's due to the process we're in now. Alas, when you're within the walls and watch how the elected are fighting over the stools that are left, without giving it a thought that this is an organization that will hopefully survive and hopefully survive well. It is my opinion that they fight over some stools for personal gain; it is bloody ugly to look at.	Her perceptions of fat cat syndrome. She argues for a whole organisation view – how can that organisation survive. The elected are the fat cats here. Projects onto the elected. Against her values and beliefs about how to behave	Identifying with sub-systems in the union Withdrawal to self-serving	Sub-systems Egotism versus
57	*And you say elected? So it's the elected, it's not the employees?* The employees have not even begun to fight yet, because we have nothing to fight about. We do not know what is going to happen. They are about to take on a few around, some leaders around, and first then,	She might not think better of the employees. They don't have information.	Uncertainty Fighting In groups and out groups Emotional	

	at that time that .... Our .... My own .... Uhh hopes for what is going to happen, they are bloody not very large. Definitely not.	Loss of hope Withdrawal from branch	Disillusioned	
58	*What do you think will happen?* So, for my part, I think that I get offered a job in Copenhagen and then I'll consider whether I want it. For there is no place for me here, in the branch.	She has already applied for a job??	Process of withdrawal	Seeking completion
59	*Because?* Because I am a leader and I am one of (name) leaders. *So (name) goes and you go?* Yes, that is what I think	She believes that since she has been manager under this particular head who did not any job she will not get any jobs either	Being a leader Being identified as (name)'s leader	
60	*Hmm,..sounds like a collective punishment?* Yes, and this is partly why we held a union club meeting, that day where all of that happened, where (name) was terminated, right. It was because… that was exactly what we feared, right. And we have not received any indication from any of the elected around the rest from this part of the union, who say it is of cause not going to happen (that the branch is being closed). It's something weird half-talk ... I do not think there is anything clearly spoken, saying that now you can calm down. I think there will be sorted in us. That .... that those who have been screaming or have been a little too far ..on the ball, they do not have a position. That is how it goes. They get rid of the cumbersome.	Her own belief about her organisation's behaviour internally – sack those who speak up, get rid of the cumbersome – sack those who might have the same ideas. No dialogue or no survey of qualifications. This view is so much against her view on union mission and values.	Getting rid of the cumbersome Loosing identification with branch Perhaps also with X	projection
61	*So it's not qualifications /* No. I think not *and an open process, but you indicate that selection parameter is who has been with who?* Yes, that's it. I think so	Selection parameter for sacking people is alliances in her mind Not waking the talk	Power game	Ability to influence
62	*It is a paradox, because in my view it is the unions who stand up and shout about injustice ... and here, you carry a belief that those who shout about internal, they get kicked out?* Yes, if we shout about in the wrong way, then, yelled at the wrong horses. I cannot say whether this is so, but I believe it. *It's a feeling?* Yes, it's a feeling I have.	Sharing my view with her – I might provoke her. She stays with her assumption.	Exposed theory and theory-in use	Projection with awareness
63	*Ok.* I'm (pouring coffee) ... I do not know if I don't care. I do care. It has been many years and it has been a part of me and it ... .. it's something I believe in, right. But I'm also not afraid still to speak up, so I keep doing that. If I get to be near someone, then I say that this is my fear .... or it is my belief that it is so, then I do. I bloody don't care, then, in one way or another so they must know ... that the others and the elected, must know that that is how it like to be us. There are more people who feel like me. So ... I do. So it may well be that it is wrong, then there is nothing to do about it	Idealism and reality Here she is confronted with attitudes she does not like or has ignored before? The others – and us. They should know what it is like to be us in this situation. She takes a risk by stating her stance	Telling your opinion versus keeping silent Part of her it still trying to influence Part of her is moving on	Creative adjustment to what is

		according to her own belief that those who shout get sacked.		
64	*What you say that it's something you believe in. The values now, I use the word values, but what to do and be supportive and there must be room for everyone ... and that's how some values that are important to you.* Well, there's always been ... I do not know what to call it ... .. we've always said that X is not for the X employees. We are not members. We have never been. Ohhhh.. but we have our own club in the club, you might say. And we have had to cope with that. Actually, we should not remain members, I recon. We cannot handle our own cases, now can we.	Being an employee in X implies that you can't get help like anyone else being a union member. That is a paradox. The union become employer – the elected are the employers and they are elected by the members – which also are the employees.	Identifying with the employee as not X members Having our own club in the club	Levels of system Differentiate
65	*It must be difficult to wearing so many hats?* Yes, it is in between. The time now is fucking hard. Now we can really feel it, right.	In this situation when downsizing it becomes visible – the dynamics reveal themselves	multiple caring identities	
66	*Yes, because who takes care of you if you become those the others don't want to play with - within the same system.* Yes			
67	*Who's taking care of you?* Exactly. *But who does?* Right now we take care of each other, right. We do, but I also feel that we are becoming more and more diluted, we are getting tired now. It's hard.	How can they take care of each other when they also compete about positions? I wonder if she is one of those persons who worked hard to keep everybody together?	Keeping X identity Withdrawing from Branch and branch identity	
68	*It has been going on for quite some time?* For a very long time it has been going on and it continues, very condensed now. Now we have to get through a summer holiday and then we get to learn something, in August ... yes, it is almost unbearable ... you turned grey-haired. You tread water, while you know that in a moment comes a wave, right, and you still can not ... I certainly cannot make myself ready for it because I do not really know what it is	I become touched by her – being supportive and understanding. Her use of metaphors here is quite intense: Turn grey-haired. Tread water knowing a wave is on its way and you can't prepare yourself for not drowning	Protecting her group members Identify with "her as being helper"	Can't move into mobilisation Stay with what is which is contradictory to her previous pattern? Or does she use her energy to support her group
69	*This strategy, which is not to report anything out?* Yes, get it over with, get it out.	Pro and against information	Information Knowledge is power	
70	*Ok. Who decides in X?* (Groans) ... ... (long pause) Yea, who decides? I soon bloody don't know no more. I guess some of the elected do. There are some elected who really have got the upper end, around here... ... ... And they decide, I think. They have really got hold and they decide now.	I think she knows and will not tell – and I don't what to push her. There are a group of the elected	Diffusion of formal power	Struggling for a common figure
71	*How have they managed to get a grip? How do you do that in such a system here?* Well, how did they do that.(Sighs). They have probably talked together	Lobbying Smoke room deal Bulldozed	Power takeover Sub-groups	Multidirectional energy Her and the bulldozing,

	and made a smoke room deal and agreed upon a huge deal, taking all the others with their pants down. So there are a bunch of elected, who have rolled up all over and bulldozed. They started in the main board and been bulldozing. Our main union chairman has also been bulldozed so they have driven down through.	Taken with their pants down Victims and executioners		undercover elected Her and the elected with their pants down
72	*They have gained so much power that they are able to push the main union chairman aside/* Yes, that happened. We don't hear much from him.	She makes assumption – they don't hear much from the president. I know how fast the news travel in this system due to the many "hats"		Her and main union chairman
73	*And he doesn't take part.* No, it was not his proposal that went through. There were several different proposals. I would not say that the proposal, which has come here, I don't say it's bad. I bloody think it's not. It is not worse than the others. I think they are just bad altogether. But I just do not think it helps any of our members. I think we're going to lose a lot (members).	The loss of members worries her. The solutions proposed are not sufficient. On one hand she talks of smoke room deals and on the other hand she talks about proposals – and voting.	Hypocrisy All proposals are equally bad All lead to loosing members	Retroflect Her and proposals Her and members
74	*Why do they do all this?* Yes, that's for slimming .. the organization. We spent too much money. We must save 170 million ….and 200 employees, I think they have found it to be. And they will implement it through large-scale operations.	She is informed why Here she sees herself as part of the union – we spent, we must – but they implement	Downsizing Intimacy and local unions to virtual and large-scale-operation union	
75	*How many within the political system have to go?* Well, we do not know. For they cannot really agree upon that. They have to figure out themselves in the branches, the total amount that are sufficient and must it be the same as in the old days or do you create new, or	The elected organisational structure seems to be delegated and not a central decision. The elected are mostly voluntary, no-cost, however they do take resources in that the employees must provide services to them	Power diffusion Self-governing	
76	*So they have looked at the employees, primarily, not at the political organization?* Yes, that's right-	Can it be that they only looked at the employees in order to save money and not for how they contribute to making the total organisation function		
77	*You know how they made that decision?* They have taken a bunch of pundits and put into various committees, and then they had to come up with some ideas for how to build it up so that you had an unemployment fund committee and technical committee and a political committee and ... .. A-fund committee' finished and made their proposals. It has also been adopted. The others are hardly begun. And that makes it's such a little unclear. Then you think: "What the hell is this about. We cannot build a new house by starting up at the ceiling, right. The foundations are not made yet and there are no walls; there is nothing. Now there's finally been appointed a director to the A-fund. And it also takes time. Now it's June and we must start by the first of August, right. How the hell do we achieve that?	Democratic values – involve people, give people a voice and responsibility for the outcome – that makes a good change. A-fund has completed their work – they are one entity. Use a metaphor: building a house starting with the ceiling.	Involving people Work task groups A-fund committee is done Identifying with the A-fund Taking care of members	 Moving forward without support Moving into future

	I don't get it. And there's still .... there are still some members who do not understand anything. They call us and write to us. We cannot just say we're moving and we are in the middle of changing things, so you just come back after Christmas. That does not work, does it		Being ironic	
78	*And you say WE are moving?* Yes, but ... when I say WE I think of my girls and their tables and their chairs ... they must be moved and they are going to Copenhagen and ... .. uhh ... the office here is closed, I think	I think she knows more. She can't say more just now. She has been gagged. She still talks about her girls and they must be moved.		Moving into future
79	*You think that this whole section here is to be closed down?* Yes, I think. (long pause) I have no great thoughts about the others, right? (chuckles)	She knows that there will be one A-fund. What she doesn't know is what happens with the other functions and people	Differentiation of her A-fund and the rest	
80	*Well, you believe what you believe, right.* That's my conviction. That's where I am	I evade further questions about her knowledge of her own position		
81	*What .. do you think is the reason that one might imagine that this branch must close?* Well, that's ... I think .... It is a rental office ... .. the others are owned. It's also a big job to go out and sell. Our office is rented. There are some big houses around. Our infrastructure means that you easily can get from K (City name) to R (City name), for example. So if people want to talk to X so they can just go to R(city) or NF(city)	She knows and must not tell. Her guesses are quite accurate. I am mystified – she talked angrily about the fat cats... and yet she knows I believe. This story is confirmed by one of the elected	Rational arguments about closure	
82	*You think R(City) and NF(City) will remain?* Yes, there will be established some small satellite office in Kal(City). I think	She doesn't seem to be angry about the offices that remained – and she knows she has a job		
83	*R and K had such an old matter, something.. ... I am a little curious as to whether you see the branches cooperate or counteract each other?* They counteract. No doubt about that. This is happening now, it's tit for tat. It is one to (name) and one to(name). Tit for tat for all those times where they have quarrelled with the others and told truths to them. There is no doubt about it. Loyalty to their own leaders	Tit for tat – the branches compete and do not work together in order to counteract the membership loss. Loyalty between elected manager and employed manager.	Sub-groups differentiate Power struggles No overall agreement	
84	*Hm, so there has been an old /* Old grudges, you bet. *Do you know what it is about?* No, not really, because.. it's a bit lost .. *in the dark (laugh together)* Yes, it's .... Firstly the two ... øhhhh .... I may not use ugly words, but I'll probably call them a bit hysterical, the two chairmen of the two branches; they are also extremely stubborn both of them. That is a very good point of departure when you have to come to an agreement, right. That's pretty logical. So that's where it started. There has never been any mudslinging between staff in both branches. On the contrary, we have always helped each other if we could get to it. Worked together and been in groups together and exchanged experiences.	Old grudges Nobody really know Take an individual a dyadic perspective – on top elected managers. Their personal traits as hysterical and stubborn. The employees help each other.	Old grudges Stubborn elected managers Mature staff that tried to work together	Unfinished business Fixed gestalt Inability to manage differences Levels of system

85	*So the staff, there is nothing? And you have not had the experience you have been attacked by R (City)?* Yes, we have, but mostly it has been those, we know in advance which has been ... .. those who do something like that.	Its personal – not a group ting People who is expected to behave like that	Expectation fulfilled – no tension, but patterns	Constructing pattern projecting
86	*It is a few people?* Yes, the same that also helps to make a backroom deal now, right. Those who do backroom deals.	The same who are contributing to the back room deals		Constructing pattern projecting
87	*And it lies with the elected, is that what you think?* Yes, it lies with the elected and also looked for some managers.	She places the responsibility on manager level		Sub-groups
88	*Ok, a mixture of some leaders and some elected who contribute to this. No employees?* No, I have not seen any employees taking part.	Managers and elected join in order to maintain power getting their proposal through		Projecting Sub-groups
89	*And you haven't been warned by any of the employees, or?* No, no one.	Exploring loyalty on employee level – between branches	No gossip	
90	*So there's no connection there?* I don't know. My impression is that ..... we were at a club meeting down in N (city) for a while ago and it was just a few days before everything broke loose and we talked about it later; that there was someone there .. some safety representatives, who joined our company, who definitely knew something and possibly some others too, right. Afterwards, you could just recall noticing some signs ... of cause; it might also be us who imagined stuff - that we don't know. We have nothing to have it in. The fact that someone says: "Nååå that was why they said so, that was why they did so. "	Shop stewards and security representatives are informed but must not tell what they learned. Looking back they interpreted based on small clues; that they knew but kept quiet.	Loyalty No solidarity	Projection of her own experience being a shop steward
91	*Subsequent interpretation ... it's not that you get on the blower and says: "What's the point? Where has your loyalty gone?* No, because just then and up till now I must say that I am slightly kinder garden offended. That is where I am just now. It is also a matter of protecting myself, because I cannot really bloody handle it anymore. It's tough.	Communication between employees – they act their system. They don't break the rules. She is disappointed even if she behaves the same way – you can't tell when your employer inform you	Being torn between internal moral system and external loyalty	Split Becoming egotistic
92	Yes, when it's something you believe in, so / *Then it hurts?* *Yea*	Sounds sad and tired. Almost about to cry.	Being disillusioned Identifications disrupted Pain	
93	*Hmmmm It's easier if it was just a job?* Yes, and it is not. It's never been. A very large part of my life .... And I realized that many years ago, that is just who I am. It's not something I can put away when I go home. I never get off that way.	Being ones job – idealism, something you believe in. Enthusiasm and disappointment. Can't separate work and home life	Union work as a vocation Strong identification Identity	Confluence
94	*Nooo, it's what you are passionate about* Yes.. *It is the price you pay?* Yes, it's the price Pause *aargh....* (empathetic)	She is fighting for her staff – I wonder how that corresponds with her view about organisational survival? Her personal traits – if I break, they break too	She identifies with her as helper Her as stronger than the rest She must carry the burden	Polarized Well developed support for others and less developed support for self Desensitising

	I stick to it with the black of my nails and fight my way through, because I have some girls I must take care of. And if there is something I can't, then I fight. I do not know how long I am able, but I try in any way. And if I break, then they do too. Then it is bloody miserable.			
95	*What will you try to fight for?* I will simply try to get them through these months until we know what is going to happen and ... uhh try to keep spirits up a little and try to get some help to them. I will simply try to get them through. There's nothing else I am fighting for. That's it. So they too have the energy to find out what they want.	She does not know if she is able to employ them all?? Interesting that she can't look at them as grownups, responsible persons – but girls.	Focusing her energy on her department	Focused energy Figure –background
96	*Ok* If I do not get an offer that I like, I will not be here anymore, that is just how it is. Then I take .. I will figure out and take on a job...... for a period, while I figure it out. But right now I do not spend time trying to figure it out. I do not. *One thing at a time.* Yes, one thing at a time.	If she does not take/or get the job as manager in the A-fund – she can't influence in ways that make sure her girls come too. Or she is sure that all her girls will get a job in the new A-fund		Being here and now Staying with uncertainty "what is" Deflecting with awareness
97	*Yes, it sounds sensible. That I am fascinated by ... .. emotionally, that's you carry so many hats. Now sitting in together in the club and in that situation there are a couple of shop stewards, who knows things... .. and who should they be loyal to.* Yes, that is exactly right *Or jointly with, if you will.* Yes, it's the.	I want to explore the "hat" dynamic further.		
98	*It must be scary hard.* Yes, that is also a bit like what I say I have in my leader position. I am also one of those who sit and flap slightly. It's probably the hardest part of being a leader and being shop steward. I've tried both. You know more than you can say and do and sometimes you know things you don't want to know. So, there's no doubt that they need to know. It's also tough for them to carry.	She compare with her leader position – many hats, personal friendship, counterpart, etc.	Being manager is a lonely position Being shop steward is a lonely position	Multiple realities Strategy versus intimate Levels of system
99	*So you take care of your team now?* Yes, I do. *And that's what you focus on?* Yes	Confirming Pull yourself together	Identifying with caring	
100	*When you get some information, then /* I figure out what I will do. At one time or another, then there's something,... some leader positions you can apply for. Maybe I should try to apply and I <u>will</u> also do it, but I feel this way ... bvadr (pretend vomiting) .. I can't be bothered. It sounds a little stupid, doesn't it?, But I do not have the zest to do it. It is basically not what I want, probably. But I do it after all	Perhaps she hasn't made up her mind jet. Or she has but don't find the zest to do it. In the end she says that she will do it – apply.	Mourning – letting go and Excitement - Reaching out	Ambivalence
101	*What will make you do it?*	Will she stay in the organisation with	Trusting people	Cycle of experience

	It could well be that I became wiser, that the people ... they were good enough in the end. It could well be that it is I who am wrong. And so that not all my illusions, that are shattered, are taken from me. It could well be that it was right what they did. And I'm still a little curious about whether it is right. But I usually have energy to investigate things. And right now I don't, so the mere thought of making ... .. make a CV and ... ... yuk	broken illusions or? She is left without energy. Saying goodbye to a branch she has worked in for many years – grief?	Shattered illusions Daring to Build energy Risk taking	I – we Egotism – confluence
102	*Hmm* And then I think ... it's something with that ... what if they do not offer me anything, then it gets bloody stupid, right. *Hmm* I have to consider that as well. That is also partly how I feel.	Fear of being rejected – looking stupid.	Feeling powerless	Exposure – vulnerability
103	*So who can you turn to and get some support?* Right now I know not really. (Pause)	No support – Almost crying		Lack of self support
104	*Hmmm. I think, why not get some coaching?.* We've had created an auntie group, where we three A-fund managers meet. But I don't want to meet them because they sit in those other branches. And I don't have any desire right now to hear about it. It is us left to carry the can. I do not want to hear how they are. It is us who have lost two managers. It is us who do not know what the hell ... cannot get any information. They are placed much closer to where decisions are made. Close to the new chairman and the new manager, so I have withdrawn a little. So right now I do not really have anywhere to go. Maybe if (name) stops. That is not clear. It's really bad. Perhaps it ends with (name) and I turn towards each other and see, if we can make ends meet	I support her there. When people in organisations suddenly are put in competing situations they withdraw and support disappears She doesn't what to talk with those who are in the "remaining branches". They know – we are those who are in pain. She is a leader and it's not an option to seek support amongst her staff.	We are left to carry the can We have lost two managers Being abandoned Long from the people in power	Polarized – confluent and egotistic Part of – withdrawn from Awareness of self support by scanning environment
105	*And that would be good?* It's fine and then I have (name) in R. We use each other a lot.	Here she use on staff member.		Self-support
106	*It makes me think of ... as far as I can hear; you spend very much effort holding your team together and protect them. How do you look at the other teams?* Those are not in my mind now. I have a few old colleagues like. (name) who I'm talking with and we are trying to figure out what we can do. But otherwise, they are not in the situation right now where they must decide .. There is a whole year before .. before it tightens up for them. And I can't spend any time on that now. And then there are some who ... ... disappointed me, that I can feel clearly right now. I weed out, that's what I do. Yes.	She repeats in different manner that her focus in on the A-fund and her girls A-fund people are forced to decide now The others are not She is disappointed with her counterparts I weed out, she says....	Weeding out amongst colleagues	Pulling back projections Fixed figures
107	*Hmm* It is a bit strange, too. Those I thought were good old fellows; I suddenly could not really use them.	People change in different context – expectations did not hold	Change of situation changes interaction	
108	*How did they fail?*	Sighs	Expectations are unfulfilled	Becoming egotistic

	I do not know. It was accumulation of many little things, I think. *It has accumulated over /* Jaaaa. There are cashed up and now I spend the resources where I find it appropriate. Then they must take care of themselves, as I did.	How she gathered situations that did not match her expectations – unfinished business		Creating patterns
109	*Those you are talking about are your old counterparts, its among them you have screen out?* Yea *And the new ones?* Oh, I get well on with any of them, with some of them. There are some of them, some of R.(city) people, who are in my team, who are great to be with. And they are as flaked out as I am, but we try to help each other the best we can. They are good people. But the old, there is not much left. I have (name), who is one of the old ones, but I don't see him often because he is in R (city).	This must be those amongst the K (city branch) people. Those from R (the merged branched) seem to be more workable.	Closing in – in-group	Coming to terms with what is Letting go Embracing the new
110	*What is it that matter to you? As (name)? What is it for example you get or don't get?* Hmmmmm ... I think probably that .... in the old branch in K(city). We were a large group then, who had much joy in each other and helped each other a lot, things like that, right. And have been through a lot together. We have a lot of history. Some stopped and some just changed, also in a different way than I realized. That I take note of and ...... well, then the relationship it must end there. A good counterpart, I depended on..... So there's been an enormous change. It is brand new .... With a bit of old elements, but in fact, it is brand new and new colleagues.	I wonder how she interacts with her counterparts – will she tell them or not. Or does she observe and make her judgements.	Change of circumstances Change of relationships Expectations unfulfilled	
111	*And what is it that has changed, do you know?* No, I do not know. So, we talked a lot about it in the management team for instance. There is not the .... caring, not really the caring we took before. Then we cared for each other. And it was obvious when one showed up in the morning and was sad. Then we knew it right along and could take care of each other and help out. It's not there anymore. I don't think so. I try to keep the feeling in my team and I think it works fairly well, right. But that atmosphere it's not so much in the house as much as it has been. We've talked a lot about what it was that had happened, since it disappeared. I cannot say why.	Caring as value. See to it, make sure that is done. Becoming efficient Change of power amongst the employees	Identifying with caring as a value The atmosphere has change into a more self-sufficient one	
112	*Care, you call it, is that to have an eye out for each other?* yes *Another factor, which I wanted to ask you about, is to stick together around something socially.* There is not much more.	They had much fun together and did things privately as well – private and work boundaries were blurred then	nostalgic Change of culture	
113	*Where's it gone?* Well, it may well be gone down the drain with the old ones. Otherwise I bloody well don't know, because we are some left who really tried to ..	Maintain values Maintain identity Restore and try again in different ways	Trying to maintain the culture in different ways	

	.. maintain and restore and try again .. and in a different way, but it is somewhat uphill, or was, right.			
114	*Right, I am thinking about of your culture, with unity and/* Yes *Partying together and having experiences together and care for each other, which I sense has gone or looks different /* Yes, it is certainly very different, if not totally disappeared, right. A lot. It is no more, it's not	I talk about what I heard from others and what I have experienced when working there. Values that have disappeared	Mourning about the old days Coming to terms with the new reality	
115	*Have you noticed it and reflected upon it?* Yes, very. It's something I've spent a lot of time on, to try figuring out if there was anything I could do to make.. (powerful voice) something happen; something new. You are also up against "the usual way of doing things". It may well be someone who says. "But usually is dead" and "it's not the old days," so we must find new ways, right. And it has been difficult. I tried, but nothing succeeded. I do not know why	The old ways being together are gone and she can't find new ways – however if she wants to maintain what's been the culture then she talks of the same goals with new means.	Her old self – moving into action Stopped by the system	
116	*Is that the reason for your disappointment? Related to the people? That they didn't put up, or?* No, they have not changed in that respect. *They still put up?* Jaaaaa. There is no change in that.	It is not about their tasks but their relations.		
117	*The various teams that have been running. To me it sounds like it is you who make them stick together and also see it as your role as manager to make sure they stick together?* I have always tried to get our team to communicate and that we should look after each other. That is what has been important for me, but I have also tried to pull out ... we have to be autonomous, right. I try to instil in them: "We have a commitment towards each other and should beware of each other." Constantly trying to get them to understand that we must help each other. When S (Head) is completely burnt out, then we must rally round each other and help and things like that. And I think we have succeeded with that and it's been good to see that. We succeeded in taking care of each other and in one having an eye out for what's happening with the others. I find that has been good and correct. And I could do it .... because I found out... I got feedback from them that they are well aware that I take care of them, that is in quotation marks, right. Because when I'm out then ... ... there's not anybody who is going to attack that group. I'll defend them. That is how I feel right now, I must admit. And I do that no matter who ... .. uh, and not matter, it may be the other teams or somebody from the Union; that is, if it is not fair, I will let them know. And I know that the girls appreciate it and it has been influential so they also started to take care of each other and know we have a good team. Now we have a group that worked and works ... .. because we work as a team. It is simply	Her role as manager – does she see it only in terms of A-fund or also the others? Autonomous teams with her as manager? Does she see herself as one of the team? It seems as she also take care of the head (burned out). She acts as a boundary keeper. If a critique is unfair she tells the intruder that. But not the other teams.	Autonomy versus caring Her value – union value as helping the weak Union as insurance for self-sufficient people She unites her group by defending it if attacked unfairly	Role as manager is boundary keeper Experiments

	without a hitch. And where it goes wrong with the others, it is that the other does not care. It is my perspective.			
118	*So none of the other teams are well functioning from your perspective?* UC team does. In my eyes they do it reasonably well. They had a rough time, but they can still figure out how to talk with each other and coordinate things and so on. But the others do not. I think we suffer .. .... our team, when they fail.	UC team which she was the only team that she didn't know which function had (2)	She is aware of the groups' interdependence but has no power to make them do so	Lack of management gives multiple directional energy and power struggle
119	*And it is because they lack that ... ... "caring for " or?* Yes, such things as recognizing, that it is a team, even if you are placed in two houses; they don't handle that. It is two houses. That's how I see it. They do not really know what they're doing in the other house. I know. I know every day what is happening in the second house and they know what is happening here. We talk together every day.	They are situated in two towns (after the merger) and are supposed to coordinate their functions.	She is aware of the importance of contact and inclusion	
120	*Here you primarily refer to R(city) /* Yes, that's correct. It is especially to will to fill in for in (ill colleagues), it's completely dead, the way there. They must fend for themselves. And it affects us. When they cannot learn it, those two, then we must take it all and I've had some battles with them. I say: "They have to go back and do their job, they must." "They cannot," she says. In my opinion that is like hell butting us. Well, we haven't closed that discussion.	When someone is ill or absent they don't coordinate their work resources. When one team works well and another does not then the whole system is affected. Where is the head?	Struggle between direction and relationship Her group is affected by the others not doing their work	
121	*Are you talking about sickness and stuff, /* Hmmm *dropout, then you have to solve it /* Oooh	Those who are sitting there however in a other function are forced to take over in regard to member service.		
122	*Ok. And who determined that?* Well, nobody has determined anything-. Ohhhh ... .. (Head) would like that we find out ourselves, because we are self-governing teams. And I think it is fair enough, that we ought to do so. But when you lean back and say: "We cannot figure it out." It's not a question of ability; it is a question of will that is how I see it. So I tell them. I don't believe you when you say you can't. It does not hold. Ohhhhh ... .. and how to get it sorted, I do not really know. Then I realize that there is no one who cares for the rest of their team, the way we have it in our team, where we intervene and say, "Hey, now we must have a back up here. There are only two in this house or one in that house, so we just have to move our girls around. They don't do that, for example.	Self-governing teams' needs leadership when changes take place – or they struggle with their identity. It becomes a power struggle before everyone feel committed. Compare how they function and behave with the other teams behaviour	No formal leadership Self-governing teams Value of taking responsibility Value of taking action Value of making things happen together Sub-group leadership	Awareness of "stuckness"
123	*And what if you said no?* That's really what I've been pondering about, that its next move we take. And then there's a hell of a fuss. If (manger) stops in a week, right, then we .. then there is no leader, who has guts to do it. "Well, she will manage all right" .... It's also a shame that she has to finish that		Power vacuum Sub-optimizing Lack of solidarity	Lack of dialogue Lack of contact

	way. BUT in uhh .. we're going to hang there. (pause)			
124	*Hmmmmmm. To clarify, there is UC team, A-fund team, the member team, and there is ... .. what are they called?* Case workers and consultants team, that's who we are. The consultant team, we do not see much. They tear around and are clobber busy	The consultant team are outgoing and work with organisations – not the same persons who worked as consultants before the merger.		Levels of system Able to shift level and figure
125	*They are solo riders?* Yes, they are.	The outgoing consultant team		
126	*Are they beneficial to X in your optics?* Yes, definitely.			
127	*So what they contribute to, do you think, to /* They help to give KH a face when they are out. And they are really, really good at it. *How?* Because they go out and solve some of the tasks that our members want addressed in the workplace.	Image – marketing – give X it's face They are competent They do consultancy work with members on their work places	Image Marketing	
128	*Hmmmhmm* And it would be a great joy if you also saw in the remaining teams could say: "They're busy out there therefore we take care of the rest". This is also part of the fighting that takes place.	There are critique that the outgoing team is not in-house – envy?	Lack of solidarity Lack of appreciation	
129	*When that team is out do they market those values your find important /* Yes, I think they do. *In your mind they stand for the values of caring for each?* Yes			
130	*How does the company receive them? They can be a little critical towards X at times?* In general I think that they welcome them. It depends on what their businesses are, of course. If they are there to start a case, then the company doesn't find it that funny. But if they are there to help them with, for example competency clarification or something like that, then companies are pleased, because they experience that everybody benefits.	Carry different roles – as member advocates, as mediators, as teachers, and process consultants	Union as process consultancy Union as watch dog Union as mentoring system	
131	*Do they charge any money or do they work for free?* They work for free.	How do the union branch behave differently in order to get in contact with its members		
132	*It is marketing /* It is the members who pay for it. *It's the members that pay in advance?* Yes	Can they attract new members Keep the old ones? The members pay for a sound work place environment which is new		
133	*It is not the business people who pay?.* No. That is the brilliant about this division, we have created. Now we come out and make the kind of work the organisations want. They are the ones who ask us to come. We don't come out and palm them off by	They see members as being more loyal to their workplace and not interested in being seen as disloyal – when shop stewards and managers	Union as process consultancy Positive reaction about the	Awareness of the complexities of the system

	saying: "Now we are going to fix this and that. Then you will realize that it works". It is the members, it's the companies who, together,....the union representative and management, who approach us and says: "We have something we would like to look into. Can you come"? That is what is brilliant.	dialogue about problems then the union is looked upon as a helper	branch as consultancy	
134	*Hmmmm. And UC team?* They make a lot of courses. UC makes a lot of courses. The other two are more concerned with job placement services. And ohhhh ... conversations, of cause, they do too, helping the members doing job applications. And there are plenty of members who come in and feel bad, really, really bad. They are helped to face the world in new ways. It ... ... We have a few, yes, at least every week...perhaps twice a week we A-fund people meet members who can tell us that they have been helped by the UC team. It's nice. (Name) had one of the old ones, which just had been helped to move on. Who had been in some very severe depressions and who have been helped to move on.	They educate and are coaches. They might do therapy as well – what is called life coaching. Severe depressions??	Union as teacher Union as therapist	
135	*Ok, you are saying that they also offer important services directed more to the individual member?* It is just targeted to the individual member and then there are courses targeted to groups, right.	Individuals and groups of members		
136	*Ok and then we have case workers?* They take care of those disciplinary proceedings. To get written out to employers ... .. in a letter, what should be recovered and any such thing, right.	They seem to be most aligned with the battle organisation – the old union image	Union as watch dogs	
137	*And in your view they are those who are the most disconnected?* Yes, in my mind.			
138	*Do they need to stick together?* Yes, in my mind. I think, because they're part of .... Those things that come in, because the consultants are out, so people get aware that they actually can seek and get help with different things in X . It is The Case team who must take over when they arrive. And they do well. They are sweet and kind to the members. There is no doubt that they are good all along, but it would be easier for them and for us if they shared it out together	I explore how her value colour team function. She talks about UC team and case worker team's co-operation. If they worked together the A-fund would be spared.	Individual they function well in relation to members but not a co-operation	Maintain a system perspective Differentiate between her own feelings and her perceptions
139	*Hmmmm. It sounds as you can see an advantage in these groupings.* Yes *Hmmm. What is it they could contribute with, the caseworker team, which they don't today?* They can contribute providing more calmness in the house. Be aware and help where it is needed. If we all join hands in a body and make it all work, right.	When you create group structures people have a tendency to stick with their groups and sub-optimize. Work that is defined as "not ours" are left alone.	Join hands in a body	Use of metaphor
140	*Hmmm. Like stepping forward and saying: "This is I" /* Jaaaa	Being active and engage in task solutions.		

	And "we can do this" / Yes, for example. We also have common tasks that we must address and it does not have to turn into a battle, right.			
141	*Do you find the fighting takes place on the interface between the groups or is it more individuals who are struggling?* (Sighs) ... ... it is individuals fighting within a group. A group within a group. *So it's sub-group against the sub-group?* Jaaaa, I suppose you might call it that.	I am interested in knowledge which level she talks about, but I don't make myself clear. I have a pretty good idea who she talks about. I don't want her to give names.	Lack of leadership	Redundant pattern Doesn't move the branch forward
142	*In my mind there's a difference whether it is the group fighting against a group or individual against individual in my mind. How do you see it?* Yes, there is a difference. My impression is that it is ... .. næææ, it's probably a group from K (city), which is fighting against maybe	It seems to be people within a group – case workers, who are viewed to make trouble for the rest.		
143	*Group K. v R.?* Oooh, or against the A-fund or from consultants or whoever it is who falls out with them. *It is one group of people against the rest?* Hmmm *It is the unity* Jaaaa (laughs)			Old Gestalt doesn't deal with leadership and hierarchy – anarchistic. Inability to influence a figure in the new gestalt
144	*Us against the others?* *Laughs* *Nååå yes /* It's good to have something to fight for. (ironic) (pause) It is my impression, honestly. *Hmmmm ok.*(pause)	Us against the others – fight is a union value.	Identity to fight for something Mobilizing energy moving to action	Putting her energy into what is possible
145	*Now I am moving to the bigger picture to the totality of X .* Hmmm *I talked about it before. How much have you participated in general meetings and such?* I think I have missed two, as I recall. So, it has surely been one, two, three (meetings).	Her involvement in X in general		
146	*Are you one of those who show up when something happens and one of those who influence?* No, I will not say that I influence. I vote, ... but I have during all the years also been ... ... um, I work in an organization where we have agreed that we do not go in and interfere in politics. It is an agreement we have. All the way out to the other houses as well. We keep our hands off that. Sååååååå .. I would not say directly that I go in and get involved in that respect. I do not go for the podium even though I would like to, because it is a part we do not interfere in.	She does not see giving a vote as influencing. Influence is a matter of going to the podium and speaking. As an employee you are not allowed to interfere with politics.		Understands strategy Understands power dynamics
147	*Hmmm. How did such a deal emerge?* I cannot remember. It is many years ago.	A gentleman's agreement, not written		Awareness of norms

	Before you joined? No, it .... I actually think it's right back in ... ... .87 or something. øhhhhh ... ... then the boat was rocking heavily. I cannot remember why and how .... It's not an agreement that actually is written down. It's more like: "This is not something we do around here."	down.	The boat was rocking heavily Organisational norm	
148	*Hmhm and this is only here in K(city)?* You do have it (the same informal agreement) in other places too, but in some places there were employees, who involved themselves in politics. Counting across time there have also been many cases about employees who were dropped out for one reason or another, because they fall foul of the political leadership, because they have been on one or the other way too much on their toes. Ooo ... that's why I claim that we're not really valid members ofX, because we cannot join and participate in the decision-making. We can show up as the usual suspects and as delegates to congresses, waving the card, but it is not us who have ....who influence on the platform.	Different hats – when you are employee you have knowledge that the elected do not. The elected can sack the employees.		Power dynamics Top dog – underdog system
149	*You can vote. But you have forfeited your exposure verbally.* Yes, I actually have	Employee can't speak their opinion openly and freely – if they go against their elected manager they can fear to lose their job		
150	*What come to your mind when I place such a question?* Well, that's some of what we have discussed tremendously, over the years.	Not easy solvable issue		
151	*Yes, I imagine.* Among other things, we've ... including we have been .... (laughs) .. many times there have been motions at our own General Assembly, where we showed up all together and where one proposal came up after another, for example if we had to pay less union dues .... and all those things ... and we raised it as well on the federal level and all that sort of thing ... . we did not have much fun doing so, as we have not been allowed to get away with it there. It has been a discussion. Always.	Power battles internally. Employees against elected. Fighting for their rights – more money or more freedom.		Top dog – underdog system
152	I*t is interesting that we talk of democracy and openness and ... .. æhm while there are some strict agreements /* Yes, that is right. We elect some people to serve as our mouthpiece, right. We have our provincial club, board, our president, etc. who goes in and sits in the executive committee and such ... and our own representatives and that kind of thing. So it's important to elect them carefully. These are the only places where you really can get some things through.	Values as democracy and freedom for speech – rather its observing parliamentary conventions Serve our mouthpiece	Loyal to the group of employees Might contradict the union values and mission	Awareness of system Power dynamics
153	*In this way it is representative democracy, one vote on somebody who /* Yes / *And depending on how well you elect /*	All of us want to stay	They are all in the same boat	

	Yes ... ... and they're just as much greased into the same situation as ourselves. ... . It has never been easy, no it has not.	(laughing together - agree)		
154	*What you gain by having agreed on this structure where you do not enter the podium and speak your opinion?* We get the virtually no trouble. (laughs). We went on (word?) to influence and we cannot be allowed to enter now and ... . if we could get a little more ... .. influence, then it could well be that it had been different, but ... So as far as I remember the agreement and how it went through, at one point before I was hired, there the staff sat in basically on everything political. They had almost everything, and it was also wrong that way.	If you keep silent you don't cause trouble The employees had too much power – more than the elected.	Change of power from staff to elected	Retroflection keeps you out of trouble
155	*Well, then it was the employees who were in power?* Yes, beyond doubt it was the employees who "determined", in quotation marks, who should be elected President. That was very easily done. It was just contacting the various workplaces and saying, "Now you will show up. You must vote on this candidate and this candidate". That was how things worked back which they would stop, right.	The employee chose the president. They worked together – lobbying	Power struggles Politics	
156	*Ok. And then this norm continued to live if I may say so?* Yes, but it's hard to turn around, because what is really the best? We are a bunch of 4000 or how much it is, who is not having as much influence as others. Or should we more than the others? It's a little ...	Question what gave the best results. If they count 4000 employees there are a lot of votes.		
157	*Like the officials of the state?* Yes	Compare with the parliamentarian system in the state		
158	*The elected, what good do they do?* They ought to be useful in that they market us. That they mingle where it is necessary to mix in, for example. ... .. To join committees ... so you can push and influence ... and leave their stamp at Christiansborg, right.	She use the word – ought. They ought to influence politics – social democratic politic		Projections –
159	*They must influence the political agenda?* yes *Do they do it?* Yes, I think. Yes. *Also here locally?* Yes.	Involved locally and governmental		
160	*It's some pretty active politicians?* L (name) is in the city council. I think it matter a lot. *And what about the rest, how do you co-operate?* The rest of what? *Elected, they are many?* It is not all of them we know who is.	If they have elected on political positions then they marked X by carry through important key issues. Co-ordination between elected and employees		
161	*The Sectors?* The chairs, it's mostly the caseworkers that personally co-operate with	There is no daily interaction between the elected and employees – in	She does not know them – or only a few of them	projections

	them. *Hmhm* But there are some elected, I am not acquainted with. *You don't have any contact with them?* Næææ not a lot.	individual cases.		
162	*They are also paid to attend, do they not?* Yes, chairs do. *But it's not much.* No, it's not.	Elected is mostly voluntary work		
163	*Is it a political system that you think is effective if you look at* X *as a total organization?* (pause) I really think that it came down very well. When I look at other organizations where you have very, very large amount of elected people in charge of everyday tasks æhhmmmm then I actually think that the mix is ok; that you have the employees to take care of operations and elected in charge of policymaking. I think its fine. You do not need elected to take care of business. They should carefully stick to what they have been elected for. And then go out and sell X properly; the trade union movement properly.	She seems pretty clear about role casting. She has a vision about a structure, employees take care of members – politicians take care of policy making		
164	*But they're also employers?* That is right, they are.			
165	*How can you help but to have something to do with them if they are your employers?* You can do so by employ someone who takes care of it, for example a manager *Ok. (long pause) hmmmmmmmmm….and they have fired the manager?* yes, it's smart. But now we see what happens.	In fact – they did not fire the head – he left because he did not get the jobs they hold out in prospect. The elected manager went in and took over management	The system created (branch) does not fit anymore with the total system	
166	*But it is some of the interesting dilemmas that you end up with, depending on which system you choose.* Yes, it's the fact.		Internal structure is collapsing	
167	*I will not take much more of your time, but just to hear you finally ... .. if you look over time and on yourself ... how do you think you have been affected by being in this system here?* (Pause) How I have been affected? *yes* I have been affected tremendously. There are many personal ... .. gains from this. And I think I will call it the most ... ... I'm trained extremely well. It's a benefit that is priceless, right. And so I think in fact that I'm .... political and ... in general .. I've learned to stand by what I believe and my opinions and dare to speak up. Såååååå ... .. mmmm it've made me ... . a very independent person.	Not surprised but rather she needed to think about the question Personal gains – educated – trained – influenced , she has become a very independent person	Political person A very independent person	
168	*Being able to get up and speak your mind?*			

	Yes. I have had many different positions through all these years. First, representative positions and so, during the last years as a leader, right. And all these processes in one way of another, I developed personally and it has been of enormous value to me. Professionally I have gained too. I am trained as retail trade assistant, so ...that's what I arrived with. Then I sat rubbing a little with the cash report and this radio business, but one cannot exactly argue that I was pretty much office educated, can they. By now I am able to work in an office, I can ... ..do a caseworker's job with my left hand. It's a very, very large training I have received. There are some ... professionally that I can ... if I look at it purely professionally, then I believe I can work anywhere, including outside organizations. Because of the experience I have.	She talks about her experience before she got her position in the A-fund – no clerical education, more autodidact. The training she got from her different positions and role is in her mind equivalent to a formal education as clerk.	Differentiate the personal versus the professional	
169	*. You believe there are others who could use you, private companies?* Exactly that I've been wondering a little about, ... Yes, I believe there is, but I could just not do it immediately ... . I have such a hard time just putting it in as part of the whole. There has been a single incident.... Uhh .... I went and buzzed over it for a period of time. It was some months ago, but just then I did not feel like it. Then it might have been smart when no one knew the end of the story, then it could well be that I should have taken the leap, but .... That how it was.	Do she find herself competent to work in private organisations?		Lack of closure Being strategic
170	Hmmm Thank you. You are welcome Then I turn this thing off			