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Ethics in Strategic Management

An Inquiry into Otherness of a Strategy Process

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Ethics in Strategic Management: An Inquiry into Otherness of a Strategy Process

Key words: Strategy, identity work, ethics, Paul Ricoeur, sensemaking

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For my daughters

Alexina and Gabriela

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In this work, I argue, following the principles of Paul Ricoeur, that the ethical is a structure of subjectivity and that the ethical constantly presents itself to us as we live our daily lives. It is thus in a very real sense our lived reality, whether we choose to accept it or not. It is up to us to make the choice to accept it and take it upon ourselves, as a desire for the good of the other. As such, I offer this project not only as a study of strategy and ethics, though it may in some sense be that, but rather as a work of chosen responsibility, as a work of life. It is a work that I can only be engaged in because of the others who surround and guide me and who have helped me strive to embrace the ethical that lies at the base of my human existence. It is in this spirit that I offer my thanks to the many colleagues, friends and family who have played such important parts in this work's coming to be.

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Helsingfors, April 2012

Henrika Franck

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1 INTRODUCTION

> "If another were not counting on me, would I be capable of keeping my word, of maintaining myself?"
>
> Paul Ricoeur (1992:341)

In this thesis I examine the relationship between ethics and the strategy process in an organization. More exactly, I focus on the ethical subjectivity constituted by how people in the strategy process see themselves as subjects in relation to their sense of responsibility for themselves and others. In bringing strategy and ethics together in this way we can talk of an ethos of an organization. What distinguishes this thesis from many empirical studies in organizational ethics is its refusal to assume even the possibility of cohesiveness in such an ethos. It takes strategy processes as an empirical starting point and analyses what is being observed as a dialectic between basic experiences of "sameness" and "otherness". It doesn't involve ideas of fair versus unfair behaviour or the explicit awareness and recognition of moral issues. What is does, is to find ethics as an individual's ongoing experience of making choices about what to do in the institutional context in which this activity is situated. In so doing it brings into question the very idea of separating individuals and institutional contexts, for as found in the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur (1992), it finds ethics less a study of moral norms than the transcendental basis for identity constituted in experiencing what is other than, or beyond, oneself. Ethics is inherent in the identity of a human being, and cannot be a separate or objective part of human life.

The general question this thesis raises is how this subjective ethics is enacted in strategy work. One response is through the notions of sameness and otherness. The preservation of sameness is the basis for most strategy research and practice, not least in emphasis on setting aims and compliance. My aim is not to criticize this underpinning of strategy, but to offer a way to consider strategy as proceeding from the dialectical identity and inherent ethical condition of the people involved in the doing of strategy. As such, difference is as constituting as sameness. I construct a theoretical framework and use it with empirical data gathered within strategy meetings and interviews in a multinational corporation in the midst of a strategic change process. I argue that although otherness is an inherent part of human life, it is repressed in the strategy discourse. Managers are ethical agents but can in strategy work only be "for the other" by acting through a strategic aim that can never live up to that demand. This has implications both on strategy research and ethics research. Whereas normative

business ethics literature has focused on how strategy can be fair, lead to good deeds or be made by virtuous people (or otherwise), my study suggests ethics cannot be separated from the day-to-day, or moment-to-moment activity to ascertain such 'effects' or 'causes'.

The findings suggest that the ethical task of relating to one's peers, superiors and subordinates as 'others' rather than as something that has to be made the same as us, or put to our service, is at the same time alien to the strategic aim, but can be coped with. Such coping appears in moments of irony, compromise and conflict, as it gives the means to navigate between reciprocal sympathy and goal-compliant norms. There is, then, an experience of contradiction between the aims that leads to an ongoing balancing between them. Ethics is not about compliance with rules or standards, but the capacity for or an expression of self-production undertaken publicly with otherness. This is different from most work on business ethics, as it amounts to avoiding claims to truth or objective-centered activity by which one could generate definitions and definitive orders. Ethics demands that we continually question the impetus and manner in which we are inevitably and factually disciplined, through the exercise of reason of the kind predominating in strategy practice.

1.1. Otherness in strategy

There is a growing interest among scholars to examine ethical issues inside organizations, and much effort is spent trying to understanding how individuals solve ethical issues at work. It is debatable whether ethics is an individual or an organizational issue. Some argue that it is individual (Soares 2003, Watson 2003), and others claim that structures and ethics are linked (du Gay 2000). The latter idea not only presumes that ethics informs organizational practice, but also leads to research that assumes that individuals in an organization can be studied by an external observer who determines what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' (Clegg, Kornberger and Rhodes 2006). There is, however, a recent interest in questioning aspects of this objectivist approach (Willmott and Weiskopf 2011, McMurray, Pullen, Rhodes 2011, Painter-Morland 2008, Kjonstad and Willmott 1995, Paine 1994, ten Bos 1997, Andrews 1989).

The starting point for this perspective is that a moral being knows that there are good and bad things, but it doesn't mean knowing for sure which things are good and which are bad (Bauman and Tester 2001). In this work, I argue, following Ricoeur, that the ethical is a structure of subjectivity and that ethics constantly presents itself to us as we

live our daily lives. It is, thus, in a very real sense our lived reality, whether we choose to accept it or not. It is up to us to make the choice to accept it and take it upon ourselves, as a desire for the good of the other. Otherness is the basis for identity of an individual who aims to 'live the good life' and is inherently ethical.

But in strategy work, there can be tensions to live up to this ethical task. Strategy is often conceived to be a rational technique for an organization to meet challenges and succeed in changing business environments. The various strategic schools; the 'design' school (Andrews 1971), the 'planning' school (Ansoff, 1965) the 'positioning' school (Porter 1980) and the 'vision' school (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994) all embrace the idea that a supreme end that is conciliated by a person or a coalition drives strategy. There is an underlying assumption that some individuals determine the strategic objective and a vision that must be accepted and enacted by others. Durand and Calori (2006) call this the 'end prevalence dimension of sameness' that is illustrated by opportunism and goal-compliance (Ghoshal, 2005).

Top management has a strategic intent and communicates what they see as the preferred future position of the firm, and this should guide the actions of the agents by means of selection and retention (Lovas & Ghoshal 2000). The strategy occurs via organizational members whose actions conform to leaders' views to achieve the strategic intent (Hamel & Prahalad 1989). Organizational members are left to be goal-compliant in order to reach ambitious collective objectives. This view on strategy can be seen as relying on the notion of sameness, where the aim is to unite both the organization and its stakeholders under the same objective formulation. Sameness, in all levels of identity construction, corresponds to what remains intact – unchanged, i.e. the intrinsic dimensions that define the individual, group or institution as recognizable through time. Sameness posits itself against otherness in clear terms – that is, based on the persistence of difference; sameness is related to otherness because what 'is' the case is always in relief from, rather than separate from, what 'is not'. As a philosophical notion, sameness expresses itself through two behavioral aspects, in theory as well as in practice. First, what can be called the 'end prevalence' dimension of sameness that emphasizes an entity's self-centered ends over both the deployed means and pursued goals of others. Second, sameness manifests itself through the propensity of a change not to alter the core traits of an entity, regardless of the change's consequences for others; self-concern naturally takes precedence over the concern for others.

Yet there is a tension here because otherness creeps in. Paul Ricoeur (1992) saw identity being formed in the relation between selfhood, otherness and sameness, and for him, 'other' is not just a simple antonym to 'same' like 'other than self' or 'contrary', but otherness is constitutive of identity as such. In other words, otherness is both a comparison when defining identity and an integrative part in forming it. Selfhood reconciles and ties the self to the other through commitment and promise. Ricoeur distinguishes between three levels of otherness; otherness from the institution, otherness from the other person, and otherness from oneself. In all such identity is a condition of reciprocity and so, for Ricoeur, ineluctably ethical: identity is sustained insofar as others' lives are considered of equal value and interest to one's own. This brings up the dilemma of 'the other's' mind – sameness is being inside my own consciousness, within my own will. Otherness is outside my mind and untouched by my own will. The ethical task of life is to "live the good life, with and for others, in just institutions" (Ricouer 1992:172)

In contrast to the sameness-ideal, otherness makes the agent subsume his or her goals under others' capacity to accept them. Hence the tension between sameness and otherness in strategy work. The strategic aim gives the one who decides upon the strategy a certain status over the person to whom the obligation is owed. The one who gives the promise of implementing the strategy is counted on and his or her self-constancy is made responsive to this expectation. In the moment of commitment to the strategic aim of the organization, managers either arbitrarily assume a constancy in their feelings which is not in their power to establish, or they accept in advance that they have to carry out actions which won't reflect their state of mind. They are either lying to themselves at the moment of commitment or they know they will be lying to others in the future. This is where Ricoeur offers his notion of practical wisdom: "Practical wisdom consists of inventing conduct that will best satisfy the exception required by solicitude, by betraying the rule of the smallest extent possible" (1992:269). Otherness pays regard to the ethical dimension of any human collaboration and practical wisdom is the ability of an agent to understand the distinctive nature of the other. It is primarily an individual characteristic, but it manifests itself in organizations through moral exemplarity and reciprocity.

There is a kinship between Ricoeur's notion of practical wisdom and the practice of strategy. First, Ricoeur says that the search for "just mean" seems to be good advice, signifying something other than cowardly compromise, that in itself may be "extreme".

In strategy, perhaps the most important moral decisions consist in drawing a line between what is permitted and what is forbidden – a deliberation between the norm and the situation at hand. Second, Ricoeur suggests that moral judgment in a situation is less arbitrary if the decision maker has taken the counsel of people who are reputed to be "the most competent and the wisest" (1992:273). In strategy it is also clear that a decision benefits from the plural character of the debate.

I want to understand the tension between sameness and otherness in strategy work and explore whether it is possible to find instances of relief in practical wisdom. And as otherness is both individual and collective, I will conduct two separate but interconnected analyses: In the first analysis, I study how identity work evolves through otherness among individual managers, and in the second, I use sensemaking theories to study the enactment of the ethical in a strategy process. Sensemaking theory is a currently established way of studying collective identity construction in organizational settings, and is therefore very suitable for the aims of this study.

1.2. Research questions

As highlighted above, this thesis uses the notions of sameness and otherness to understand and explain how the ethical (Ricoeur 1992) is present in strategy work, while at the same time attempting to discover whether practical wisdom can be realized. The central phenomenon I study is the paradox between the strategic aim of sameness and the ethics of otherness.

Otherness is something that can be understood on both the individual and the collective level. Identity work happens through the ethical task of living a good life. The inherent ethical aim to treat others as an end in itself/herself/himself brings up questions about how identity evolves in a strategy process - where the strategic aim of sameness prevails.

The first question I pose in this thesis is:

- How do otherness and sameness influence identity work in a strategy process?

Most traditional approaches to strategy research have tended to rely on sameness – the strategic aim is to unite the organization and its members under the same umbrella, collectively, aiming at a common goal. The ethical on the other hand embraces

otherness and a concern for others takes precedence over a concern for the self. Sensemaking serves as a platform to understand how ambiguity and uncertainty lead to action in strategy work. Managers constantly make both strategic and ethical choices in their work; sensemaking about the strategic aim and the otherness of ethics is ongoing and never stops, but it is bound to find relief in some collective sense.

This work focuses on how managers make sense of the ethical in a strategy process characterized by a strategic aim. Thus, I am able to explore links between how individuals and groups receive the strategic aim and the unpredictable nature of the ethical otherness. I report on the findings from a qualitative case study that considers how the strategic aim changes when sensemaking of the ethical is processed. In line with an interpretative approach, a sensemaking perspective is used to develop a model from the empirical data to account for these findings. I also try and understand if there is a possibility to find instances of practical wisdom in the midst of conscious and unconscious choices. The second question I pose in this thesis is:

- How are the strategic aims and ethics enacted in an organizational strategy process?

This study contributes to strategy research in two ways. First, the results show identity work can be inherently ethical and that ethics in strategy is all about interactions and responsiveness. Second, I present a novel way of understanding ethics and strategy by studying strategic aims and ethics from a sensemaking perspective.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The following, Chapter 2, describes the case study as it transpired. Chapter 3 explains the underlying methodology, where I start to explicate possible links between strategy and ethics. From there I divide the analysis into two streams; one where I discern the identity work of the managers through sameness and otherness, and one where I show how the strategic aim and ethics are enacted through sensegiving and sensemaking. Chapter 4 proceeds to examine links between identity work, ethics and narratives, discerning managerial sameness and otherness on three levels; in relation to themselves, the group and the organization. This gives me an understanding of otherness as manifested in strategy talk, how identities evolve through ethics in strategy, and what consequences the inherently ethical can have on identity work within a strategy process. Following this, Chapter 5

finds the analysis shifting to efforts to gain an understanding of how identities are continuously disrupted in the tension between sameness and otherness at a more collective level. Here I first explore how sensemaking can be used to understand ethics in strategy, followed by an analysis of how sameness and otherness are present in strategy research. To understand the link between strategy and ethics, I examine how ethical issues have been studied in business studies and, more precisely, in strategy research. I review the studies through their various philosophical foundations, and show how a non-normative or subjective ethics can be a platform to study strategy. I then return to the case study and analyze the data in the light of this discussion of strategy and ethics. I analyze the data using constant comparison techniques to find codes and issues that form overarching concepts. This gives a model for how ethics is enacted in the strategy process. I find that the ethical task of relating to one's peers, superiors and subordinates as 'others' rather than as something that has to be made the same as us, or put to our service, is at the same time alien to the strategic aim, but can ultimately be coped with. Such coping appears in irony, compromise and conflict, as they give the means to navigate between reciprocal sympathy and goal compliant norms. I conclude by discussing the implications for research and practice.

2 OTHERNESS IN A STRATEGY PROCESS – THE CASE OF ICE

In this chapter I describe the field study as it unfolded, without omitting any theoretical analysis for the time being.

When I started my doctoral studies, I held the firm conviction that all people want to be good - sometimes there are just circumstances in life that prevent them from doing the right thing. I discovered research in "workplace spirituality" with the ambition to try and find "what is good" and discover methods and practices in organizations that would bring out the good. After one year of studying workplace spirituality and spiritual leadership, I felt like I had reached a dead end. The research had no grounding in solid theories and it was very hard to grasp what was supposed to come out of it.

Then, in the autumn of 2007, I gained access to the study management team meetings of a multinational company and began to gather data. My first meeting was a strategy "away-day" with the top management team. I sat in a corner of the room and hastily recorded in my laptop virtually everything that was said. It was an interesting meeting, as the people in the room were very lively and there were a lot of jokes flying around. I attended 16 meetings in four different management teams that autumn and interviewed 21 managers. In some ways it was an easy time. I was able to observe and take notes, I didn't have to analyze anything. At the same time it was difficult, because I didn't really know what role I had. I didn't feel I fit in the surroundings of men in dark suits. I was very well taken care of, however. Everyone was polite and friendly, and I had several lunches in the cantina talking with different people about the company. At the time of the data collection, I was still unsure of my theoretical framework, and tried to find clues to how the conversations could be analyzed.

I was pressed to generate some results, as the company wanted me to present something at their January 2008 strategy day for over 100 of their managers. Eventually, I simply reviewed their strategic goals and value statements and presented how they spoke about them.

Earlier in my data analysis I read Durand and Calori's (2006) article "Sameness, Otherness? Enriching organizational change theories with philosophical considerations on the same and the other". I felt there was something about the concept of otherness they presented that resonated with the data I had gathered. I pursued that stream of

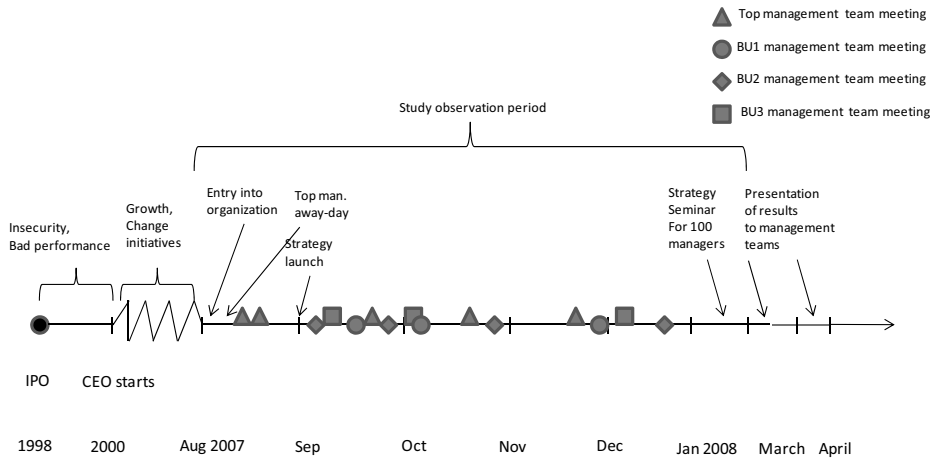
thought further and it led me to Paul Ricoeur. His philosophy not only spoke to the data, but also to my interest in understanding goodness. I read 'Oneself as Another' (1992) and started figuring out how the otherness as understood by Ricoeur was visible in the case company. I will now tell the story as it unfolded, and illustrate how the case brought up the phenomenon of tension between, on the one hand, the aim to pursue sameness both at the individual and the collective level, and on the other, the inherent ethics of otherness – of treating the other as something that isn't like me or is not put to my service.

2.1. The setting

ICE (all names are pseudonyms) is a multinational company with operations in 18 countries. It consists of a corporate headquarters and seven business units. ICE was listed on the stock exchange in the late 1990s after a merger between two companies and has grown substantially since then. After the Initital Public Offering, IPO, the company's share price began falling and the organization was quickly in crises. There was no vision for the future about how a company that had previsouly operated within a strictly regulated market could now compete in the free market. The stock listing was harshly criticized in media. In 2000, a new CEO was appointed. He was seen, both inside and outside the company, as a saviour. He came in and initiated big changes.

The cultures in both companies that constituted the merger were characterized by the bureaucracy of state-owned companies, with a civil servant mentality. A lot of effort was now put into changing the culture. 'Individual initiative' was brought up as a key issue, with the aim of trying to get people 'think out of the box' or 'run the extra mile for the company'. The business units were granted more responsibility, with the ultimate goal to make some of them work as independent units before long. One of the main strategic targets was growth. Beginning in 2000, ICE succeeded in growing substantially, purchasing new companies abroad. When I entered ICE in August 2007, many change initiatives had been implemented in the structure. This included various training programs, re-structuring of the organization, new practices for performance follow-up, scanning of low-performance, and the shuffling of key persons in management teams. The first top management meeting I attended was a two-day strategy away-day, where the goals for the next year were presented. The last meeting I attended was in April the following year. Figure 1 illustrates the timeline of ICE's change initiative and my research.

Figure 1 Timeline of ICE's change initiative



To formulate my story, I mainly relied on observation (mainly examining the ongoing negotiations of strategic priorities during meetings), but I complemented these insights with interviews and documents.

Observation: Observation data were gathered during five months in top management team meetings and in three business unit management team meetings. Most meetings were recorded and transcribed. At some meetings I took notes on my laptop, hastily writing down everything they said. All in all, I attended 15 meetings that lasted anywhere from one to one-and-a-half days.

Interviews: I interviewed 19 managers in top management and middle management. The interviews took place during work hours and averaged around one hour. They were all recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Documents: These data primarily consist of public documents from ICE and newspaper articles.

Table 1 Summary of the data set, excluding documents

	Top management team	Extended management team	Business Unit 1	Business Unit 2	Business Unit 3
Observation	5 meetings, 31 hours	2 meetings, 4 hours	3 meetings 19 hours	4 meetings 23 hours	3 meetings 12 hours
Interviews	7 persons		3 persons	4 persons	5 persons

2.2. The beginning – professional and rigid

The fact that I was fortunate enough to be extended this opportunity to attend management team meetings was already in itself a sign that the company was open about its codes of conduct. I had two phone conversations with the CEO, who then delegated the project to the HR Director. My first meeting with him was relaxed, fun even. The company headquarters was in an impressive building by the sea with modern architecture and plenty of space. People in the corridors were formally dressed. I often saw groups talking and laughing. My first impression was that the company was very open and welcoming. Almost everyone I met was curious and showed interest in what I was doing there and how this study could help them improve their routines and discussions.

The first event I attended was an away-day in the countryside for the top management team. Located in a luxurious house by the sea, the meeting lasted for two days and a night. The management team consisted of five men and two women. They had been working since the morning, but I came at lunch time. As I arrived a bit early, I sat outside and listened to them talk inside the meeting room. I could not hear the words, but they were often all speaking at the same time, interrupting each other, and, every once in a while the CEO interjected rather harshly. I also heard a lot of laughter. The men were the most frequent speakers, the two women spoke only when they were asked about something or when it was their turn to report on something. All jokes were between the men, or at least the women did not laugh or participate. They somehow seemed to take everything much more seriously. I had been asked to give a presentation about what I was doing there and to keep it to seven minutes. I found this rigid timeframe to be a bit ridiculous, but I adhered to it, almost to the second, and realized later that this focus on time was very characteristic for top management.

During the meetings, the managers were quick-thinking and witty, but surprisingly, between the meetings they were not. There were many silent moments during lunch. The CEO tried to make conversation about personal matters: "I was in Germany with my son, as he participated in a sailing competition". But no one picked up the discussion, except me, when I could no longer stand the silence. I cannot be sure whether the silence was because of me or if it was often like that. During coffee breaks, most of the managers took their phones and went out to make phone calls.

My first impression of ICE was therefore that it was rather open and easy-going, but at the same time very rigidly and professionally led, and that the managers were on top of things and maintained their roles to the end.

2.3. The change demands

As was mentioned earlier, ICE sought changes in order to become the leading company in their industry and achieve excellent performance on all levels. A lot of effort was put into making changes to the prevaling culture. Creativity and innovation were brought up as a key issues, and many resources were invested trying to get people "think out of the box" or "run the extra mile for the company". The job satisfaction survey was changed to highlight engagement in the job. Managers at all levels were sent to in-house courses that would teach them to "go outside their comfort zone in order to get to know themselves better". The seperate ICE business units were granted more responsibility – the ultimate goal was to make them work as independent units.

ICE headquarters is a 18-storey building. Employees, especially those who didn't work in the building, referred to it as "The Tower", which also indicated the formal hierarchy of the company. Many things were changed, however, as the CEO told me:

> "When I came here, all of the senior management sat on the 17th floor. The CEO's room was behind three secretaries and two long corridors. My nearest colleagues called the secretaries to make appointments for 15 minutes. After I was here for 4 months, the top management and I moved down to the first floor. I am sure it was a good idea, because now I know what people talk about."

The CEO played a central role in instigating and activating the change. After he joined the company in 2000, he was considered the company's saviour. One of the middle managers describes it like this:

> "You have to remember our history. The time before NN (CEO) was insecure both in business and in leadership. It was terrible to work here. I talked to a lot of headhunters and tried to find a good exit... But then NN (CEO) came. I will never forget his first speech for the personnel. After that day, I decided not to talk to headhunters anymore.
>
> He told a story that captured everyone and brought the heart back to ICE. When I remember those first years, and how much that has happened since then, I fail to adjust to a slower speed and start asking myself all the time: What is happening next? It is very exciting. His place cannot be filled."

One middle manager who worked in the corporate headquarters gave this description:

> "He has an extraordinary memory and his mathematical intelligence is extremely high. For instance, when I have done Power Point presentations for him, which I often do, he watches them for five minutes, 30 slides, and immediately spots the weak parts. - ll those parts that I knew I did not do properly, that I thought about when I went to sleep the previous night. He is so brilliant and intelligent. He also has glamour around him that nobody else has."

It almost seemed as if the strategy was personified around him as a person: he represented the demands, the change, the new initiatives and the endeavor towards excellent performance. This is how one of the middle managers described it:

> "NN (CEO) is the most important person, he is crucial. He can never ever miss the message on any occasion. He has to relate issues to the strategy"

The CEO himself saw this as a challenge because he knew that it wasn't very good that so much was personified in him:

> "When it comes to people admiring me, it is a problem. I am retiring in a few years and by then everything has to work without me."

I eventually attended five team meeting of the top management. They were all characterized by a rather tough rhetoric about how to lead the company and push through the changes. The managers talked rather openly about how to make the business units live up to the demands of taking their own initiative and securing excellent performance, as seen in this discussion from a team meeting:

> CEO: One message to send: Now we are waiting for new initiatives, this is the time.
> NN1: New blood act on low performance.
> NN2: Do we have good examples of new initiatives? [Business Unit 3] has achieved good results.
> CEO: This time we have to do it, not only say it. It is going to be a tough one, but we just have to realize that this is where we are.
> NN1: [BU 2], NN can give very good contribution to this company. He has very high goals and is ready to take major responsibility.

They were very consistent in their strategic intention. The strategy had been decided upon a few years earlier, and their aim was to follow it through on all levels. There was

a very strong sense of strategic guideline in everything they did and decided, as is made apparent in this excerpt from an interview with a top manager:

> "Our strategy is our own strong commitment to what we are doing and it also contains the means to get there. We have been committed to the strategy for a long time and we have stuck with it consistently, in contrast to a strategy that is reworked again and again. And to get and keep good people in ICE, it is important so see what and why ICE exists."

The key message in ICE's mission and vision statement was: "*At ICE, new challenges are met with excitement*". It rather soon became obvious to me that the people in the organization who didn't meet new challenges with excitement were not wanted, or as one of the top management team members put it:

> "If I could, I would change 50% of the personnel, but I cannot, so I just have to stick with those that are here"

One manager had been in the company for 20 years. Like many others, she had definite ideas about what it would take to get things done in the company:

> "We have an ICE way of doing things. We have our so-called people day, where employees are reviewed once a year. There we discuss the different people in the company. It was very difficult in the beginning, but then everyone started to dare to talk about the others. We try to identify the key resources. The managers are asked to rank all the people in their teams and pick a possible successor. This is our way of creating a bottom-up process in finding people. Dialogue is the starting point. We also talk about difficult things like low performance. We do not talk about business there, we talk about people. But we also enforce strict discipline. Everyone has been assigned strict goals, and on this day we check that these goals are achieved. NN (CEO) once tried a less-stringent routine, presenting issues instead of a format, but that did not work out. Everyone did things their own way and noone had done their homework. We had to reinstate the strict routine in order to make it work. Now everyone has done their homework and no time is lost to rambling."

The change was systematized and the organization was harnessed to follow the new guidelines and operational methods. The focus was to change from "issues" to "people". The ideal way of implementing the idea in the company was by talking about it to everyone, or as one of the members in the top management team describes it:

> "After you have come up with a strategy, implementation is the first step.. My role is to be a coach, a challenger. I want to create a shared vision. I support the business unit managers. Our contact is good and they contact me in case of problems. They need to be engaged in order to communicate the strategies further. In order to get people to understand, the communication needs to be passionate. And I do not mean fancy Power Point presentations, but real communication with other people, where the other part can see that you really believe in this. It is also about pride. Anyone in this organization should be able to tell his or her neighbor about all of the things ICE has done for the society and be proud."

On the surface, the members of the top management team never deviated from their mission to push through the new strategy at all levels. The team was also very affected by the personality of the CEO.

One means of controlling the strategy and the change was the so-called performance review. These were meetings in which the business unit management teams met with the top management team and gave an oral report on their performance. The performance reviews were arranged semi-monthly for each of the seven business units. The idea was that the top management team would have the opportunity to meet the whole business unit management team and discuss recurrent business. The performance review was held in a large meeting room where the top management team sat in a row on one side of the room behind a table, and the business unit management team members sat, without a table, on the other side. The head of the business unit management team stood in the middle of the room. The meeting started with him/her reporting the latest news and figures from the business unit, and after that, there was time for questions. It was often the CEO or the CFO who started the questioning. They could direct the questions to the head of the business unit or to any other member of the business unit management team. Before the meetings, the head of the business unit tried to prepare the members for possible questions. This comment is from a conversation among two members of a business unit management team before a performance review:

> "We are all drilled for their questions; I hope they will not be too harsh."

The performance review was a rigid and effective way for the top management team to keep track of the results and ambitions of the business units. But the demands for reporting results in this manner also brought up feelings of insecurity, as this member of a business unit management team put it:

> "There is a culture of fear here. During the days before the performance review everyone is tense and nervous. The day of the review they are dressed up to the teeth and are drilled by their managers in order not to miss any answers."

The CEO himself was not unaware of this:

> "I know that people are nervous before they come to the meetings. I know they watch every expression on my face to get signals. But if they have done their homework, they have nothing to fear."

The middle management view that the performance reviews were like cross-examinations was widespread. But the fear was combined with an admiration of the CEO. Many managers felt that they wanted to perform and put forward their best effort to get the CEO's approval. A comment after performance review:

> "That went well. Did you hear what NN (CEO) said? He really said some good things to you, you should be proud!"

The performance reviews were rather awkward for me; I felt embarrassed to witness situations where individuals and groups were cross-examined. At the same time, I could respect the very efficient manner in which the company was led. People didn't 'waste any time' on inefficient meetings – everyone knew that they had to prepare properly.

So the change was very much personified in the CEO – both in his demands and his charisma.

But not everything had changed.

2.4. The 'old' culture shows its face

Over time, I noticed that the old ways of doing things were still very much present. It seemed like much of the effort that had been put into trying to change the culture to become more "market-oriented" was just a smokescreen. People were not prepared to change in the way that the top-management wanted them to. One sign of this was the high level of respect reserved for the CEO. He wanted the culture to become more open and less hierarchic – hence his decision to move down from the top floor, as described above. But the legacy of having a hierarchic structure, and the old traditional culture of having respect for, or even fear of, one's superiors wasn't easy to erase. It was visible in how people dressed and in how they addressed people in higher ranks in the organization. I once stood in the elevator with the CEO when a group of blue collar workers entered. They seemed to become nervous at first, but then the biggest one opened his mouth:

> "Good day, sir. How has the moose hunting been this year, sir? Any moose fallen?" CEO: "Oh, unfortunately not. I only shot one deer, or at least that was what the dog found." The man: "I bagged two this year, but it cost me a lot of ammunition, which is very expensive. I wish you good hunting, sir."

The other blue collar workers in the group were blushing and looked at their colleague like he had made a fool out of himself. The CEO was, seemingly, enjoying the situation.

There was tension between what the corporate level said they wanted and what they in fact signalled to the organization by how the work was organized. They wrote and talked about 'enabling', 'dialogue' and 'individual initiative', but their discussions in meetings were totally issue-driven. The frameworks in place were rigid and people didn't dare to make mistakes. There was a discrepancy between the old public institution and the new culture that the CEO and top management wanted to implement. They had succeeded to some extent, but it seemed like it was too connected to the CEO as a person. A middle manager with a 20-year history in one of the companies thinks that much of this culture still existed:

> "All our routines and bases for minutes for meetings have come with us from either Company A or Company B [the merged companies]. Many people still feel that they need orders. For instance, I have this brilliant guy in Sweden who is on my team, but it took him two years to understand that he was supposed to make his own job description."

One of the most obvious discrepancies between what the change aimed at and what was really happening in the organization was the aim to become a 'people-driven' company. The top management wanted people to take their own initiative and to drive things, but many people still relied on taking orders. This is a comment at a business unit management team meeting:

> "Based on the business agenda, what does it mean for the HR strategy? Every employee must know: 'What does it mean for my work?' The 'people compass' says that we are a people-driven company that depends on our values. But I do not think we are that at the moment, we are still an engineer and issue-driven company that does not take people into account. "

This discrepancy between the old culture and the demands for change didn't go unnoticed by the top management. In response, they introduced even more control measures and demands in order to carry through the new way of doing things, which in itself was ironic.

2.5. The stakes are high

The change was to be implemented on all levels, and it didn't come naturally. Even though many systems were put in place, it was evident that it was the CEO who was the most important person in the change initiative. At the top management team meetings, noone got away with vague presentations and descriptions. He had piercing eyes and he challenged all of the members. The top management team members were very good at

taking up the challenge, which made the meetings dynamic and compelling. A recurrent discussion was how to change the organization, whether by changing the attitudes of the people who were in the organization already, or by encouraging better leadership, or via discussion on how to acquire new people . The following is an excerpt from a team meeting of the top management:

> CEO: It is an attitude and a mental thing that has to be in place… the leadership to drive change. It is everything you do. In order to drive this, we need to think that every penny counts. We cannot be sloppy on that. There is such high demand.
>
> NN1: Let's, you and me, try and discuss this together in another meeting.
>
> CEO: We have to find the capacity to handle this so that we do not hurt ourselves. People have been working too long at their own slice of the cake… this need to be on many levels.
>
> NN2: Look at the people issues – we need to find the right kind of people. If we cannot find all the people we need internally, we have to go external.

The top management team also discussed the performance of specific middle managers and the demands placed on them were high. But self-irony was also frequently utilized – they tested each other's limits all the time, using a rather laconic humor in their meetings:

> CEO: I don't understand this, does everyone else understand this?
> NN1: I think it is very easy to understand if you broaden up your scope a little.
> CEO: So you're saying that I am limited?
> NN1: Well…you said it, not me…

A recurrent discussion was how to get rid of "underperformers" and to make those who were left ready to "run the extra mile for the company". The rhetoric was tough. Below are examples of the ways they expressed the demands at the top management team meetings:

> "If you want a change in behavior it has to be tougher than this. If it doesn't hurt, it's not good enough. If you aren't bold enough, nothing changes."
>
> ---
> "NN1: If we want to make a difference in our leadership style, now is the time!
> NN2: Do we need more control? How do we make sure they do not get fat and lazy?"
>
> ---
> "People are tense, they are afraid of punishment. We have now a new time and we need to facilitate people to put themselves on the line."

As said, the top management team meetings were characterized by tough rhetoric, high demands and also self-irony. The CEO's personality came through also at the extended

management team, which consisted of the top management team and the heads of each of the business units, all of whom were male. I attended my first extended management team meeting one month after my first observation at the top management team away-day. Meanwhile, the company had lost a tender that they had really counted on winning. I was supposed to have access to the meeting at 8 a.m. when only the top management team gathered, but I had to wait outside the room until the extended management team arrived at 9.30. I surmised that the disappointment had to be discussed without the 'fly on the wall'.

When the meeting started, the CEO was in an obviously bad mood, probably because of the lost bid. When the business unit heads gave their presentations, he often backed them against the wall in a quite embarrassing manner. He and the CFO both sat leaning back in their chairs with their hands behind their necks. From my notes:

> NN1, a new business unit head, gives his presentation and shows figures. He is clearly nervous and his English is halting. The CFO interrupts him and asks about some of the figures. NN1 tries to look convincing, but it is clear he has made a simple counting mistake. The CFO stops his questioning. Then NN1 explains about a mistake made in his unit in communicating stock trading. He reports that the matter is over and dealt with, but this does not satisfy the CEO.
>
> CEO: What do you except will happen?
> *NN1 explains the sanctions applied by the Exchange.*
> CEO: What do we do internally?
> *Silence*
> CEO: If we turn the question around: if this would have happened in a bank, what would happen now?
> *Long silence.*
> CEO: I don't know, but are we taking enough corrective actions?
> *Silence*
> NN1: Well, we could check the processes.
> CEO turns to the company lawyer: Do you have an opinion on the legal aspect?
> Lawyer: I think this person should be punished somehow. Maybe we should take away all trading possibilities.
> NN2: Can the person continue the work? Was this that kind of negligence?
> CEO: Exactly. If this had happened on Wall Street, what would have happened?
> NN2: It is obvious.
> CEO: I think this is very serious and we would be much scrutinized if it happened again. I need you to investigate it and I need your answer quickly. We have zero-tolerance.

This conversation was illustrative of the atmosphere in the extended management team meetings, when the CEO wanted to have the business unit heads try even harder. These kinds of mistakes had been passed with a small notice before, but not anymore. The CEO was very sharp and didn't not let any vague or inept arguments pass through. But compared to the vivid discussions at the meetings with the core top management team, these meetings with the extended management team were dedicated to listening to the performance of the business units, followed by what at times seemed like a cross-

examination by the CEO. The setting made him seem more like the rigid school principal than a challenging sounding board.

The stakes were high, and the middle managers were in charge of implementing and disseminating the new demands to other parts of the organization.

2.6. Middle managers in between

I followed the management team meetings of three different business units. Each of them was different, but all were characterized by the new demands that were instilled upon them.

One of the business units had a rather timid leader who had been with the company for several years. The business unit that this team was leading had been in a bit of trouble in the past few years, and were the subject of several remarks from the top management team about their profitability. As said, the head of the business unit was discreet, and didn't take much space for himself,. At times he was run over by the other members. Some of them seemed annoyed by his behaviour and his unwillingness to take a stand. The business area of the business unit had performed below expectations during the previous quarters and had the stress of having to attain better results.

At some of the meetings I attended, the atmosphere was approaching aggressive. Participants often interrupted and accused each other. The members felt the head of the team was too sloppy, eating from the hand of the top management team. All in all, the interaction was characterized by some antagonism, but at the same time, it was a dynamic that forced people to take a stand.

This is an example from one of the meetings:

> NN1 gives a presentation
>
> NN2: WHERE did this slide come from? We had a hell of a time trying to figure out what we were talking about and now you come up with this? Why didn't you show it before?!
> NN1 Hey, I didn't have it then. It is new.
> NN2: I don't like this. Why do these things come up like this – unplanned? I think this is very important and I think we should discuss this for a longer time.
> BU-head: Let NN1 make his presentation and then give a suggestion…
> NN4: But I don't think it can be only a model…
> NN5: Let NN1 give a suggestion!
> NN2: So would you now recommend us to shut up?
> BU-head:Yes please, nicely put.

It seemed as if the members of the management team wanted to carry through the new demands, but felt restrained by the business unit head.

At another business unit, it was almost the opposite. This unit had a new leader, although he had been with the company for 10 years. He was very keen on putting his mark on the work of the unit and was very energetic. He seemed to be on a mission to delegate good spirit. This is an extract from an interview I conducted with him:

> "Most people I have met, and I mean many, many - they want to do a good job. We come from a culture where it is a virtue to do a good job. And most people feel bad if they are doing a bad job. This is a motivator we have to harness. What it is about? During my studies, I worked as a nurse in elderly care. I fed them and changed their nappies. And what was that about? Sometimes people were angry because the linen was on the wrong side of the closet. It was about gaining power in that sense. It is about understanding what you can influence. And it is also about making things positive. If you are about to bake a cake, do it so that everyone can smell it and taste it, because that is what makes people happy. It is about harnessing the positive in every individual. Of course everyone will not necessarily cheer about it, as everyone will not feel the same degree of engagement."

Having put this quote here, it has to be stressed that he didn't have an easy time, either in his own business unit or in the extended management team. He tried to energize people in his own way, but they sometimes just got scared or offended.

He tried to put his personal touch on his new unit:

> "We should exploit every possibility. We have to understand what is happening. We have figures, but we only have them in our heads. You are good at many things, but one thing you are not good at is selling what you do. This is a typical engineer mindset. How often do you need meetings? If we don't achieve more quality in our meetings, I think we should have them less often. We need to fill in the time we spend in meetings with something else. What I would like is a strategy day, where we can discuss strategy."

This comment was received with silence. I could not figure out if it was because of politeness, shyness, that they did not care, or that they disagreed. After a few moments one of the members said:

> "In our department we discuss issues, not numbers and tables."

Then the BU-head went on according to his preset agenda. He was quite good at engaging the meeting participants to take a stand on various issues. It seemed like they were not used to it at first, but he challenged them:

> BU-head: We take global warming very seriously. Take it from that angle and make it good. We will make CO_2-free our main target.
> NN: Do we want to cut emissions in the world or just in this company?
> BU-head: We thought we would buy this company in [another country]

> NN: In that case I would not like to make the BU-level emissions public, as we then have to explain why we do things the way we do. My proposition is that we do not publish our own figures.
> BU-head: We must have the figures, send everything to the corporate level that they need. It is all about choices.
> NN:.. and as a customer, what is it you want to hear. They want to hear that we have done a good job.
> BU-head: We have announced that we are a CO2-free company, and we have to communicate to our people in the plants when they get the questions. We have to have answers for the personnel when they are asked.

This business unit eventually adapted the new business unit head's energy plan and willingness to change. At the last meeting I attended, the atmosphere was very relaxed, jaunty even.

The most systematic middle manager effort was seen in the third business unit. This unit also had a new head, but he came from outside the company. He was around 50 and very calm and demure in nature. He was the only one of the managers who wanted to meet me beforehand to hear about my research. This was also the only business unit management team meeting where my presentation actually was on the written agenda. After my presentation, he gave his guidelines to the management team:

> "We can drop off some of the nonsense we do. I hope it is not much, but if we are doing a lot of nonsense, then we must change what we do now. I want us to start a culture of forecasting every month; it is one of the manager's tasks if you know what you are doing. A good forecast has 3 items: A good idea of what will be the outcome, the range within the forecast (we need to communicate the spread), and we have to commit to certain actions. This is much easier than doing it by quarter. If we do it continuously, we remember what we have done. This is what makes life easy.
>
> --
>
> Delegation is good, but control is better. We do these things, not only because we have been told we will, but because if we don't do it, nobody will. Revolutions are also planned, but come as surprises to those who are not paying attention."

After this comment there was silence for a long time. But in this meeting led by a calm person, the silence was not awkward but natural. The head of the management team spread calmness, and this somehow made everyone talk silently and softly. There were no interruptions or contentious conversation. The members soon learned that it was all right to make mistakes and to suggest new ideas. It seemed like this was new for them.

2.7. The tension

Eventually I started observing the equivocalities and paradoxes in the organization. I noticed resistance towards the intended change, not only because of the old culture, but also because of the rigid demands. It didn't necessarily come up in clear statements of opposition, but as anxiety, cynicism and withdrawal, to name a few. It was most obvious at the middle manager level, but it also came up at the top management meetings. At the business unit level, there was opposition to the strategy that didn't match the job descriptions and the established control mechanisms. The following is a conversation from a business unit management team where they discuss the practical implications of the overall strategic goal to mitigate climate change.

> NN1: All business units have to make sure that their emissions from travelling are reduced. We cannot adopt a new system because management is tracking our travelling and we can't do anything about it.
> NN2: There was also this plan we were supposed to do.
> NN3: But in general we can reduce travelling. Those people who sell have to travel, but everyone else can use the video conference system.
> NN4: I have used the video conference, it is not good.
> NN1: Ok, but we cannot say: You can't go purchase something in Bulgaria because the quota is already full. You just have to hope that you are at home when the quota is filled!

The tension also materialized as fear of the organization's demands on employees personally. The performance reviews that I described above are one example of how the fear assumed this form, but there was also a more subtle fear that took its form in anxiety. Here is a comment from a middle manager, given during an informal conversation:

> "I don't know… perhaps I just don't have enough ambition, but I don't always know how to cope with these new demands… I would just like to do my job and go home and forget about it"

I started to notice ambiguities at the top management level as well. Even though they said things like "How do we make sure they don't become fat and lazy?", they seemed to say it with some sort of irony, as if they knew it wasn't right to talk about people this way. They also made jokes about the rigidity of the control systems and the number-centered focus, as the conversation below on the performance requirements for one of the business units reveals.

> NN1: Should we put 20? That is an even number
> NN2: 19 looks more thought through, let's put 19.

> NN3: Hey hey, do not forget the fly on the wall! [referring to me, the observer]
> NN1: I think she has seen enough not to be surprised anymore.

What happened in the company was that a very demanding change process had been initiated and the organizational systems had been very well harnessed to make the change happen. The HR organization was very efficient and various training programs, measurements and control mechanisms had been put in place. New people had been recruited to better tackle the new demands and there was an ongoing process of identifying and getting rid of "underperformers".

These changes affected the people in the organization in various ways. Most wanted to be part of it – surely in part because the charisma of the CEO attracted people and they derived pleasure from rising to the occasion and showing their skills. But the changes also brought up insecurities and resistance – not everything could change. The individuals seemed to feel a paradox between what was supposed to happen and what really was happening.

I started to wonder how it was possible to live with the tension imposed by the requirements and expectations, and how the managers coped with it. It seemed like the strategic intent and what was happening in the present were intertwined in a complex struggle between personal identity and human interaction and the demands coming from above.

What did the individuals seek and what was the organization's will? Could there be ethical dilemmas? Did the managers feel they were doing the right thing? I wanted to understand the ambiguities and the paradoxes, which were obviously being experienced both on the individual and collective level.

3 METHODOLOGY

The way we understand the world influences what we think can be known about it, and how we think it can be investigated. This is in a nutshell what ontology, epistemology and methodology are about and promptly illustrates why they play a part in any scientific endeavour. This research stems from a constructivist perspective and applies both narrative and naturalistic inqury methods to analyze the data. Usually the grounding attribution for social constructivist approaches in the field of management and business research is given to Berger and Luckmanns's (1966) book "The Social Construction of Reality", where they argue that human beings together create and sustain all social phenomena through social practices. They see three fundamental processes as responsible for this: externalization, objectivation and internalization. Their account shows how the world can be socially constructed by the social practices of people, but at the same time be experienced by them as if the nature of their world is pre-given and fixed. Given that my work has been undertaken in the spirit of Berger and Luckmann's work, my analysis focuses on the meanings attributed by organizational members to ongoing events as they are being experienced over time. The collected data are seen as representations rather than facts, and there is a need for extensive involvement in the organizational setting in order to reflect on these representations with care.

Given the study is a single case taking place through time, the analysis is broadly processual in its perspective. Van de Ven and Poole (2005) point out that a processual view on organizing examines questions like: How do processes of making sense, conflict resolution, protests, or making a living unfold over time? They also acknowledge the irony that lies in doing any processual research empirically; the representation, interpretation and explanation of processes must always reify the evanescent processes in words and diagrams that are statically fixed on the page; the method of studying process must be filtered through static representations of the process. Despite these problems, Tsoukas and Chia (2002) present three reasons why the process perspective is helpful. First, it enables us to obtain a more holistic understanding of the micro-processes in change. The objective is to observe patterns of behaviour and outcome in which, often, many people, resources, aims and norms are implicated. Second, it generates a greater understanding of how change is actually accomplished – when change is viewed from the stability perspective, it is the exception, an occasional episode in organizational life. But change is really the norm, as for instance Feldman

(2000) has shown in an empirical study that organizational routines are not stable patterns of behavior, but emergent accomplishments that perpetually change in action. Third, there is a pragmatic reason to view change as ongoing: if we view stability as the default state and change as episodic events, it can be difficult to overcome the implementation problems of change programs. But when viewed as an ongoing process, a stream of interactions and a flow of situated events, change becomes more an issue of fine-tuning and adjustment by actors in particular contexts.

Given this orientation toward constructionism and process, I am inspired by naturalistic inquiry methods to study the experience of change processes. In the second analysis, I use the constant comparison technique, which can be seen as a rather extreme form of naturalistic inquiry. It is not necessary to insist that the product of qualitative inquiry be a theory that will apply to a "multitude of diverse situations". Examples of a more flexible approach to qualitative inquiry can be gained from a number of sources. For example, Guba (1987) states that "naturalistic inquiry is always a matter of degree" of the extent to which the researcher influences responses and imposes categories on the data. Accepting the limitations of the method of giving snippets of static representation, it must also be recognized that they offer a means to understand how emergent narratives and actions can lead to the unfolding of collective endeavour, as well as to study how understandings unfold through time and how the narratives change in the process.

The constant comparison technique is a part of grounded theory and focuses on the process of generating theory rather than a particular theoretical content. It emphasizes steps and procedures for connecting induction and deduction through the constant comparative method, doing theoretical sampling and testing emergent concepts with additional field work. While the phrase "grounded theory" is often used as a general reference to inductive qualitative analysis, it consists of quite specific methods and systematic procedures (Glaser 2000). Corbin and Strauss (2008) emphasize the interplay between researcher and data, so that grounded theory offers a framework for coding in a standardized and rigorous way. It helps the researcher to consider alternative meanings of a phenomenon and is meant to build theory rather than test it. Although grounded theory is claimed to strive for 'objectivity', the language of grounded theory has found its way into the constructivist literature. Charmaz (2000) compares objectivist and constructivist approaches to grounded theory, and has found examples of grounded theory that are constructivist in their orientation. She believes

that in a constructivist-grounded theory causality is suggestive, incomplete and indeterminate, and that "variables" are grounded by giving meaning out in subjects' lives. She gives an example of the kinds of questions one would have to ask to study a topic such as pain:

> I start by viewing the topic of pain subjectively as a feeling, an experience that may take a variety of forms. Then I ask these questions: What makes pain, pain? (That is, what is essential to the phenomenon as defined by those who experience it?) What definition, properties or characteristics do ill people attribute to it? When do they do so? How does the person experience this pain, and what, if anything, does he or she do about it? My questions aim to get a meaning, not a truth. As a result, a constructivist grounded theory may remain at a more intuitive, impressionistic level than an objectivist approach. (Charmaz 2000: 526)

What Charmaz describes is not very different from hermeneutic inquiry, even though grounded theory strives to remain fundamentally realist and objectivist in orientation. The idea, of course, is to get the researcher's biases out of the way, but constructivism and hermeneutic interpretivism makes the inquiry both more true to what really happens and adds healthy doses of creativity to the analytic process.

In a constructivist epistemology, the researcher's own interpretation is key - the research process is inherently interpretive, political and rhetorical in nature (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2000). Therefore I have sought to think carefully about my own research practices and choices and throughout the study have expressed these reflections; so that it will be clear to the reader how I have arrived at the reported outcomes.

I now go on to use the one case study and analyze the data in two interrelated ways, first with regard to the construction of identities within change processes, and second with regard to collective sensemaking of strategic change. I sometimes use the same quote in both analysis, as the data can be interpreted in many ways. By combining both approaches and analyses I am able to show how identity work can be inherently ethical and that ethics in strategy is all about interactions and responsiveness. I present a novel way of understanding ethics and strategy by studying the strategic aims and ethics from a sensemaking perspective.

4 IDENTITY WORK THROUGH SAMENESS AND OTHERNESS

Organizations can challenge our view of ourselves, provoking us to reassess our personal identities (Watson 2008). The ways in which people negotiate their awork identities are inspiring an increasing stream of research (Fineman 1997, Creed & Scully 2000, Alvsson &Willmott 2002, Thomas & Linstead 2002, Svenningson & Alvesson 2003, Beech 2008, Mallett & Wapshott 2011). The intent of this chapter is to elaborate processes of identity construction among the managers at ICE, with two underlying and interconnected objectives in mind: to advance understanding of the manner in which managers as individuals attempt to generate identities that provide them with both a sense of dignity in the role as a strategist, and a sense of self-esteem and self-worth in their individual narrative of life. There are three characteristics of identity that are specifically maintained and exchanged (Linde 1993): continuity of the self, particularly continuity of the self through time; relation of the self to others; and reflexivity of the self, or treatment of the self as other, including a moral evaluation of the self.

I start by framing the problems of identity construction among managers in strategy work and then discuss the data sources and procedures. I then conceptualize identity work in connection to the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur (1992) and otherness, and elaborate on the process of identity construction I observed.

Identities are the various meanings attached to an individual by the self and by others, and they are based on both the social roles and personal characteristics that others attribute to her or him, i.e. personal identities (Ashfort and Mael 1989). The expression "identity work" suggests that there is something happening continuously, that identity isn't something that is core, distinctive and enduring, as Albert and Whetten (1985) have suggested. Gioia, Schultz and Corley (2000) took their stance from Albert and Whettens' (1985) idea and argued that the apparent stability of identity is in fact formed by organizational members and their expression of whom or what the organization is. The 'stability' of the organization is as stable as the identities they create and recreate. In examining identity construction processes among managers doing strategy work, I try and understand how strategists shape their actions through who they are, as coherent individuals with a past, present and a future.

Johnson, Balogun and Beech (2010) show that identity shapes praxis, and yet the praxis also shapes identity, and ultimately strategic change at an organizational level. The concept of praxis here is not meant to indicate an instrumental or purposeful way of doing things, but rather something that is intrinsically linked to identity. Chia and Holt (2006:107) see praxis as inseparable from the person and a manner or style of conducting him/herself. They follow Dunne in defining praxis as (2006:107) "the conduct of one's life and affairs primarily as a citizen of the *polis*; it is activity which may leave no separately identifiable outcome behind it and whose end, therefore, is realized in the very doing itself". This view on praxis helps us understand strategic praxis in a more profound way. It is understanding that the identities of the people who form strategy develop through interaction. The act of forming the strategy and being the one who enacts it are interlinked. Identity work is here defined as peoples' engagement in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising their identities (Snow & Anderson 1987, Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003).

By using the concepts of sameness and otherness, I also refer to the apparent 'stability' of sameness and the constantly changing otherness. I claim that identity work is a continuous iteration between these two; we want to create coherent narratives out of identities and we want to identify with the organization's 'sameness', but the inherent otherness cannot be avoided, so the sameness becomes disrupted over and over again.

How is this iteration between identity, sameness and otherness present in organizations? The notion of identity work has been defined by Alvesson & Willmott (2002:626) as "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness". This definition locates identity work in a social and discursive context; there is an emphasis on the self, or the internal identity. Svenningson and Alvesson (2003) write about how people strive to shape their personal identities (2003:1164), but not as something out of a social context.

Identity is regarded as both a product of and a producer or action and interpretation and there seems to be a performance–based element in many of the studies (Fineman 1997, Creed & Scully 2000, Coupland 2001, Beech 2008). This means that people perform in certain ways in order to portray themselves in a fashion that either associates them with or disassociates them from the other employees. Thomas and Linstead (2002) show how the discursive activities of managers are used when they try to identify with a certain status. There is a security in having an identity as an 'expert'

or an 'outsider'. Ibarra (1999) shows how the process of finding an identity in a new workplace involves experimenting with provisional selves and molding the identity according to the feedback. It underlines how people acquire identities that are consistent with the social surroundings and how the self is constructed in social interaction. I argue that otherness is an important part of this socialization, and that the inherent aim to live a good life has to be part of this testing with provisional selves.

4.1. Sameness and otherness in identity work

In their studies of dress codes, Pratt and Rafaeli (1997) find that multiple identities between groups are evident as certain symbols. They define social identity as self-categorizations that individuals use to denote their sense of belonging. Their study also touches the relation between the group and the individual. This relation deals with the individual's identification with the group: "Am I like them?" Or "Do I agree with them?" In the beginning of the 20th century, Cooley (1902) stated that identity is shaped through interaction with others. Tajfel and Turner (1979) claimed that social identity is based on the individual's desire to enhance self-esteem by forming positive and negative evaluations of in-groups and out-groups, whereas Hagg and Terry (2000) discussed the centrality of being a group member and argue that the self is depersonalized in the process of becoming a member of a group. Simpson and Carroll (2008) also talk about the group's relation to the individual, when they conclude that the term "role" marks the point where one's own representations of self meets the perceptions of how others desire that self to be constructed.

In my view, what these studies show is how identity work is in a constant flux. I agree with the proposed definition of identity work as people's engagement in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising their identities (Snow & Anderson 1987, Sveningsson & Alvesson 2003). Such identity work invokes self-narratives that make a point about the narrator (Linde 1993) in relation to their sameness and otherness. As concepts, *sameness* and *otherness* are constitutive of all identity formed through a basic narrative question: "Who am I in relation to my (former/future) self and others?". Narrative identity approaches suggest an approach to identity work that is self-reflexive and focuses on the conception of the self and interactions with others (Watson 2009). The self-narrative needs a continuity of self through time, a reflexivity of the self and others and a treatment of the self as other, which includes, inevitably, a moral evaluation of the self (Linde 1993, Ricoeur 1992). There should be a relation

between the self in history and the self now, but as the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus argued; the same man cannot step into the same stream twice, because of changes both in the man and in the stream. But despite this change and the flux, there needs to be a oneness, a sameness of the self – and this is the work that individuals do: trying to realize a oneness in their identities that is being constantly disrupted by otherness.

Ricoeur (1992) saw the conception of identity as directly tied to ethics. Identity is dependent upon a narrative coherence in one's life, and if this is lost, the ability to see oneself of worthy of living a good life, and being responsible, is lost, leading to a loss of self-esteem. Ricoeur hence argues that self-esteem is the ethical task of human life. In other words, self-esteem means affirming narratively to one's self that one is worthy of a good life. Ethical values are not constructed anew every time a decision is made; they have history and are part of the search for the good life that people in organizations strive for.

For Ricoeur, an individual's daily effort to live up to a desired state is made within a "narrative unity of life". People see themselves as part of a story that is unfolding, and the individual's life within a social community is part of the narratives of the other individuals. People are continuously trying to make sure that their actions are reconcilable with their sense of self and a desired state to which they aspire. But what is 'good'? The expression of a good life is an evaluation that combines one's own subjective criteria and the inter-subjective criteria of the regard, words and action of others. Here is the root of ethics: a responsibility for one's actions. It is a practical and material conception of identity that entails a presumption that self-identity is utterly dependent on others. As a subject for my actions, I am responsible for what I do with and for others. As the ethical intention in future aims and intentions is set by one's self alone, it includes self-concepts like role, solicitude and justice.

Narratives present the moments when agents who are aware of their power to act actually do so, and those who are subject to being affected by actions actually are affected. By affect I mean mental and emotional influence over a feeling or state of mind, something different from effect as in causal influence. Stories help individuals create meaning (Ashfort 2001, Van Maanen 1998, Ibarra 2010). The constitutive features of a narrative form the basis for Ricoeur to hold that personal identity, as a combination of a constant part (ipse) and a changing part (idem), is a narrative identity. Narratives combine disparate elements into a unity of a plot that has a

temporal span. All narratives also have ethical dimensions, as they contain promise and call for us to evaluate their characters as such. Furthermore, narratives show that from the standpoint of ethics there is a kind of primacy of the other-than-self over the self. Ethically considered, the narrative unity of a life is made up of the moments of its responsiveness or failure to respond to others. The responsive self is primarily concerned not with its own condition, but with responding faithfully and thoughtfully to others. Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity as a combination of selfhood and character makes it possible to extend our understanding of practical actions beyond the individual characters in the narrative.

Identity is thus formed in the dialectic relation between selfhood and sameness on the one hand and selfhood and otherness on the other. For Ricoeur, 'other' is not just a simple antonym to 'same', like 'other than self' or 'contrary', but otherness is constitutive of identity as such. In other words, otherness is both a comparison when defining identity and an integrative part in forming it. Selfhood reconciles and ties the self to the other through commitment and promise. Ricoeur distinguishes between three levels of otherness: otherness from the institution, otherness from the other person and otherness from oneself. In each, such identity is a condition of reciprocity and so, for Ricoeur, ineluctably ethical: identity is sustained insofar as others' lives are considered of equal value and of interest to one's own. The self is formed, then, through the aim of self-esteem in which who we are is firstly bound up in a sense of the good life, secondly is realized in the company of others, and thirdly is sedimented through just institutions (1992: 172).

4.2. Sameness through identity regulation?

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) argue that self-identity is mutually constitutive with identity regulation and identity work. By the former they mean the discursive practices of identity definition and by the latter the interpretative activities involved in reproduction of self-identity. Identity regulation is seen as a form of normative control that seeks to manage the feelings of workers so that they identify with and are committed to the organization (Deetz 1995). Alvesson and Willmott (2002) suggest that this managing of the "inside" of individuals is more effective than managing the "outside" – meaning more traditional external forms of control. It is more risky though, as individuals can resist such "internal" management easier than the "external" control. The means whereby identity regulation occurs is what they call "defining a person by

defining others" (2002:629). Barker (1993) shows that in order for a person to resist the control of the team, he/she must be willing to risk their role as a "teammate", whereas Jackall (1988) concludes that strong feelings of morality, although accepted in other life contexts, can be misplaced in the business world. Weiskopf and Willmott (2011) talk about a reflexive constitution of the self, i.e. a self that constitutes itself in relation to what is defined as duty or obligation and understands its enactment as a choice.

If I take Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) position of identity regulation as a starting point, I can raise one question: how do people's identities develop and become meaningful through otherness? This question emphasizes the processes through which individuals create their narrative of 'living a good life'. I will argue that one way of answering the question is to conceptualize Paul Ricouer's (1992) philosophical conceptualization of ethics as the process of finding a coherent narrative of life. I investigate identity work as it emerges in narratives in strategy meetings, and I especially focus on the otherness as part of identity building, which is inherently ethical. My focus is not so much to analyze the relative ethicality of strategy with particular ethical theories, but rather to examine how ethics occurs through otherness in strategy activities.

Hence the founding question in identity work becomes "Who imposes the prevalent identity and what makes it change? In other words, what is it that influences identity work?" Alvesson and Willmott (2002) bring up the idea of identity regulation as a means of identity work in organizations. They make an analytical distinction between three patterns of identity regulation – "managerial", "cultural-communitarian" and "quasi-autonomous". They argue that *managerial* theories supply discourses through which self-identity is constructed and maintained. Managers are encouraged to express "sameness"; "management of meaning" is predominant (see Smircich and Morgan 1982). The upside with expressing sameness in identity is that it helps managers to cope with ambiguities and focus on work, but it imposes a fierce corporate identity on individuals and can impede critical thinking and ethical judgment (Alvesson & Willmott 1996, Deetz 1992, Jackall 1988).

Particularly in strategy work, otherness might be repressed because there are limitations on how individuals and groups can turn otherness to account. The presumptions of strategy are not realized, as the managers' intentions are not the organization's intentions (Mintzberg & McHugh 1985). The depiction of individual

behavior in strategy work is restricted to a limited range of possibilities in the strategy process (see e.g., Knights & Morgan 1991, Barry & Elmes 1997, Mantere & Vaara 2005). Knights and Morgan see corporate strategy as a "set of discourses and practices which transform managers and employees alike into subjects who secure their sense of purpose and reality by formulating, evaluating and conducting strategy" (1991:252). They suggest that strategy is a discourse that shapes the very sense of what it is to be human. They treat strategy as a problematic, as opposed to a natural feature of organization life. Their main argument is that strategy discourse causes power implications that disable some actors and empower others. To gain power, the actor has to accept the logic of strategic discourse, which leads individuals to secure their sense of identity and reality through participation in discourses of strategy. This has implications on the agency of the individual in strategy. Power is gained by using and participating in the 'right' discourse, whether a rationalization of a failure or a masculine conception of power. Oakes, Townley and Cooper (1998) also draw attention to the power-aspect of strategy, finding it a form of symbolic violence.

The *cultural-communitarian* patterns of identity regulation refer to broader convictions that are more socially than organizationally rooted. Cultural control in organizations is most often anchored in historically-derived patterns of belief. In Snow & Andersson's (1987) study on identity work among the homeless, they show that all individuals, irrespective of their social status, look for larger meaning and self-esteem, and do so by constructing identities that give them a sense of self-worth. Rhodes, Pullen and Clegg (2010) show, using Paul Ricoeur as their basis for theorizing, that the presence of a dominant story that seeks to legitimize organizational change narratives also serves to normalize it. This means that it diminishes the capacity for organizations to really look into the ethical implications of the actions in the organization.

Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) third pattern of identity regulation is characterized as a *quasi-autonomous* pattern, and is in effect a move towards 'micro emancipation'. This is an expression of the multitude of voices through which identities are formed. It gives a chance for identities to be formed in part by regulated management/strategy-driven processes – in the struggle to keep a sense of self-identity, individuals use a multiple of ways of being.

Ricoeur (1992:118) offers us an interesting expression of this in his consideration of identity building as an ongoing dialectic between Selfhood, Sameness and Otherness. Otherness is as inextricably bound to the persistence of pattern as sameness - and is

inherently ethical. When this is applied to management research and strategy, where sameness, or the realization of sameness, or its pursuit, dominates, it is apparent that this sameness is the kind of identity most managers are encouraged to express. For Ricoeur the otherness is repressed, it turns away, but it does not cease to exist. On Ricoeur's terms, this can give rise to a dilemma for a manager engaged in strategy work: how is it that one navigates the tension between the need to subordinate others (subordinates, customers, competitors, allies, and so on) behind a performance-oriented goal, and the human capacity for sympathy and reciprocity by which otherness can be admitted to form and frame conceptions of identity?

4.3. Identity work through otherness

> 'Ethical aim: To live the good life, with and for others, in just institutions.' Paul Ricoeur (1992:172)

Selfhood is not sameness when the temporal dimension is taken into consideration. It is only with the question of permanence in time that the confrontation between idem and ipse becomes an issue. The question of permanence in time is connected to idem-identity; the idem-identity is what gives the self its spatio-temporal sameness. The ipse-identity gives the self the ability to initiate something new. Without both sorts of identity, there is no self. When we speak of ourselves, we in fact have available to us two models of permanence in time which can be summed up in two descriptive yet emblematic qualities: personal character and keeping one's word.

Character is the set of distinctive marks which permit the re-identification of a human individual as the same over time. In this way, the sameness of a person is designated emblematically. Character designates the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is identified and recognized. Habit gives history to character. Each habit formed in this way acquires and becomes a lasting disposition, a distinctive sign by which a person is recognized and re-identified as the same. This is the idem-identity – the identity as sameness.

To keep one's word is the ipse- or the selfhood-identity that is represented by the essentially ethical notion of self-constancy. Self-constancy is that manner in which a person conducts him- or herself so that others (and oneself) can count on that person.

Because someone is counting on me, I am accountable for my actions. The term 'responsibility' unites both meanings: counting on and being accountable for something. Ricoeur's main argument is that selfhood cannot be reduced to a form of narrative identity, because the question of selfhood exceeds that. It is this excess that brings out the ethical dimension of the self, and invites us to question how we value and prefer one character and devalue another. It cannot be ethically neutral.

4.3.1. Three levels of otherness in identity construction

If the 'good life' is the goal of ethics, it is lived with and for others. This is the basis for Ricoeur's reflection on ethics; it is in the otherness of the self and the otherness of the other. He designates this concern for the other as solicitude. The ethical intention to act or remain passive stems from otherness on three levels: individual (a good life), group (with and for others) and institution (in just institutions).

The **individual** level of ethics comes from future aims: "What do I want to become?" It is motivated by the individual's search for self-esteem and a unity of life. Ricoeur hence argues that self-esteem is the ethical intention of human life. In other words, self-esteem means affirming to oneself that one is worthy of a good life. But what is 'good'? The expression of a good life is an evaluation that combines one's own subjective criteria with inter-subjective criteria from the words and action of others. Here is the root of ethics; a responsibility for one's actions. It is a practical and material conception of identity that entails a presumption that self-identity is utterly dependent on others. As a subject for my actions, I am responsible for what I do with and for others. The necessary self-engagement in keeping one's word makes it possible for others to trust me, which at the same assures me of my own internal consistency,my own identity.

Consequently, the second level of ethics is the **group**. It is in face-to-face encounters with the other that mutual vulnerability begins and eventually gives rise to demands of duty and justice (institutional level). In Ricoeur's words, this phenomenon can be one of solicitude or benevolence. Self-esteem rises from the reciprocity of benevolent feelings, feelings one is also capable of directing towards oneself, through the benevolence of others. Ricoeur gives sympathy as an example, s situation in which the suffering of others is shared.

This is the crux of the meaning of oneself as another - one is always already an Other to oneself. This means that solicitude for others and solicitude for oneself are two sides of

the same coin, so to speak. One becomes who one is through relations with the Other, reciprocity forms the basis of the self-affirming relations central to so much of ethics, namely friendship and justice. This is the ethics that face-to-face meetings give rise to, and which precedes the moral duty of the institution. The deprivation of ethics leads to destruction of self-esteem, which goes hand-in-hand with harm to others and injustice. Questions posed regarding identity at the group level include: "How do I differ from the other person and how are we alike?" and "Who are we as a group?" Otherness to the other person is a integrative part of personal identity – it evolves in interaction with the other. Sameness is the identification with the other person and the sense of belongingness to the group.

The third level, **the institution**, is the world outside the interaction between two people or a group. It is the structure of living together with interpersonal contacts; what Ricouer calls the moral obligation. The institution creates the moral, or the duties that individuals are supposed to follow. But although duty runs deep, prior to duty there must be certain reciprocity; an openness and orientation to others in order for the power of duty to be felt. This means that individual and face-to-face ethics have primacy over the moral obligation.

These three levels of ethics determine the human desire for a 'good life'.. The self cannot be a subject of its own without reference to another. But as long as one remains within the circle of sameness-identity, the otherness of the other than self offers nothing original. "Other" appears in the list of opposites to same. But Ricoeur claims that it is quite different when one pairs otherness and selfhood - the kind of otherness that is not the result of comparison but the kind that can be constitutive of selfhood as such. He suggests that selfhood implies otherness to such an intimate degree that it cannot be thought of without the other.

It may be argued that to see another as oneself is related to seeing oneself as another. If we see others as ourselves, then we are concerned about them. To be concerned about the well-being of others is to be concerned about our own well-being; we can take care and have responsibility for others. But on the other hand, to see oneself as another means that we can see ourselves from the outside and practice self-criticism. The motivation to act or to remain passive is, in Ricoeur's terms, the foundation to the ethical intention to live the good life, which in turn is an ongoing identity work in the

dialectics between sameness and otherness. Table 2 summarizes the three levels of ethics that gives an agent the motivation to act or to remain passive.

Table 2 Three levels of ethics that create the motivation to act or remain passive

Level of study	**Ethical aim of character**	**Motivation for character to act or not to act**
The good life... Individual How do I want to live a good life?	*Ethical intention:* Role Self-esteem	Concern for self; role practice, unity of life Future aims set by individuals (I am not yet)
...with and for others... Group Which others?	*Ethical inspiration:* Self-respect Solicitude Reciprocity	Concern for others as individuals
...in just institutions... Organization How just is the organization?	*Moral obligation*: Justice Norm Duty	Past norms and traditions, rituals and routines, established by institutions (I ought to be)

These considerations of the self and the other are fundamental in human interaction, and are the foundation for individual aspiration to the 'good life'. Ricoeur points out that ethics is the self-engagement of keeping one's word that makes it possible for us to trust in each other, while at the same time assuring the individual of his or her own self-consistency. Self-esteem, on the other hand, extends beyond keeping one's word into a sense of struggle, which means that the ipse identity is more primal. Although self-respect is also dependent on such constancy as keeping one's word exemplifies. It is not a rigid allegiance of sticking to oneself, but simply the act of being reliable and responsible. It is impossible to reduce ethics to the question of moral obligation, where the actor or subject follows the moral law only, because beyond the moral law, there is the aspiration for a true and good life. But Ricoeur also says "...the sense of justice takes nothing away from solicitude; the sense of justice presupposes it to the extent that it holds persons to be irreplaceable. Justice in turn adds to solicitude, to the extent that the field of application of equality is all of humanity." (1992:202).

This idea of justice contains an ambiguity – in instances of disruption between norms and personal ethics, there is a dilemma between character and selfhood, between idem- and ipse identities, and between sameness and otherness. This is why it is interesting to empirically scrutinize who is actively creating the strategy, and to understand how the levels of ethical aim play a role in identity work in the strategy process. I will look at how the alteration between sameness and otherness manifested itself in ICE's strategy process.

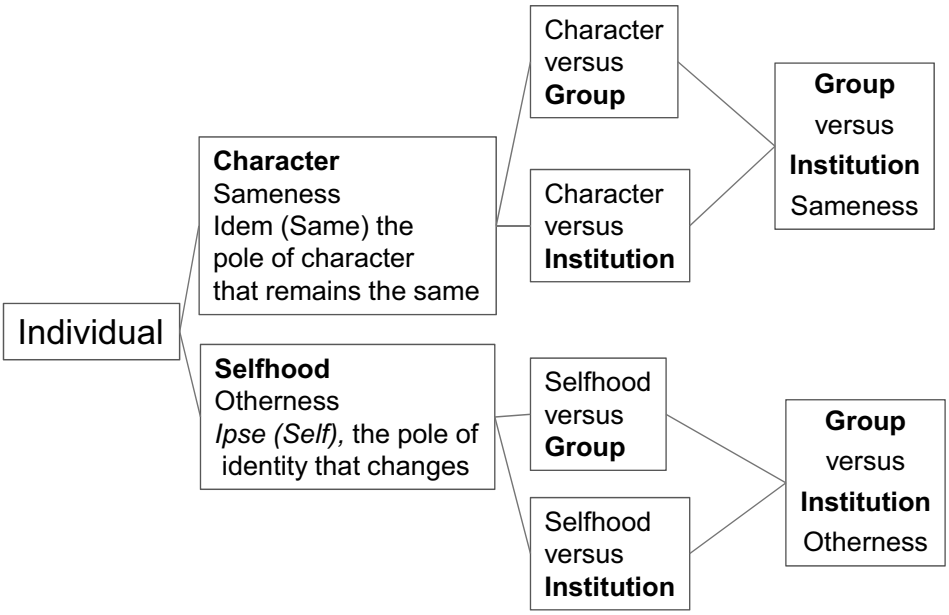
The question I pose in this chapter is:

- How do otherness and sameness influence identity work in a strategy process?

I address this question with data from the case study at ICE. My primary concern was with personal identities and the ways in which the managers constructed and utilized their identities in their narrative accounts. I did so by looking in detail how the different levels of otherness and sameness in ethics were iterated in the conversations and the interviews, and tried to understand how the ethical dilemmas manifested themselves in the actions. The three levels are not distinct "levels", and I don't want language to bewitch the reader into thinking so. But to be able to understand the identity work, I must simplify Ricoeur's notion of otherness.

As I explained earlier, Ricoeur deals with three meta-categories of otherness: the world's otherness (institution), the otherness of another person (group) and the otherness of the self to his orherself. I first engaged in a descriptive account of the data and captured the ways in which the managers expressed sameness and otherness. Next, I moved on to increasing levels of theoretical abstraction by comparing within and across the data for dominant themes and blending with existing theory in identity work. The content of the issues were primarily found in the data from observing the meetings, and the interview data provided additional insight into the processes of identity work. My concern was to interpret the ways that managers in the company made sense of situations in strategy work in their everyday talk, thus the method is narrative. I identified ways in which the managers' iteration varied between the three levels of ethical aim, and how they made sense of the strategic content. Figure 2 illustrates how the analysis was carried out.

Figure 2 Iteration between the three levels of ethics



4.4. Managers' identity work at ICE

Inspection of the data combined with the focus on otherness on three levels yielded three generic patterns of identity talk. Each was found to contain ranges that varied according to which level of otherness the identity work was directed. I will conclude this section with a discussion of the three generic patterns: embracing otherness, resisting otherness, and neglecting otherness, as well as their implications on the managers' identity work.

4.4.1. I change, but I stay the same

Character versus selfhood

The individual is in constant iteration between the idem and the ipse identities; character is the pole of identity that stays the same and selfhood the pole of identity that changes. To understand how the managers iterated between the ipse- and idem

poles of identity, character and selfhood, I tried to capture their thoughts about their role in the organization over time. This is how one manager explained what strategy was for him:

> ""Most people I have met, and I mean many, many - they want to do a good job. We come from a culture where it is a virtue to do a good job. And most people feel bad if they are doing a bad job. This is a motivator we have to harness. What it is about? During my studies, I worked as a nurse in elderly care. I fed them and changed their nappies. And what was that about? Sometimes people were angry because the linen was on the wrong side of the closet. It was about gaining power in that sense. It is about understanding what you can influence. And it is also about making things positive. If you are about to bake a cake, do it so that everyone can smell it and taste it, because that is what makes people happy. It is about harnessing the positive in every individual. Of course everyone will not necessarily cheer about it, as everyone will not feel the same degree of engagement."

The idem-identity is the one where the manager feels he has a responsibility towards the character of himself, the unchanging, and the accompanying changing role that comes from the otherness of oneself (in time) and the otherness of others. It is the awareness of ethics, the persistent question of "Who am I in the self-other relationship?" It is the search for an ethical unity of life, and looking back and affirming that one is worthy of a good life. In the example, the manager recognizes the need of a story for himself where he can affirm he has engaged in not only doing what would have been expected of him in his role as a worker and manager, but also as someone who changes things, who retains influence from experiences and consequently acknowledges their rightness or wrongness. This need for a coherent narrative and an ethical motive to work in the company was also expressed by another manager:

> I feel strongly for ICE, it has become a part of me after ten years. It would be extremely difficult for me to imagine working somewhere else. But then again, I spent a lot of time thinking about the climate long before ICE even knew the word. It is hardly anything new.

The manager reveals how his ipse- and idem identities match the strategic aim. When he looks back at his own identity-building, he sees that the pole of his identity that is changing, ipseity, has gone along with the pole of identity that remains the same. Here another manager tries to find a coherent connection between historical identity and the present:

> Our way of working is that we work and work. It is fun, but we do not talk about personal things. This culture of ours is such that we do not talk about personal matters. There is a father or mother behind each person, but that is not made visible for us here. For instance, one of the managers whom I have worked with for 20 years suddenly started talking about his children. I told him: this is the first time we have ever talked about personal matters. If only we had a little bit of warmth and normal communication. We have forgotten all about the emotional side of people.

The balance between the idem- and ipse identities is about the search for an ethical unity, to be able to look back and affirm that one is worthy of a good life. The managers reflect on their own and their colleague's otherness – ipseity - in the organization. The relationship between the same and the self is thereby defined as a path between the historical and the contextual; the self who is held responsible for an action or situation must be the same self who defines his or her identity in the situation.

The following is an example of a manager who looks back at what he did at one of the performance reviews while discussing with his business unit management team:

> NN1: Well, I made one clearly fatal mistake, and another smaller one. I mistook one of the contractors; I shouldn't have made that mistake. The big mistake was that somehow I got sidetracked and forgot to raise the issue of NN's role in our team. I'm sorry.

The manager feels repentance for an act he has committed previously. Here it is the feeling of solicitude that points to his ipse-identity, the otherness. The reflexive moment of the wish for a good life, constituted with a need for friends gives rise to the awareness of the self among others. It is the other in the self and in the other person that engenders ethics.

To understand how character (sameness) and selfhood (otherness) arise in a strategy context, I will explore how they are affected by the otherness of the group and the institution. The identity of individuals is in a constant state of evolution in strategy work and this identity growth is inherently ethical. Otherness is *embraced* in relation to oneself.

4.4.2. The group doesn't make me change

Character versus group

Character, or idem, is the pole of identity that remains the same and is recognizable over time. Character is sameness and can also be thought of as the reliable sameness that resonates with the strategic aim; a reliable manager does what he or she is supposed to do. The sameness of the individual is in an ongoing iteration towards other people, face to face, and is an intertwined process between the moral norm and individual ethics. For the individual it means that to learn what I think, I look back over what I said earlier to other people. There is a search for a unity of life by striving to link the past with the future by instilling a sense of continuity.

Character is responsibility, but in the strategy process, it is not always directed towards the strategic aim. Sameness in identity can lead to avoiding responsibility. One way of avoiding responsibility of a strategic process is to confirm that something is out of one's hands as somebody else makes the decisions, another is to hide disadvantageous results. Instances of avoiding responsibility were not easy to spot, but a few were observed, as this manager reports.

> ICE had made a decision to reduce travelling and install more video conference systems instead. The video system become much more expensive than was budgeted, and discussions about its price and usability were recurrent in many meetings. In not one single meeting did I hear anyone take responsibility for it: the business unit management teams accused the top management of making a bad decision, and the top management team blamed it onbad implementation from the business unit's side.

The previous example shows how the identity of the manager is more important from the character's sameness point of view than from the group's otherness. The disruption between the sameness in organizational identity and ethics is very evident when responsibility is avoided.

> Estimating the future performance of the company was a part of the strategy process, and the business units made their own estimates. This is a discussion in one of the management teams on the estimates:
>
> NN1: I suggest we just write low performance in service.
> NN2: But that is not true.
> NN1: Yes, but if we write a lot about it we will end up having a big discussion about a minor problem.

Here the manager avoids the imposed norms and guidelines by not telling the truth. There is also an element of practical wisdom, or phronesis, in addition to telling lies. There is an awareness that serial truth telling can expose you to inquiry that you might then find debilitating. Keeping the character, the sameness, is often expected to achieve the strategic goals, but can also lead to avoiding responsibility or detachment from the strategy. In terms of the strategy it means that persons are committed to the group's sameness. Sameness can also be a role that the strategists take in order to follow the strategic aim. This can be labeled as *neglecting* otherness, and perhaps a fake attestation to identity regulation – the managers want to maintain the apperances of committing to the strategy as part of their role, but in fact, they are detached from it.

4.4.3. The group makes me change

Selfhood versus group

The idem-identity, or character, is what gives the self its spatio-temporal sameness. The ipse-identity, or selfhood, gives the self the ability to initiate something new. Without both sorts of identity there is no self. In strategy this changing identity is sometimes not accepted – a manager has made the promise to live up to the demands of strategy, which require him or her to keep that promise, to keep his or her character. But change is also needed. Selfhood or otherness was most tangible in the face-to-face meetings among people; the managers felt tension in meeting the demands of the strategic aim. The group encouraged otherness. This is from a conversation at a business unit management team meeting:

> NN1: One question about the managers there: Would it be stupid to ask one of the managers what he wants for his future?
> BU-head: Well… I think it is fair, but you have to discuss it with NN3. What does HR think?
> HR-manager: I think it is definitely good that you ask what they want; if this is the person NN3 wants to keep there.
> NN1. I don't think this can be forced on them.

This conversation reveals how difficult it can be to show otherness in a strategic context. As a group, they all knew that they are supposed to be instrumental, and both NN1 and the head of the business unit hesitate on whether it is proper to actually ask what a person really wants. They need reassurance from the HR manager before they can feel confident to take their own and other person's otherness into consideration: "Would it be stupid… ?". Ethical commitments and practice come crashing together in the moment of practice. The conversation starts by rejecting otherness – it doesn't seem appropriate to ask the person what he wants – but ends by embracing otherness: it is important to understand the subjectivity of the other person.

Remorse was also something that the managers felt in the disruption between the group and selfhood. This same performance review quote was used earlier used as an example of the individual iteration between the idem- and ipse poles of identity, but also reveals how the business unit head is willing to change because of reciprocity towards the group.

> "…well, I made one clearly fatal mistake, and another smaller one. I mistook one of the contractors; I shouldn't have really made that mistake. The big mistake was that I somehow got sidetracked and forgot to raise the issue of NN's role in our team. I am sorry."

He shows a strong commitment to the group and is willing to change and show reciprocity. He acknowledges that his mistake with the contractor wasn't a big one – even if in terms of the strategic aim it was more important – while his major error was to not give recognition to another person in the team. He fully embraces otherness.

In the dialectic between selfhood and the other, it is the face of the other that makes me responsible, i.e.capable of answering, and obligates me. Ricouer contends that it is the search for equality across inequality which establishes the place of solicitude in ethics. Thus, it is seen that solicitude is not external to self-esteem, but is constituted as a moment of self-esteem in its lack and need. This means that I understand the other as a self, as an agent and author of his or her actions, with reasons for these actions and the ability to rank his or her preferences.

Humour was a manifestation of this need for similitude towards the group. This is a conversation between two managers before a performance review:

> NN1: I put on my best shoes and combed my hair so the headmaster won't disapprove. Are you ok?
>
> NN2: Yes, I think so; I have a new tie and I have done my homework.

The managers use humour to cope with a situation that feels uncomfortable. Self-esteem is the reflexive instigator of the goal for a good life, and the relation between the self and the other is characterized by solicitude. Friendship and solicitude is based on the exchange of giving and receiving, and introduces the notion of 'mutuality'; or a you-like me. But this was also an example of 'faking' the behaviour of an appropriate individual, they in fact neglect or resist otherness, and the humour is just a way of showing that they have an otherness in them, but are not willing to sacrifice the role as appropriate managers, which follows the rule of sameness.

The group could also be a place where individuals could be seen in their otherness, as this conversation from a management team reveals:

> NN1: Now we have an extra resource. But I tell you, use him a lot in your work. We have a really good resource in him. I have told him that he can participate in investments. Make it easy for him, as it is really difficult for him to be here now.

The manager feels a need to ackowledge the other person as an end in himself. Equality is presupposed in our relations of friendship, while it is also a goal to be achieved in our organizations. Solicitude, the relation between the self and the other, is based on giving and receiving. The otherness of the other person changes my selfhood, and in relation

to the strategic aim it can lead to either a disruption of the aim or a wanted change. For the strategy, it means a disruption and a change in the aim. Commitments made to the group can lead to tensions in the situation and to a distancing of the sameness in the strategic goals. It suggests that otherness is embraced and even facilitates a new opening in the sameness of the strategy process.

4.4.4. The organization doesn't make me change

Character versus institution

Facts, scientific and technical knowledge are needed when moral issues are deliberated. It would be immoral to ignore technical information and make decisions without all of the feasible information. Knowledge and moral arguments are in a way antinomies, as facts are descriptive (what there is) and moral is prescriptive (what we ought to do). The duties and the moral norms conduct the way I act, but what I say and do as the content of the thought is only a small portion of the whole, because of the variables of context and personal disposition. Character, the traits that make me recognizable from one day to another, is important and strategy is dependent on the sameness of the people in the organization. ICE was an engineer-driven company, where technocratic discourse prevailed. Managers were often experts in technology who assumed that moral problems were to be solved by the best experts and in the light of the best facts. What was forgotten was that moral questions cannot be solved solely by means of value-free information, and that in an organization it is sometimes crucial to involve as many people as possible in the solutions. However, involving others in decisions is often not a good idea, and to decide in a clique or alone is not to discount otherness necessarily, but to accept that there are instances where consultation will not create the impetus necessary for the decision. The good side of this technocracy was that it examined facts thoroughly. A new business unit manager stated his relationship to the institution to his management team as follows:

> NN1: Delegation is good, but control is better. We do these things not only because we have been told we will, but because if we don't do it, nobody will. Revolutions are also planned, but they come as surprises to those who are not paying attention.

He showed his role as a committed leader, and he wanted to show that character is the most important trait. He wanted by example to demonstrate how important it is for the team members to follow organizational sameness and to live up to being a company man, an appropriate individual.

Keeping the character in relation to the institution was often required from ICE's managers in strategy work; it is the sameness in the strategic aim that demands sameness in character. The CEO's role towards the organization was clearly to state the sameness and the character and urge others to do likewise. In this conversation, the top management team discusses technical solutions that could help mitigate climate change.

> NN1: The video conference system became much more expensive, but the person responsible only said "The top management team decided on this". The cost per employee is up to 50 Euros!
> NN2: I don't think you have the whole picture on that one. I got alarming messages on how the equipment did not function.
> NN3: The target was to reduce traveling, not to install video conference equipment.
> CEO: The idea was to save time, money and CO_2. But can we do something else besides introduce video cameras? Are there alternatives, smarter ways of achieving our aim?
> NN1: And does it really cut traveling?
> CEO: Now I do not want to go back to the basic question. If someone proves it wrong, then let's re-evaluate!

The CEO assumes his role as the symbol for the sameness in strategy, and directs the discussion away from what he thinks are irrelevant questions. This is a very common feature in strategy, the implicit "rule" that reducing traveling can mitigate climate change and that video conference systems is the solution. When this is questioned by NN1, he is quickly snubbed by the CEO, who wants more evidence before he will consider changing the decision. The top management typically seemed to follow sameness in character in relation to the ethical aim. Otherness is treated like a troublesome schoolboy.

This conversation is from a top management team meeting, where a mistake in communication stock trading is discussed:

> CEO: What do you except will happen?
> *NN1 explains the sanctions applied by the Exchange.*
> CEO: What do we do internally?
> *Silence*
> CEO: If we turn the question around: if this would have happened in a bank, what would happen now?
> *Long silence.*
> CEO: I don't know, but are we taking enough corrective actions?
> *Silence*
> NN1: Well, we could check the processes.
> CEO turns to the company lawyer: Do you have an opinion on the legal aspect?
> Lawyer: I think this person should be punished somehow. Maybe we should take away all trading possibilities.
> NN2: Can the person continue the work? Was this that kind of negligence?
> CEO: Exactly. If this had happened on Wall Street, what would have happened?
> NN2: It is obvious.

> CEO: I think this is very serious and we would be much scrutinized if it happened again. I need you to investigate it and I need your answer quickly. We have zero-tolerance.

The managers in this conversation see themselves as the keepers of the strategic vision. Their role is to preserve the sameness, because without that there is no organization in their sense of it. The discussion shows how the norms and the duties are of large importance in the company, from both a social and legal point of view. When the legal norms are violated, there is no room for otherness. If otherness would be introduced, it would put the credibility of the top management on the line. The sameness of the strategy is very strong because there needs to be certain characteristics and roles in the individuals in order for the strategic aim of the organization to follow through. The institution expects individuals to keep their character recognizable and trustworthy in relation to the strategic aim.

What is more, it can also lead to a common goal and togetherness, as everyone then can understand one another in the mode of sameness. The sameness in character versus institution was a goal in communication, as one of the top managers expressed:

> In order to get people to understand, the communication needs to be passionate. And I do not mean fancy Power Point presentations, but real communication with other people, where the other party can see that you really believe in this issue. It is also about pride. Anyone in this organization should be able to tell his or her neighbor about all the things that ICE has done to mitigate climate change and be proud. There needs to be a passion and a willingness to listen.

This is the perfect scenario for strategy implementation, people are committed to change for the sake of the sameness of the organization. They embrace otherness as a part of their becoming appropriate individuals.

The managers were aware of the fact that personal commitment and sameness in character were important for the organization. At one top management team meeting one absent person was discussed:

> NN1: Is there still energy left in NN2 (not present)?
> NN3: Yes, I think so.
> NN1: He has also accrued a lot of money by now and he used to be very committed to securing the money. If he loses motivation, he could be dangerous. He really likes to be around.
> NN4: He is so purchasing, I do not think he will ever do anything else.

The managers wanted to keep the person's sameness in character, as they realized that it was precisely that which made him valuable for the company. If he would change, his commitment to the strategic aim would have been jeopardized. Otherness is neglected.

4.4.5. The organization makes me change

Selfhood versus institution

If there is a conflict between the personal ethics and and the moral norm, I make the "plausible" evaluation. Ricoeur suggests that ethics inherently precedes the moral norm and if there is a disruption, the identity changes in relation to the institution, the norm. The tension between selfhood and institution was most typical at the middle management level; the middle managers were between two norms, as they had to cope with both the requirements of the executives and the requirements from the lower legions. This example from a business unit management team meeting.

> NN1: All business units have to make sure that their emissions from travelling are reduced. We cannot adopt a new system because management is tracking our travelling and we can't do anything about it.
> NN2: There was also this plan we were supposed to do.
> NN3: But in general we can reduce travelling. Those people who sell have to travel, but everyone else can use the video conference system.
> NN4: I have used the video conference, it is not good.
> NN1: Ok, but we cannot say: You can't go purchase something in Bulgaria because the quota is already full. You just have to hope that you are at home when the quota is filled!

It shows how NN1 is between two norms, and retreats back to his selfhood, his otherness, to resist the strategic goal. By bringing forward his own otherness, he aims at changing the norm – the strategy – of the group. In his role as a middle manager he feels more responsible towards his own group than the institutional norm. He embraces otherness and challenges the sameness of the organization.

This questioning of the strategic aim also led to healthy self-criticism, as the groups identity affects the norms and taken-for-granted duties. The strategic aim didn't take personal ethical values into account, and this can be a reason why counter-rhetoric emerged. This discussion is also from a business unit management team meeting:

> NN1: The CEO didn't like the advertisement [...], because he says it gives a negative picture.
> BU-head: Do not let the top management team drive this! Never give business to the top management team! You are in a much much better position to drive it, they are sitting in the wrong place.
> NN2: But very often, for instance in our branding team, the top-management team comes and tells us what to do.

> BU-head: You are so top driven here in [a country]! I'm sure that when you come from [another country], you also say 'I have been to the tower again'. You are so top down here!

The business unit head questions the strategic goal given by the top management team by elevating the otherness of the business unit. He also indicates that the hierarchy of the headquarters isn't necessary. In other words, he objects to the taken-for-granted custom that the top management team has the moral right to intervene in decisions that should be made by the business unit. Otherness is embraced.

The two previous examples showed how otherness elevated ethics towards the organization by the middle manager and his authoritative power. However, otherness and ethical questioning of the institutional norms was also done by others in the groups of middle managers. In one of the business unit management teams, the head of HR had the capability of bringing out the ethical aim:

> I could say that we plan for the personnel, and I could tell you we are counting costs and I could tell you that we are planning for the people day. But you already know this, and this is why I thought I tell you about why we have a HR strategy. This is about people and inspiring people.

This introduction inspired the team to talk extensively about HR issues: how they could be involved and how they could help their co-workers. She was also the only manager in the business units meetings I attended that brought up sensitive issues:

> These are nice words, but what do they really mean? There was some fine tuning last spring to get HR closer to the business. There has not been a difference comparatively and I really don't see what has been done. There is lot to improve. But it is mostly our work as leaders that needs improving. HR cannot do the job for us. HR is a part of the business and not an external issue. I need to have a discussion with each and every one of you.

She focuses attention on the need for self-esteem, but does it in a way that doesn't necessarily contradict the strategic aim. Her acknowledgement of the otherness of the individuals brings a human otherness into the meeting. The need for self-esteem can be in tension with the strategic aim. Commitments made to the strategic aim of the organization can run into disruption when they are faced by the need for self-esteem and the strategic aim is resisted or distanced.

4.4.6. We as a group are like the organization

Group versus institution, sameness

The ethics of the group is based on the idea that we, as a group, have a solicitude and reciprocity. That we together reflect back on the norms of the institutional level and conceive if we are aligned or not. The institutional norm was more often questioned at the middle manager level than on the top management level, as they are literally in between. Top management of course had the role of giving an example, the group wanted to show their commitment to the organizational norm. But sometimes this aim of sameness was manifested in empty rhetoric, where the "right" words compensated for substance. This is a discussion from the top management team.

> NN1: We have been visible and vocal and active in climate change.
> NN2: Now people say they can feel proud.
> NN1: We need to have solid ground under our feet when we are vocal and active.

Rhetoric such as this is irredeemably ambiguous and open to interpretation, but proceeds as if it is not. NN1 tries to appeal to values and feelings, but without deviating from the institutional norm and the strategic aim. The group nods as if they would agree. In this situation, nothing changed, the group adjusted to the strategic aim without detaching from it or destabilizing it.

The group's sameness with the institution could also lead to detachment from the strategic goal, as the discussion about not wanting to tell the truth about budgeting (p. 44) illustrated. The group doesn't want to do what is "right" because of the risk of destabilizing the institutional norm that they are measured by. In the group, the mechanism to respond to inherent ethics comes into play. It is testing the ethical through others. What is said is determined by the audience that the person anticipates will audit his orher conclusions, one is dependent on the words and actions of others in one's determination of the subjective criteria of what is "a good life". This gives feelings of togetherness and commitment, but also resistance and distancing from the sameness in the strategic aim. Solicitude to the other people goes before the obligation towards the organization.

The next example illustrates how the top management team relied on the sameness of the group with regard to institutional norms.

> CEO: We need to make sure that the market is growing.

> NN1: 1% this year and 2% next year.
> CEO: Then you have to play the market. We know that people are starting to move. The shit is gonna hit the fan. But this doesn't mean that we should be stupid.
> NN2: If I know my people right, they are already doing it.
> CEO: Yes, and they must call the shots.
> NN1. Let's stop making life easier for our competitors. We have not raised prizes, we command most, 80%, of the market. We must run the business, cause otherwise, why would we be here?

The task of the top management team is to run the business and to get the different organizational units to be aligned. This conversation shows how they spur each other on to keep the strategic aim together in the group; NN2 reassures that his people are fully aligned with the strategic aim. Otherness is resisted.

Also at the middle manager level, the feeling of mutuality in the group aligned with the institutional norm was encouraged. This example is from a business unit management team meeting:

> NN1: The large business customers are prioritized by [another business unit], but not by us. I feel it is important to have someone who is responsible for keeping this together. We have a project manager, but it is currently more of a support function with little influence.
>
> HR manager: We need to have clear roles for how this is coordinated, otherwise they remain internal business unit decisions and not taken forward. We need to have a driver in the front seat and also be able to say no.
>
> BU head: This is the conflict with the whole steering model. We need to coordinate and have someone taking primary responsibility.
>
> NN1: To build up the ICE way of doing things and to build on the structural capital of ICE.

The managers feel that they, as a group, are somehow ignored in the whole picture and that they need to "be on the front seat" and "drive". They still have a strong alignment with the strategic aim of ICE, and a willingness to build the "ICE way of doing things". The concern for others as individuals in the group fits in with the strategic aim. Otherness is neglected and even resisted.

4.4.7. We as a group are different from the organization

Group versus institution, otherness

Otherness in the group reflects back to the institution and brings out both destabilization due to self-criticism, as well as resistance and detachment. At the middle manager level, the institutional norms could be received as something that don't concern the group, as this conversation at a business unit management team meeting shows:

> HR manager: 'Inspire individual growth' has been on the strategic agenda for a couple of years, what does this mean? One part is training and courses, and now the next step is implementing it to the lower management teams, coaching, job rotation…
> BU head (interrupting): What about new rules on sick-leave?
> HR manager: We haven't done anything about that…

The head of the business unit isn't interested in the big picture about how to inspire individual growth in the company. He is merely interested in a specific topic, sick leave, that is more important for the group. The group distances itself from the sameness of the strategic aim.

The group's otherness to the institution could also be hidden, as this from example shows. From my notes:

> Members of a business unit management team are about to present a proposal for a target to the top management team. Before they present it, two members of the top management team recommend that they adjust the target in order for it to be more realistic. They do not change it, but present the proposal as is to the top management team, who approve it as is. When the target is then presented to the business unit management team, they say it is "a decision by the top management team – they have forced this high target upon us".

This shows how the otherness in itself doesn't always lead to "moral behaviour". The ethics of the individual can be "wrong" from the organizational institution's point of view.

The group otherness also led to self-criticism, where the managers scrutinized their own behaviour. This is a comment from the CEO at a meeting:

> "The truth of the matter is that we don't seem to be on top of things. We should be able to do much more. We sit here looking at the numbers and when we look up; we think that everything is fine."

The top managers are wrapped up in a constant process of trying to follow the strategic goals themselves, too. They try to make sense of the context and see themselves from the outside – both as managers and as human beings. They were often critical about the way they communicated the strategic aim.

> CEO: Picture: If you have a risk, you have to control it. It something goes to the internal audit, then the shit has hit the fan already many times.
>
> NN1: But the business unit heads say "We are not involved in the strategy process". We have to look at it, otherwise we will have costs of failure.
>
> CEO: Control and freedom… We do not think that everything improves with more control.
> Many things: yes, hm, yes.

Reciprocity in the group led to identities that were different from the strategic goals, and, at least for short instances, were manifested in a distancing from it. Embracing otherness introduced new elements to the strategy.

The top managers had the multiple roles of being leaders to their respective business units, responsible for the whole business, and accountable towards the board, the stock owners and the greater public. This is why their otherness was contested from many angles – they represented the institution, but the institution was also an entity in and of itself. The roles between the different norms and values showed the conflicts between the various "othernesses". At one of the top management team meetings, the managers discussed how to handle so-called "underperformers":

> NN2: These people do not know that they have been shuffled around because they are underperformers.
> CEO: But this cannot be a voluntary thing. When the boss says that here is the package, there is no choice. [...]
> NN3: If there is a person on the low performance list who does not know that he is there, then we have a problem. And the problem is at higher levels in the organization.

The managers subject themselves to harsh criticism regarding the strategic goal of getting rid of underperformers. The managers are critical towards the way the organization has handled the situation, and they blame themselves. This is key in Ricoeur's notion of ethics, the ability to change over time by seeing "oneself as another". It also quite tellingly takes ethics outside of consequentalism, the effort to get rid of underperformers is not ethically questioned, instead the worry is the requisite attitude and process by which it should be done and the manager's complicity with such a process. The following discussion of the top management team manifests the group's ability to see themselves as another:

> CEO: We don't seem to be very good at IT projects in this company. *(shouting)* Why is it generally accepted that IT projects are always late!! I do not understand this mindset.
> NN1: But it is dependent on the vendors market and we do not always exactly know what we want.
> CEO: But hey – we don't build plants, too? We don't go into that saying 'Let's see where the pipes end up'!

The CEO's role is to understand, give commands and take responsibility. Otherness is manifested in responsibility and self-criticism, but the sameness in the strategy is still maintained.

4.5. Summary

In this chapter I have elucidated how otherness and sameness influence identity work in strategy. The starting point for my analysis was Paul Ricoeur's notion of ethics and the search for a narrative unity of life. When analyzing the different levels of otherness: otherness from the self, the group and the institution, I was able to distinguish the ongoing identity work among the managers at ICE that was triggered by otherness. Inspection of the conversational data from ICE yielded three generic patterns of identity work: 1) neglecting, 2) resisting and 3) embracing otherness.

The most common form of identity work through otherness was just simply *neglecting* it when it came up. It involved a strict focus on the organizational norms and sameness, without any kind of reflection on the ethical aim. When the top managers put tough demands on the organization, there was no room for otherness. The neglect of otherness was however commented on by the middle managers, for instance, when one manager says that "we have forgotten about the emotional side of people" and later when the HR manager points out that the organization is still issue-driven and not people-driven as it supposedly desires. ICE presented a range of goals that the managers were expected to adapt in their identities as appropriate, but showing solicitude and care wasn't one of them. By prescribing actions, working life can exert influence over us (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004). In their roles as professional managers, the individuals didn't see it as appropriate to occupy behaviour that would have revealed otherness. They still expressed needs to show otherness, both by saying that they "have forgotten about the emotional side of people" and by the irony directed towards the sameness in the strategic aim. Some of these expressions led to responses in the strategic aim, the sameness which seems to indicate that the individual otherness, as it evolves from moment to moment, can have some implication on the strategy process itself. The managers tried to preserve their sense of self-esteem and their narrative unity of life in the crossfire resulting from the strategic demands.

When individuals have to assume the role of a strategist, or utilize institutions that promote their roles as ones that are efficient and goal-compliant, they may attempt to *resist otherness*. My findings reveal that a substantial proportion of the identity work of the managers I studied was focused on resisting the ethical aim of otherness. In relation to the institution, it took form in resisting changes in the norm, like in the example where the middle managers cannot accept the instructions to cut travelling to support

the overarching aim to mitigate climate change. Also at the top management level, resistance of otherness took its form in the tough rhetoric and the hard examination of performance. The management teams were the face-to-face groups where the managers mirrored their otherness. Expressions of otherness through solicitude and friendship didn't appear often, especially not explicitly. Implicitly, otherness was seen in irony, remorse even. The managers seemed to be ashamed of showing reciprocity, as the example on page 45 illustrates, where the manager has to ask the HR expert if it is appropriate to ask a subordinate what he wants from his future. Otherness was resisted.

A third form of identity work through otherness was the practice of *embracing* it. By embracement I refer to the verbal confirmation of acceptance of the otherness in the self, the group or the institution;, or embracing the ethical intention of 'living the good life, with and for others, in just institutions' (Ricoeur 1992:172). Embracing implies instances when a glimpse of the ethical could be seen. For instance, when the business unit head admitted that the biggest mistake he had made was the fact that he forgot to call attention to one team member's achievements. He didn't have to do that, and it wasn't necessary for the strategy, but it was the ethical thing to do at the moment. There were also moments where the group's otherness highlighted the ethical aim to live "with and for others", like when the manager asked if it would be appropriate to ask a co-worker what he really wanted, instead of just making decisions over his head.

A summary of the different manifestations of otherness and sameness in strategy talk and their implications for the strategic aim is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Alteration between sameness and otherness in strategy talk, summary

Level of otherness	**Identity work**	**Implications for the strategy process**	**Example**
Individual Character/Selfhood (Sameness)/(Otherness)	Who am I is indicated by discovery of how and what I think, the self-other relationship is the base for identity construction	The identity of individuals is in a state of constant evolution in strategy work. This kind of identity is inherently ethical. *Embracing otherness*	"I feel for ICE, it has become a part of me after ten years. It would be extremely difficult for me to imagine working somewhere else. But then again, I spent a lot of time thinking about the climate long before ICE even knew the word. It is hardly anthing new."
Character/**Group** (sameness)	To learn what I think, I look back over what I said earlier to other people. I search for a unity of life by aiming at linking the past with the future by giving a sense of continuity. My identity stays the same in relation to the group.	Keeping the character, the sameness, is often expected to achieve the strategic aim, but can lead to avoiding responsibility or detachment from the strategy. Sameness can be a role that the strategist takes in order to follow the strategic aim. *Neglecting otherness*	NN1: I suggest we just write low performance for service. NN2: But it is not true. NN1: Yes, but if we write a lot about it we will end up having a big discussion about a minor problem.
Selfhood/Group (otherness)	I am capable of changing and enacting in time, everything I say or do is subject to approval or disapproval by the other person. My identity changes in relation to the group.	The otherness of the other person changes my selfhood – to the strategic aim it can lead to both a disruption of the aim or a desired change. Commitments made to the group can lead to tensions in the situation and to an	"…Well, I made one clearly fatal mistake and another smaller one. I mistook one of the contractors; I really shouldn't have made that mistake. But the big mistake was that I somehow got sidetracked and forgot to

		avoidance of the strategic aim. *Embracing otherness/ Resisting otherness*	raise the issue of NN's role in our team. I am sorry."
Character/**Institution** (sameness)	The duties and the moral norms conduct the way I act, but what I say and do as the content of the thought is only a small portion of the whole, because of the context and personal disposition. My identity stays the same in relation to the institution.	Instead of hanging on stubbornly to one's opinions, one has the practical wisdom to change when it is needed. There need to be certain characteristics and roles of the individuals for the strategic aim of the organization to be followed through. The institution expects individuals to keep their character recognizable. Typically top management *Neglecting otherness*	NN1: Is there still any energy left in NN2 (not present)? NN3: Yes, I think so. NN1: He has a lot of money now and he was once very committed so he could make money. If he loses his motivation, he could be dangerous. He really likes to be around. NN4: He is so purchasing that I do not think he will ever do anything else.
Selfhood/Institution (otherness)	If there is a conflict between the ethical aim and the moral norm, I make the plausible evaluation. Ricoeur suggests that the ethical aim inherently precedes the moral norm. My identity changes in relation to the institution.	The need for self-esteem can be in tension with the strategic aim. Commitments made to the strategic aim of the organization can run into disruption when they are faced by the need for self-esteem. The strategic aim is resisted or distanced from. Typically middle top management	"I could say that we plan for the personnel, and I could tell you we are counting costs and I could tell you that we are planning the people day. But you already know this, and this is why I thought I tell you today about why we have a HRstrategy. This is about people and inspiring people."

		Embracing otherness	
Group/Institution (sameness)	We, as a group, have solicitude and reciprocity that we reflect back on the norms of the institutional level and wesubsequently conceive that they are aligned.	The concern for others as individuals in the group fits with the strategic aim. Typical for top and middle management *Neglecting otherness*	CEO: We need to make sure that the market is growing. NN1: 1 % this year and 2 % next year. CEO: Then you have to play the market. We know that people are starting to move. The shit is gonna hit the fan. But this doesn't have to mean that we should be stupid. NN2: If I know my people right, they are already doing it. CEO: Yes, and they must call the shots. NN1. Let's stop making life easier for our competitors. We have not raised prizes and we command almost 80% of the markets. We must run the business, because otherwise, why would we be here?
Group/Institution (otherness)	We, as a group, have a solicitude and reciprocity, that we reflect back on the norms of the institutional level and we subsequently conceive that they are not aligned.	The group doesn't want to change. Reciprocity in the group leads to an identity that is different from the strategic aim. The strategic aim is collectively resisted or distanced from. *Embracing otherness* *Neglecting otherness*	"The truth of the matter is that we don't seem to be on top of things. We should be able to do much more. We sit here looking at the numbers and when we look up; we think that everything is fine."

The detailed engagement with identity as a process, facilitated by Ricoeur's concept of selfhood, sameness and otherness and a coherent narrative of life, reveals how identity work can be a paradoxical process in the search for the "good life". This chapter has shown the potential a particular ethical approach poses to the processes in which otherness performs an important function in bringing concordance between ipse- and idem identities. Managers are ethical agents, but in the strategic organization they can only be "for the other" by acting through a strategic goal that can never live up to that demand.

To understand how the managers *as a group* coped with the struggle between the strategy process and the ethical aim, I will in the next chapter explore the case through theories of sensemaking.

5 SENSEMAKING OF THE STRATEGIC AIM AND ETHICS

I have now elucidated how manager's identity work evolved in the strategy process, through Ricoeur's ideas on the inherent ethics of "living the good life". The question of ethics is connected to many phenomena within and outside organizations and currently there is considerable interest in organizational research into ethical subjectivity (Kelemen & Peltonen 2001, Clegg, Kornberger & Rhodes 2006, Ibarra-Colado 2006, Iedema & Rhodes 2010, Rhodes, Pullen & Clegg 2010, McMurray et. Al. 2011, Weiskopf & Willmott 2011). Ethical subjectivity attends to how people manage to define their ethical position in relation to their everyday practice (Bernauer & Mahon 1994, Chan & Garrick 2002, Keleman & Peltonen 2001). It also relates to how people at work constitute themselves as subjects in relation to ethics and the practices they adopt in forming a sense of an ethical self. This chapter is a continuation of the analysis in the previous chapter, where I showed how managers as individuals and in groups are performing constant identity work because of the struggle between sameness and otherness.

My research interest in this chapter is how ethics changes the strategy of an organization. I examine these questions as I discuss the strategy process that took place at ICE. The starting point is that strategic aims are typically connected to the concept of sameness, whereas ethical aims are inherently connected to the concept of otherness. In order to understand how ethics and strategic aims are enacted in a strategy process, I need to understand the link between strategy and ethics and how these are made sense of. I start by examining how sensemaking can be used to understand the enactment of the ethical aim and I then review the strategic aim and ethics through the notions of sameness and otherness. To understand how ethics is formed through otherness, I discern how Paul Ricouer saw identities being formed through "ethical aim". In the empirical section, I analyze findings from ICE using constant comparison technique.

5.1. Sensemaking

Research on sensemaking (e.g. Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991) often assumes a direct link between the sensegiving of the managers and the comprehension or sensemaking of receivers, rather than relying on direct observation and then theorising. Explanations for these effects are often explained in relation to either their ability to connect with

public stakeholders (Sonenshein 2006) or the discoursive ability of managers (Maitlis & Lawrence 2007). My study looks to assess persuasiveness in the context of a strategic change process. From analysis of this change process, coupled with the prior analysis of identity work, this sensemaking and sensegiving can be theorized as an ethical, perhaps frustrated, condition of persistent negotiation between sameness and otherness. It advances the existing literature dealing with strategy and ethics because it frames the ethical task as one of struggle rather than attainment or compliance. As such, it runs against the strategic aim of those for whom performance is configured around the realization of goals and plans. Instead it looks at ethics and strategy as an ongoing register of self and organizational re-production.

My argument is that ethical deliberation is a part of sensemaking, as is happens under conditions of equivocality and uncertainty. To understand how ethics is enacted in the strategy process, I will look at otherness from a sensemaking perspective. I adopt a non-normative view of ethics in organizations, treating the ethical as something that constantly presents itself to us as we live our daily lives. It is, thus, in a very real sense, our lived reality, in strategy work too, whether we choose to accept it or not.

Previously, there have been some notable attempts to combine sensemaking and ethics. Sonenshein (2009, 2007) offers an intriguing explanation for moral reasoning using perspectives from social psychology and sensemaking. He introduces a new theoretical model featuring issue construction, intuitive judgment and post hoc explanation and developes a theory of how ethical issues emerge as employees turn strategic issues into issues with ethical content. He presents an alternative perspective to objectivist views by calling attention to the processes of sensemaking.

Sonenshein's focus is on how issues oscillate between the strategic and the ethical and how business issues can be constructed to have ethical implications. Assuming Sonenshein's view as my starting point, I explore how sensemaking and sensegiving can be theorized as an ethical condition in the persistent negotiation between sameness and otherness. My starting point in sensemaking is the contradiction between ethics and strategic aim. I will explicate their difference in detail later, but in short I argue, following Ricoeur, that the ethical is a structure of subjectivity and that the ethical constantly presents itself to us as we live our daily lives. Otherness is the basis for the identity of an individual who aims to 'live the good life' and is inherently ethical. Ethics is grounded in otherness and it is the intention to 'live the good life, with and for others, in just instititions' (Ricoeur 1992:172)

But in strategy work, there can be tensions to live up to this ethical aim. Strategy is often conceived as a rational technique employed by an organization to meet challenges and succeed in changing business environments. The *strategic aim* often relies on the notion of sameness, where organizational members are expected to be goal-compliant in order to reach ambitious collective objectives - where the aim is to unite both the organization and its stakeholders under the same objective formula.

To understand how otherness can be part of strategy, we begin by focusing on strategizing as an iterative and contextual process. We must look at the emergence of phenomena like strategic action as something that cannot be pre-assumed but unfolds over time. This is why a sensemaking view of ethics and otherness is helpful.

The sensemaking view of ethics focuses on questions such as: "What story am I telling?", instead of trying to figure out if something has ethical implications or not. Important steps have already been taken towards unfolding the emergence perspective of sensemaking and ethics, but there are, as Sonenshein (2009) points out, several future directions scholars can pursue. He calls for a contextualization of the process by exploring the role of key players in the process. His take on sensemaking is focused on strategic and ethical *issues*, but my aim is to explore how making sense of ethics is ongoing and inherently connected to otherness, and how managers respond to the imperative of sensegiving with regard to the strategic aim.

The goal is to understand how managers can cope with the tension existing between strategic aims and ethics. I acknowledge the agency that both top managers and middle managers have in responding to the strategic aim through the inherent will for otherness. We know from research on sensemaking (Willmott 1987, Poole, Gioia & Gray 1989, Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Gioia, Thomas, Clark & Chittipeddi 1994, Brown 2000, Balogun & Johnson 2004, 2005) that the individual's interpretation of an issue is mediated by the issue's context and in interaction with others. New information is mediated by the existing knowledge and creates scope for both intended outcomes and unintended outcomes (Balogun et al 2005). Sensemaking is grounded in both individual and social activity, and it is debatable whether these two are even separable (Weick 1995).

Through my focus on how managers make sense of ethics in a strategy process characterized by the strategic aim, I am able to explore links between how the individuals take on the strategic aim and the unpredictable nature of ethics and

otherness. Much of the research in sensemaking is focused on times of change (ex. Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Brown 2000, Balogun & Johnson 2004), because during periods of "stability", it is argued, there isn't as much sensemaking, as routines of interaction are not challenged and there is some level of shared understanding (Weick 1995). The reality is enacted in forms of unquestioned routines, rituals and beliefs. But during change, individuals start to act in a more conscious sensemaking mode and the collective subjectivity is questioned as people try to make sense of what is going on around them.

Contrary to this assumption, I argue that sensemaking is continuous because of the inherent ethics and otherness, irrespective of "stability" or "change" in the organization. Individuals are continuously redefining their identity and presenting some self to others and trying to decide which self is appropriate. Individuals use sensemaking to respond to conditions of *equivocality* and *uncertainty* (Weick 1995). The sensemaker doesn't know what the plausible interpretation is, and he or she is unsure what implications his or her actions have on the future. Both equivocality and uncertainty are signs that it is hard to determine what to do in the moment, and it triggers sensemaking. Individuals try to find at least temporary resting points where they can simplify the equivocality and uncertainty and decipher a plausible account for action (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld 2005). They are often pressed for time while they try to figure out the plausible account or the "accurate answer", and most managers are prone to make a speed versus accuracy trade-off in the action (Fiske 1992).

Sensemaking is primarly a conversational and narrative process (Brown 2000, Balogun & Johnson 2006) and involves both formal and informal narratives. More specifically, it involves individuals engaging in negotiations, gossip and information seeking and taking in both in formal and informal signs. We know from studies that examine the way interpretation of change develops that these interpretations are the most important in the change's coming to be (ex. Balogun & Johnson 2004, 2005, Brown & Humphreys 2003, Isabella 1990). But what remaines unresearched is how these interpretations are enacted through otherness and ethics.

5.1.1. Sensemaking and ethics

Otherness triggers ambiguity and uncertainty. It is an ongoing process of trying to make sense of the equivocality that otherness brings into the strategic aim of sameness. Sensemaking starts because of this confusion, when it is difficult to know how to

mediate between different interpretations. Sensemaking happens when individuals attempt to develop a meaningful framework for understanding the nature of this ambiguous situation. Individuals make sense of their personal ethics through ambiguity and the urge to find a sensible narrative of their own lives that gives them self-esteem. Weick assumes that people do not look for accurate accounts of meaning, but are looking for explanations that fit into larger concepts. Some reasons for this are that people need to filter in order not to be overwhelmed by data and to separate signal from noise. Weick also points out that most organizational action is time-sensitive, which means that in a speed/accuracy trade-off, managers favor speed. Also ethical deliberation seldom rests on knowledge of various ethical theories and alternatives, but is interlocked in time. When individuals try to find resting points where they can simplify the equivocality and uncertainty and get a plausible account for action, they can, in their sensemaking, be retrospective and look at what has "worked out" before.

According to Weick, actions are known only when they have been completed, which means we are always a little behind or our actions are always a little bit ahead of us. But we can also bring this into critique, as we make sense of action insofar as it resonates with our future-oriented projects. For instance, a top manager is reticient to anger from a sense of grievance as any such action might reduce his or her status as a top manager, as anger is often equated to weakness in terms of management. We know our actions because we stand in relation to it from a future point, making sense because we are being pulled forward by our projections. Some studies in sensemaking acknowledge and accept that sense emerges also by picturing the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Gioia and Mehra, 1996). When we make sense of the future, our actions carry meanings that sustain them over time – the future is not only what happens to things over time.

This resonates with Ricoeur's sense of a coherent narrative of life (1992:167) as the gap between narrative identity and ethical identity. Narrative links the past with the future by giving a sense of continuity to an ever-changing story of the self. The ethical comes from future aims: what do I want to become? It is motivated by the individual's search for self-esteem and a unity of life. Ricoeur hence argues that self-esteem is the ethical intention of human life. In other words, self-esteem means affirming narratively to oneself that one is worthy of a good life. This means that a character can, at different times, both look back in retrospect at his or her life and look forward in order to understand how to keep the unity of life. This ongoing and intertwined process is processed through otherness.

Meanings change as current projects and goals change (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991). According to Weick (1995), the changing sense of self is posited in the need for self-enhancement, self-efficacy and self-consistency. All of these three needs are closely linked to ethics. To shift among interactions is to shift among definitions of self. The sensemaker is an ongoing puzzle undergoing continual redefinition, coincident with presenting some self to others and trying to decide which self is appropriate. It is through this interaction that a person identifies the ethical aim that leads to acting in the moment. The individual is undergoing continual redefinition; depending on who I am, my definition of the ethical aim will also change. Once I know who I am, then I know what my ethical intention is. But the direction of causality flows just as often from the situation to a definition.

A person has to feel that she or he acts morally in order to maintain a positive state about the self. Ricoeur claims that self-esteem is the reflexive moment contained in the goal of the "good life", while the relation between the self and the other is characterized by solicitude, which is based on the change of giving and receiving. "If another were not counting on me, would I be capable of keeping my word, of maintaining myself?" (Ricoeur 1992:341). This takes us to the second need – the desire to perceive oneself as competent and efficacious. If the good life is the goal of ethics; it is lived with and for others. Ricoeur designates this concern for the other as solicitude. It is not something that is added to self-esteem from the outside, but an internal, dialogical dimension "such that self-esteem and solicitude cannot be experienced or reflected upon one without the other" (1992:180).

On the ethical plane, self-interpretation becomes self-esteem. The third need, the need for self-consistency and continuity is also fundamental in Ricoeur's perspective on ethics: When we speak of ourselves, we in fact have available to us two models of permanence in time which can be summed up in two attributes that are at once descriptive and emblematic: character and keeping one's word. Character is the set of distinctive marks which permit the re-identification of a human individual as being the same over time. In this way, the sameness of a person is designated emblematically. Character designates the set of lasting dispositions by which a person is identified and recognized. Self-constancy is the manner in which a person conducts himself or herself so that others (and oneself) can count on that person. Because someone is counting on me, I am accountable for my actions.

Through this study, I look at sensemaking as something ongoing because of the ethical intention and need for otherness. I therefore build on these earlier studies to explore the links between the strategic aim and ethics. To understand how the strategic aim is made meaningful or how meaning is managed, I use the notion of sensegiving.

5.1.2. Sensegiving

Sensemaking serves to reduce knowledge gaps, but in order to analyze how identities are constructed and unfolded, the notion of sensegiving is useful (Pratt 2001, Weick 1995, Ashforth Harrison & Corley 2008, Mantere, Schildt & Sillince 2012). Sensegiving occurs when the individual attempts to construct meanings of others towards a preferred redefinition of organizational reality (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Gioia, Thomas, Clarke & Chittipeddi 1994, Fiss & Zajad 2006). Individuals try to find a meaningful way to frame a path towards a desired future (Isabella 1990, Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991). Sensegiving is often conceptualized as a response to "sensegiving imperatives" that come up when the current state is challenged in some way, like ambiguities in organizational identity (Corley & Gioia 2004), pressure from external stakeholders (Maitlis & Lawrence 2007) or external identity threats (Ravasi & Schultz 2006).

Many studies have looked at how managers engage in activities that construct and "give" employees meaning to change (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Rouleau 2005). But employee reinterpretation of these meanings have been largely overlooked. Sonenshein's (2010) study on how employees construct change in progressive, regressive and stability narratives is a good exception and opens the road towards more research in ambiguity within strategic change. My aim is to study how this ambiguity is triggered by the tension between sameness and otherness.

My empirical analysis is concentrated on sensegiving and sensemaking in a strategy process and Gioia & Chittipeddi's (1991) definition of sensegiving fits well with what I have seen: "a process of attempting to influence the sensemaking and meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality" (1991:442). Other studies have also shown that organizational reality is constituted through shared knowledge structures that guide interpretation of organizational events (e.g. Bartunek 1984, Balogun & Johnson 2004). Top management often plays a key role in how sense is given in a strategic change effort (Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991). Top managers engaged in sensegiving do it, not only by constructing new schemes, but also

by dismantling key aspects of the current interpretive scheme (Mantere, Schildt & Sillince 2012). This kind of destruction of old meanings can be called "sensebreaking", which seeks to "create a state in which individuals are searching for meaning, increasing the chances of favourable responses to sensegiving" (Ashfort et al. 2008:342).

I seek to understand how the strategic aim is made meaningful through sensegiving and how it is made sense of by managers who have the inherent ethical intention to embrace otherness.

5.2. The strategic aim

The concept of strategy has changed over the years and different approaches to the subject have arisen. These approaches are helpful in different ways as they provide different insights on strategy and prompt us to think about different options. They also allow us to understand the limitations and possible dangers of one approach over another. My goal is to understand what the strategic aim is in strategy research and how the notions of Sameness and Otherness are present. I will do so by discussing the Classical, Process and Practice views on strategy.

5.2.1. The aim to follow a plan

Strategic management is a rather new research area and its roots lead to concepts used in war. As a theory, it started gaining ground in American universities after World War II when the environment of western corporations started to become more diverse. Business scholars reasoned that it was essential to study the environment of the organization in a more systematic way, and create a "strategy" that could lead the activities and development. For this reason, researchers were granted an essential role in the development of strategic thinking and its attendinglanguage. Business practitioners quickly embraced this thinking as it seemed to offer practical conceptual tools for outlining the competition and communicating the company goals to various interest groups.

The origins of the classical approach to strategy can be traced back to the works of Chandler (1962) and Andrews (1971), but before this they were inspired by Frederick Winslow Taylor and the scientific management principles of the early 20th century. This approach considers strategy to be the result of a plan and a linear planning process –

long term goals and short term objectives drive strategy. If we go back to Taylor (1911) and the principles of scientific management, we can see that the idea was that the objective for both the employee and the management should be the training and development of each individual so that he can do the highest class of work for which his natural abilities fit him. The term "maximum prosperity" is used in its broad sense to mean not only large dividends for the company or owner, but the development of every branch of the business to its highest degree of excellence, so that the prosperity may be permanent.

Already here we find the planted idea of the "vision", that was to become one of the central tenets of classic strategic management. Considered the father of the design school or classic school of strategy, Kenneth R. Andrews (1971) writes that "corporate strategy is the pattern of major objectives, purposes, or goals and essential policies and plans for achieving those goals, stated in such a way as to define what business the company is in or is to be in..." (1971:26). Ansoff (1965) talks about strategic decisions and how they are the single most important part of strategic management. Firms need a well-defined scope and growth direction, and objectives alone cannot meet this need – additional decision rules are required if the firm is to have orderly and profitable growth. Such decision rules and guidelines have been broadly defined as strategy.

Chandler (1962) presumes that the right structure makes the strategy work. He defines strategy as the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals. Later, the tenets of strategic management have spread to all sorts of private and public organizations. Strategic discourse has become the dominate way of thinking and defining decision-making in corporations. Leaders and companies don't seem to survive anymore without a strategy, a mission and a vision. The discourse of strategy has also spread to other kinds of organizations like hospitals, schools, universities and NGOs. We cannot avoid bumping into various practices and discourses that are connected to strategic planning.

The classical approach to strategic aim emphasizes the role of the leader, but does not underline the aims of the other individuals in the corporation. They are supposed to follow the leader-imposed aims. Andrews (1971) criticizes the idea of what he describes as "colorful intuitive leadership" that may seem to render conscious planning unnecessary. He says that if goals are not articulated, the employees and associates are frustrated by the continued chase. However, he also discusses the relationship between

personal values and the choice of strategy, saying that conflict between the personal preferences, aspirations, and goals of the key members of an organization and the plan for its future is a sign of danger and a harbinger of mediocre performance or failure. Chandler (1962) gives a great deal of responsibility to the leaders. He says that in many enterprises the executives responsible for resource allocation may very well concentrate on day-to-day operational affairs, giving little or no attention to changing markets, technology, sources of supply and other factors affecting the long-term health of the company. Their decisions are made without forward planning or analysis but rather by meeting every new situation, problem or crisis that arises in an ad hoc way.

5.2.1.1. Prevailing sameness

Classical approaches to strategy promote self-improvement as critical for survival with others. An organization counts on selection for eliminating others that are unable to survive. The notion of sameness is present in the quest for continual self-improvement: strategy emphasizes the individual differences that provide one with a survival advantage over others. It is also present in resource appropriation; it stresses the importance of ecological niches, wherein organizational forms exclusively appropriate the available resources.

Kiechel (2010) suggests in his book "The Lords of Strategy" that the argument that strategy is there to increase shareholder value is rather new, driven hard by consultants in particular. He says that agreement on the idea that a corporation is there to enrich its owners has been arrived at only recently, starting in the 1980s largely as the product of newly-discovered opportunities to make money. Within the scope of management literature, moral issues have been pointed out as important already by Taylor (1911) and Barnard (1938). Lesser weight was given to social responsibility in strategic management research in the 1980s and 1990s, arguably as a consequence of the inordinate stress on 'competitive advantage'. The strategy revolution in itself didn't lead to the triumph of shareholder capitalism, but those leading its charge seized on the strategy's tenets as precisely the intellectual underpinnings they needed for their battle plans (Kiechel 2010).

To sum up, theories of strategic objective formulation have since the 1980s typically assumed that some individuals determine a vision that must be accepted, followed and enacted by others. They also depend on the agent's goal-compliance. There is an endeavor towards a control of consequences that can lead to a closure of the self and a

fear of otherness. People who make strategy typically don't acknowlege the will of others or the significance of multiple voices in strategy work. Sameness is embodied by both opportunism, where others are used as a means to reach an objective, and goal-compliance, where the sameness of the strategic plan is enforced. The strategic aim, when it is seen as design (Andrews 1971), a plan (Ansoff, 1965) or a position (Porter 1980), embraces the idea that a supreme end that is conciliated by a person or a coalition, drives strategy. Top management has a strategic intent and communicates what they see as the preferred future position of the firm. This intent should guide the actions of the agents by means of selection and retention (Lovas & Ghoshal 2000). Organizational members are encouraged to be goal-compliant in order to reach ambitious collective objectives that can be illustrated by opportunism (Ghoshal, 2005).

The discipline of strategy when looked at from a classical perspective can be seen as relying on the 'sameness' principle, where the aim is to unite both the organization and its stakeholders under the same objective formulation. The attitude towards the 'other' in classic strategic management is as something to be conquered, absorbed, dealt with and codified. This sameness permeates most strategy practice and theory, as strategy research is about the idea of something uniform, predictable and stable. Often, what we call 'strategy' involves a lot of retrospective sensemaking: We want to impute purposeful design and deliberate planning to locally embedded initiatives in which the primary concern is to solve immediate pressing problems, local issues, and situated challenges.

5.2.2. The aim to follow a process

A very different stream of strategy research, led by Henry Mintzberg, Andrew Pettigrew and others in the 1970s, drew on sociology and psychology to argue that people were too imperfect and the world too complex to rely solely on analysis and planning. The process approach studies realities of strategic decision making and strategic change processes. Mintzberg's contingency model presumes that there is a reciprocal relationship between strategy and structure, and that strategy is formed as part of an ongoing, mutually-constructive process. According to this processual view, strategy is a process rather than a state. Process researchers have shown that the real-world disorder of strategy formulation and implementation makes it impossible to analyze everything up front and predict the future. It is futile to search for economically optimal decisions. It must be accepted that managers make decisions which are as much to do

with organizational politics and the history and culture of the organization as they are to do with the economics of strategy.

Emergent strategy is defined as 'a pattern which is realized despite, or in the absence of intentions' (Mintzberg & Waters 1985:257). Mintzberg's model distinguishes strategy originating from the organization leadership's intentions and plans from strategy forming in the absence of intentions (Mintzberg, 1978). There is a possibility that some strategies may never be realized, but the realized strategies imply the presence of a pattern. This pattern may either be deliberate or emergent.

The process view of strategy distinguishes strategy that originates from plans from strategy formed without intention – strategy that emerges through action in the moment. Collective goals and goal compliance are combined with individual action that can lead strategy changing from the intended plan.

Strategy-as-practice is a stream of strategy process research that has done much to try and understand how emergent strategy comes into being. Strategy-as-practice seems to aim at welding together all previous schools of strategic thought. It is undoubtedly also a larger societal trend; there are hardly any managers in companies that don't have a fairly practical view of management and strategy. That is why strategy-as-practice is practical as a perspective into the workings of organizations – but also very hard to grasp at the root. The paradigm of trategy-as-practice is evolving and reconstructing itself all the time – precisely in the same way it says organizations do. Strategy-as-practice scholars build on sociological and psychological traditions to examine more closely the actual practice of managers in strategy. They aim at developing a detailed understanding of the activities and techniques involved in strategy. According to this approach, strategy is formed in the practices and processes of the organization and between the actors, for instance through learning, power games, culture and innovation. These studies can be said to rely on social constructionism, where social phenomena are produced in a certain time and space.

5.2.2.1. Possibilities for otherness

In terms of sameness and otherness, the emerging strategy requires some form of otherness, as it presumes that something that is uniform (a strategic plan) changes into something different. The process and practice studies are a good starting point, especially when looked at from a deeply emergent perspective of strategy. We can start

by focusing on strategizing as a fragile and contextual process, and shift the focus to understanding how strategies are enabled within everyday situations, over time, and in the context of particular events. Instead of normatively pre-assuming the importance of formulating and implementing a strategy, it is better to understand what the implications of formulating strategies are for organizations. Could it be that the more deliberatively a strategy is proposed and enforced, the more likely are its negative consequences?

Strategy-as-practice research has the opportunity to create and recognize strategies that emerge in the process of *doing* the strategy, which may offer the possibility to take otherness into account in daily strategy work. An increasing number of scholars look at how identity and subjectivity are formed within the strategy *discourse* (se e.g. Knights & Morgan 1991, Barry & Elmes 1997, Heracleous & Barrett 2001, Maitlis & Lawrence 2003, Vaara Kleymann, Seristö 2004, Laine & Vaara 2007, Mantere & Vaara 2008). The bottom line is that, in order to understand the dynamics of doing strategy, we need to understand the discursive practices that are embedded in the strategy discourse. Strategy is not neutral in its nature, but it constructs and maintains the subjectivity of individuals and groups. Laine and Vaara (2007:30) define subjectivity as a discursively constructed sense of identity and social agency in specific contexts. Specific discourses produce subject positions for the actors, who may use some facets and resist others in order to enhance their own social identity. Knight and Morgan's (1991) seminal paper from 20 years ago already states that the discourse of strategy is a part of the identity of managers and workers. Strategy talk grants some people more power than others, and those who have power will most likely use that power over the others. This means that even strategy-as-practice studies that aim to understand the subjectivity and identity of the individuals enacting the strategy, seem to find that sameness still permeates most of the day-to-day strategizing.

Chia and Holt (2006) took a Heideggerian perspective on strategy, arguing that strategy emerges non-deliberately through the notion of strategy as "practical coping", together with the idea of "breakdowns" in everyday coping when expectations are not met. This compels practitioners to reflect on the circumstances of their occurrence. Using the terms "building" and "dwelling" for modes of strategy, they refer to the dominant mode of strategizing that configures actors as deliberately engaging in purposeful strategic activities or building, and thereby concealing the dwelling mode in which strategy emerges non-deliberately through everyday practical coping. The

dwelling mode requires an acceptance of sameness and otherness in perpetual concert. It presumes habituation, and hence awareness of the often conflicting dispositional expressions of those undergoing strategic direction. It also presumes possible breakdown, a deviation from strategic design brought about, in part, because of a strategic ignorance of habituated influences whose otherness might be accounted for.

If we start looking at strategy as something that emerges not only from strategic plans and sameness, but also from otherness, then Paul Ricoeur (1992) offers us a useful expression of this in his considerations of ethics as a subjective and ongoing negotiation between sameness and otherness. Otherness is as inextricably bound to the persistence of pattern as sameness - and is inherently ethical. For the individual manager who seeks to lead the good life, it is the other, rather than the same that is perhaps the single major ethical aim. This can give rise to a dilemma for a manager engaged in strategy work: how is it that one navigates the tension between the need to subordinate others (subordinates, customers, competitors, allies, and so on) behind a performance-oriented goal, and the need to accept others as ends in themselves.

When this is applied to management research and strategy, where sameness or the realization of sameness or its pursuit dominates, it is apparent that this sameness is an encouraged behavior. For Ricoeur, the otherness is repressed. It turns away, but it does not cease to exist. What do empiricists tell us? Does the dwelling mode of doing strategy indicate that managers experience their identity as sameness or as same vs. other? If the former is the case, are there nevertheless signs of humour, repression, anxiety, or deviance that might indicate the latter? And does this tension between sameness and otherness lead to unexpected emerging strategies? Dwelling as a concept takes up sensemaking within strategy processes, as it is both sameness, as in habituated, unreflective doing, and otherness, as in accepting differences in habits. It also implies that familiar practices can be upset and disturbed. So through irony, humour or anxiety, there is awareness of a sameness of character and its evolutionary nature.

Table 4 summarizes the three approaches to strategy, their relation to sameness and otherness, and the strategic aim.

Table 4 Summary of approaches to strategy and their relation to sameness and otherness

Approach to strategy	Sameness/Otherness	Strategic aim
Classical	Emphasizes the role of the leader, but does not underline the aims of the other individuals in the corporation. Relies on sameness	Goal compliance, uniformity, collective goals.
Process	Distinguishes strategy originating from organizational leader's intentions and plans from strategy formed in the absence of intentions. Strategy can emerge from an understanding of otherness.	Collective goals and goal-compliance combined with individual *strategic* action that can lead to renewed aims.
Practice	Strategy is formed in the practices and processes of the organization and actor interaction, through learning, power games, culture and innovation, among others.	Doing things in the day-to-day work that are a part of strategy.

In my exploration of the strategic aim and otherness, I have discussed the classical, process, and practice views of strategy and mirrored them against the idea that strategy could embrace otherness if it was understood as an iterative, fragile, and contextual process. To understand from where such elements of otherness could be drawn, I will review the literature on business ethics to find on more about the nature of ethical aim.

5.3. Philosophical foundations behind ethics in strategy

Over the last two decades, there has been an increasing interest in understanding the link between ethics and strategy (Bonini, Mendonca, Oppenheim 2006, Frigo 2003, Hosmer 2004, Benham & Rache 2009, Husted & Allen 2000). The prevailing assumption seems to be that individuals behave according to deliberate moral decisions; 'rational' and 'objective' procedures form the basis of morality. Most papers dealing with the ethics-strategy link define the outcome of the agents' actions as fair/unfair, right/wrong or just/unjust. Also dependent variables like performance via

links to ethical behavior are sought for. One argument is that the moral behavior of central corporate representatives relates to corporate reputation, which is in turn linked to performance. E.g. Hosmer (1994:29) states that an ethical approach to strategic management benefits companies "by ensuring a cooperative, innovative, and directed effort on the part of all of the stakeholders of the firm".

Another underlying assumption is that there is a profound association between an organization's ethos and the ethos of its members. Jones (1995) asserts that organizational morality coincides with managerial morality and that a self-selection process will naturally occur as moral people tend to leave organizations containing opportunistic people. This theory assumes a strong alignment between organizational and individual values. However, it can be debated whether ethics is an individual or an organizational issue. Some claim that it is individual (Soares 2003, Watson 2003), and others argue that structures can guarantee ethics (du Gay 2000). The latter idea comes from the modernist idea that there are certain universal values that can be applied to groups. This not only presumes that ethics informs organizational practice, but also leads to research assuming that individuals in an organization can be studied by an external observer who is able to determine what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' (Clegg, Kornberger and Rhodes 2006).

However, there is an emerging body of literature that finds that ethics is in contrast situated and contextual (Kjonstad and Willmott 1995, Paine 1994, Ten Bos 1997, Andrews 1998, Kelemen & Peltonen 2001, Ibarra-Colado 2006, Clegg, Kornberger & Rhodes 2006, Iedema & Rhodes 2010, McMurray, Pullen, Rhodes 2011, Rhodes, Pullen & Clegg 2010, Weiskopf & Willmott 2011). As Kjonstad and Willmott (1995) noted, there is a tendency in business ethics literature to think of ethics as something that is restrictive and should be controlled. But if we were to think of ethics as the basis for the identity for individuals and groups, it becomes something much more profound. To build an understanding of what ethics in strategy builds on, I will explore the philosophical foundations behind studies of ethics in organization studies, in strategy in particular.

There are different ethical presumptions behind studies of ethics and strategy. In order to understand what implications strategy has for the studies of ethics, I will discern what philosophical foundation lies behind these studies. This will give an idea of how the inherent ethical aim is connected to the philosophy on ethics in general. At its core,

ethics is all about adopting the other as part of oneself. I will show how the inclusion of otherness as a part of non-normative ethics can be a part of strategy.

5.3.1. Cost-benefit analysis of ethics

Strategy is often planned and perceived as a means to generate profit for the shareholders. This overriding imperative often functions like any other social priority, in the same way as honesty and respect can act as values of moral orientation. This can, for example, lead to profit-maximization becoming a value that informs the way people think, albeit balanced with other societal values. When ethical utilitarianism is used as a foundation for understanding ethics in business or strategy, it relies upon the rightness of acts being determined by the consequences of that act or of something related to that act. The moral agent has to try to establish a balance between profit considerations and other values, which can serve to increase tensions among business practitioners. Frigo (2003) aims at linking ethics and strategy in a utilitarian way. He discusses mission-based strategy, which is a set of guidelines for designing developing and evaluating strategy aimed at maximum value-creation. He develops a framework for Mission-Based Strategy that is adapted from Return Driven Strategy. Bonini, Mendonca, and Oppenheim (2006) see that the way of incorporating an awareness of social and political trends into corporate strategy is to look for signs of emerging new hot topics and be ready to respond to them early.

Within the utilitarian cost-benefit analysis, all pains and pleasures are made comparable and instrumentalized, neglecting the individuals that are affected by the decisions. Moreover, it is difficult to calculate the effects on others over time, which means that utilitarian reasoning cannot properly account for unpredictable changes over time. With a utilitarian understanding of ethics and strategy, there is always a risk of objectifying people. The utilitarian reasoning allows strategists to rationally justify some of the harmful consequences of their actions by pointing at the benefits. This belief that the ends justify the means can, serve to rationalize unethical behavior..

5.3.2. Well-reasoned principals as a foundation for ethics

Ethical decisions in strategy work can also be reasoned through a belief that the morality of a particular act cannot be determined by its consequences. Instead, the moral agent should follow the directives of well-reasoned principles, no matter what the consequences are. This profoundly Kantian view of ethics, or *deontology*, argues

that moral imperatives are established by means of a priori reasoning. Business ethicists that make use of Kant's deontology are especially interested in how moral imperatives are established by reasoning. They reject consequentalists calculation of outcomes and argue that rational individuals can identify and formulate moral maxims that will guide them in their actions. For Kant, a principle is a fundamental, objective moral law, grounded in pure practical reason (Kant 1998). Kant's deontological approach is typically described in terms of two basic moral maxims, the first of which states that a moral maxim must always be put to the so-called "universalization test" stating: Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law.

The assumption that all rational individuals would agree that the breaking of a promise is immoral under all circumstances may not be adapted by those who make business. Situations may arise where there are conflicting promises both to employees and owners. But deontology doesn't assist in deciding between two equally 'rational' moral directives. This dilemma has been responded to by various discursive methods (Bowie 1999). As long as there are no deceptions existing in the employment relationship, for example, Kantian morality judges large-scale lay-offs acceptable.

Kant's second maxim is as follows: Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end.

Rationality lies behind the Kantian test of universality. Bowie (1999), who has used Kantian theories in business ethics, regards the ability to be rational as essential to moral agency. There is an intimate link between reason and strategy here, not least the capacity to see future consequences. Hosmer (1994), for example, argues that ethics must be a part of the planning process in order to build trust among all the stakeholders of the firm. Ethics should be central to the overall strategy of the firm, a universal moral obligation. Jones (1991) pointed out the characteristics of the ethical issue itself in a business setting. In his issue-contingent model he took the characteristic of the moral issue into consideration and suggested that the moral intensity of the issue itself has a significant effect on moral decision making. His research opened doors for more situated research in business ethics, but still presumes that individuals can rationally decide what is moral and what is immoral, or what is good and what is bad in a specific situation. Husted & Allen (2000) question the use of ethics in a strategic way. They claim that companies can be ethical or socially

responsible for the wrong reasons. They use utilitarian and deontological perspectives to show that the motives for using ethics as strategy are often, in fact, unethical.

Behnam & Rasche (2009) show how the strategy process and ethical deliberation are one and the same, in practice. The strategy process represents an "appropriate locus" for ethical reflection within corporations (2009:86). They argue that the strategy process and ethical reflection are related, not as the parallel development of two processes, but as an overlapping of ethical questions with strategizing activities. In their view, ethical reflection provides a frame of reference which is an integrative part of strategy-related decision processes; ethicists and strategists think and act in similar ways. I understand their argument from the point of view that ethical reflection is seen as a normative deliberation between ethical decisions and strategic process. Their account is valid, as they talk about situations in time and place, in the process of making strategy and the process of making decisions. However, they seem to favour facts and law-like relationships before values like freedom and beauty. This is precisely what Jones, Parker and Ten Bos (2005) criticize in the use of Kant in business ethics. They argue that it is a selective reading of Kant that informs business ethicists and that his interest in practical philosophy leads to a far greater confidence in the possibilities for rational and autonomous behavior than that that actually expressed by Kant.

Painter-Morland (2008) points out two main challenges to business ethicists' interpretation and employment of deontology. First of all, it is based on a far too simple interpretation of Kantian moral theory. Kant himself was not quite so sanguine about human beings. He believed we were 'crooked timber' and incapable of behaving as a rational being, indeed, we could only struggle to behave according to such maxims. Business ethicists who refer to Kant rarely exercise the same caution. The second problem is that business ethicists interpret the maxims as if business ethics were a matter of following rules and action out of duty, thereby undermining moral autonomy. But there are also greater problems with the Kantian deontology not related to the misinterpretation of his thoughts. These have to do with the fact that Kant sees the moral agent as a rational, independent individual who is always capable of moral deliberation. But perhaps ethics is far more complex and indefinable than Kant's rational moral agent leads us to believe?

5.3.3. Ethics as justice

John Rawls' concept of "justice as fairness" has been universally influential in the formulation of normative parameters in the free market system. Like Kant, Rawls belongs to the social contract tradition. However, Rawls' social contract takes a slightly different form from that of Kant's. Rawls develops what he claims are principles of justice through the use of an entirely and deliberately artificial device he calls the Original position, in which everyone decides principles of justice from behind a veil of ignorance. This "veil" is one that essentially blinds people to all facts about themselves that might cloud the notion of justice that is being developed.

Edwin Hartman (1996) uses Rawls' theory to better understand organizational justice and argues that it is helpful as it guarantees that those involved will be impartial by eliminating their ability to secure their own self-interest to the detriment of others. The 'veil of ignorance' guarantees that agents will know only that they are stakeholders, but not what stakeholder position they hold. Phillips (2003) makes a distinction between normative stakeholders and derivative stakeholders, arguing that normative stakeholders have a 'moral obligation' towards the organization, whereas the derivative stakeholders' claims must be considered by managers because of their effects on the normative stakeholders. Freeman and Evan (1990) introduced Rawls' ideas to corporate governance and argue that rational stakeholders would be able to agree upon principles for fair contracts if they were to apply Rawls' veil of ignorance to their deliberations.

Yet the recourse to a veil is itself an expression of a culturally-located presumption that, first, such a thing is possible for an individual, and second, that agreement is what justice as fairness demands. These remain presumptions concealed by the rhetoric of the veil. For instance Child and Marcoux (1999) point out that the 'veil' has to be transparent for these principles to make any sense.

In the context of strategic management, the limitations of Rawls' approach become apparent. The first principle is easy for strategy makers to adapt; it gives them the freedom to do business, compete with one another, and seek a profit. But the second principle might be harder to acknowledge in strategy: inequalities are not arranged so that everyone gets equal advantages, and not just anyone can gain positions of influence in business.

5.3.4. Moral character as a foundation for ethics

The central thought in this view on ethics is that a man's life is a narrative in time. Humans grow into a certain character or person over the course of a lifetime. *Virtue ethics* explores how this growth could have the best possible result. The character of a person is central, and is dependent upon what he or she has been in the past. Previous research on moral character more or less agrees that there are serious constraints on moral agency in organizations, especially in what they call 'capitalist' organizations, where the short-term optimizing of shareholder value in particular can constrain opportunities for moral agency. However, within identity formation, moral identity has been described as one kind of self-regulatory mechanism that motivates moral action (Erikson 1964, Blasi 1984, Hart, Atkins and Ford 1998). Aquino and Reed (2002) suggested that, like other social identities that people embrace, moral identity can be a basis for social identification that people use to construct their self-definition. And like other identities, a person's moral identity may be associated with certain beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. This framing puts the emphasis on the actions of human beings, their narratives and the harmony of those actions with one or another ethical principle or theory.

5.4. Ethical subjectivity

Normative approaches to business ethics find their philosophical justification in a specific worldview that allows scientific analysis to identify and describe cause-and-effect relationships between the different elements and aspects of the world. The moral individual is seen as capable of applying moral principles with universal validity. But if ethics is to be seen as something that is done in everyday life, it requires normative priorities and commitments be integrated with the context of their application.

Consequentalist and non-consequentalist moral theories have come to play an important role in business ethics, and as Jones, Parker and ten Bos (2005) claim – has led to a 'foreclosure of philosophy'. They argue that many of the 20th century philosophers' insights into ethics have been ignored in business ethics, which still relies mainly on Aristotelian virtue-ethics, utilitarianism and deontology. They also argue that these approaches are treated as if they had a common understanding of what ethics is, ignoring the significant differences among Aristotelian, utilitarian and deontological conceptions of ethics. Rational moral agents are expected to be able to

detach themselves from their own identity or emotions, and remain completely objective in relation to ethics.

Friedrich Nietzsche was one of the first who attacked the belief that there would an objective world structure independent of any human apprehension of it. He urges a reliance on sense and common sense as the most useful means of understanding the world. Common sense gives the correct version of how things are, for there is no such thing as a correct view.

Martin Heidegger claimed that Western philosophy had misconstrued the nature of the moral agent. He argued that it was the philosophers' desire to have their discipline accepted as a legitimate science that led them to adopt certain subject-object dichotomies. He pointed out that when individuals think of themselves as 'subjects' the entire world is objectified and forced to become useful. This process makes individuals lose respect for the non-instrumental meaning of individual lives. For Heidegger, the possibility of morality lies in individuals' readiness to respond to realities as they occur in everyday life.

Also Karl Marx and Herbert Marcuse question the objectification of human life. Marx argues that the source lay in the material realities of capitalist production. Marcuse claims that the individual need not be objectified, since the social controls of modern society have become a part of individual identity. The individual no longer has a non-instrumental understanding of the meaning and significance of his orher life. A common theme amongst Heidegger, Marx and Marcuse is that they reject the notion of the 'transcendental subject' and claim that is has become a victim of its own ingenuity. As Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) present in their analysis in the Enlightenment, the transcendental subject has imprisoned the very individual that those who developed it initially wanted to free. Parker (2003:204) concludes, following Adorno and Horkheimer, that ethics cannot be something we have, or don't have, but "is a relationship that we sometimes name in order to articulate features of our particular relationships to (what we understand as) our history, our present and our possible futures". Parker is critical in his perspective on ethics and views the world as entirely classified and colonized, where the needs of the consumers are predetermined by the needs of capital. He asserts that decisions that constitute ethics are colonized by business too, because it is a social order within which real freedom is no longer possible and final conclusions are avoided because of the inherent messiness of the world. It is impossible to provide final solutions that would lead to some kind of order.

Clegg, Kornberger, Rhodes (2006) theorize ethics in relation to what managers actually do in their everyday activities. They argue that such practice is central to how ethical subjectivity is formed and contested in organizations, as it is circumscribed by organizational rules, norms and discourses. They suggest that ethical practices will be conducted in a situation of ethical pluralism, one in which moral choices are made, often in unclear situations and against potentially conflicting standards. The prescription of moral norms may ensure compliance, but it doesn't guarantee morally sound behavior. Ethics should be more attuned to the singularity of experiences and perceptions, in other words, be more relational.

There is an emerging body of literature that studies ethical subjectivity (Kelemen & Peltonen 2001, Ibarra-Colado 2006, Clegg, Kornberger & Rhodes 2006, Iedema & Rhodes 2010, McMurray et al 2011, Rhodes, Pullen & Clegg 2010, Weiskopf & Willmott 2011). Ethical subjectivity attends to how people manage to define their ethical position in relation to their everyday practice (Bernauer & Mahon 1994, Chan & Garrick 2002, Keleman & Peltonen 2001). It also relates to how people at work constitute themselves as subjects in relation to ethics and the practices they adopt in forming a sense of an ethical self.

Kelemen and Peltonen (2001) show that individuals are ethically attuned to the limits of reason through an embodied engagement in the reciprocal play of interpretations and influences, and call for an articulation of an alternative ethics of management, an ethics that sustains an ongoing dialogue and interaction; in other words an embracement of otherness. Ibarra-Colado et al. (2006) examine managers as active ethical subjects in relation to organizational structures and moral norms. They find that ethics as practice is intertwined in an individual's subjectivity and freedom to make choices about what to do and the organizational frames. They argue that ethics is a form of power that influences, and is influenced by, people's sense of self and ethicality. This claim might seem tautological in some theories, but I argue that my work doesn't suffer from such tautology, given it is grounded in empirics and theoretically shows what makes a sense of self possible and what it entails.

McMurren et al. (2011) also focus on the ethical subjectivity that attends to how people define their ethical position in relation to their day-to-day practice. They draw the implication that ethics is always based on alterity, but that it also recognizes the necessity of political action as a response to that ethics. They come to the very compelling inference, that the ethical subject that emerges from the contradiction

between ethics and political action is a divided self who can only be 'for the other' by acting through a politics that can never live up to that demand. The implication is that in organizations the ethical subject is always a political subject as well; the one who takes action in response to the call of the ethical demand.

Table 5 summarizes different views on ethics and strategy, along with their ethical presumptions and their implications for strategy.

Table 5 Summary of views on ethics and strategy

Authors	Central ethical presumption	Implications for strategy
Sonenshein (2007, 2009) Husted & Alllen (2000) Frigo (2003) Bonini, Mendoca, Oppenheim (2006)	Utilitarianism Moral agents have to determine what course of action is most likely to bring about the optimal outcome in balancing pleasure over pains.	'Whatever works best', cost-benefit analysis Interested in the future. Focus on separate acts.
Behnam & Rache (2009) Jones (1991) Gilbert (1986) Hosmer (1994)	Deontology	The decision now and the principles behind the decision. Focus on separate acts.
Aquino & Reed (2002)	Virtue ethics	The past, because the quality of the personal virtue is a consequence of his/ or her previous conduct in life. But also the future: what do I want to become? The focus is on the unity of life.
Kjonstad & Willmott (1995) Clegg, Kornberger & Rhodes (2006) Sonenshein (2007, 2009) Parker (2003) Weiskopf & Willmott (2011) Painter-Morland (2008) Kelemen & Peltonen (2001) Ibarra-Colado (2006) Iedema & Rhodes (2010) McMurray, Pullen & Rhodes (2011)	Ethical subjectivity/Non-normative ethics	Strategy and ethics are both linked to the subjectivity of the persons doing the strategy, they cannot be separated.

Studies that have non-normative ethics as their philosophical presumption explore how individual subjectivity develops in the intertwining of personal ethics with organizational norms. In this thesis I consider identity building as an ongoing dialectic between Sameness and Otherness. Ethics in organizations becomes manifest in an ongoing process of enactment as a response to the ethical demand of the other or otherness.

5.5. Ethics and Otherness

> 'Ethical aim: To live the good life, with and for others, in just institutions' Paul Ricoeur (1992:172)

Here I allude back to some of the theory I already presented in the previous chapter and emphasize a more collective perspective on Ricoeur's view of ethics. Paul Ricoeur (1992) saw identity being formed in the dialectic relation between selfhood and sameness on the one hand, and selfhood and otherness on the other., For him, 'other' is not just a simple antonym of 'same', like 'other than self' or 'contrary', but otherness is equally constitutive of identity as such. In other words, otherness is both a comparison when defining identity and an integrative part in forming it. Selfhood reconciles and ties the self to the other through commitment and promise. Ricoeur distinguishes between three levels of otherness: otherness from the institution, otherness from other persons and otherness from oneself. If the "good life" is the goal of ethics, it is lived with and for others. This is the basis for Ricoeur's reflection on ethics. Otherness is inextricably bound to the persistence of pattern as sameness - and is inherently ethical. I will present how Sameness and Otherness in the philosophy of Paul Ricouer offer a useful conceptualization of the subjectivity of ethics.

He designates the concern for the other as solicitude. Ricouer thus takes from Aristotle the ethics of reciprocity, sharing, and living together, but seeks to extend his analysis of the ethical goal of the good life from interpersonal relations to institutions. By institution, Ricouer means those structures of living together found in historical communities, structures that extend beyond simple interpersonal relations but are bound up with the latter through their function in the distribution of roles, responsibilities, privileges, goods, and rewards. Capturing these understandings informs theory about how people's inherent ethical aim influences the strategic aim in a strategic change process. This view of identity formation runs contrary to that established in the management literature, most notably the identity of strategists, for whom the aim as a strategist is to annul or contain otherness to the point of possession

and control. The attitude towards the 'other' in strategic management is regarded as something to be conquered, absorbed, dealt with and codified. This apparent tension of aims is summarized below.

Strategic aim, Sameness	**Ethical intention, Otherness**
Goal compliance, uniformity, collective goals, similitude	Concern for others as individuals, solicitude, sympathy, reciprocity, honesty.

5.6. Practical wisdom through Otherness

Otherness pays regard to the ethical dimension of any human collaboration and practical wisdom is the ability of an agent to understand the distinctive nature of the other. It is primarily an individual characteristic, but it manifests itself in organizations through moral exemplarity and reciprocity. In contrast to the sameness ideal, it makes the agent subsume his or her goals under others' capacity to accept them. To learn to "live the good life" includes an honest self-appraisal of the limits of oneself and others, in addition to the courage to trust other's opinions and points of view. But it also requires a willingness to argue with those who repress their own self-esteem. "Practical wisdom consists in inventing conduct that will best satisfy the exception required by solicitude, by betraying the rule to the smallest extent possible." (1992:269).

Ricoeur takes the example of promising; it illustrates a subclass of duties toward others and is thus the heart of the problem in the relation between duty and solicitude. An example of promising is: "A places himself under the obligation to perform X on behalf of B in circumstances Y". According to a Kantian notion of universality, the agent would reason:"Can the maxim of my action become a universal law of nature?". It insinuates itself between the rule and the exception, and says that the rule must be universal with no exceptions. But in what Ricouer calls the "second path", he asks, "What about the exception made on behalf of others?".

It is a path of application to singular situations, where others stand in their irreplaceable singularity. This path considers persons as ends in themselves, and has implications for strategy work as well. It is potentially discordant in relation to the idea of strategy, which is limited to extending universality and subsuming plurality to the disadvantage of othersness. In this "second path", the path of otherness, the rule is submitted to a test of circumstances. So, in the promise, 'A' commits himself; but

keeping the promise depends simply on the conditions of satisfying the promise, not on the conditions of success. On first appearance, it would seem as if this commitment would have all the characteristics of a rigid intention and that we put our own self-constancy through time at stake. But once the self-constancy contains moral significance, it is dialogic in structure; the duty to maintain one's self in keeping the promise is in danger of becoming a stubborn rigidity of simple constancy. Otherness implies that it is permeated with the desire to respond to an expectation, to a request coming from another. Otherness pays regard to the ethical dimension of any human collaboration, and practical wisdom is the ability of an agent to understand the distinctive nature of the other. It is primarily an individual characteristic, but it manifests itself in organizations through moral exemplarity and reciprocity. In contrast to the sameness ideal, it makes the agent subsume his or her goals under others' capacity to accept them.

This is the tension between the strategic aim and the ethical aim. In the moment of commitment to the strategic aim, the managers either arbitrarily assume a constancy in their feelings which is not in their power to establish, or they accept in advance that they have to carry out actions that won't reflect their state of mind. They are either lying to themselves at the moment of commitment or they know they will be lying to others in the future. How is it possible to escape this paradox in self-consistency? This is a paradox recognized by all managers, but concealed in those for whom ethics is simply compliance with the law or for whom the technical nature of managerial work demands an adherence to profit maximation.

This is where Ricoeur offers his notion of *practical wisdom*. The strategic aim, as a rule of reciprocity in an initially asymmetric situation, gives the one who decides upon the strategy a certain status over the person to whom the obligation is owed. The one who gives the promise of implementing the strategy is counted on, and his or her self-consistancy is made responsive through expectation. The intention is not to change the intention. In the strategic aim, the expectation of others who count on me becomes a right to require something of me. Not keeping one's promise to pursue the strategic aim means betraying both the other's expectations and the organization that needs mutual trust in order to function. There is a kinship between Ricoeur's notion of practical wisdom and the practice of strategy. First, Ricoeur says that the search for "just mean" seems to be good advice, signifying something other than cowardly compromise, that in itself may be "extreme". Also in strategy, perhaps the most important moral decisions

consist in drawing a line between what is permitted and what is forbidden – a deliberation between the norm and the situation at hand. Second, Ricoeur suggests that moral judgment in a situation is less arbitrary if the decision maker has taken the counsel of people who are reputed to be "the most competent and the wisest" (1992:273). In strategy it is also clear that a decision benefits from the plural character of the debate. Practical wisdom is not for individuals alone.

Taking Ricoeur's hermeneutics as a point of departure, human action is always an essential part of self-understanding and a recognition of the relation of the self to another. This relation is intrinsic to the very constitution of the self and brings light to the ethical dimension of the self that is fundamental to the being of every person. It can be said this ethics refers to the otherness of persons or to solicitude, , but not a "naïve" solicitude of doing what feels right in the moment, but a "critical" solicitude that has passed through the paradox of the moral condition. Ricoeur says that it is this *critical solicitude* that is the form that practical wisdom takes in the region of interpersonal relations.

5.7. Summary

Before presenting the results, I will summarize the literature and the linkages herein. I first explored how sensemaking can be used in order to understand how the strategic aim and the ethical aim are enacted in the present time. I then looked into strategy literature and found that although classical views on strategy mainly embrace sameness as their foundation, the process and practice views open up possibilities to understand and see how otherness can be part of strategy if it was to be seen as something iterative, fragile and contextual. When looking at how ethics and strategy have been linked in previous research, I found that most studies rely on normative ethics, i.e. utilitarism, deontology and virtue ethics. There is, however, a growing interest in understanding how subjective ethics can be included in the contextual strategy. I especially focused on Paul Ricoeur's notion of otherness and the ethical aim of life and how practical wisdom, if realized, can relieve the tension between sameness and otherness.

The research question I pose is:

- How are the strategic aims and ethics enacted in a strategic change process?

In this literature review, I have explicated the theoretical foundations based on strategy theory and ethics, linking them through the concept of otherness to sensemaking. From a process-oriented view, managers act in a world of emergent connections from which they try to build a sense of stability. A sensemaking perspective allows for broad types of meanings and is inherently a temporal construction. When faced with the strategic aim of sameness, individuals start constructing meanings of their own identity to enable a coherent narrative of their lives. The questions become inherently ethical as people contemplate their self-esteem and a search for 'the good life'.

5.8. Analysis and results

The research context was presented in Chapter 2. Below follows the analysis of the data.

Analysis of issues. I first engaged in a descriptive account of the data: capturing first order concepts and the process that was unfolding and summarizing it with quotes. Next, I moved onto increasing levels of theoretical abstraction by comparing within and across the data for dominant instances of merges with existing theory. The content of the issues were primarily found in the data from observing the meetings, while the interview data provided additional insight into the sensemaking processes. Working from all this data, I used a constant comparison method, moving between the data and themes to build a grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

Identification of issues. The original purpose of this research project as a whole was to develop broader theories of strategic change and organizational identity. However, in reading the data I observed that the identities were unfolding through interaction that revealed sympathy and solicitude and care for the other person. In my notes, I highlighted phrases and sentences that suggested sensemaking about the strategic aim in comparison with the ethical. I micro-coded the conversations and interviews by using the computer-based qualitative analysis program NVivo. I attached labels to the texts; a portion of text could be labeled with multiple codes. I identified initial concepts on the data and grouped them into categories. The first-order (Van Maanen, 1979) codes used language from informants or a descriptive phrase. When searching the data, I grouped like-coded data into themes. I used the software to categorize paragraphs of data on the basis of both of my a priori theoretical interests. I returned to the data to examine if there were any themes, and located ten emerging issues or second-order themes that are described in detail below.

One of the main goals in the company was to change the “engineer” and “civil servant” mentality into an entrepreneurial one. Individual initiative was brought up as a key issue, with the aim of trying to get people to “think out of the box” and to “run the extra mile for the company”. In terms of these issues, I understood the change process to represent a strategic aim, emphasizing demands for change. Strategy strives to build a coherent and unified ethos in the organization. Otherness on the other hand furthers the practice of reciprocity and epitomizes moral exemplarity; it recognizes that other opinions are of value and interest and consecrates the equal nature of the other. Drawing on the theory, I was able to find themes that represented demands for the future and demands for change which were the sensegiving of the strategic aim.

The ambiguities that led to sensemaking of the ethical in consideration of the strategic aim became apparent through ethical questioning and reported threats to self-esteem. These equivocalities found their relief in irony, compromise and conflict. The sensemaking eventually led to responses on the sensegiving - the strategic aim - in the form of detachment, adjustment and destabilization. To finish I gathered similar themes into overarching dimensions that made up the basis for the emergent framework. The final data structure is illustrated in Figure 3, which summarizes the second-order themes upon which I built the model on sensemaking. Table 6 gives illustrative examples of these themes.

Figure 3 Data structure

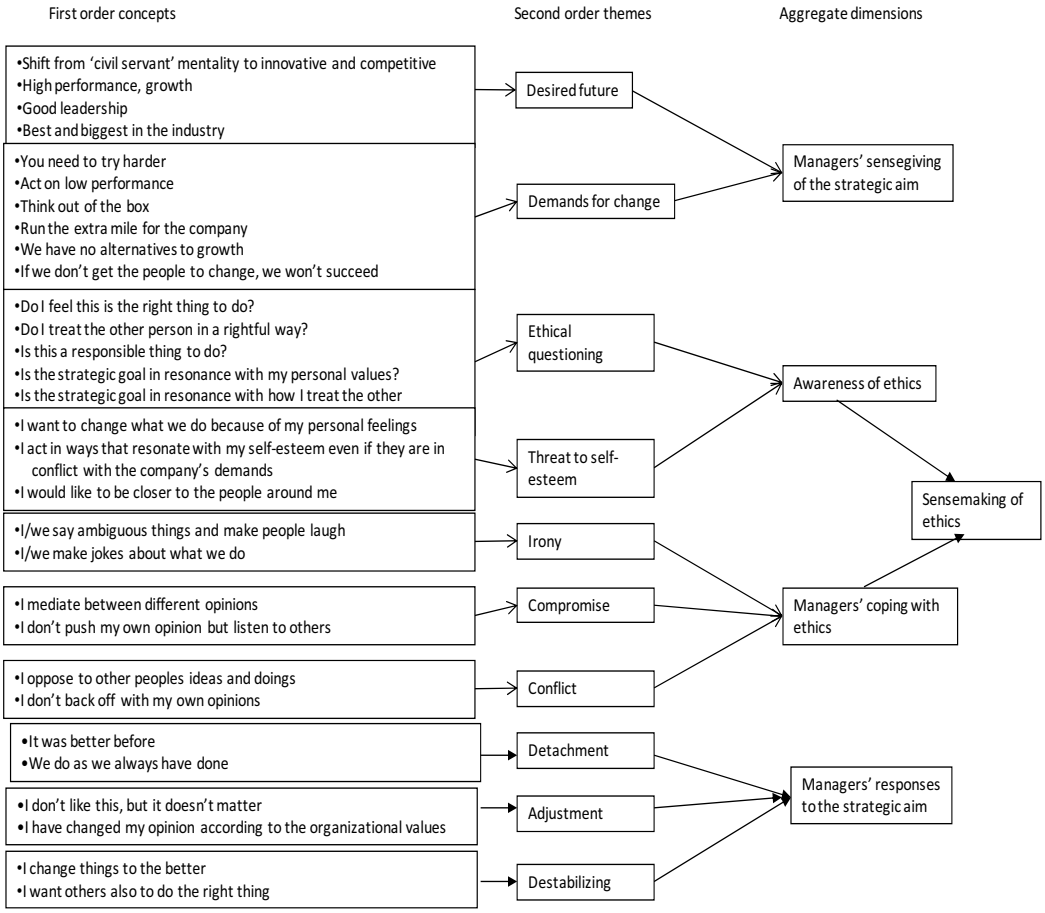


Table 6 Empirical illustrations of the main codes

Manager sensegiving of the strategic aim

Desired future	"NN1: We have to find the capacity to handle this so that we do not hurt ourselves. People have been working at their own pieces of cake, but this needs to change. NN2: Look at the people issues – we need to find the right kind of people. We cannot find all the people internally, we have to search externally." *Discussion at top management team meeting* "NN: We need to make sure that the market is growing. NN2: 1% this year and 2% next year. "*Discussion at top management team meeting*
Demands for the future	NN2: Do we need more control? How do we make sure they don't all get fat and lazy?" *Discussion at top management team meeting* "People are tense, they are afraid of punishment. We are introducing a new era and we need to encourage people to put themselves on the line." *Interview with middle manager*

Sensemaking of ethics

Awareness of ethics

Ethical questioning	"Based on the business agenda, what does it mean for the HR strategy? Every employee must know what it means for their work.' The 'people compass' says that we are a people-driven company that rely on our values. But I do not think we are that at the moment, we are still an engineer and issue-driven company that does not take people into account. " *Comment at business unit management team meeting* "Do not let the top management team drive this issue! Never give business matters to the top management team! You are much much better equipped to handle it, they are sitting in the wrong place." *Business unit head at management team meeting* "Common values have to be in place, but not because we want to measure them. For instance if I take bribes, I violate the values, and that is measurable. But if you are a bit rude to your colleague, how do you measure that?" *Top manager in interview*

	"Most people that I have met, and I mean many, many - they want to do a good job. We come from a culture where it is a virtue to do a good job. And most people feel bad if they are doing a bad job. And this is a driver we have to harness. What it is about? When I studied, I worked in elderly care as a nurse. I fed the patients and changed their nappies. And what was that about? Sometimes people were angry because the linen was on the wrong side of the closet. It was about gaining power in that sense. It is about understanding what you are able to influence. And it is also about making things positive. If you are about to bake a cake, do it so that everyone can smell it and taste it, because that is what makes people happy. It is about harnessing the positive in all individuals. Of course there will be some who will not cheer about this because not everyone will not feel the same level of engagement for this issue.' *Middle manager in interview*
Threat to self-esteem	"I don't think it is about telling them what to do. What I would like to do more is to go out and talk with my co-workers. I have done it sometimes and it is widely appreciated. It can lead to some of our own initiatives, and for people to feel seen and, in the best case scenario, even understood." *Manager in interview* "For a long time the discussion was that we lived mostly by one of the values – excellent performance –especially monetary performance. Other values, especially innovation and development, and why not co-operation even, were not as visible. So if you ask if we talk about that and what it means in practice, I am sure the answer is that we don't know." *Manager in interview* "I feel strongly for ICE. It has become a part of me after ten years. It would be extremely difficult for me to imagine working somewhere else. But then again, I spent a lot of time thinking about the climate long before ICE even knew the word. It is hardly anything new." *Manager in interview*

Manager coping with ethics

Irony	"NN1: For 5 years now we have had the same survey. We need to take the next step. We need to measure engagement, not only rational but also emotional commitment. Are people really ready to walk the extra mile for the company? NN2: [NN1]: how do you communicate the change to the staff? NN1: The reporting tools will be better and it is easier to follow the action plans and structure the action. We need to market the new approach and measure the direction. NN3: And we must be careful, as these kind of surveys are much tougher than the other type of survey. They go directly into your leadership style. NN1: Or should we do it like they do in Jeopardy and have the answer first and then try to figure out the right questions?" *Discussion at top managament team meeting*
Compromise	"Well, I made one clearly fatal mistake and another smaller one. I mistook what one of the contractors was; I shouldn't have made that mistake. The big mistake was that, somehow I got out sidetracked and forgot to raise the issue of NN's role in our team. I'm sorry. *Comment at business unit management team meeting* "Now we have an extra resource. But I tell you, use him a lot in your work. We have a really good resource in him. I have told him that he can participate in investments. Make it easy for him, as it is really difficult for him to be here now." *Comment at business unit management team meeting*
Conflict	NN1: We don't seem to be very good at IT projects in this company. *(shouting)* Why is it generally accepted that ITprojects are always late !! I don't understand this mindset. NN2: It is the vendours market. We also do not always exactly know what we want. NN1: But hey – we don't build plants and only then look to see where the pipes end up! [others] make their plants like this... but hey! *Discussion at top management team meeting*

Manager responses to the strategic aim

Detachment	"All our routines and procedures for minutes of meetings have come to ICE from the two merged companies. Many people still feel that they need orders. For instance I have this brilliant Swedish guy on my team, that took two years to understand that he was supposed to draw up his own job description.' *Manager in interview* "If I could, I would change 50% of the personnel, but I cannot, I just have to stick with those that are here" *Member of top-management team*
Adjustment	"We can drop some of the useless stuff we do. I hope it is not much, but if we are doing a lot of nonsense, then we must change the situation now. I want us to start a culture of forecasting every month; it is one of the manager's tasks if you know what you are doing. A good forecast has 3 items: the outcome, the range within the forecast (we need to communicate the spread), and thirdly we have to commit to certain actions. This is much easier than doing it by quarter. If we do it continuously, we remember what we have done and this is what makes life easy." *Comment in business unit management team meeting* "Delegation is good, but control is better. We do these things, not only because we have been told we should, but because if we do not do it, nobody will. Revolutions are also planned, but come as surprises to those who are not paying attention." *Comment in business unit management team meeting*
Destabilization	"We should exploit every possibility we have to understand what is happening. We have figures, but we only have them in our heads. You are good at many things, but one thing you are not good at is selling what you do. This is a typical engineer mind-set. How often do you need meetings? If we don't instill some more quality into our meetings, I think we should schedule them less often. We need to fill the time in with something else. What I would like is a strategy day where we can discuss strategy together." *Manager in interview*

As illustrated in Figure 4 below, there are three main dimensions to the model of sensemaking of ethics that emerged at ICE: (1) Managers' sensegiving of the strategic aim, (2) Sensemaking of ethics, and (3) Managers' responses to the strategic aim. The

strategic aim of ICE was manifested in a desired future and demands for change. However, the strategic aim led to uncertainty that triggered sensemaking of the ethical task. The managers felt a threat to their self-esteem and started questioning the ethical. This sensemaking took its relief in irony, compromise and conflict, as the managers coped with the tension through these reactions. These tensions between the strategic aim and ethics led to responses to the strategic aim in the form of detachment, adjustment and destabilization. I gathered similar themes into overarching dimensions that make up the basis for the emergent framework. All these dimensions are discussed in more detail below. In this findings presentation, I have coordinated and integrated the findings narrative itself, Figure 3, showing the data structure, illustrative examples of the themes, and Figure 4 showing the model.

Figure 4 Ethical Sensemaking of Strategic Change

5.9. Top manager sensegiving of the strategic aim

Sensegiving at ICE was characterized by two specific themes related to the desired future and the demands necessary to achieve it. Sensegiving highlights top-down processes that organizations use to manage strategic aim. It is rooted in identity construction (Pratt 2001, Weick 1995) and is an attempt to guide the meaning construction of others.

At ICE, the demands for uniformity and goal-compliance were clear and articulated. The managerial attempt to influence the new vision and the change demands are described in more detail below.

5.9.1. Desired future

The company wanted to change from its previous status as a state-owned company with a civil servant mentality to a market-oriented, competitive and innovative one. The 'old' culture characterized by the hierarchy and mindset of a state-owned company had to be changed. The company had initiated many what they called leadership programs to train the managers and the potential future managers to conform to the desired future. The programs focused on teaching the managers to take own initiative, to "think out of the box" and to "run the extra mile for the company". An annual "people's day" gathered over 100 managers to not only discuss the future, but also evaluate potential talents.

As ICE became more accustomed to the idea of changing to a market-driven culture, it became increasingly obvious that in order to survive in the culture, everyone had to change. The demand for compliance was strong and the new values of excellent performance and growth were integrated in all goals and measures. Goal-compliance was measured with a strong hand. Even more radical ways of changing the future were ventilated, as one manager put it:

> "If I could, I would change 50% of the personnel, but I cannot, so I just have to stick with those that are here"

Uniform and collective goals were the strategic benchmarks and this desired future was the institutional norm that was supposed to be followed by the others. In Ricoeur's words it was the rules, routines and traditions that the individuals were supposed to follow, and in order to do that there were duties, i.e. demands for the future.

The sensegiving of the desired future was strongly personified in the CEO. He was seen as the savior of the company and he knew that in order for people to conform to the tough demands, he had to show a new style of leadership. He initiated it immediately after he arrived:

> "You have to understand that this company has a long legacy. When I came here, all of the top management sat on the 17th floor. The CEO's room was hidden away behind three secretaries and two long corridors. My nearest colleagues called the secretaries to make a 15-minute appointment. After 4 months I moved down to the first floor. My door is open. I am confident it was a good idea. Now I know what people talk about."
>
> *CEO in interview*

In other words, a part of the desired future was to make the organizational hierarchy flatter and more informal. The CEO wished that everyone would confront him in a frank, bold and honest manner. He himself reflected those attributes, combined with a charisma that many admired. However, most members of the organization continued to be compliant and even deferential towards the CEO.

There were numerous examples where managers made reference to the domination and charisma of the CEO. He was received as very demanding, but also very generous when he was satisfied with what he saw. People were motivated to 'try harder' to get his acceptance. One of the managers described it like this:

> "...but you have to remember our history. The time before NN (the CEO) was insecure both in terms of our business and leadership. It was terrible to work here. I talked to a lot of headhunters and tried to find a good exit. But then, six years ago, NN came. I will never forget his first speech in the cantina. After that day, I decided not to talk to headhunters anymore. [...] He told a story that captured everyone's allegiance and showed that his heart was in it."

In terms of the strategic aim implemented and understood in the organization, the CEO was seen as very important, but a problem with that was also acknowledged, as one of the members in the top management team related:

> "NN's [CEO] person and personality is very important, but it should not be the only thing. He also wants to communicate to the business unit heads that they need to take the issues further through their personalities."

The personality of the CEO was the most efficient driver of the strategic aim to make people and groups think and act independently. This is potentially a dangerous strategic aim, given the immense contradiction involved in telling people to be independent and so by implication to ignore what you are telling them. It can only be done by exemplification, by showing. This is where practical wisdom enters the picture. Rather than a technical demand placed upon people, this is more an opening of their sensitivity and initiative, to listen carefully to the demands their situation is making of them. At ICE this was particularly paradoxical, as the admiration cult and the culture of taking commands were legacies of the old culture that the top management wanted to change. The dominant theme to emerge from my comparisons of ICE's historical identity with the desired future reflected a growing sense of identity ambiguity about what it meant for the managers. The wish for informal communication among all employees was not to be considered for a couple of years. The notion of sameness, of not changing what has been, constituted a strong reference for the coming changes.

The top management knew this, and therefore made a big effort to "hire new blood"; people with the "right" attitude from the beginning. There was an obvious difference between the managers who had a history in the company and those who didn't. The new managers were very good at promoting the new agenda and convincing the others to follow it. This dialogue is from a business unit management team meeting where the head was new to the company:

> Delegation is good, but control is better. We do these things, not only because we have been told that we will, but because if we do not do it, nobody will. Revolutions are also planned, but they come as a surprise to those who are not paying attention.

This shows how control runs right against a spirit of independence. In the previous analysis on identity work, this quote exemplified the manager as a committed leader, demonstrating how important it is for the team members to follow organizational sameness and to live up to being part of the company team, or an appropriate individual. Thus, identity work and committing to the strategic aim are intimately intertwined.

The managers also seemed to possess the "right" values from the start, as this manager exemplifies:

> I feel strongly for ICE, it has become a part of me after ten years. It would be extremely difficult for me to imagine working somewhere else. But then again, I spent a lot of time thinking about the climate long before ICE even knew the word. It is hardly anything new.

We know from the sensegiving literature that it is a way of communicating new beliefs and meanings towards the staff (Fiss & Zajah 2006, Gioia & Chittipeddi 1991, Gioia & al 2000, Mantere et al 2012). The success of a strategic change effort depends on the impact of managerial sensegiving efforts which can be measured by its effect on how employees make sense of it (Balogun & Johnson 2004). At ICE the sensegiving of the desired future was very much a top management effort, and directed the employee sensemaking process towards a desired shared interpretive scheme. On the surface, it looked like the sensegiving regarding the desired future was successful, as the middle managers and their management teams had a scheme that was congrunet with the goals of the top managers. The top management was very aware of their power in the sensegiving, and the CEO's role in particular wasn't underestimated. The top management was serving the desired future as a truth and simply urging the organization to act in resonance with it. The demands to reach those goals were communicated as demands for the future.

5.9.2. Demands for the future

As we have seen, the CEO had a personal ambition to change the old culture towards a more people-driven, dynamic, open and market-oriented business environment. To live up to these demands, the organization structure was also changed. The hierarchy was organized so that the top management team included the CEO, CFO, the HR Director, the Communications Director and 3 others who each had one or several business units as their responsibility. They met on average once a month for one day. The next level was the extended management team, where the heads of the business units were included in the meetings. This was an opportunity for everyone to hear what was going on in the whole company. The idea was to increase openness and to let people ventilate ideas and opinions. Although often it was just the same people that spoke; the rest talked when it was their turn to report on something.

The demands for the top managers were clear and articulated. They were to communicate clearly, openly and honestly. No vague talk was accepted, and the CEO was very good at spotting any attempts to be vague or elusive. The line of talk in the top management team was demanding. They had recurrent discussions about what it would require to make the organization change, and the means agreed upon were often quite tough. This is a quote from a top management team meeting:

> If you want a change in behaviour you have to be tougher than this. If it doesn't hurt, it is not good enough. If you are not bold enough, nothing changes.

The demand of the CEO was formidable and regulated by various control mechanisms. The duty to be goal-compliant to the strategic aim was thus very powerful. Strategy was given an omnipotent status. The CEO and the top management team were aware of the big changes that were needed in order to instigate employee changes, as this discussion at a top management team exemplifies:

> NN1: If we want to make a difference in our leadership style, now is the time!
> NN2: Do we need more control? How do we make sure they don't all get fat and lazy?

This need for control was also reflected in the extended top management team meetings. That was the top management team plus all the heads of the seven business units. In one meeting, a business unit head reported a mistake that had been made in his business unit. It included trading issues, but it wasn't very severe, and it didn't lead to any harmful consequences. But the CEO took it very seriously.

> CEO: But if we turn the question around: if this would happen in a bank, what would happen?
> *Long silence*... I don't know, but are we taking enough corrective actions?
> *Silence*
> NN1: Hm, we could check the processes.
> NN1: Do you have an opinion on the legal aspect?
> NN3: I think this person should be punished somehow. Maybe we should take away all trading rights?

The sensegiving imperative to follow the strategic aim was strong and clearly exemplified here by the CEO. He states the demands for the future by setting the benchmark high and not accepting any deviance from the determined path.

One of the practices that had been introduced with the change was the so-called performance review. They were meetings where the business unit management teams met the top management team and gave an oral report of their performance. The performance reviews were arranged semi-monthly for each of the seven business units. The idea was that the top management team would have the opportunity to meet the whole business unit management team and discuss recurrent business. The performance review was held in a large meeting room where the top management team sat in a row on one side of the room behind a table, and the business unit management team members sat, without a table, on the other side. The head of the business unit management team stood in the middle of the room. The meeting started with him or her reporting the latest news and figures from the business unit, and after that there was time for questions. It was often the CEO or the CFO who started the questioning. They could direct the questions to the head of the business unit or to any other member of the business unit management team. Before the meetings, the head of the business unit tried to prepare the members for possible questions. This extract is from a conversation before a performance review:

> We have all properly drilled for their questions; I hope they will not be too harsh.

The performance review was a rigid and effective way for the top management team to keep track of the results and ambitions of the business units. But the obligation to report results in this manner also introduced feelings of insecurity, as this member of a business unit management team put it:

> There is a culture of fear here. The days before the performance review everyone is tense and nervous. The day of the review everyone is dressed to the teeth and is drilled beforehand by the managers in order not to miss any answers.

The CEO himself was not unaware of this:

> I know that people are nervous before coming to the meetings, I know they watch every expression on my face to get signals. But if they have done their homework, they have nothing to fear.

This was also a very strong statement regarding the strategic aim: In the future everyone would be expected to do their homework.

The middle managers' view that the performance reviews were like cross-examinations was widespread. But the fear was combined with an admiration of the CEO. Many managers felt that they wanted to perform well and to show their best effort to get the CEO's approval.

> Comment after performance review: 'That went well; did you hear what NN (CEO) said? He really said some good words to you. You should be proud!'

Future demands were the duties that the strategic aim imposed on the managers. The norms and the duties were on the institutional level, the motivation to act or maintain passive was triggered by traditions, rituals and routines.

Sensegiving was thus used to build a foundation for a desirable future, with the attending demands. The new strategy was portrayed as a solution to transform the "lazy and reactive" former organization into a "proactive and innovative" one. The top management framed their vision of the future as necessary and inevitable, and forced all people in the organization to draw their own conclusions: to concord with their demands or leave.

In Ricoeur's terms, for norms and duties to be fulfilled as part of the quest for the good life, the ethical task of the individual and the group must come first. The sensemaking of ethics therefore started on the individual level as ethical questioning and the threat to self-esteem.

5.10. Sensemaking of ethics

The sensemaking of ethics was an ongoing process between the awareness ethics at the individual level and managerial coping on the group level. When the managers made sense of the situation, it engendered an awareness of the ethical and their efforts to cope with it in the disruption caused by the strategic aim.

Sensemaking happened in situations when the managers felt equivocal and uncertain, and it started with an awareness of the ethical – an awareness that awoke ambiguities

towards the strategic aim and led to an ongoing deliberation between ethical questioning triggered by a threat to self-esteem. But as people in sensemaking are looking for explanations that fit into larger concepts, individuals try to find at least temporary resting points where they can simplify the ambiguity and uncertainty and secure a plausible account for their action. So in making sense of the ethical aim, the managers tried to find "accurate solutions" for the conflicting feeling and often did this through irony, compromise and conflict.

5.10.1. Awareness of ethics

The sensegiving of the strategic aim triggered questions like: "Am I doing this for the right reason? Am I part of the strategy?". This was evident both in the top management team and in the business unit management teams. The managers' behavior and discussions awoke questions about the meaning of the strategy, in my view through ethical questioning.

5.10.1.1. Ethical questioning

Ethical questioning was triggered by the discrepancies between the demands of the organization and the aims of the individuals. It was manifested in the act of questioning the ways of doing things. The demand for *sameness*, which is the demand to be compliant to the strategic aim and the current norms, was manifested in the ways people talked about the strategy. The following quotes are from interviews where managers describe the questioning:

> "ICE suffers from a systems stress among its people. You feel you have a big responsibility but no rights. And if a company like this is to succeed, the responsibility and the rights have to be in balance. This is how we can harness the drive in people to do and change things, but we don't have that now. You need to give them some space and let it mean different things for different people."

> "For a long time the discussion was that we lived mostly by one of the values – excellent performance –monetary performance in particular. Other values, especially innovation and development and even co-operation, were not visible. So if you ask if we talk about it and if you ask what it means in practice, I am sure the answer is that we don't know."

In both quotes, the managers are reflecting on what they do though their sense of otherness and inherent ethics. They are aware of the conflict between what they do and what they feel, and don't seem to have a solution for it yet.

Ethical questioning was also visible in the business unit management team meetings, when the norm of having to reduce emissions was discussed at a practical level:

> NN1: All business units have to make sure that their emissions from travelling are reduced. We cannot make a new system for this, as corporate is tracking our travelling,. We cannot do anything about it.
> NN2: There was also this plan we were supposed to do.
> NN3: But we can reduce travelling in general.People who sell have to travel, but the other people can use the video conference system.
> NN4: I have used the video conference, and it is not good.
> NN1: Ok, but we cannot do it like this. We cannot say: You can't go purchase something in Bulgaria because our quota is already full. You just have to hope that you are at home when the quota is filled!

At this management team meeting, NN1 does the ethical questioning at the individual level, the responsible thing to do at the institutional level is in conflict with the individual and group level, and he thus questions the norm. Part of the ethical questioning on the individual level was caused by a threat to self-esteem – the very self-esteem that is the basis for an individual's ability to live the good life with and for others. They are reflecting on the ideal of cutting carbon emissions, but agree that these ideals are not practical, therefore recognizing and legitimizing their 'less than ethical practices'. The uncertainty led to the most convenient solution – business as usual continues.

The view that strategy formulation is envisioned as a task of top management and implemented by others is challenged by many strategy scholars, especially those that have taken social processes into account (Pettigrew 1973, Minztberg 1978). Strategy involves internal tensions around agency and identity (Mantere & Vaara 2008) and there are several studies showing the alternative discourses around strategy (Knights and Morgan 1991, Samra-Fredericks 2003, Chia & Holt 2006, 2009). At ICE, the ambiguities and discrepancies between the strategic aim and the ethical aim led to sensemaking of the ethical aim through an awareness of otherness and of the tension between personal feelings and the organizational norm.

5.10.1.2. Threat to self-esteem

The threat to self-esteem was visible as a willingness to act in resonance with individual feelings and values even though the norms (institutional level) or the concern for others (group level) were in conflict. One manager expressed it like this in an interview:

> "Our way of working is that we work and work, and it is fun, but we do not talk personal things. This culture of ours does not encourage us to talk about personal matters. There is a father or mother behind the person, but that is not visible for us here. For instance, one of the managers with whom I have worked with for 20 years suddenly started talking about his children. I told him: this is the first time we have ever talked about personal matters. If we just had a little bit of warmth and normal communication. We have forgotten all about the emotional side of people."

The threat to self-esteem elevated the inherent need for otherness and triggered actions that were motivated by sympathy and solicitude on the group level. This discussion is from a business unit management team meeting:

> NN1: Should we start making written reports of these meetings?
> NN2: My personal experience is that the only good way to report things back to my unit is to report them personally. It is stronger when it is related in person. It is a funny thing.

This awareness of ethics was triggered by the individual level of aiming to live the good life. But the otherness is always present, and it is impossible to be a self without it. So, this awareness led to manager's coping in various ways at the group level if there was a conflict between the strategic intent and the ethical aim. One of the top managers put it like this.

> People are tense, afraid of punishment. We are implementing a new era now and we need to encourage people to put themselves on the line.

Managers became aware of otherness through ethical questioning and the threat to self-esteem. Situations that triggered an awareness of otherness involved one in which the strategic aim and the inherent ethics conflicted. As a result, managers took recourse in their sense of solicitude and self-esteem. However, the strategic aim was the yardstick and the expectation. This is the individual level of "the good life", where the motivation to act is triggered by a concern for self and a unity of life.

We know from research on sensemaking that the recipients' interpretation of the sensegiving is likely to be key, and that the content of new information is mediated through their existing knowledge and the language of expression, which is intimate

with knowledge (see Balogun & Johnson 2004, Gioia et al. 1991, 1994, Poole et al. 1989). It calls for a recognition of people as agents who construct their work environments and also reinforces the focus on others in the interpretation within organizations. At ICE, this interpretation was done by sensemaking of the inherent ethics, which was triggered by awareness of it and a threat to self-esteem. This sensemaking led to reactions towards the sensegiving of the strategic aim in forms of irony, compromise and conflict.

5.10.2. Managers coping with ethics

As described above, the strategic aim to make the organization work competitively in a global market was clearly communicated and implemented. In all official statements and interviews, the managers were asseverating the importance and success of the strategy. But when I looked at the instances where managers were aware of their otherness, I started to notice activity that was working against the strategic aim. The action was not purposeful, i.e. it didn't presuppose a desired and clearly articulated end goal, but it was purposive, meaning that it was taken as alleviation from a negative situation (see Chia & Holt 2006). They used coping as a buffering device to protect their own self-esteem. The ambiguities and uncertainties that triggered sensemaking, took relief in "plausible action" in the form of irony, compromise and conflict.

I will first present them briefly and then discuss them in parallel with the manager responses to the strategic aim.

5.10.2.1. Irony

In organization studies, irony has mostly been noted in situations where traditional power structures have endured, and is therefore associated with non-liberating discourses and resistance to change (Johansson & Woodilla 2005). Hatch (1997) showed that managers used irony to deal with ambiguities and their own emotional reactions to the cultural situation. Irony became a tool for individuals to deal with a contradictory situation, and a device to cope in that situation, rather than change it. To protect their self-esteem, the managers reacted in the tension between the strategic aims and the ethical aims with irony.

5.10.2.2. Compromise

Compromise can be described as a form of practical wisdom or the ability to persuade others of the opposite nature of specific purposes and interests - but at the same time maintaining conversational conditions by which others are able to express their own interest. It is rhetoric that is not an external manipulation of feelings, but promotes good arguments above bad ones without any specific exploitative interests. In reaching for a compromise, opposite views are discussed on the way to decision making. This process allows the expression and possible integration of arguments from different people whereby individuals suspend their assumptions: they communicate meanings to each other in order to mutually enhance their understanding of the situation. Such "thinking together" increases the diversity of meanings and the emergence of new ideas (Bohm 1996). Individuals are willing to listen to the other and can pursue self-criticism. They take responsibility for the actions of themselves and others.

5.10.2.3. Conflict

Coping with the ethical also led to situations in which managers disagreed openly. The managers did not suspend their opinions or attitudes at all. Sometimes the conflict was dissolved by compromise, but at other points it led to a dead end in the discussion. Individuals have their specific agenda and are not very willing to change their opinions or to take other views into consideration.

These coping mechanisms led to three types of responses to the intended strategy: adjustment, detachment and destabilization.

5.11. Manager responses to the strategic aim

The sensemaking of ethics led to the enactment of the coping mechanisms of irony, compromise and conflict. This led to responses to the sensegiving imperative in the form of adjustment, detachment and destabilization. I will discuss the three responses in parallel with the three coping mechanisms.

5.11.1. Adjustment

Irony

At ICE, irony was used as an oppressive device in situations where the strategic aim was seen as inevitable, but where the persons participating in the discourse felt uncomfortable in the situation. Among the top management team, irony appeared when the strategic aim was forced on the managers, and their feeling of mutuality in an ethically uncomfortable situation triggered a disruption or conflict of aims. The managers were aware that the steps towards changing the culture were difficult, and that the organization wasn't always coping well. That led to many ironic remarks about themselves and their behaviour. The quote used in an earlier example, as an example of the strategic aim, also suggests irony when one of the managers says tongue in cheek: *"How do we make sure that they don't all become fat and lazy?"* Here, the managers are aware that their discourse is powerful and that the remark is inappropriate.

As Mulkay (1988) notes, humor handles diversity and complexity much better than a serious mode, because in humor it is accepted to 'change' the reality. Humor handles these multiple realities that can cause trouble in the serious discourse. The top managers knew that the strategic aim wasn't always ethical towards the individuals in the organization, but in their role as managers, they felt they didn't have a choice. In this way, irony didn't become a resistance to the strategic change *per se*, but a device to preserve the ongoing strategic change, no matter how the people in the organization felt about it. It is not ironic self-production, but irony of self to absorb the reproduction of the organization in tension with the character of the self.

Many of the discussions in the top management team dealt with numbers. At one point, after a lengthy conversation about one number in the performance demands for one business unit, this dialogue took place:

> NN1: Should we put 20? That is an even number.
> NN2: 19 looks more thought through, let's put 19.
> NN3: Hey hey, do not forget the fly on the wall! [referring to me, the observer]
> NN1: I think she has seen enough not to be surprised anymore.

The participants orient themselves towards their prior conversation as to how sensitive, dodgy or dangerous it may be in terms of some norm or moral code, by referring to the presence of the researcher as somehow relevant, or perhaps problematic. If the

conversation hadn't been deemed 'sensitive' or potentially 'dangerous' in some way, it would have simply passed as a normal, unproblematic discussion.

This kind of irony deals a blow towards the number-centered strategic aim, and is also an example of the Kirkegaardian ironist who hypocritically resists change and makes ironic remarks about the world in which he or she feels lost. The awareness of the hypocrisy of the strategic aim to measure everything in numbers led to the recourse to the ethical aim of reciprocity.

Also the strategic aim of high performance was being measured. This conversation is from a top management team meeting, where one tool for measurement – the job satisfaction survey – was discussed:

> NN1: For 5 years now we have had the same survey. We need to take the next step. We will measure the engagement, not only the rational but also the emotional commitment. Are the people really ready to walk the extra mile for the company?
>
> NN2: [NN1]: How do you communicate this change to the staff?
>
> NN1: Reporting tools will be made better so it is easier to follow the action plans and structure the action. We need to market the new approach and measure the direction.
>
> NN3: And we must be careful. This kind of survey is much tougher than the other types of survey we had in the past. They delve directly into your leadership style.
>
> NN1: Or should we just like they do in Jeopardy and pose the answers first and then try to figure out the right questions?

The team has an unspoken mutual understanding that it is impossible to measure everything and that "you get what you measure". Still, the strategic aim of conformity, goal-compliance and rationality was predominant. The last ironic remark by NN1 reveals the ethics of self-esteem and reciprocity, and some kind of tacit consent to the uncertainty of the strategic aim. The dialogue overall seems to be about them reflecting on power and control vis-a-vis their employees. From the start, the conversation is about power and control – we need to control them (make them go the extra mile for us). This runs against the "official" notion of employee surveys as being positive attempts to "listen" to employees. The phrase "be careful" implies they do not want to cede too much control to the staff, for example, if the employees were to submit negative feedback on leadership styles and therefore affect managerial change.This would again run contrary to the spirit of the strategy itself and the ethical task of seeking the good life.

The three examples above show how irony was used as a devise to adjust to the strategic aim in spite of the conflict with the ethical aim. Mantere and Vaara (2008) showed that if strategy is mystificated or disciplining, it can lead to a ironic and cynical attitude towards the strategy and the organization. At ICE, the strategy was clearly disciplining, and the irony was merely a means of coping that most often didn't lead to changes - "business as usual" continued.

Compromise

Ricoeur's theory of the same/other relationship implies that I am in the presence of the other, who has his or her own sameness and myself as constituted of both permanent characters and of contextual experiences. Compromise can be seen as representing the ability of an individual to understand the distinctive nature of the other and adjust his or her conduct to satisfy the otherness of the other. It can be a sort of "practical wisdom" that manifests itself in the organization through moral exemplarity and reciprocity. This understanding of otherness by compromise could lead to an adjustment to the strategic aim.

This example is from a business management team meeting in which the HR manager begins her presentation as follows:

> "I could say that we plan for the personnel, and I could tell you we are counting costs and I could tell you that we are planning a 'people day'. But you already know all this, and this is why I thought I would tell you why we have a HR strategy. This is about people and inspiring people."

This can be interpreted as only smart rhetoric to persuade the others by appealing to their self-interest, but what happened after this opening was that the group started discussing how they could help inspire people by listening to their genuine desires and wishes. When practical wisdom is turned into compromise in a strategy setting, it is a form of reaction to the tension between the strategic intent and the ethical aims. It appeals to the sympathy, generosity and collective creation inherent in human life. It doesn't change things, but it helps people to adjust to the strategic intent. Compromise is utilized as a tool to adjust to the prevailing sameness, as that is the presumed way of doing things. By paying attention to the roles of various individuals and groups of people, and to recognize their needs, compromise reflects the ideal of dialogue and has been seen as particularly beneficial for contemporary organizations (Barry & Elmes 1997, Floyd & Woolridge 2000). Compromise at ICE was a way of adjusting to the strategic aim.

Conflict

Conflict happens naturally when two parties have a different sameness and want to hold on to it. Conflict in the group could result in an adjustment to the strategic aim. In the next example there were n new strategies that emerged. Instead the group adjusted to the norms and duties of the institution.

> NN1: We don't seem to be very good at IT projects in this company.
> NN2: It is not…
> NN1: *(shouting)* Why is it generally accepted that IT projects are always late!! I do not understand this mindset.
> NN2: But there is the vendors market and we do not always exactly know what we want.
> NN1: But hey – we don't build plants by saying let's see where the pipes end up! The [others] might do their plants like this but hey! – It is totally….
> NN 3: I am not trying to be a know-it-all, but we have supply-driven orders.
> NN4: Yes, may I add that this is not acceptable, but we cannot change the way things are.

Here, the sameness pushed NN1 to find a scapegoat for the failed IT -project. NN2 tried to explain it through extra-organizational reasons and the "culture of IT people". The conflict did not lead to a change in organizational sameness, but an adjustment to the existing situation.

To conclude, adjustment to the ICE strategic aim was preceded by coping with the ethical aims through irony, compromise and conflict. It can be said that these reactions led managers to participate in strategy, something that is seen as crucial in strategymaking. These coping mechanisms are not arbitrary; they reflect central discourses in the praxis around strategy (see ex. Whittington 2006, Mantere & Vaara 2008). The same coping mechanisms also led to detachment from the strategic aim.

5.11.2. Detachment

Irony

Irony was also used as a device to detach oneself from the strategic aim. Middle managers often took distance from the strategic aim.

As noted previously, ICE introduced so-called 'performance reviews', where the business unit management teams answered questions from the top management team. The situation could be described as a cross-examination, were the business unit head stood in the middle of the room, with his management team on one side and the CEO

and the top management team on the other. Anyone from the management team could be the recipient of a question at any time, so the teams were coached ahead of time in order to be able to answer various questions. People were nervous before these meetings, but jokes were one of the means they used to cope with the demands of conformity. This is an example of a discussion between two members of a management team before a performance review.

> NN1: I put on my best shoes and combed my hair so that the headmaster won't disapprove. Are you ok?
>
> NN2: Yes, I think so. I have a new tie and have done my homework.

The management team members concede to the power of the performance reviews as a part of the strategic aim to reach high performance levels and adjust to the tightening competition. Still, they acknowledge the conflict in how they are being treated as persons, and feel that their sense of self is lowered to that of a school child's. Irony is used as a device to detach from the strategic aim and help them cope in the conflicting situation. This ties back to the analysis on identity work, where this was also an example of "pretending" to be an appropriate individual. The managers in fact neglect or resist otherness, and the humour is just a way of showing that they have an otherness in them, but are not willing to sacrifice their role as supposedly appropriate managers in their adherance to the rule of sameness.

One part of the performance process was to gather the so-called extended management team together once a month. The extended management team consisted of the top management team and all of the heads of the seven business units. Much of the discussion circled around pitching business proposals that the business units had prepared. This example is from the end of one of those meetings, after all of the business units had presented their proposals.

> CEO: All right, that is the world around us. Let's not get too funny. We are more a bank that a company - well, banks are companies as well I suppose. We are betting pretty much on the [another country] market.
>
> NN1: One bank is missing, what we have here today is... an asset worth 1 million. ...the only safe haven in [another country] is [another company] and then there are [a geographical region consisting of many countries]... Of course [another country] is interesting... but it is under national ownership. We could try and buy the [a geographical region consisting of many countries] *(laughter)*

The CEO seems to be reflecting on how their business practices are comparable to 'betting', with its unethical connotations. NN1 reflects on the huge amount of power the company wields over countries when he states, "We could try and buy the [a geographical region consisting of many countries]". This recognizes the potential problem with the strategic aim, and ultimately diffuses tensions and concerns by ensuring that nothing is really challenged and 'business as usual' is restored. Like Fleming and Spicer (2003) have argued, cynicism, humor and irony make people feel as if they are resisting and distancing themselves from power and control, but it is really not resistance because nothing gets changed. You just make yourself feel better, less like a 'dupe' and more in control of your own life.

As such, jokes are quick to betray inconsistencies between an organization's publicly stated values and its internal realities. They are also used in order to deal with disappointment, fear and desires. But as the examples above demonstrates, irony may make it easier to tolerate a subordinate position. Although it does not really alter the power-structure, it helps workers to cope with it (Rodriques and Collinson 1995). So here irony is seen as a device for adjustment and detachment, but because irony is a complex trope, it can also be related to destabilizing the organizational reality, which I will discuss later.

Compromise

When compromise is employed as a coping mechanism in the awareness of ethics, it can oftentimes lead to a detachment from the strategic aim. Where compromise can most of the time help people adjust to the strategic aim, in some instances it distanced the whole group from it.

The demands of the top management team were also questioned by the business units. The questioning took its forms in discussions protesting the hands-on management that the top management team practiced. The conversation below is from a business unit where the strategy handed down from on high is questioned:

> BU head: Do not let [the top management team] drive this! Never give business matters to [the top management team]! You are much much better equipped to handle it, they are sitting in the wrong place.
>
> NN1: But very often [the top management team] comes and tells us what to do, for instance in our branding team.

> NN2: You are so hierarchical here in (country)! I am sure that when you come to Poland, you say "Now I have been to the tower again". You are so top-down here!

The business unit head tries to take back control from the top management. He tries to find some solution through compromise, but sees that in order to do so, he needs to impose new demands on his management team as well. Usually, compromise means that different individual's voices are allowed to be heard. It takes into consideration the suggestion that strategy-as-practice occurs in both micro- and macro contexts (Whittington 2003). Actors can bring in their own experiences either from other parts of the organization or from outside the organization. Compromise is typically needed more in heterogeneous groups, as the actors come from different structures. Culturally-adaptive organizations are characterized by a senior management that supports strategic initiatives arising at other levels of the firm (Bartlett and Ghoshal 1993). Individuals suspend their opinions and assumptions for the period of the conversation, and build on each other's arguments. This has a tendency to enhance the argument and make the conversation about the strategy more versatile and more meaningful for the individuals. It also permits listening to opinions and ideas that are not tightly bound to the specific issue at hand.

Conflict

Conflict sometimes ended in situations where the group distanced itself from the intended strategy. The different ethical aims at the individual and the group level led to a deadend, where the whole group detached itself from the intended strategy. The following is an example from a business unit management team meeting after NN1 gives a presentation:

> NN2: WHERE does this slide come from? We had a hell of a time trying to figure out what we were talking about and now you come up with this? Why didn't you show it before?!
> NN1 Hey, I did not have it then. It is new.
> NN2: I don't like this, why do these things come up like this - unplanned. I think this is very important and I think we should discuss this in depth.
> BU head: Let's let NN1 finish his presentation and then give some suggestions…
> NN4: But I don't think it can be only a model…
> NN5: Let Tom give a suggestion!
> NN2: So would you now recommend that we shut up?
> BU head:Yes please, nicely put.

The managers recognize the need to cope with a situation where the management team is in some kind of trouble and where they know that the strategic aim is working against them. NN2 makes the "plausible solution" to start a conflict, but this only leads to everyone becoming detached from the strategic aim. The incompatibility of the two "samenesses" and the inability to recognize otherness or the ethical aim, led to a situation where the whole group detached itself from the strategic aim. There was a discrepancy between the different individual ethical aims.

To conclude, irony, compromise and conflict also led to detachment from the strategic aim at ICE. There is a close kinship between detachment and resistance, and the fact that the organizational members resisted the hegemony of the strategic aim added impetus to the detachment. The challenge with detachment and resistance in relation to the strategic aim, is that it reproduces itself. For instance, managers who use ironic remarks often easily become outsiders in strategy work, and often willingly reproduce their own detachment. Their attitudes can undermine the strategic aim and the legitimacy of top management sensegiving. The very strong sensegiving of the ICE strategic aim could have become self-destructive.

5.11.3. Destabilization

Irony

Irony didn't only appear as a device for coping with the prevailing strategic discourse, it was also used to destabilize it. The examples above show how irony is utilized to 'test' if things can be changed, or as Kunda (1992) exemplifies in 'Engineering Culture', the irony used by engineers before their meetings was like the wet finger the sailors hold up to see which way the wind blows before setting the course.

In one of the business units, the head of the unit was not always respected by the team members. Quarrels were frequent and the members slandered the business unit head between meetings. In this example a member of business unit NN1 wants the business nit head to take more responsibility and tests the atmosphere by throwing an ironic remark.

> NN1: With the final meetings in Germany, we will need to have a decision from you [turns to BU head]

> BU-head: Auuhh....., Well, you see, I cannot take the risk of signing off on something before things proceed. The only thing we can do is keep up the good work.
>
> NN1: Don't lose your hair; I will do it for you.

NN1 has adopted the strategic aim and feels no conflict between it and the ethical aim. The business unit head sees problems with the strategic aim and tries to postpone decisions. NN1's ethical aim is to follow the strategic aim and create a conflict that aims at changing the BU heads intention to postpone the decision.

The company wanted to reduce travelling in accordance with their goal to mitigate climate change. This, however, was a recurrent debate in all the meetings, both in terms of its applicability and its benefits. The following is a discussion from a business unit management team meeting:

> BU head: All business units have to make sure that our emissions from travelling are reduced. We cannot make a new system for this, as corporate is tracking our travelling. We cannot do anything about it.
> NN2: There was also this plan that we were supposed to do.
> NN3: But we can reduce travelling in general. Obviously people who sell have to travel, but everyone else can use the video conference system.
> NN4: I have used the video conference, it is not good.
> BU-head: Ok, but we cannot do this. We cannot end up saying to someone that they cannot go purchase something in Bulgaria because our quote is full. You just have to hope that you are at home when the quote is filled!

The business unit head uses irony to make the others see how wrong the instructions from the corporate head quarters are. He tries in fact to change the norm by employing irony.

This kind of destabilizing irony was not common in the top management team, but the issue of climate change triggered it, as this extract from a meeting shows:

> NN1: "But before we go in, I have heard that the climate change is not really happening [silence] ... but we stick to the climate researchers."

This can be interpreted as irony, as what the manager says can be construed to be utterly "politically incorrect". He didn't get a response, but he did "put up his finger to see where the wind was blowing from".

In the three previous examples, irony was used as a destabilizing device. It builds upon the complexity of meanings attached to the ironic tale, where the ironic tale-maker uses this complexity to check which way the interpretation will go, always leaving open the option to ignore the underlying meanings and return to a simple description (Johansson & Woodilla 2005:44). There are hints at possible alternate realities that may either confirm or deny the intentions, depending on the confrontation. Irony, therefore, can have a destabilizing function, testing the possibilities to move things in a new direction. Such irony can be retracted or quickly developed into a formal position, depending on the reactions of the others, and is thereby constantly destabilizing the situation.

Compromise

Compromise could also lead to a questioning of the strategic aim. The group-level ethical aim led to a response to the strategic aim that changed it. This example is from a business unit management team meeting.

> BU head: We take global warming very seriously. Take it from that angle and make it good. We will assume CO2-free operations as our main target.
> NN: Do we want to cut emissions in the world or just in this company?
> BU head: We were thinking of buying this company in [another country].
> NN: In that case, I would not like to have the BU-level emissions public, as we then have to explain why we do things the way we do. My proposition is that we not publish our own figures.
> BU head: We must have the figures, send everything to the corporate level that they need. It is all about choices.
> NN: ... and as a customer, it also about what you want to hear. They want to hear that we have done a good job.
> BU head: We have announced that we are a CO2-free company, and we have to communicate answers to our people in the power plants for when they get questions. We have to have answers that the personnel can use when they are asked.

The business unit head wants to change the current way of doing things. He also tries to change the way the others in the business unit are used to do things. In his view, the otherness of the people at the power plants also is important. He tries to find a compromise that doesn't change too much, but assists in finding a way towards a more transparent strategic aim. Compromise is used as a conversational tool to find reciprocity and to initiate change. As Ford and Ford (1995) proposed there needs to be an organizational space for such conversations to take place and for a real dialogue to

occur; a dialogue where agents suspend their meanings to each other in order to mutually enhance their understanding of a situation.

Conflict

Goal-compliance, combined with the increased demand to report details to top management, led to ethical questioning and discrepancies between the strategic aims and the ethical aims. There was a dilemma between whether to follow the historical pattern of 'hiding' issues or the change initiative to be open and effective. This is a discussion at a business unit meeting, where there is a discrepancy between how the members would have liked to handle the matter and how the strategic aim stated it:

> NN1: I don't understand, but we need to have CT plan, NN2 can never do anything. ..now there are different opinions on what is what.
> NN2: But if nothing would happen with this picture now, we could come back to this later.
> NN1: Why do not we have a clear picture of what we want?
> Many at the same time: But we have!
> NN1: Why do not we take the drivers seat then?
> NN3: Because this is what we agreed upon on a former meeting, so that we would be aligned.
>
> NN1 angrily whispers something to NN2 and looks annoyed.

The interaction was characterized by some aggressiveness, but at the same time the dynamics forced people to take a stand. It was triggered on the individual level by a threat to self-esteem and brought up to the group level to test if the individual frame of reference was shared by the group.

To conclude, the strategic aim was also destabilized by the sensemaking of ethics. Through my focus on how ICE managers make sense of the strategic aim through otherness and ethics, I saw that the unintended outcome of destabilizing the strategy occurred. The managers aimed to put the sensegiving of the top management into place, but the strategic aim as translated into action through the medium of otherness destabilized the strategy and turned it into an unpredictable process.

5.12. Summary

In my analysis I have focused on the question: "How are strategic aims and ethics enacted in an organizational strategy process?" As a result, I have identified a process of sensegiving and sensemaking that is illustrated in Figure 4 on page 96. The results

show that sensemaking of otherness and ethics is ongoing through ethical questioning and a threat to self-esteem, but that the sensegiving of the norms and duties of strategic aims is often in contrast to the ethical and leads to coping mechanisms manifested in irony, compromise and conflict. The manager response to the strategic aim through sensemaking of ethics was either adjustment to it, detachment from it or destabilizing it.

The success of the strategy process depends on the impact of managerial sensegiving efforts. This can be measured by its effect on how employees make sense of it. At ICE, the sensegiving of the new strategy was a top management effort, and at the surface it looked as if it was successful, as the middle managers and their management teams had a scheme that was congruent with the goals of the top management. But when new situations triggered sensemaking, it woke an awareness of the ethical, and coping with this awareness meant disruption to the strategic aim. At ICE the discrepancies and ambiguities between the strategic aim and the ethical led to sensemaking through an awareness of otherness, experienced in tension between the personal feeling and the organizational norm. An awareness of ethics was triggered by the intention to live the good life, where otherness is always present – it is impossible to be a self without the other. But as the strategic aim, the sameness, was always being experienced as a form of dominating expectation, it led to ongoing coping between the conflicting aims and a repression of the otherness.

6 DISCUSSION

I set out in this thesis to explore the relationship between ethics and the strategy process and to examine how the ethical subjectivity that is constituted by otherness can be a part of strategy. My answer to this question was first to elaborate how identity work evolves through otherness among individual managers and then to examine how otherness is enacted through sensemaking. The underlying research interest was that individuals as moral agents need a coherent self-narrative that is self-reflexive and focuses on the conception of self and interactions with others. The self-narrative requires a continuity of self through time, a reflexivity of the self to others and a treatment of the self as other, which includes a moral evaluation of the self (Linde 1993, Ricoeur 1992). There should be a relation between the self in history and the self now, and despite changes in the self and in the surroundings, there needs to be a oneness, a sameness of the self – and this is the work that individuals do: trying to realize this oneness in their identities that is disrupted by otherness.

The idea that managerial actions lead to both planned and unplanned consequences is well accepted in strategy research today, starting with Minzberg's process models and the newer strategy-as-practice school of research. However, the preservation of sameness is still the basis for most strategy work and certainly a necessary one in order to for companies and organizations to function. My aim was not to criticize this underpinning of strategy, but to offer a way to consider strategy as proceeding from the dialectical identity and inherent ethics of the people who are involved in the doing of strategy. The otherness of strategy – what do the organization's members care about – it is the caring for and nurturing that draws them together. The individuals play many roles in the organization, but the strategy is a perpetually unfolding story that can be shaped through this otherness.

I will start by discussing the more detailed implications of the two separate analyses, followed by an outline of the present contributions to research in business ethics and strategy, and conclude by discussing why Paul Ricouer is valuable for understanding business ethics.

6.1. Three patterns of identity work through otherness

The first analysis showed that the strategy process governs a form of identity regulation that tries to produce the "appropriate individual". The starting point for my analysis on

the identity work among ICE managers was Ricoeur's notion regarding the ethical intention of life and the search for a narrative unity of life. The research question I posed was: "How do otherness and sameness influence identity work in strategy?" I observed that identity work was ongoing, as the inherent ethics to live the good life was iterated against the strategic aim.

At ICE, identity regulation through sameness of the strategic objective formulation was powerful, but it couldn't resist all the attempts to express otherness. The detailed engagement with identity as a process, facilitated by Ricoeur's concept about selfhood, sameness and otherness and a coherent narrative of life, revealed how identity work can be a paradoxical process in search for 'the good life'. The analysis showed the potential of a particular ethical approach to identity work in which otherness performs an important function in creating concordance between ipse and idem identities. The implication is that in organizations, ethics is always as present as the strategic aim; the ethical being the action in response to the call of the demand for self-esteem through otherness. I found three patterns of identity talk through otherness: neglecting, resisting and embracing otherness.

The most common form of identity work through otherness was just simply *neglecting* it. It involved a strict focus on organizational norms and sameness, without any reflection on the ethical. For instance, when top managers made tough demands for the organization, there was no room for otherness. The neglect of otherness was however commented on by middle managers, for instance, when one manager says, "We have forgotten about the emotional side of people", and again when the HR manager points out that the organization still is issue-driven and not people-driven as it had intended to be. As Alvesson and Willmott (2002) claim, organizations are often defined by their presumptions and their attempts to marshal the "internal striving" of individuals. These aims come to interfere with the relationship between self-evaluation and self-concordance in pursuit of organizational goals.

ICE presented a range of goals that the managers were expected to adapt in their identities as appropriate, but showing solicitude and care wasn't one of them. Working life can exert an influence over us by prescribing our actions (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004). In their roles as professional managers, the individuals didn't see it as appropriate to display behaviour that would have revealed otherness. They still expressed needs to show otherness, both by saying that the company had "forgotten about the emotional side of people" and by the irony directed towards the sameness in

the strategic aim. Some of these expressions led to responses in the strategic aim, the sameness, which seems to indicate that the individual otherness, as it evolves from moment to moment, can have some implications on the strategy process itself. The managers tried to preserve their sense of self-esteem and their narrative unity of life in the cross-fire arising from the strategic demands.

When individuals have to enact the role of the strategist, or utilize institutions that promote their roles as the efficient and goal-compliant person, they may attempt to *resist* otherness. My findings reveal that a substantial proportion of the identity work of the managers I studied was focused on resisting otherness. In relation to the strategy, it took form in resisting the norm, like in the example where the middle managers cannot accept the instructions to cut down on their travelling because of the overarching aim to mitigate climate change. Also at the top management level, resistance of otherness took its form in tough rhetoric and the strict examination of performance.

The management teams were the face-to-face groups where the managers mirrored their otherness. Expressions of otherness through solicitude and friendship didn't appear often, at least not explicitly. Implicitly, otherness was reflected in irony, remorse even. The managers seemed to be ashamed of showing reciprocity, as the example on page 45 illustrates, when the manager has to ask the HR expert if it was appropriate to ask a subordinate what he wants from his future. Ethics unfolds through processes that emerge from the interaction between people. Identity forming through otherness is a continuous process where the self and the other formulate, edit and refuse various acts. In ICE's strategy process, rather than defining their own ethics, the managers were defined by the strategy and ethics that the organizational strategic aim constructed for them. Weiskopf and Willmott (2011) talk about a reflexive constitution of the self, i.e. a self that constitutes itself in relation to what is defined as duty or obligation, understanding its enactment as a choice. At ICE, this kind of choice didn't seem possible, even though there were attempts to fight against the duty and obligation.

At ICE there was an attempt to do this by reinforcing "individual initiative" and "thinking out of the box". However, the means that they chose to use: having people redefine their own work, didn't leave much space for reciprocity. It was conducted through the sameness of the strategic aim. The top management team wanted to make sure that people did not "become fat and lazy", and those who did were "underperformers" and let go. Also the structure didn't support the aim towards instilling more freedom, which was illustrated by the middle manager who complained

that it took two years for one of his subordinates to understand that he was supposed to make his own job description. Reciprocity is the basis for otherness, and in Ricoeur's framework it includes reflections of power and domination. Power is needed to sustain the maintenance of strategy, but when power becomes domination, the reciprocity becomes asymmetrical.

A third form of identity work through otherness was the act of *embracing* it. By embracement I refer to the verbal confirmation of acceptance of the otherness in the self, the group or the institution; embracing the ethical aim of "living the good life, with and for others, in just institutions" (Ricoeur 1992:172). Embracement implies instances when a glimpse of this ethicality could be seen. For instance, when the business unit head admitted that the biggest mistake he had made was the fact that he had forgot to call attention to one of his team member's achievements. He didn't have to do that, and it wasn't necessary for the strategy, but it was the ethical thing to do at the moment.

Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) third pattern of identity regulation - the quasi-autonomous – gives expression to the possibility of "micro-emancipation". They talk about producing the "appropriate individual" through organizational control. Managerial work operates to influence employees' self-construction towards Sameness (coherence, commitment) and argue that such control is a process that is in tension with other claims on the individual's identity that can open forms of "micro-emancipation". This micro-emancipation is preceded by patterns of identity regulation where the "sense of autonomy arises through an engagement with 'the other' rather than something that is essentially given and 'liberated' through resistance" (2002:640). In the same way, the inherent ethical aim that was formed by otherness was regulated by the ICE strategic goals. It can thus be said that the individual ethics triggered by otherness can open forms of micro-emancipation from the strategic aim and the intended or unintended production of the "appropriate individual". My data suggests that the strategy process produces a form of identity regulation that tries to produce the appropriate individual. At ICE, the identity regulation through sameness of the strategic objective formulation was powerful, but it couldn't resist all of the attempts to express otherness. However, it was probably not only the internal strategy process that created the powerful strategy discourse in ICE. As Alvesson (1990) has noted, post-industrial society creates conditions that weaken naturally occurring processes of organizational identity development, and this is why managers must concoct corporate substitutes in order to keep functioning as economic entities.

The detailed engagement with identity as a process, facilitated by Ricoeur's concept about selfhood, sameness and otherness and a coherent narrative of life, reveals how identity work can be a paradoxical process in search for "the good life". It shows the potential a particular ethical approach may have on these processes in which otherness performs an important function in bringing concordance between ipse and idem identities. The implication is that in organizations, the ethical intention is always one and same with the strategic aim; the action in response to the call of the demand for self-esteem.

6.2. Ongoing coping between sameness and otherness

In the second analysis, I delved deeper into Ricoeur's concept using empirics explicated through sensemaking theory. It focused on the sensemaking of ethics from within the sensegiving of the strategic aim. A lack of sameness is usually not a challenge for organizations, but it can be acknowledged that people don't always feel a commitment to the strategic plan (Floyd & Wollridge 2000, Balogun & Johnson 2004, Mantere & Vaara 2008). I argued that one way of better understanding the managerial actions in strategy is to focus on ethics through otherness and to examine how they make sense of the strategy and the ethical. To do this, I examined the relationship between ethics and the strategy process at ICE.

More precisely, I focused on the ethical subjectivity that is constituted by otherness – how people in the strategy process see themselves as subjects in relation to their sense of ethical responsibility to themselves and others. Sensemaking of ethics played a central role in the reproduction of the notion of otherness in the midst of a strategy process that is characterized by sameness. This involved the joint reconstruction of the strategic aim and had implications on both the fulfillment of the strategic plan and the participation in the strategy process. The norms and duties in the organization were mediated through processes of sensegiving and through a process of sensemaking triggered by ethics. The managers were involved in a fundamental questioning of their identity as their sense of self was challenged.

Through my focus on how managers at ICE made sense of the strategic aim through otherness and ethics, I observed that the process had an unintended outcome: strategy destabilization. The managers aimed to put the sensegiving of the top management into

place, but the strategic aim as translated into action through the medium of otherness destabilized the strategy and turned it into an unpredictable process.

Sensegiving served as a guide to the meaning construction of others, towards a preferred definition of organizational reality. The responses to the sensegiving of the strategic aim, after the sensemaking of ethics, were adjustment, detachment and destabilization. This analysis has links to research in the control-resistance dynamics of strategy work (Levy et al 2003, Balogun & Johnson 2005, Laine & Vaara 2007, Mantere & Vaara 2008) and the role of ethics in these dynamics. In particular, the analysis showed how the managerial hegemony that is characterized by sameness can be brushed aside through otherness. Sensegiving of the strategic aim is the means by which goal-compliance and hegemony were established and at ICE it was characterized by top-down and exacting demands for the future. It is often important for managers to establish sameness and compliance and therefore to promote this top-down approach, but in combination with the inherent otherness it led to tensions and disruptions.

As the managers strived to apply the strategic aims of the top management, their everyday experience with the actions of others and the discussions they shared shaped their interpretation of what they were doing. The result was a tension and a false belief in the top managers, and at times this also led to an exclusion of the middle managers' otherness and their capacity to offer something to the strategy. The sensemaking of ethics found its relief in irony, compromise and conflict, and these in turn led to some influence on the strategic aim, but by and large the organizational reality stayed the same.

This is because these responses were largely subtle and often passed unnoticed in the interaction – the taken-for-granted strategic aim of sameness was easily legitimized in the company and feelings of otherness became very difficult to enact. But while ICE was characterized by the sameness of the strategic aim, it still managed to co-exist with ethical.

6.3. Implications for business ethics literature

My findings show how managers mediate the impact of the strategic aim through the ethics of otherness, but also indicates that these activities are repressed and muted. This leads me to question the feasibility of ethics in strategy. Top management wants to introduce and implement a strategy that is internally "people-driven" and takes

individuals into account, but the omnipresent strategic aim of sameness impedes the organization from realizing it. Whereas normative business ethics literature has focused on how strategy is fair, leads to good deeds or is made by virtuous people, my study suggests that ethics is not something separate from the day-to-day, or moment-to-moment activity. It cannot be "managed" and controlled from a distance.

Business ethics scholarship has moved towards understanding subjectivity in ethics and the current study not only shows how this subjectivity is enacted in strategy work, but also suggests that it is impeded and resisted. This subjective view on ethics makes it more complex, as it defies the possibility of ensuring a "common" ethics in organizations and also defies the possibility to critique the ethics of an organization. The space between ethics and strategy provides an empirical ground in which subjective ethics, or ethics in practice, can be studied. Both the subjective ethics of an individual and ethics in relation to the complexities of strategy work are subjects worthy of additional study. I have drawn attention to the complex relationship between ethics and strategy by working through the conflicts and disruptions between the strategic aim and the ethical.

The idea that strategy/business and ethics are entwined is not a new one. Freeman (1994) has persuasively demonstrated how the "separation thesis", or the idea that business and morality can be separated in certain ways, should be rejected. Stakeholder theory has done much to enhance a more versatile view of business ethics in organizations. But while it is generally agreed that the separation thesis should be rejected, there is little agreement on the issue discussed in this thesis. I suggest however that whether or not we should reject the separation thesis must ultimately depend on how we understand the ethicality of the stakeholders. I have tried to introduce the idea of a subject infused by the institutional setting, who is articulated by and yet at the same time impeded by that setting. It is very difficult to do without resorting to abstractions, and nearly all business management literature uses abstractions in a way that veils our awareness of experience by bracketing it. This is typically fine, if we talk about something as mundane as resource allocation. But when we talk about ethics, it becomes problematic, because ethics is dealing with the assumption of projective expressions in a public setting.

In other words, ethics is a concern of about how you flourish in the company of others and through the articulation or expression or discovery of a sense of esteem. This is something that cannot be pulled away from our behaviour at every minute. So business

ethicists cannot behave in the same way as the other researchers, by abstracting. What I show is that it is really hard to pull away, not to abstract. We are not sufficiently aware of that, but the ethics scholars have to try and define someone or their subjectivity, even while they recognize that this persona is constantly under review.

More generally then, managers are people. They aren't fixable. None of us are solely virtuous people or full of only vice. We cannot isolate them managers as distinct from parents or men or women. What my work shows from a broadly ethnographic perspective is that it is possible to articulate a kind of ethical well-being: the experience of ethics as evolutionary as opposed to something that can be attained. It is about the task of self-creation and recreation, and this endeavour is as much ironic as it is beautiful. We cannot isolate the route. I'm not saying that business should be more ethical, because there are no readily quantifiable elements in ethics. The managers at ICE have problems we all share; we recognize them as our own. Ricoeur is allowing us to try and make sense of them in some ways. This is the value associated with using Ricoeur, as he allows us to make sense of the problems we are experiencing. There is a common set of problems at play, the experience of tension, which we can make sense of. Ricoeur's idea of the just institution is what animates the lives of the people. This is another reason why Ricoeur is important, because ethics is distinct from the moral. Too often business ethics is discussed at the level of the moral. But the underbelly where ethics exists is hidden. It is a bit similar to the "practical coping" in strategy (see Chia and Holt 2006) – people see the "headline" issues, but the ordinary groundwork is something we ignore, something we abstract away from, and Ricoeur is pulling us back.

I believe that it is an important contribution, as it furthers understanding of how managers are moral agents, fully engaged with the contingencies and dynamics of the world. Instead of an abstract cognitive exercise, ethics is all about participation, relationships and responsiveness. Sonenshein (2007) has in his sensemaking-intuition model introduced a new theoretial model on how non-rationalist ethics emerges though issue construction and intuitive judgement. The model of ethics and sensemaking I have developed in this thesis furthers Sonenshein's theorybuilding by showing more explicitly how the intuitive judgement happens via the constant iteration between selfhood, sameness and otherness. Sonenshein (2009) has also shown empirically how ethical issues emerge through trigger points and ambiguity. My model specifically examines the trigger points, the discrepancies and the anxiety that are a part of the emerging ethical issues.

Iedema and Rhodes (2010) illustrate how emergent subjectivity and interaction can result from video surveillance and conclude that the fact that people feel that they are 'being seen' can intensify mutual attentiveness to the point where interaction affords an ethic for self and other. My research adds to this by demonstrating how the ethical can become possible and tangible in practice. It is an ethics that prompts reactions with on-going practicalities.

McMurray, Pullen, Rhodes (2011) argue that people at work, when faced with multiple demands from multiple others, will always violate ethics in the way that they constitute their own subjectivity. They show that there is an inevitable conflict between ethics and politics because the ethical subject is always divided between "itself and a demand that cannot be fulfilled". They call for further studies on the interaction between how people shape their sense of their own and other's ethical subjectivity. My study furthers this research by offering a more complex environment to study subjective ethics and by juxtaposing the different ways in which people "cope" with the tension between the different demands. I claim that by building their ethical subjectivity in strategy work, managers locate their otherness in the "plausible solution" between the strategic aim and the ethical otherness. This plausible solution is at its best some kind of practical wisdom.

This practical wisdom might be bring relief to the tension between the strategic aim and ethics – or the separation thesis to use stakeholder terms. There were instances where the managers saw the others' otherness, but at the same time were wise enough to follow the best possible solution for the group or the organization. Otherness is not after all an end to itself, but something that is constantly iterated against and with sameness. As otherness pays regards to the ethical dimension of the human collaboration, there were instances in the interaction at ICE where the agents did understand the distinctive nature of the other – something that could be called practical wisdom or phronesis.

In Ricoeur's terms, practical wisdom is the capability to make plausible exceptions from the norm on behalf of others. It requires application to singular situations, and makes the agent subsume his or her goals under the others' capacity to accept them. When the managers at ICE coped with the sensemaking of the ethical aim through *compromise*, they showed moral exemplarity and reciprocity, but it was also very clear evide nce of the inevitable tension between the strategic aim and ethics. The managers tried to find a plausible solution to a situation of being sandwiched between the sameness of the

strategic aim and the otherness, but in the moment of the commitment to the strategic aim, they disclaimed their urge for the ethical.

The strategic aim gives the one who decides upon the strategy a certain status over the person to whom the obligation is owed. A manager has given a promise to implement the strategy, and he or she is counted on to live up to this promise. Also his or her self-constancy requires it. Not keeping one's promise of pursuing the strategic aim means betraying both the expectations of the others and the organization that needs mutual trust in order to function. In strategy, perhaps the most important decisions consist in drawing a line between what is permitted and what is forbidden, and it is in these moments that sameness and otherness meet. And as practical wisdom can never truly be individual, the judgment in a situation is less arbitrary if the decisionmaker has talked to other people and acknowledged their otherness. To follow Durand and Calori (2006), I suggest that for practical wisdom to have a possibility in strategy work, managers should focus on the development of conversation spaces where the ethical is made possible. Ethics literature should increasingly acknowledge the subjective nature of ethics and the fact that ethics is constantly demonstrated in practice and in all of our interactions with other people.

6.4. Implications for strategy literature

The view that strategy formulation is envisioned as a task of top managers and implemented by others is challenged by many strategy scholars, especially those that have taken social processes into account (Pettigrew 1973, Mintzberg 1978). Strategy involves internal tensions around agency and identity (Mantere & Vaara 2008) and there are several studies showing the alternative discourses around strategy (Knights and Morgan 1991, Samra-Fredericks 2003, Chia & Holt 2006, 2009). In this thesis I have tried to understand how ethics constructs individual managers' identities and how it is made sense of and enacted through sensemaking in strategy work. I found that the aims of strategy work and the strategy process at ICE were characterized by sameness, which means that the aim was to unite both the organization and its stakeholders under the same objective formulation. However, otherness was also present as an inherent part of human life – the managers were ethical agents and I saw strategy proceeding from the dialectical identity and inherent ethical condition of the people enacting the strategy. Often, both in theories about business ethics and in practice for managers, ethics is simply an issue of compliance. However, I have made a case to show why we

are all inherently ethical, irrespective of our explicit goals, at least insofar as we are able to understand why esteem matters. I have also shown that business and ethics are not separate – it is about how we live with one another outside of being merely means for one another to gain. Managers were ethical agents, but in strategy work the ethical task of relating to one's peers, superiors and subordinates as "others", rather than as the provider of a service, was muted and resisted, although constantly present as an ongoing source of coping. Through two interconnected analyses I was able to reveal how strategy work was riddled with tensions and how individuals relied on a number of tactics to navigate in order to live up to the demands of otherness.

6.5. Credibility of the study

In this work, I have applied a naturalistic inquiry to strategy work. Since naturalistic inquiry is not a clear-cut research method as such, but allows different styles and approaches, the researcher needs to develop an own way of conducting the naturalistic study. An important question in this kind of qualitative research is the notion of trustworthiness. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985): "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" (1985:290). One of the central principles of assuring the credibility of case study research is to triangulate multiple sources of data. In this study, I have used *methodological* triangulation and *data* triangulation. The triangulation of methods was assured as I used interviews, observation and documents in gathering data. Data triangulation involves time, space and persons, and entails gathering data through several sampling strategies, so that slices of data at different times and social situations are gathered. During my data gathering over six months, I made continuous analyses of it and as I got new data, it worked as a new layer and made the analyses constantly richer. Three months after the period of observation, I went back to the management teams and discussed the preliminary results with them, thus processing the data again in another time and another situation. The feedback I received from them seems to confirm my findings. I have also let other scholars read the raw data and interpret them, and have discussed various interpretations with them.

As I decided to use Ricoeur's idea of the ethical as the theoretical lens in this work, it has influenced the work and the results. The contributions of this work, although produced empirically, stem from this thinking, which means that the empirical

evidence of ethics in strategic management has been constructed within this line of thinking (Alvesson & Kärreman 2007).

Although I have used a single case study, the findings and the induced theory can have theoretical generalizability. In qualitative research, the generalizability can be corresponded to transferability (Guba & Lincoln 1985). In positivist work, the concern of external validity often lies in demonstrating that the results of the work can be applied to a wider population. Although some naturalistic inquirers say that it is impossible to generalize from a particular environment, Stake (1995) offers a contrasting view. He suggests that although each case may be unique, it is also an example within a broader group and as a result, the prospect of transferability cannot be immediately rejected. The responsibility of the investigator is to ensure that sufficient contextual information about the fieldwork site is provided to enable the reader to see the transferability. In this work, I have tried to offer a full description of all the contextual factors impinging on the inquiry. There is also an accumulation of findings from earlier studies staged in different settings that enables a more inclusive and overall picture. For instance Sonenshein's (2009) study on one Fortune 500company has offered a theoretical platform from which ethical issues can be investigated in other contexts, too. Also McMurray et al. (2010) have used single case research to further the theories on ethics in organisations. The transferability of my study is assured both by the comprehensive empirical descriptions of the data, and the fact that it accumulates findings from previous, similar studies.

6.6. Paul Ricoeur and business ethics

In English translations of Ricouer, the term "the ethical aim" is used, translated from "la visée ethique": "la visée de la vie bonne, avec et pour les autre, dans des institutions justes" (The aim of living the good life, with and for others, in just institutions). However, la visée is does not strictly mean "aim", it is more like an intention we are not necessarily aware of. This is a problematic term in English, because aim in English connotes something that is strived for. But if we discount standards and principles, ethics becomes something internalized, something we simply live. So nothing is pushing or pulling us in life, there is nothing in life that is sustaining us, there is nothing dogmatic about ethics. Because ethics is like breathing for Ricouer, it is therefore not decisional. Morality might be decisional, which is the kind of expression of ethics on the level of social norm, where it becomes explicit, at least so far as it can

invoke standards or you can identify manners or customs. But from within, ethics is that condition from beneath which you can't apply any yardstick to, and you can't decide whether someone is or is not ethical. One must penetrate their willingness, and disturb them. We must make explicit their experience in ways that allow them to touch against what is dark and disturbing, and to get some sense of their own possibility, their own sense of potential awareness. It is deeply intimate and it is something that is strange to talk about. Language struggles to describe it; one reaches the end of meaning.

There are many classifications from within the language; our experience is where language touches sense and the sense is experience. We have to use metaphor and I suppose that there is something of that in this interchange of morals and ethics, where morals is the point where we can reach some kind of semiotic classification, whereas ethics is about the constant semantic negotiation. Ricoeur is useful at least insofar as he allows us at least to some extent to get a handle on that. This is the value associated with using Ricoeur, he allows us to make sense of the problems we are experiencing. There is a common set of problems at play, the experience of tension, which we can make sense of. Ricoeur's idea of the just institution is what animates the lives of the people; this is why Ricoeur is important, because ethics is distinct from the moral.

Yet Ricoeur can be brought into critique because of his preoccupation with an idea of the self that is narrated with a sufficient degree of continuity, common thread or sense of historical. So if someone fails to maintain a sense of narrative percistance, is he or she then somehow less than ethical? Ricoeur is perhaps too insistant in his preoccupation with the idea of the narrated self. If I can't make sense of my life through some kind of emplotted tale, am I then somehow becoming less human? And is the ethical aim somehow being discounted? It can be brought into question whether Ricoeur is too fixated with the self, investing too much of his ethics in weaving the self into the tale.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The idea that strategy and the strategic aim is about something uniform and predictable is well accepted in strategy research, leading to a focus on manager efficiency and goal-reaching. The importance of the two analyses and the model presented in the second analysis is, therefore, the empirically-based concepts they offer to account for the managers' inherent need for otherness – or the ethical intention of life. They link the strategic aim and ethics through identity work and sensemaking – activity that is triggered by the tension between the aims and acknowledging the unpredictable nature of change. In bringing strategy and ethics together in this way we can talk of an ethos of an organization. Ethics is an ongoing individual's experience of making choices about what to do and the institutional context in which this doing is situated. In so doing I bring into question the very idea of separating individuals and institutional contexts as, by drawing on the philosophy of Paul Ricoeur (1992), I find ethics less a study of moral norms than the transcendental basis for identity constituted in experiencing what is other than, or beyond, oneself.

I have shown from within how managers experience tensions when encountering a strategic impress that somehow traduces their sense of rightness, fairness, integrity, or esteem. These ethical considerations in relation to self, others, and the organization manifest themselves in a variety of behaviours and expressions. I have elaborated on these using Paul Ricoeur's terms and taken the ethical beyond what is often considered to be the established way of appreciating what it means to be ethical. Ricouer finds ethics woven into all practice where the self is under negotiation, either personally or collectively, hence ethics is not a topic in itself, but entwined with strategy in all its concerns.

The ethical is not something that can be planned or measured, it is more an attitude towards life, or a pervading sense of rectitude that dispositionally matters that the managers have dealt with for a while and which they find governs their sense of what is appropriate. Hence there is an intimate connection to practical wisdom, or phronesis. The managers tried to find a plausible solution to being in between the sameness of the strategic aim and the ethics of otherness, but in the moment of commitment to the strategic aim, they disclaimed their urge for otherness.

The strategic aim seems to stress the agent's opportunism as a critical factor for strategic success. Seizing opportunities requires alertness and vigilance to see the potential in internal and external resources. But an inclusion of otherness might inspire different behaviours, such as leaving certain opportunities to others and universal openness. Otherness could engender, for instance, a more long-term benefit, sustainable development, and smarter strategic positioning. Also the relationship to stakeholders could be more balanced.

Even though a strength of my study is that it has allowed me to explore the ethical subjectivity of managers in a multinational company, its weakness might be that it is a single case study. It would be worthwhile for further studies to explore these issues in even greater complexity by bringing together different ways that people give accont to their ethical subjectivity. More generally, this thesis attests to the value of Ricoeur's ethics in organizational settings. I realize that Ricoeur can be seen as too fixated on the narrative unity of life and the ethical intention, but this doesn't mean we should give up on this kind of subjective ethics. Rather, it calls for business ethics scholars to recognize that ethics is a concern for how people flourish in the company of others and the articulation or expression or discovery of a sense of esteem. Ethics cannot be generalized. Business ethicists cannot behave in the same way as mainstream strategy scholars and their tendency towards abstracting. What I show is that it is really hard to zoom in, not to abstract. We are not sufficiently aware of that, but the ethics scholars have to try and define someone, or their subjectivity, and recognize that it is constantly under review.

While I have sought to explicate identity work in a strategy process through Ricoeur's ideas of the ethical aim of life, I believe that the theoretical approach I have proposed for understanding the ethical side of strategy work has significant value for other contexts, too. There will always be some aspects of work that require people to behave in conflict with their inherent ethics and disrupt their sense of self. To respond to these conflicts, ongoing identity work is required in order to sustain a self-esteem and a verifiable sense of who one is as a moral being. Narrative identity work understood as a self-reflexive process might help grasp the iteration and mediation in the flux of conflicting demands. It makes us see the evidence of our behavior and perhaps help us become the moral beings we can look back upon with a good sense of self-esteem.

We might all recognize some aspects of our work identities that require us to behave in ways that conflict with our profound sense of self and our search for the good life.

Responding to the conflicting identities requires acknowledging and formulating the inherently ethical in our being. The formation of the traits that form identities in organizational contexts can relate to training and interaction between people. When ethics can be seen as something that is happening every day in the interaction between people, it becomes something that cannot be fully managed and rationalized. It should be something that is part of everyday strategy practice and not merely compliant with rules and regulations. There is a growing practitioner interest in how managers could be more intuitive or "spiritual" at work. If individuals respond to otherness in affective ways, then training them to develop more rational processes of responding to ethical issues might not be the most fruitful alternative. Perhaps it would be more important to acknowledge that managers are restrained in time to reflect on the ethical, and tend to respond automatically. Managers should recognize that strategy work always has ethical implications, and that managers as moral agents cannot step outside their holistic narrative of life.

Although the current study takes a step towards understanding ethics at it is unfolding in the day-to-day strategizing activities, there are several important challenges still to overcome. The rationalist approaches to business ethics have been important for understanding ethics as a way of making the organization's ethos more solid and more generous towards its stakeholders, both internal and external. Taking the subjective view on ethics into consideration will hopefully serve as encouragement for continuing these endeavors. This is a case study, exploratory by nature, and should be complemented and followed by other analysis. For instance, it would be interesting to understand how the managers themselves formulate their accounts of identity; would the managers, if put against the wall, admit to their otherness or would they rationally want to follow the sameness path of the strategic aim. It would also be interesting to see if there are differences in who is worthy of "being another"? This is a question much bigger than ethics – it is about a resolution in time and space and values and culture that is too large to explore in a thesis. It is about recognizing what is best for us. And I think that there is an inherent ethical intention in us all to eventually get people to see that the "otherness" in the other person actually boils down to being the same as your "sameness" – it may take generations but we are on the way.

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