



Title : Imagining organisational futures: towards a systemic constructionist practice perspective

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**IMAGINING ORGANISATIONAL FUTURES.
TOWARDS A SYSTEMIC CONSTRUCTIONIST
PRACTICE PERSPECTIVE**

by

Martin Miksits

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of a
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Abstract

This thesis is an inquiry into the practice of imagining of organisational futures. The aims of this research are to promote understanding of imagining as relational, discursive and dialogical practice in organisations, to develop opportunities for imagining in organisations drawing on systemic and social constructionist theories and practices, and to develop propositions informing systemic constructionist practice. It is a reflexive, qualitative, case and practice based research, informed by ethnographic sensibility, using Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory and discourse analysis as research methods.

The focus of this research is not to solve problems but to make sense and create connections. This research promotes an understanding of imagining as relational, discursive practice and a critical appreciation of imagining in organisational theory and systemic constructionist practice with organisations, in particular the relevance of imagining in organisational opportunity, alignment and coordination, organisational decision making, and organisation development. Reflections on imagining practice are articulated as concepts of *games of imagining* expressing archetypical discursive forms of imagining, *discursive reflexivity*, a practice of reflexive evaluating of the unfolding talk for the emergent possibilities in it, and *game changing*, an expanding of possibilities for imagining from within a conversational situation.

Drawing on reflections from theory and practice this research promotes the relevance of relational, discursive imagining for organisational task attainment and makes a case for advancing imagining practices through developing the participation in imagining processes and by foregrounding and institutionalising imagining in organisations. It argues that such developments can be of a transformational nature and positions systemic constructionist practice as a resource for such a development.

This research contributes to systemic constructionist practice research by developing practice based frameworks that serve to orientate practitioners in the living moment of practising. It builds on established frameworks of systemic constructionist theory and practice, expands their relevance, and also invites critical and appreciative sensibilities in relation to systemic constructionist practice. This research contributes to a small body of empirical case research into organisational imagining informed by social constructionist positions and ethnographic sensibility.

Keywords: Coordinated management of meaning, CMM, Constructionist, Discourse, Discursive reflexivity, Future, Games of imagining, Game changing, Imagining, Organisation, Systemic

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of a Professional Doctorate in Systemic Practice at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

Name of candidate: Martin Miksits

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Miksits', written in a cursive style.

Date: May 8, 2014

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I had also the privilege to be part of a welcoming cohort of systemic constructionist practitioners and friends, who have rich experience and expertise in systemic constructionist practising, who gave me the opportunity to learn with them and from them, and who have contributed to this thesis through their curiosity and encouragement.

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1 Introduction

My aim with this research is to promote understanding of imagining as relational, discursive and dialogical practice in organisations, to develop opportunities for imagining in organisations drawing on systemic and social constructionist theories and practices, and to develop propositions informing systemic constructionist practice¹.

In this thesis I will propose that *imagining of organisational futures* can serve as a metaphor useful in developing the utility of systemic constructionist practice for organisational emergence. Inviting an understanding of the relevance of this metaphor for organisational practice and for systemic constructionist practice is a major theme of this thesis. A second major theme is the research into the performance of imagining practice and the development of its use and usefulness for organisations.

I will conduct this research from a systemic and social constructionist position which is also associated with post-modernity. It means to consider that the social world as we know it arises out of conversations, cultural conventions and practices (Burr, 2003). This is also a radical departure from scientific and modern ideas of an objective and discoverable world, a topic that I will explore further in the literature review.

I think of this thesis as punctuation of an inquiry and also as part of an emergent conversation on ways of practising in a community of practitioners. I will relate to imagining from different perspectives and I am looking forward to sharing what I think of as interesting and useful. I hope I can portray my sense of the relevance of imagining in organisational practice as well as insight into imagining in systemic and social constructionist practice in a way that invites coherence and understanding. In the following sections of this introductory chapter I will say more about the context of this research, the approach and the structure of the thesis.

¹ The terms systemic and social constructionist will be introduced in the following chapter two.

1.1 On this project of imagining organisational futures

It has become a common sense statement that people in organisations require a shared vision to act purposefully and in a coordinated way. There is discussion about what constitutes such a shared vision, objective, purpose, strategy, goal, aim, identity, mission or programme of an organisation, what it should look like and what is deemed good enough. There are, of course, methods about how such common frames of reference can or should be created and what the steps involved are (for example Porter, 1980, Collins and Porras, 1996, Riel and Balmer, 1997, Markides, 2000, Kaplan and Norton, 2001, Kaplan et al., 2008).

So one might ask what point is there in an inquiry into imagining of organisational futures?

My purpose here is to engage with the unfolding and relational nature of imagining, as conceiving of possibilities for how to go on. These possibilities are not necessarily hard wired into the grand vision of an organisation but may be more local in nature and emergent from situations. Also the way I will engage with this question will be focused on insights into the dialogical and discursive structure of imagining as opposed to research into outcomes or achievements of coordination as a *'thing'* such as a vision, strategy or plan.

Imagining of practice and the practice of imagining

My interest in imagining has originally evolved during research seminars out of reflections on my work as consultant in a situation where I was advocating the use of dialogical approaches to address performance issues in an organisation. What I was proposing to stakeholders in that organisation was, although in different words and actions, that the structures and ways of talking, the possibilities to express experiences fully, the matters of participation and voice, can be of such significance to the operation *that this in itself* may have the consequence that problems resolve or can be addressed in more effective ways. I suggested that permitting and inviting more open, participative and reflexive² conversations can be a start and a step on a journey to improve on performance matters.

² The concept of reflexivity will be introduced in chapter 2 in relation to systemic social constructionist practice in organisations.

Some people may say ‘What a strange proposition indeed to talk yourself out of trouble’, or they may say, ‘When have we stopped analysing problems and taking decisive steps to resolve issues around here?’ In my experience leaders in most organisations value the importance of talk, relationships, and stories but see these as subordinate to their being effective in analysing and solving problems. They find it difficult to consolidate a world-view where things get done through effective problem solving with a proposition of addressing issues through discursive practices such as dialogue, conversations, or storytelling.

In this particular organisational experience there were several voices involved, some more supportive and others more reserved about the use of what I will introduce as a *systemic constructionist approach to organisation development*. The underlying question in the consultancy work was how can we come to imagine a practice together? This question of moving towards an imagining together will be of relevance in the propositions developed in this thesis.

Imagining as a shared frame of practice

Related to the concerns mentioned above I see the lack of a language that connects modern and realistic approaches with post modern and dialogic approaches. To the contrary postmodern traditions have been criticised for relating through a language that is difficult to comprehend (Chomsky, 2011). Relating post-modern to modern thinking is often done in the form of comparing the one with the other emphasising notions of difference.

I can sympathise with managers who are careful in investing in change or development approaches they find difficult to comprehend, assess or sustain in their organisation. From my own experience in corporate settings and from the training contexts of business schools I have almost exclusively experienced modernistic accounts of practice and theory, not necessarily implying single best solutions or hard theories in all aspects of managerial practice but offering objective frames of reference to make considered judgements.

The rift between the modern and the systemic constructionist positions and the implications for how to go on, is equally present in my own biography, experiences and resources. I suggest that the development of frames of common reference and practices that promote and invite understanding and also foreground relevant experiences and resources would be helpful for systemic constructionist practitioners to contribute to modernistic oriented organisations and for modern managers to engage with systemic

constructionist practice. I will propose that concepts of imagining can contribute to such a shared frame or practice.

Related to the interest of promoting shared frames of reference I aim to write this research in a way that makes it accessible also for readers who are joining without prior knowing of systemic or postmodern ideas.

Imagining as systemic, social constructionist practice

A third context for this research is my interest in systemic, social constructionist practices and ideas, generally and here particularly in organisational contexts. I will provide an introduction to the theoretical routes in the literature chapter and here only invite transparency on my personal history of engaging with these ideas.

I came to relate to systemic social constructionist traditions and practices through Kensington Consultation Centre Foundation (KCCF) in London. KCCF existed from 1985 to 2010 under the leadership of Peter and Susan Lang and Martin Little and many others who contributed to the practice and character of the organisation. I related to KCCF as a student on their masters programs in Systemic Therapy and Systemic Leadership, later I contributed as systemic therapist to KCCF's qualified psychotherapy service and as a tutor to the Systemic Leadership and Organisational Studies programme. Peter Lang and John Shotter from KCCF also developed the professional doctorate in systemic practice in cooperation with the University of Bedfordshire which continues the doctorate programme since the ending of KCCF as an organisation.

As a consequence of this personal history and research context my relating to systemic constructionist ideas are influenced in large measures by the particular KCC school of systemic practice³. Imagining in many ways has been part of the practices, theories and ways of relating cultivated at KCCF and in foregrounding imagining as a theme I attend to what I see as a resource in systemic constructionist practice.

1.2 Purpose, aims and approach

With this research I try to do several things that I hope are useful. First I want to develop a perspective of imagining as a relational and discursive activity grounded in social

³ The term of *KCC school of systemic practice* was coined by Gail Simon

constructionist sensibility rather than treating it as a mental and cognitive activity (Harré, 1998). I am drawing here in particular on John Shotter's (1993, 1994, 1997, 2008, 2010) insight and scholarship and in my use and development of the concept of imagining hope to expand his work. I came to believe that imagining and in particular imagining together is a very important practice in organisations, it is also a moral and an ethical activity. With this research I aim to add further insight into this practice and activity.

Secondly I want to foreground imagining processes in several ways: I want to understand better what imagining is, how it is located in organisational theory and how to notice it in conversations. Specifically I want to notice imagining in organisational practice and also in systemic social constructionist practice. Such sensibility into imagining as relational and discursive practice then may be of use in contributing to systemic constructionist practice with organisations.

I express here an a priori interest in *we-ness* and *relational practice* rather than *I-ness* and *cognitive achievements* (Shotter, 1993, 2008). I aim to maintain this focus in the research question which is 'How are we imagining organisational futures?'

I believe that imagining as a topic has a huge potential for development. So researching into imagining is not only of relevance with perspective to particular propositions from this research but also as a way of developing the conversation on this topic further. I hope that the research will be useful in particular to the systemic and social constructionist community of practice (Brown and Duguid, 1991, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger and Snyder, 2000) but as well to managers or consultants, some of who may be initially lesser drawn to systemic social constructionist ideas but maybe find the concept of a relational approach to imagining organisational futures relevant.

The aims of the research can be summarised as follows:

Aim #1: Cultivate sensibility and consciousness for imagining practice in organisations

An initial aim of this research is to promote understanding of imagining in organisational practice and in systemic constructionist practice, to develop insight in how imagining takes place between people as relational activity, and to develop sensibility for imagining in organisations. This includes also developing an understanding of imagining as a discursive and dialogic process. I also hope to invite a frame of imagining that connects contemporary organisational practice with systemic constructionist practice and invites opportunities for the application of systemic constructionist concepts.

Aim #2: Learn to open up spaces for imagining through systemic constructionist practice

Relating imagining to participation, voice, creativity, possibility and choice I hope to develop practical insight into ways of engaging in imagining practice or to participate in it to open conversational spaces for imagining with others. Here I think in particular of ways to create opportunity for imagining in conversations that are originally inviting a limiting or narrow discourse and focus.

Aim #3: Develop propositions in relation to systemic constructionist practice and theory

Systemic and social constructionist theories, approaches and methods are informing of and are informed by practice. Several useful theories and frameworks are alive in the community of systemic constructionist practitioners through being used, discussed extended and critiqued. I hope to develop propositions in this research in relation to existing frameworks as a way of making them more relevant and accessible and also to strengthen the theoretical frameworks used in the community.

This study of imagining organisational futures is a reflective, qualitative, practice and theory based research. It is also a research oriented by a systemic and social constructionist position which means that the research process and findings, unlike in modern research, are not organised by modern criteria of validity and objectivity. In social constructionist research other criteria such as credibility, honesty and usefulness of contributions that invite insight, promote meaning making and understanding are valued. It does not matter that what is said is said from a person position and is saturated in many ways by the author's prior experience or the contexts that an author is researching from. Indeed these contexts are often what make the contribution meaningful, relevant and different from other possible contributions other people can make. I will therefore try to be reflexively aware, inclusive and transparent of the particular contexts that I bring to the research. This research framework will be developed in section 2.5 on research methods.

In the literature review I will follow a couple of aims. First I will try to write in a way that makes theory accessible and intelligible; this includes systemic, social constructionist theory but also other contributions. In the review of literature on imagining in organisational theory I will try to be inclusive of the contributions of different research traditions and to invite a critical appreciation of the emergent theorising of imagining in relation to organisational theory and practice. I will also relate and locate imagining in systemic constructionist practice with organisations.

The second large part of the research is an inquiry into discourses of imagining practice. Here I will draw on different experiences and sources, and use Coordinated Management of Meaning theory and discourse analysis to expand my reflections and relate different insights to each other. I will relate reflections to my practice experience and suggest what I learn as a framework of ways of imagining that I see fits my experience and that may be useful for others. In particular I will suggest the framework of games of imagining practice, the notion of a discursive reflexivity as a sensibility in participating in practice, and I will reflect on how my use of the word 'imagining' is coherent with the reflections on practice and what alternative meanings of the word 'imagining' could be considered.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

I have chosen a traditional structure to organise the content of this thesis starting with literature review and then continuing with research question, aims, methods, findings, discussion and conclusion.

The literature review, chapter two, is a series of interrelated performances⁴ and includes also the development of progressive insight. In section 2.1 I will introduce systemic and social constructionist theory and practice with an aim to be inclusive of readers who had no prior engagement with these paradigms. Also I will develop an initial relevance of systemic and social constructionist theory to the topic of imagining. In section 2.2 on imagining I will draw on literature from philosophies, social psychology and social constructionist traditions to argue for a perspective of imagining as a discursive and relational process. In section 2.3 I aim to invite an understanding of the use of imagining in the contexts of organisations, it is also a way of showing the critical and ethical importance of the concept of imagining and portray its emergent relevance in the field of organisational theory. In section 2.4 I will again attend to systemic constructionist practice with the aim to locate the relevance of imagining in it. In the final section 2.5 of this chapter I will articulate my research position and the research methods.

Chapter three on the research question and aims serves as a brief punctuation of the research progress. Here I will position the research question in relation to the research methods and acknowledge the contribution from the literature review to the aims of this

⁴ The notion of research as a performance of relational meaning making has been developed by McNamee (2010).

research. With the method chapter four I will provide an account of the process informing the second part of the research leading to findings that are reflections on imagining conversations and practice, presented in chapter five. I consider findings as discourses emergent from a reflective, reflexive, discursive and relational process. Aiming to maintain the integrity of this process I will present findings and analysis in an interrelated and emergent way.

In chapter six I will discuss the learning and propositions from this research. This will include reflections on the literature review, the propositions, the research question and aims, the methods used and main limitations. In chapter seven I will offer conclusions.

Some final words on writing:

In aiming to situate most of the things said in this research as personal, relational and local and rather than speaking from an authoritative or removed position I will be present in most of the text. I will also try to anticipate you as a reader in my writing and refer to us (we) as reviewing, considering or learning on this journey (Shotter, 2011).

Drawing on literature I will acknowledge the persons contributing with their first and second name the first time I mention their name in the text in a section. I do this because I have a sense of actually relating to them and it feels polite and respectful to me.

2 Relevant theory and practice

I conduct this literature review from systemic and social constructionist positions which to explain will be an important part of this chapter. Taking this position invites me to understand a review of literature also as a conversation with you as an audience; it also invites consideration of the relationship with the scholars in the field of study whose ideas and wisdom I am drawing on and some of whom I have been fortunate to meet. In that sense reviewing literature is a relational performance (Tomm, 1998, Hamilton, 2005) and also an invitation into a particular construction of knowledge by the reviewer (Montuori, 2005).

The agenda for this review is informed by the research question ‘How are we imagining organisational futures?’ and in particular the aim of *cultivating sensibility and consciousness for imagining practice in organisations*. I will start this review with systemic social constructionist theory which is an important foundation to the thinking and practice in this research. The main part of the review will relate to imagining as relational practice and its application and relevance in organisational theory and in systemic constructionist practice with organisations. In the final section of the review I will elaborate on my research position and research methods relevant for the following sections.

The engagement with literature has been alongside the empirical part of the research process and not as it may appear discreetly positioned as prior to reflection on imagining in practice. Reflecting on the literature and the interrelating of theory with practice have been mutually influencing and contributing to understanding and learning. I see the orientation to literature as a form of inquiry as part of the process and outcome of this research.

2.1 Systems, systemic and social constructionist theory and practice

The purpose of this first section is to provide an orientation to systemic and social constructionist thinking and how it relates to construction of reality and ways of knowing. A more detailed discussion of systemic, social constructionist thought in relation to imagining and in relation to research will be part of the respective later sections 2.4 and 2.5 in this chapter.

With this introduction I try to create a focus for theory and for practice. *Systems theory* and *social constructionist theory* (also constructionist theory) inform paradigms of existence and knowing. *Systemic constructionist practice* relates to practices of change and development in the realm of human communication and interaction (Pearce, 1998). In addition to theory and practice what matters are the people who engage in practising and knowing. An understanding of knowing requires an understanding of the group that knows (Kuhn, 1970). Systemic, social constructionism is, as I see it, not only a body of theory or practice but also an emergent community of practitioners and scholars.

The systemic constructionist practice I introduce here has been developed in the field of family therapy and with significant input from social work practice since the 1950s. Strong theoretical influences can be located in cybernetics, general systems theory, constructivist and social constructionist scholarship (Hoffman, 1993, Dallos and Draper, 2000, Nichols and Schwartz, 2000). With the original and primary focus of helping individuals and families overcome or resolve difficulties or impasses I see the development of the field of systemic constructionist practice organised by figuring out the pragmatics of theories in applied practice, by learning from practice with the benefit of theory and by making sense of practice to re-inform theory (Lang et al., 1990). Particular theories having been influential on the community but also, and as I see it more importantly, the community of practice (Brown and Duguid, 1991, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger and Snyder, 2000) has developed and chosen for theories in the light of their convictions, hopes and dreams, that is from a particular ethical position (Hoffman, 1993). So I do not think of systemic constructionist practitioners as theory led but ethics led (Lang et al., 1990).

Systems and social constructionist theories have been increasingly influential in the theorising of organisations (for example Argyris, 1977, Senge, 1990, Morgan, 1996, Schein, 2007) and scholarship of systemic practice gained currency in the field of organisational consultation and development (for example Huffington and Brunning, 1994, Campbell, 1995, Haslebo and Nielsen, 2000, Oliver, 2005, Campbell and Huffington, 2008). Today systemic social constructionist practice is relevant not only to therapy and organisation development but also to community development (Browne, 2004), conflict management and mediation (Littlejohn and Domenici, 2001, Welp, 2005) and school development (McAdam and Lang, 2009, Lampe and Lampe, 2010).

Having pointed to relevance more generally our task here is to understand some of the underlying assumptions and thinking to then orient towards a relevance of these theories and practices for the topic of imagining organisational futures. I will first introduce systems theory, secondly social constructionist theory, to then move towards an orientation to a systemic constructionist practice with organisations.

2.1.1 Systems Theory

On the one hand, we have the systemic nature of the individual human being, the systemic nature of the culture in which he lives, and the systemic nature of the biological, ecological system around him; and, on the other hand, the curious twist in the systemic nature of the individual man whereby consciousness is, almost of necessity, blinded to the systemic nature of the man himself (Bateson, 1972, p.440).

Systems theory has been developed at the beginning of the 20th century. It is concerned with understanding wholes as interconnected parts and the relational and informational dynamics in and between systems. Systems theory has been designed to be abstract and work across different scientific contexts and boundaries such as biology, ecology, sociology, physics or chemistry.

After world war II there has been a series of interdisciplinary conferences, the so called 'Macy Conferences' (1946-1953), which have staged exchange and cross fertilisation of scholarship in the field of systems research. Participants included Ludwig von Bertalanffy, Norbert Wiener, Heinz van Foerster, Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson and many others (Bateson, 1972, American-Society-for-Cybernetics, 2013). Prominent contributions include Wiener's (1950, 1965) theorising of information and communication between man and machines which addresses issues of coordination and control in systems. He named his approach Cybernetics, a term that later got prominence to embrace the much larger field of systemic concepts. Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968a, 1968b, 1972) founded General Systems Theory – a framework which comprises a hierarchy of systems ranging from atoms to the universe and including living systems. He theorised autonomous activities of organisms and organismic systems and he also conceptualised the constitutive systemic properties of open organic living systems as a process. Gregory Bateson, a cultural anthropologist, developed key systemic concepts in their application to communication, mind, learning, mental health issues and others and became a lead figure for systemic practice (Bateson, 1972, Hoffman, 1993). His work remains inspirational to the field of systemic constructionist practice up to today (Keeney and Keeney, 2012).

Early views of systems thinking, which I suggest have been and are still very influential to practice in organisations, conceive of systems as discoverable entities. The concept serves to see connections and dependencies and to move beyond simplistic linear cause and effect thinking. Organisations can be understood in that way, as people interrelating and forming the organisation as a whole through patterns of communication. This early

view of systems can be related to the tenets of systems stability developed by von Bertalanffy (1968b):

- *Wholeness*: The system is more than the sum of its parts, for the parts are interrelated and the relatedness defines what the system is or does.
- *Homeostasis*: The ability of self-regulation and hence stability of the inner state of a system through feedback processes.
- *Equifinality*: That a system arrives at the same final state or goal from different starting points.
- *Ordered through process*: Organic structures are themselves expressions of ordered processes, and they are only maintained in and by these processes.

Early systems theory invites a position of discovery, of figuring out how parts are interconnected, how processes of communication create the order that is. These aspects are of a structural nature that needs to be understood, to then make meaningful changes and improvements, to engineer the system, the conversations, and the processes. So whilst we conceive of the complexity of interrelated parts, the approach to problem solving is a linear one, and this is also, I suggest, the dominant way of how leaders in organisations are thinking of organisation development and leadership.

The above can be a very useful position in attending to the interrelatedness of parts but may be misleading in suggesting that objective knowing of the system is possible as later developments of second-order cybernetics have shown. This is because when we accept systems thinking in principal we also have to accept that (i) a system is limited as it can only sense and can only make sense by the very parts and processes it is formed of, that (ii) an observer is always also a system – with the limitations just mentioned, and (iii), to observe means that the process for observation i.e. the properties of the observer become a defining part of what is observed (Maturana, 1991, von Foerster, 1991).

To repeat, the claim of second-order cybernetics is that of a systems ontology where as we participate and observe, not that the properties of what can be discovered enter us, but rather we observe what our sense and process of observation makes of it. The observation is a construction in the domain of the observer and cannot be objective. This is a limitation that cannot be avoided: even if the observer is replaced with a community of observers, as opposed to one single individual, we are always left with an observing system (Maturana, 1991, von Foerster, 1991). As Ernst von Glasersfeld (1984) points out, it is hence not possible to know what is real out there, at best we can develop and understand in a way that fits the circumstances of the world we live in well. This way of understanding the world is however not the only possible way and we can hence talk of a multiverse of possible 'realities' (Maturana, 1988b). Without an objective vantage point

we also need to become careful about what developments we claim to be an improvement (von Foerster, 1991).

Conceptual views on second order cybernetics were reinforced and extended through research into the biology of cognition and coordination by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1998). One of their achievements was to separate and inter-relate the structural domain of a system, the molecular domain, from the domain of organismic sensing and coordinating. Based on this clarity they established principal limitations of working with systems such as the impossibility of instructive interaction (Maturana, 1988a, Maturana and Varela, 1998): The famous example to illustrate what is meant here, building on Gregory Bateson (1972), is the comparison between kicking a stone and kicking a dog. If you kick a stone you have reasons to believe depending on your kick how the stone will move and how far it goes. If you kick a dog the response is autonomous to the dog, not only with regard to the energy but as well the kind and direction of the response.

The impossibility of objective knowing and of instructive interaction removes the simplicity of linear change and development of earlier forms of systems theory. We can think of ourselves as participants in a world structured and created by communication processes and action, all of which we have no objective way of knowing. We need to be aware that our knowing is on the one hand at best partial and a good fit to our circumstances and on the other hand this very knowing is part of the system we are creating. The same is true for our ideas on good practice which we, on these terms, should hold tentatively.

Despite claims about the limitation of knowing objectively what the system is or how it works, the underlying model in building the theory is of a structural and hence modernistic nature. This paradox of maintaining parallel knowing and not knowing positions is also present in Maturana's theory of cognition which includes aspects of radical constructivism, social constructionism and scientific modernism (Maturana, 2002, Lannamann and Shotter, 2006, Midgley, 2008, Proulx, 2008).

Practice approaches based on a systems metaphor have been critiqued as reliant on a significant power differential between the practitioner and other participants in a system and an approach to change being driven through strategic interventions that aim to out-wit the system (Hoffman, 1993). Another related critique was that of a failure to attend to imbalances in power, violence and injustice in systems, whilst maintaining a stance of neutrality which can also be seen as a lack of criticality (Bograd, 1984, Treacher, 1988, Dell, 1989). I think however it is reasonable to doubt if such a valid critique of practice is necessarily a consequence of *underlying theory* or should rather be seen as a critique of

underlying ethics which, although connected can be distinguished from the theory (Keeney and Keeney, 2012).

Second order cybernetics has led to a host of developments and key concepts for the field of systemic practice (Dallos and Draper, 2000). Important to mention here is the concept of circularity, that invites practitioners to work with and relate to their clients' ways of making sense, their resources, myths and ways of being, rather than colonising or imposing ideas (Selvini et al., 1980, Penn, 1982, Cecchin, 1987); the concept of irreverence to any way of knowing, to any truth claims including truth claims on ways of working systemically (Burnham, 1992, Cecchin et al., 1993); and the concept of reflexive practice with and within a system (Tomm, 1987b, 1987a, Treacher, 1988, Pearce, 1998).

Systems theory has been of significant influence to organisational theory. Edgar Schein (2005), the founder of process consultation, acknowledges the influences of Gregory Bateson, Paul Watzlawick and systemic practice on his work. Chris Argyris' (1977, 1986) organisational learning theory as double loop learning, turning a systems attention reflexively upon itself, is a further development of Batesonian thought. Applications of systems thinking in organisational settings are in the theorising of information and learning processes, of change and transformation, and turning attention to information processes and dynamics in organisational sensemaking (for example Schein, 1987, Senge, 1990, Weick, 1995, Morgan, 1996).

I suggest an immediate significance of systems theory to a concept of imagining of possible and alternative futures in two ways: Firstly I think that the conceptual view of more than one possible reality at any given point in time, Maturana's concept of a *multiverse*, invites credibility to imagining processes attending to (further) possibilities even in circumstances where a credible way of sense-making has been established. It infers that, what we *can imagine to be the case*, in relation to the future but even in the presence or in the past, *may as well be the case* – as one of many possible 'realities' in a multiverse. Secondly, with reference to *second order cybernetics* attending to 'knowing' being part of a system, we can also say that to the extent imagining is creating knowing of possibility⁵ this knowing is also becoming part of the system and hence is changing the system. In other words, imagining itself is consequential. This observation relates

⁵ The link between imagining and knowledge of possibility will be substantiated in section 2.2

systems theory to the well documented concepts of self fulfilling and self destroying prophecies.

Examples from systemic practical theory (Cronen, 1995, Cronen, 2001) that are relevant to possibilities of imagining as relating to a multiverse include domains theory and systemic story creation: *Domains theory* (Lang et al., 1990) is a meta theory of systemic practice developed by Peter Lang, Martin Little and Vernon Cronen distinguishing three domains of practice, named as domains of production, explanation and aesthetics. In domains theory the domain of explanation corresponds with Maturana's notion of a multiversa, where multiple ways of meaning making, relating or being can be developed; the domain of production invites a singularity of ideas and a coherence of meaning-making and acting with cultural, statutory, institutional or contractual requirements; the domain of aesthetics informs ethical and aesthetic practice and invites attention to what is created in practice as ethical, beautiful, coherent or pleasing. In domains theory all three domains are present in every single situation however one domain might be privileged. In imagining activities we can think of the domain of explanation being privileged as practices inviting multiple possibilities, however also the plurality of three domains could be seen as a multiversa. The concept of domains of practice has been developed as heuristic to invite different ways of relating to a situation in systemic interventions (Oliver and Brittain, 2001). I suggest domains theory can be of relevance in situating imagining practice and in defining aesthetic way of moving between different ways of relating to a situation. We will draw on this relevance of domains theory later in the discussion chapter.

Systemic story creation (Lang and McAdam, 1995) is a dialogic practice, predominantly in the domain of explanation, of developing multiple ways of making sense of, being with and relating to a situation. It serves practitioners to develop a reflexive stance to own stories, prejudice and emotions which may otherwise invite a singularity of meanings, but also to draw on alternative ways of making sense and relating. I suggest what interests here in its relevance to imagining practice is the deliberate preparing for new ways of relating by moving beyond entrenched singular ways towards multiple ways of meaning making. Notably the focus of this practice is the practitioner who acquires a 'learnt-not-knowing-position'.⁶

⁶ I suggest systemic story creation is moving beyond the notion of hypothesising, as offering scripts for clients (Cecchin, 1987), to a cultivating grammatical abilities and plurality in relating, a resource for the practitioner to join and co-create with clients.

2.1.2 Social constructionism

Social constructionism is a relatively young approach to the realm of human knowing, sense-making and communication, which in its present outline dates back some 35 - 40 years (Burr, 2003). The original focus and the name social construction is generally credited to the sociologists Berger and Luckmann (1966). The basic unit of attention is people in communication and how meaning and knowledge is unfolding through the use of symbolic interaction that is in communication and language and including other actions. The potential implications of this shift for the understanding of human activity are tremendous: "The explanatory locus of human action shifts from the interior region of the mind⁷ to the processes and structure of human interaction" (Gergen, 1985, p.272).

There are significant variations and different emphases in between social constructionist theories in the field (Pearce, 1995, Burr, 2003). Vivian Burr (2003) observes the following tenets of social constructionism as agreeable between most scholars:

- Knowledge is historic and culturally specific: The way one understands the world depends on the community and culture one participates in and the time or historic context. "Not only are they specific to particular cultures and periods of history, they are seen as products of that culture and history, and are dependent on the particular economic and social arrangement prevailing in that culture and time" (ibid, 4).
- Knowing is sustained by social processes: Knowledge about how things really are is fabricated between people through social interaction rather than discoverable and derived from nature.
- Knowing, acting and power relations go together: Social constructions of the world invite and sustain specific actions and exclude others. As a consequence the practical choice of describing our world in this rather than that way is also expressive of power relations for the implication such choices have on peoples' action.

⁷ Kenneth Gergen uses 'mind' here as inner activity which is different to Gregory Bateson's (1972) concept of mind as process of information that extends beyond the brain and body into the environment.

- A critical stance to taken for granted knowledge: Not surprisingly from the ground covered above social constructionism invites to challenge received knowledge and our own assumptions of how we see the world and the categories we use to account for experience.

Social constructionist scholars suggest that truth claims are contingent on social agreements that hold validity only in the communities that are agreeable to them; they reject the notion of an objective way of knowing outside the realm of human interaction. In removing the vantage point of an objective valid purpose that justifies any enterprise social constructionists call into critical focus the choices and ethics of forms of practising and knowing (Gergen, 2001, Burr, 2003, Gergen and Gergen, 2004).

Social agreements mentioned above do not require an explicit agreement in a classical sense; they are more likely discursive performances. The term discourse is difficult to capture and is used in various ways. Burr (2003, 64) suggests a use of the term to refer “to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events”. Discourse is used to denote practice with an emphasis on what meanings and social actions are performed in these practices, but also it refers to already existing linguistic repertoires and shared meanings that are drawn on and into the performance, re-enacted or changed (Potter et al., 1990, Burr, 2003, Kreisky, 2012). In that sense in an organisation people know what an ‘internal audit’ is, or a ‘fire alarm’ or ‘casual Friday’ without needing to agree to a definition; as long as in their talk and action they perform the meaning of these ‘things’ in a coordinated way, they have social agreement.

Constructionism locates essentialist and structural concepts of science, that are oriented towards a discovery of objective truths and transcendent laws, as the specific practice and knowing in a community of scientists of the one or other orientation. Whilst a modern science enterprise is focused to generate objective, reliable and valid knowledge, a social constructionist position is opening a space for alternative frames of validity contingent to different communities. As such constructionism is pluralistic but also has a potential to invite a critical focus on how practices and methods of science and academia are also expressions of power dynamics in and between communities (Foucault, 1981, Gergen, 1985, Gergen and Gergen, 2004, Gergen, 2006).

The emphasis on language, discourse, power, shared meaning making and pluralism presented in the social constructionist movement relates to the wider paradigms of postmodernism and poststructuralism and is connected in several developments in adjacent fields: Thomas Kuhn’s work on the history of sciences stipulates that sciences are enterprises which function against the background of taken for granted assumptions

which he calls paradigms. To the extent that sciences fail to develop satisfying explanations paradigms may shift giving rise to new science (Kuhn, 1970). Michel Foucault theorised societal procedures that regulate discourse through systems of exclusion, control and delimiting discourse (Foucault, 1981, Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). Foucault sees the power of discourse located in scientific and institutional practices, including education, media and ideology, in determining not what is true or false, but in determining the rules by which claims for true or false can be made, and the powers and effects that are attached to what is considered true or false (Foucault, in Rabinow 1991). Finally, to mention the work of social anthropologist Clifford Geertz's on meaning making in cultural communities which refutes the notion of universal common sense but confirms ways of making sense are common only to local communities (Geertz, 1983).

The social constructionist paradigm is positioned in a tension to modernist, realist and science positions (Gergen, 1985, Mallon, 2007). The most recurring critique of constructionism centres on relativism, suggesting that social constructionism places equal value to any truth claim as socially constructed between people and in consequence may be used to serve interests of anti-Semitism or consumerism (Pilgrim, 2000, Brinkmann, 2006, Ratner, 2006). For responses see for instance (Gergen, 2001, Shotter and Lannamann, 2002, Gergen, 2006, Zielke, 2006, Dey, 2008). With most of the critique being addressed to Kenneth Gergen's writings, he is at pains to clarify that nothing in social constructionist theory is anti-scientific or anti-realist, and asserting that modern, realist and science traditions have their place, merits and undoubted contributions. However, as he sees it, in a pluralistic and not a monolithic understanding of traditions of knowing (Gergen, 2001, 2006).

Constructionist thought invites us to see, all knowledge claims, including science, as culturally and historically situated. I did not see this as an 'anything goes' relativism, as many critics claimed. Such a relativism would itself constitute a value-laden intelligibility. Rather it was to invite intelligibility to the credibility of multiple traditions within themselves and, in doing so, set the stage for replacing conflict among competing traditions of truth with vast transfusions of meaning (2006, p.121).

As there are different approaches to the development of social constructionist theory (Pearce, 1995), critical scholarly discussion may be seen as marginalising some of these diverse views (Burr, 2006, Dey, 2008). Hacking (2000) draws attention to the breadth of the field with a range so diverse as to include the social construction of 'quarks', 'Zulu nationalism' and 'the medicalised immigrant'. He also maps the various degrees of commitment in different constructionist research positions on a scale ranging from historic constructionism (lowest) to revolutionary constructionism (highest). Theoretical pluralism

can be seen as a strength and an embodiment of the commitment of constructionism to diversity and rich scholarship (Pearce, 1995, Pilgrim, 2000, Dey, 2008), I suggest it, unfortunately, also serves as a source of confusion and as hindrance for spreading a concept that admittedly is of “radically new and really rather strange nature” (Shotter, 1997, p.7).

Social constructionism invites us to engage critically and creatively in the use and development of language and practices, and to develop new discourse and perform new meanings. It raises questions about limiting versus liberating use of language, stories and ways of knowing. In that way social constructionism has a generative potential to create different solutions for human systems such as organisations, communities, families, individuals and invites people to take more control over their lives; it justifies plurality and diversity of thought and practice (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, Shotter, 2008).

Constructionism has been a central concept for the development of contemporary systemic therapy practice since the mid 80s (Dallos and Draper, 2000) giving rise to therapeutic approaches that were less predicated on the systems metaphor but more on narrative and dialogic concepts. Many of these approaches have been inspiring to ways of working with organisations and as we shall see are relevant to the imagining of organisational futures. These include prominently the collaborative approach to therapy and consultation, developed by Harlene Anderson and Harold Goolishian (1986, 1988), the brief solution focused approach articulated by De Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg and their colleagues (De Shazer, 1991) and narrative therapy developed by Michael White and David Epston (1990).

The concept of discourse positioned at the interception of talk, practice, order and power seems to be particularly useful in attending to human coordination: Discourse can be seen as shaping institutions such as organisations and can be linked to stability and production. A hypercritical response to a social constructionist framework of practice can be seen as a case in point for what happens if discourses such as that of a modernistic science are called into question. The way of engaging with and in discourse so to create space for imagining and generating possibilities for all involved is then a challenge that this research will engage with.

Relating social constructionism to imagining organisational futures opens a couple of interesting lines of inquiry. For instance we can say that ‘imagining’ is constructed as a cognitive and inner process and orient ourselves to alternative ways of constructing ‘imagining’ as social, relational and discursive practice. We can inquire into the discourse of organisation theory and ask what role does imagining play here and how is it linked to

notions of power and choice. We will pursue these questions as we turn to imagining more specifically later in this chapter.

2.1.3 Systemic social constructionist practice in organisations

Having introduced systems theory and social constructionist approaches we are now in a position to firstly relate these two frameworks to each other as informing a systemic constructionist practice position, and secondly to turn to the application of systemic social constructionist practice in organisational contexts.

To start with relating the frameworks of systems theory, in particular second order cybernetics, and social constructionism to practice, several similarities stand out (even though the theoretical underpinnings are different). To both practice positions there is no objective knowing possible, and practitioners are positioned *within* a systemic or respectively a discursive form of life. Both privilege the context of relationship: In constructionist theory relationship is the primary context for communication, in systemic theory relationship constitutes the system. Probably the most important communality is the emphasis on language and discourse: second order systems theory and constructionist theory equally invite an attention to language and meaning making and hence dialogic approaches to practice, implying that practitioners need to join a system or conversation and participate from within it.

Social constructionist practice has developed as from the 1980ies building on cybernetic traditions and practices, albeit by critiquing part of it to move practice forward (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988, White and Epston, 1990, Dallos and Draper, 2000, Hayward, 2009, Flaskas, 2010). Constructionist practice can be seen as free from a commitment to structural metaphors such as a system predicated on regularities and therefore might be more apt to engage with other metaphors such as narratives, or to be profoundly open to the metaphors and discourses of a client system (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988). It shall be noted however that also second order cybernetics can be seen as radically irreverent to structural metaphors as well as ways of knowing, practice, approach, and methods (Keeney and Keeney, 2012).

Drawing a line of how particular schools of practice can be understood as influenced by different theoretical frameworks might be possible. I am, however, not convinced that such emphasis on underlying theories is warranted in a tradition that contemplates a fair amount of irreverence to its theoretical routes. Building on a recent review of systemic practice of Carmel Flaskas (2010, 2011) to me it seems pragmatic to maintain a view of a single field of systemic social constructionist practice welcoming the diversity of different

schools of practice whilst acknowledging that the field has developed overall towards a social constructionist and post modern orientation. Flaska also argues that the concept of purist frameworks or schools of practice today serves mainly training and development purposes whilst practitioners in the main draw on a variety of practice resources based on situated intelligibility.

In relation to this claim for plurality the term *grammars of practice* has been used to denote the possibilities systemic constructionist practitioners can draw on in their participating in unfolding discourse (Cronen, 1995, Cronen, 2001). The term maybe could be best described also as a way of being in language and practice (Lang and McAdam, 1995). It originates from Wittgenstein's (1978, 184 #133) insight on language that "Grammar is not accountable to any reality. It is grammatical rules that determine meaning (constitute it) and so they are not answerable to any meaning and to that extent are arbitrary".

This leads me already to my second task, establishing what I mean with systemic social constructionist practice in the context of organisations. Whilst there are many dialogic approaches to organisations not all of these approaches are informed by the insights and sensibilities outlined here. Also when practice approaches solidify as methods or tools they run the risk of losing their situated, circular, relational and ethical potential (Oliver and Barge, 2002, Fitzgerald et al., 2010, Oliver et al., 2011). The concern here is that of a practice that is then not informed by participating from within a living relationship but by a method brought to a situation. The antidote to such a situation is to become alive to the uniqueness of a situation through reflexive practice. Barnett Pearce (1998, p.7) relates to "the discovery of reflexivity, or the positioning of the knower inside that which is known":

When thinking systemically [...] the thinker is self-reflexively a part of the system and takes the perspective of a participant or component of the system (1998, p.2).

If we are part of a system, then our knowledge of the system affects (because it is itself a component) the system. But what is knowledge if the thing known is changed by the act of knowing itself? And who are we who know ourselves if we are part of a system? (1998, p.7)

This participating from a reflexive sensibility that invites a doing with each other has also been central to approaches and developments of social constructionist theorists (for example Shotter, 1994, McNamee, 2004, Shotter, 2008, Hosking and Bass, unpublished). John Shotter (2008) suggests that reflexivity in participating in conversations deserves further attention:

Clearly, our ways of talking *are* very influential in shaping our actions. But there are, [] good reasons for assuming that it is not simply by choosing to construct different linguistic representations of a circumstance that we can come to act differently in relation to it; something much deeper and less open to deliberation and choice is at issue.

Rather than to do with our minds and ways of thinking, it is much to do with our bodies and our ways of acting; perceptual rather than cognitive changes are crucial (Shotter, 2008, p.iii).

Shotter's reflecting on and in conversations expands beyond cognitive ways of knowing and beyond a language use as representation to an attention to the conjoint relational bodily activity, he calls joint action. He draws attention to conversations as once occurring and unique moments of being with each other, and invites a reflexivity that engages with the quality of such with-ness, a knowing that can be felt rather than understood from within a conversation (Shotter, 2008).

Whilst some scholarly contributions are explicitly referring to systemic practice and others to social constructionist there are also developments that are explicitly integrating systemic and social constructionist traditions, which include Kevin Barge and Gail Fairhurst's (2008) frame of a systemic constructionist approach to leadership, suggesting that systemic traditions invite a focus of "attention on the coordination of meaning and action within human systems and how language invites, creates and sustains particular patterns of coordination and discourages others" (2008, p.232). Similarly, David Campbell (2000) in his book on the socially constructed organisation seemingly draws on Batesonian thought: "systemic thinking is a way to make sense of the relatedness of everything around us. In its broadest application it is a way of thinking that gives practitioners the tools to observe the connectedness of people, things, and ideas: everything connected to everything else" (Campbell, 2000, p.7).

Whilst a comprehensive review of literature on systemic social constructionist approaches to organisational practice would by far exceed the scope of this introduction, I want to attempt a portrayal mentioning key topics of systemic constructionist research and contributions to organisational practice. Here I see two groups of contributions: First research that relates to ways of working systemically, if you will, discursive resources or *grammars of practising* (Cronen, 1995), a leader or consultant may choose to use. These include for instance concepts of meaning making and coordination (Pearce and Cronen, 1980, Morgan, 1982, Pearce, 1989, Barge, 2004a, Pearce, 2004), the application of systemic dialogical practice in leadership and consultancy settings (Andersen, 1995, Cunliffe, 2001, Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003, Barge, 2004b, Oliver, 2004, Oliver, 2005,

Shotter, 2005, Barge and Fairhurst, 2008), relational sensibilities and eloquence in dialogic practice (Oliver, 1996, Barge and Little, 2002, Oliver and Barge, 2002), and ways of situating and preparing practice (Lang et al., 1990, Lang and McAdam, 1995, Shotter, 2010). Secondly, research regarding *organisation development interventions* that build from a systemic and social constructionist approach such as Appreciative Inquiry (Barrett and Cooperrider, 1990, Cooperrider, 1990, Whitney, 1994, Cooperrider et al., 1995, Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, Johnson and Leavitt, 2001, Oliver and Barge, 2002, Barge and Oliver, 2003, van der Haar and Hosking, 2004, Bushe and Kassam, 2005, Sekerka et al., 2006), collaborative organisational practice (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988, Anderson and Burney, 1996), narrative practice (Czarniawska, 1997, Boje, 2001, Lämsä and Sintonen, 2006, Langer and Thorup, 2006), systemic constructionist approaches to coaching (Berg and Szabó, 2005, Huffington, 2008, Szabó et al., 2009, Oliver, 2010), or conflict resolution (Littlejohn and Domenici, 2001, Welp, 2005).

The development of systemic constructionist practices for organisations seems of particular relevance in the field of organisational change and development which is increasingly moving from modern to postmodern paradigms (Marshak, 2005, Bushe and Marshak, 2007). Marshak and Grant (2008, p.10), for instance, observe new post modern approaches to organisation development that “place increased emphasis on socially constructed realities, transforming mindsets and consciousness, operating from multicultural realities, exploring different images and assumptions about change, and forging common social agreements from the multiple realities held by key constituencies”. This shift from *diagnostic to dialogic forms of organisation development* (Marshak and Bushe, 2009) means to leave mainstream ideas of a discoverable world behind and to develop an organisation development practice that is not applied as a pre-established process or method, but developed through systemic sensibilities of joining and change from within (van der Haar and Hosking, 2004, Hosking and Bass, unpublished).

Whilst systemic social constructionist practices to organisation development offer promising possibilities and elegance for organisation development I suggest it is also beset with several difficulties and dilemmas constructed against the background of dominant modernistic culture, education and science paradigms:

- As a post-modern approach in a dominant modernistic society it is prone to have to explain itself and to be misunderstood (Gergen, 2001, Shotter, 2008).
- As a complex theory it is difficult to comprehend or present (Shotter, 1997, McNamee, 2004) and ironically postulates the theory holder to be a language artist (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988, Pearce, 1994).

- It operates from a value base that perturbs and critiques current power relations (Burr, 2003) however it often requires to successfully engage with those with positional power (McAdam and Lang, 2009).
- A commitment to uniqueness and emergence (Barge and Little, 2002) and a requirement to market itself based on articulate evidence based practice methods.

We have started in this first section on systems theory, social constructionism and systemic constructionist practice in organisations with the aim of orienting to the underlying positions of these theories and the consequences for knowing and practising; we also have started to relate them to our inquiry into imagining.

Social constructionist theory will be relevant to the whole of this research. The next sections will develop the relevance of systemic constructionist thinking and practising for the concept of imagining and its application to organisational theory. The following section is an inquiry into imagining in systemic constructionist practice with organisations. The research methods section will come last in this chapter and will build in particular on social constructionist thinking as a paradigm for research.

2.2 On imagining and imagination

As I have mentioned in the introductory chapter, my initial interest in imagining was informed by a curiosity into conversations that open up joint imaginings between people for how to go on differently. Reflecting on this initial positioning of imagining in my research interest I want to do three things by means of an introduction of imagining: *firstly* I will explore the meaning of imagining in the literature, *secondly* I will develop the link I have assumed above between imagining and the emergence of possible and potentially different futures, and *thirdly* I will attend to ways of conceiving of imagining as a relational and discursive activity as opposed to a cognitive or mental activity.

So whilst I start this review from a broad perspective of imagining I also aim to develop a particular intelligibility of imagining as social activity, a dialogical practice that creates possibility. This way of going about this review is of course limiting to other possible concepts of imagining that I am not following here. As a consequence my introduction of the topic is biased towards social constructionist and social psychology developments of imagining. A review of specific applications of imagining practice in organisational contexts is part of the following section.

2.2.1 What does it mean to imagine?

A research into the meaning of imagining quickly leads to an engagement with philosophical thought. I found most philosophers consider the work of René Descartes as one of the earliest robust definitions of imagining. Descartes (1641, p.50) offers that

when I imagine a triangle for example, I do not merely understand that it is a figure bounded by three lines, but at the same time also see the three lines with my mind's eye as if they were present before me; and this is what I call imagining.

Looking at more contemporary scholarship, for instance, philosopher Tamar Gendler (2011, para.1) suggests that

To imagine something is to form a particular sort of mental representation of that thing. Imagining is typically distinguished from mental states such as *perceiving*, *remembering* and *believing* in that imagining *S* does not require (that the subject considers) *S* to be or have been the case, whereas the contrasting states do.

Descartes, Gendler and others make reference to a *mental representation* of a thing, a *picture in the mind*. But do we have pictures in the mind? Do we have a mind's eye? This is in several ways subject to philosophical debate (Kind, 2013b) which, I suggest, interests here with regard to the implication to the process of imagining and consequently its use.

Theodore Sarbin & Joseph Juhasz (1970) consider the concept of imagining as *picture in the mind* a myth. They support their argument by an etymological analysis: They demonstrate how the language of *image* has emerged originally without it being meant to denote the character of imagining whilst over time it did. Sarbin and Juhasz conclude that “we have been taken in by a submerged and unlabeled metaphor – we now talk (a) as if there were pictures (sometimes called representations or images) and (b) as if there were minds like photographic plates, to register these pictures” (1970, p.58). They go on to name the metaphor of an image in the mind that of a *Cartesian man* and propose the alternative metaphor of a *Man as actor*, who has the ability to operate with a range of “hypothetical abilities which free him from domination by the immediate environment and allow for stimulation at a distance, not only in space but also in time” (ibid, p.61). The Man as actor is an active and exploring agent in the world, he engages in “classificatory behaviour” and “formative activity” (ibid, p.62) which are more abstract and hypothetical than the actual activity would be and he is using these hypothetical abilities to solve real problems.

Luis Flores (2001, 218) analyses the concept of imagining in Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy and suggests that to him "imagining needs to be understood not only as a mental state but as a practice (Praxis), a behaviour (Verhalten) and an activity (Handlung)" also that "when I imagine its determinant I imagine", and "I *want* imagine what I want to imagine". I understand Flores' reflection on Wittgenstein's use of imagining as emphasising imagining as conscious and wilful activity. Wittgenstein (1953, §370) suggests that there are several uses to imagining: "one ought to ask not what images are or what happens when one imagines anything, but how the word 'imagination' is used". This reading of Wittgenstein seems to be sympathetic to the process and action perspective of Sarbin and Juhasz (1970) above, the perspective of Man as actor, an active and exploring agent, as opposed to that of a Cartesian man.

Reflecting on Wittgensteinian thought an inquiry into imagining then needs to take into account the language game, the use of imagining, the circumstances (Flores, 2001). This attending to a multiplicity of uses of imagining is echoed by contemporary philosophy (Gendler, 2011, Kind, 2013a). Amy Kind (2013a) details four different types of activities and contexts for imagining. As these will be of continued relevance I here briefly introduce them as imagining as (i) *engaging in fiction*, like in listening or creating fictional stories, (ii) *mind-reading*, an anticipative imagining of someone's next move in a social situation, (iii) *pretence*, or role play, the stepping into someone else's shoes, and (iv) *modal epistemology*, the conduct of robust thought experiments to test possibility or develop viable options, for instance how a budget can be spent or how a seminar room can be setup.

From this initial exploration and portrayal of imagining as a range of useful practices that call on our hypothetical abilities I move to my second task of relating imagining with possibility.

2.2.2 Imagination and possibility

Linking imagining to possibility in its strongest form relates of course directly to the last of the points above, (iv) modal epistemology, but it seems clear that also other forms of imagining like the activities of mind-reading or pretence can have a strong link to possibility. We already noted Gendler's (2011) definition of imagining above that had us understand that what we imagine *is not necessarily real* so now we ask is it at least possible then?

One route to engage with possibility is to understand how it is linked with reality. Here I found the theory of imagining of social psychologist Lev Vygotsky (2004) useful as he

establishes a holistic sense of this link. Vygotsky considers different uses for imagining activity such as imagining of fiction and of non-fiction, and imagining as creating technical inventions. He relates imagining to realities in four ways:

- (i) Imaginations are always built from experiences. For example if someone has never seen an elephant he or she is unlikely to (be able to) imagine a pink elephant. In that sense Vygotsky claims that all imaginations are combinations of what we have experienced and the power to imagine develops with the richness and diversity of memories of the life experiences we can access.
- (ii) Imagining can be linked to reality through socially accessing of someone else's experience. For instance we come to imagine what the French Revolution was like based on a story told from someone who has. The imagining is still depending on our own experience and concepts we already have acquired in our memory but at the same time is guided through the narrative as if instructed by someone else and to the consequence that our imagining is relating to reality in a way the pink elephant is not. Vygotsky points out that this second type of imagination not only is dependent on experience it also serves it. When we read the newspaper the imagination of what we read becomes our experience.
- (iii) Mental images are linked to emotions in a two directional way. *First* mental images have specific real emotional states as a consequence, for instance walking down a narrow dark street we may imagine a threat around the corner and experience a sense of fear. Whilst particular images induce an emotion or mood in us *reverse*ly a particular emotional state of joy, sadness, pride etc. is linked in our mind with memories that carry the same emotional connotation. These are then more readily available to us, as for instance presented in dreams or daydreams.
- (iv) Creative imaginations can become real in the world in the form of material reality as technical inventions, as stories or other works of art, forms that can be experienced and exert an influence on us (Vygotsky, 2004).

I understand Vygotsky to relate imagining to being in the world, starting with experience and memories, including social experience and mediated by emotional states imagining can become real on two levels, a material level but also as an expression.

Theodore Sarbin (Hevern, 1999) observes on the link between imagining, reality and possibility, that imagining and believing cannot be differentiated at a phenomenological level. To believe means to imagine and attribute a high value to it (ibid). This link is also discussed in the philosophies and usually traced back to David Hume (1739, p.32) who

suggests “Nothing that we imagine is absolutely impossible”. Kind observes that “Most philosophers deny that logical impossibilities can be imagined in a robust way” (Kind, 2013a, p.151). Further she suggests that

imagination is supposed to give rise to knowledge of possibility as perception gives rise to knowledge of the actual world. Our knowledge of the world in which we live is grounded largely in perception. But, since we have no sensory access to what is not actually the case, perception can afford us no real insight into non-actualized possibilities. In contrast, the imagination is not limited to what is actually the case. This feature of the imagination, in conjunction with the close connection between perception and imagination, is what seems to lead us to rely on the imagination for knowledge of possibility (Kind, 2013b, para.68).

So regarding the question, if imagining can be linked to possibility, I suggest to conclude that imagining practice can serve the very purpose of establishing possibility. Indeed, if we say ‘we can imagine that’ then this is very often the articulation of the very claim of possibility. As I understand it, drawing on Vygotsky (2004) and Sarbin and Juhasz (1970), the difference between saying ‘I can imagine such and such’, and saying ‘such and such is possible’, is that in the former I explicitly locate the intelligibility of my claim for possibility in my experience and my capacity to creatively construct experiences and my abstract and hypothetical ability, whereas in the latter I don’t. Whether our *use* of the word imagining is however actually of that particular kind that gives rise to claims of possibility we need to consider from case to case.

2.2.3 Imagining from a constructionist perspective – a social phenomenon?

We are now moving on to the third task of exploring how imagining can be understood as positioned in the social as opposed to the cognitive realm. Above we have already attended to the question of a mental eye, representations and pictures in the mind, as opposed to a process or action perspective, the metaphor of a *Man as actor*. But we have not resolved the question of whether the activities we are talking about are cognitive activities, if they are ‘mental’ and what that means. Interestingly I found that the educational scholar Alexander Gadi (2006) has asked a similar question from an interest in educational rather than organisational process: “Can imagination be perceived as a totally individual process?” (2006, p.3), I will turn to his insight later.

In responding to the questions above I propose to revisit briefly Vygotsky’s (2004) theory of imagining who has offered us four features of imagination (i) as building on own experience (ii) including through social experiences the experience of others (iii) being

linked to emotions and memory and (iv) becoming real through expression. Immediately we can see that this short list places doubt on imagining as an activity divorced from social reality and identity based on (i), (ii) and (iv), but what about (iii) memory and emotions?

Emotions are often understood as primarily natural and intrinsic to a person. There is however a strong argument for emotions being meaningful *only* against the background of a cultural emotional repertoire, the shared historic nature of relationships and the moment by moment unfolding relational activity (Harré, 1986, Lutz, 1990, Fredman, 2004, Boiger and Mesquita, 2012). Looking back to Vygotsky's use and concept of emotions as an index to experience, this second and social concept of emotions makes compelling sense.

Based on these reflections of Vygotsky's thought we have already a comprehensive indication on how imagining activities are linked to social reality. This is however not to the exclusion of cognitive processes or mental states, but how can we relate to such 'inner' activities from a social constructionist perspective?

Rom Harré resolves on the question "What sorts of attributes are those we single out as 'mental'?" by suggesting that "People produce streams of action, some private, some public. These display all sorts of properties some of which we pick out as mental" (Harré, 1998, p.3). My reading of Harré's category of mental is that to him it is a rather artificial and not necessarily meaningful distinction. He proposes a different construction instead and refers to private activities, activities that we choose not to express publicly. To Harré (2002) building on Vygotsky's (1962) developmental psychology such activities have been first acquired through participation in collective activity before they then were privatised.

John Shotter (1997), building on Valentin Volosinov (1973), explains that our inner activities are *determined* by the unfolding of the relational dialogic activity we are involved in, an activity in which we participate in a relational responsive manner. As I understand Shotter this determination is not subject to choice; it is rather essential to what human beings do, the way we function basically: "all of one's speech, inner or outer, must be directed to certain others, and must, in being responsive to them in its production, take them into account" (Shotter, 1997, p.13).

Coming from different starting points Shotter and Harré seem to tell us that in essence every activity or practice is structured in a socially and relationally responsive way. Even if they are conducted as inner or private activities they are emerging from the moral obligations of our relational circumstances. I believe it is worth noting though that this is not to say that imagining in public or in private are the same. As we will see later in this

research, conversations have a particular order and morality that mediate what can be said or done and hence also what can be imagined in them.

Finally, in place of concluding on the question if imagining is a social activity, I return to Gadi's (2006) insight drawing on pedagogic research:

Before a person seeks social approval and acceptance, the process that occurs within his or her head is dependent to a large extent on his or her social framing and the reading of his expectation of his or her affinity group. The individual thinker does not imagine in a vacuum, and restrictions or openness to listening, examining, accepting, and relating to his or her ideas will play a part in the kinds of thoughts that will be generated" (ibid, p.3).

To summarise on this introduction, which served as well as the development of a particular concept of socially and relationally responsive imagining, what we can propose is (1) that imagining can be understood as an activity, something we do, and (2) rather than this activity producing a picture in the mind we draw on hypothetical abilities in our acting as active agents, in a sense that (3) when we imagine, we also know to what extent our activity serves us to establish an orientation to possibility, and (4) imagining is an activity that in several, rich and inevitable ways relates to our social being and reality, even though we may choose to conduct it at times in private rather than publicly. So prepared we can now move to imagining in organisational contexts.

2.3 Imagining in the context of organisations

In this section I will offer a review of research on imagining as located in organisational theory. This is relevant to provide an orientation to the field of study of imagining organisational futures and for the development and discussion of propositions in this research project. From a social constructionist and a critical perspective what interests here is not only the particular claims that are made in the theory but also how concepts of imagining are used in organisational discourse and are relevant to dialogical processes and to ethical practice.

It would be tempting to start with a definition of what we shall mean by 'organisation'; however this is easier thought than done. As I found any definition of what an organisation *is* can be challenged from the one or other perspective as not robust, as too narrow and excluding or as too wide and loose. Organisational theorists then suggest that we cannot point to what organisations are in a robust way by means of definitions which are always laden with assumptions and perspectives, hence never objective and always

open for critical rejection (McAuley et al., 2007, Griseri, 2013). As a consequence, what an organisation is can be understood only from within a particular discourse and in a particular community, and from a constructionist perspective we can say only as little as that the organisation “is just that: socially constructed. But it is being constructed continuously, on a daily, even momentary, basis through individuals interacting with each other. The organisation never settles into an entity or a thing” (Campbell, 2000, p.28).

However, what we can do, briefly and as initial orientation, is to engage with an overview of relevant discursive frameworks that give rise to a diversity of meanings of ‘organisation’. One way of capturing the plurality of approaches is to attend to historic development of organisational discourse identifying major traditions. Drawing for instance on a historic punctuation and scholarship of Ann Cunliffe (2008) we can portray the following four main episodes to organisational theory:

- A *classical period* gaining momentum around 1900, which is concerned with observation, explanation, characterisation and single best practice of organisations in societal and economic frameworks. Significant developments include the theory of bureaucracy of Max Weber (1922) and the time and motions studies of Frederick Taylor’s (1911) scientific management approach and are still of relevance to organisational discourse and practice today.
- *Modernism* as from the 1950s. Theoretical approaches include systems theory and contingency theory: organisations are understood as adapting and responding to potentially unstable environments (Donaldson, 2001), hence there are no longer single, ideal or idealised ways of organising or managing. Management action can be reliably informed by theory based responses to known circumstances.
- *Social constructionism*, as from the 1960s is the third main developmental stream to organisational theory. A prominent representative is Karl Weick (1995) who has popularised social constructionist thought in theorising organisational sensemaking and enactment.
- *Postmodernism* (1980 -) attends to organisations as systems of power relations, attends to language and knowledge as functional to oppression rather than enlightenment and questioning mainstream ideas (Cunliffe, 2008).

An alternative way of drawing on a multiplicity of traditions has been proposed by Gareth Morgan (1996) who relates to organisational theory through metaphorical lenses: speaking of organisations as machines, prisons, organisms, brains etcetera he draws on multiple traditions foregrounds, draws together and resourcefully relates precisely some discourses and theories whilst leaving others in the background. For instance under the metaphor of organisations as a brain Morgan draws on images and theories of

organisations that foreground knowing and learning processes, theories of individual and group knowledge, and theories of how organisations arise out of information processes.

With such awareness of the wealth of discourses organisational theorists are drawing on in making sense of organisations and organisational phenomena we now turn back to the task of reviewing research claims that explicitly relate to imagining in organisations. We can also be mindful that these research contributions may and will relate to different historic periods and be informed by different discourses of organisational theory. This review has been informed by literature from the taught part of the doctorate, by a search of literature in relation to imagining in organisations in research databases, and by literature through reviews on the topic of imagining practice in organisations (further details to literature selection are provided in appendix 1 - literature review).

Overall I noted that contemporary research draws intensively on classical texts of early pioneers which seem to have left significant imprints on organisational discourse. Another more general note to make on the literature is that the topic of imagining and imagination in organisational contexts seems to have been wiped off a modernistic research agenda which privileges rational choice and fact based reasoning. Robin Matthews (2002) suggests that imagining has been cast in a negative light, having a legitimate place in the domain of art rather than organisational and management studies and plays at best a subjugated role to more relevant concepts. Against this background, inquiry into imagining in organisational literature can also be seen as an attempt to foreground these particular maybe fragmented research contributions and scholarly positions which as a whole avails a discourse of an imagining organisation and of organising as imagining.

I have structured this review according to the uses or applications of imagining in organisational practice contexts. With this logic I organise the literature into the following few interrelated topical strands: (1) *organisational opportunity* – relating to the theory of the firm or organisation, its purpose and how it is emergent out of imagining processes (2) *alignment and coordination* – addressing the issue of how shared images of the future serve to coordinate activity across the organisation (3) *decision making* – exploring the presence and consequences of imagining and (4) *organisational development or change* – attending to imagining practice exemplars.

2.3.1 Organisational opportunity

Imaginative frames of organisational opportunity can be compared with and set off against frames of rational choice. For instance, classical organisation theory starting with Adam Smith's conception of the firm with the famous example of a pin-maker was

oriented to economic efficiency (Smith, 1776). A rational rather than an imaginative choice related to maximising wealth given the technology of division of labour. In economic theory Joseph Schumpeter (1912) and Edith Tilton Penrose (1955, 1959) are often credited as first contributors in acknowledging the importance of imagining in the theory of the firm (Witt, 2005, Beckert, 2011, Jones and Pitelis, 2011).

To Schumpeter (2002) economic development is driven by innovative ideas which are conceived by “a minority of people with a sharper intelligence and with a more agile imagination [who] perceive countless new combinations. They look at everyday events with more open eyes and a wealth of ideas suggests themselves on their own” (2002, p.413). Schumpeter suggests that the entrepreneurs then pick up on such ideas - which are not necessarily their own - and act on them. The translation of ideas into action requires leadership without which

the virtually defenceless new thought would almost never be noticed. It would remain unknown or at least not understood – because for adopting something new, a process of reconsideration is required from all people moving along in static channels – and it would meet with rejection, or at most only with that kind of opaque, vague type of agreement that can never lead to real fruitfulness. Without the activity of the leader, a new thought would hardly ever be perceived as Reality, a Reality that one must take into consideration, acknowledge, adapt to. [...] This is because only what you have seen working is perceived as real – that is, generally speaking the complex of static events and ideas (Schumpeter, 2002, p.429).

In Penrose’s economic theory it requires experienced managers and entrepreneurs for firms to grow and prosper. Opportunities exist as images in the mind of the entrepreneur or executive (Pitelis, 2009).

A versatile type of executive service is needed if expansion requires major efforts on the part of the firm to develop new markets or entails branching out into new lines of production. Here the imaginative effort – the sense of timing, the instinctive recognition of what will catch on – becomes of overwhelming importance (Penrose, 1955, p.540).

These original contributions must be acknowledged for drawing attention to the importance of imagination to the development of organisations and the economy. The essential role of sustained innovation, a central argument of Schumpeter, has been maintained in more contemporary research and scholarship (e.g. Bhide, 2000, Witt, 2005, Cornelissen and Clarke, 2010).

Amar Bhide (2000) in a multi case study argues that entrepreneurs try out imaginative variations which “initially exist only in their mind” (Bhide, 2000, p.65). He considers entrepreneurial response to developments from inside or outside the organisation as imaginative achievements. His observations also include that innovative processes are not always that radical as Schumpeterian theory suggests but can take place in incremental steps. Bhide frames strategy formulation as an imaginative activity, that can involve sacrificing short term wins in exchange for the longevity of the firm and involves “imagination to envision a different kind of future, a capacity for creative synthesis and a capacity for abstraction” (Bhide, 2000, p.82) and further that entrepreneurs “use their imagination to envision what their firms could become along several dimensions such as the markets they will serve, the tangible and intangible assets they will acquire and their organisation’s climate and norms” (ibid).

Jones and Pitelis (2011), drawing on the theory of the firm from Penrose (1955, 1959) and Hymer’s work on multinational firms (1960, 1972), focus attention on the relevance of imagining in the theory of large multinational companies (as opposed to entrepreneurial ventures) and suggest that concepts of imagined realities should take centre stage in the theorising of multinational enterprises. They develop the concept of “appropriability-informed imagination” (Jones and Pitelis, 2011, p.18) which marries up the concepts of imagining and action-ability⁸. Supported by cases from business history they establish that multinational companies not only imagine products or services, but they also imagine the markets that yet have to come into existence.

I suggest we can observe in the above a confluence of imagining and power and with emphasis on Schumpeter, Penrose and Bhide a notion of imagining being located in few and special people. There are two qualifying frames offered, one is the smart and action driven entrepreneur, the other the experienced and versatile executive. I also note what has not been discussed is how access to information and control of resources is contributing to the observed privileged positions of imagining of what is possible in the future of the organisation.

A critique into an elite perspective of imagining could be expanded drawing on the work of Coskun Samli (2011) who understands imagining as a practice open to everybody rather than a special capacity of a few individuals: relating imagining to practices of

⁸ The emphasis on linking imagining with action-ability addresses a problematic that parallels our earlier discussion of imagining and possibility in section 2.2 above.

critical thinking and critical theory he suggests that imagination can be provoked and stimulated in a structured way. Hence everyone is able to imagine through cultivation of imagining as systematic free thinking. Such a practice perspective invites a much more inclusive frame of imagining and in itself is a critique of elitist positions of imagining.

We may also note that the whole case of attending to opportunity is framed against a background discourse of economic prosperity which serves as sole justification of the whole enterprise of imagining of organisations. This is liable to critique from Marxist, feminist, economist and critical social constructionist positions some of which we will attend to later in this section in the form of alternative frames of imagining organisational opportunity.

So far I have only focused on firms and said little on imagination of opportunity in public sector organisations. Public as opposed to private sector developments and experience may be a source of such alternative developments, despite a notable trend in public sector organisations to become increasingly technocratic and structured in the image of private sector organisations (Harris, 2002, Stacey and Griffin, 2007). Arguing for a different perspective to imagining in public sector organisations, Carol Harris (2002) is making a case against technocratic management of schools, suggesting that schools need to imagine the requirements of the community they are part of and need to serve and to contribute to the imaginative abilities of this community through a rich curriculum.

I notice that Harris' (2002) use of imagining is also oriented to possibility and opportunity. She also makes the link between resources and imagining. Her case for imagining, however, is not situated at the executive level of the school organisation which is geographically removed from the local school. The difference between the orientation and agendas of the top of the school organisation and the requirements of the local community is part of her unfolding insight into what could be framed as opportunity of a community imagining its future and a school imagining its role in serving this community.

Janice Wallace (2002) writes from a critical, feminist, social constructionist position and is in clear opposition to an economic frame that sees organisations only as a means to an end: to her an organisation is also an end in itself. It is part of the social world we create and inhabit and she asks what sort of world we want to live in and whose images are to be privileged in answering this question. Wallace imagines the gender equitable organisation and offers possibilities for pragmatic development of this imagination through approaches for strategic action and conversational spaces of reflective learning which have a potential to unsettle dominant gender discourses and practices.

The critical social constructionist and post modern research contributions of Harris and Wallace offer significant counterpoints to the classic and modernistic positions we have

seen earlier. Arguing for alternative aims and forms of imagining organisational opportunity, such as an imagining of the organisation as a place to inhabit or an organisation as being of service to community, their work can also be seen as drawing attention to the limitations of hierarchically and bureaucratically structured concepts of imagining organisational opportunity.

2.3.2 Alignment and coordination

I found imagining in relation to alignment and coordination to be addressed from two perspectives: one is that of managerial action or intervention in relation to staff and sense making in organisations, a second perspective is that of attending to imagining as collective orientation to a possible future, without emphasis of managerial practice. I will introduce and discuss contributions to this theme to then draw out a few main implications for the use of imagining in the coordination of organisations.

Imagining coordination in economics - from Schumpeter to Witt

Having attended to Schumpeter's thought on imagining of opportunity I suggest starting also with his theorising of alignment and coordination before moving to contemporary theory. Schumpeter (2002, p.428) sets the stage for describing the task of alignment in organisations, describing the nature of the players involved: There are "statically disposed individuals and there are leaders":

Statically disposed individuals are characterized by essentially doing what they have learnt, by moving within the received boundaries and by having in a determining way their opinion, dispositions and behaviour influenced by the given data of their sector. Leaders are characterized by perceiving new things, by changing the received boundaries to their behaviour and by changing the given data of their sector (ibid).

Everywhere these types are set apart by the same strong contour lines that make those spirits stand out who *create* new 'lines' of art, new 'schools' and new parties, from those spirits who *are created* by, 'lines' of art, 'schools' and parties (ibid).

Schumpeter then mentions two mechanisms for alignment:

Coercion is exerted on the reluctant mass which basically does not want to know anything of the new, often does not know what it is all about (ibid, p.429).

The leader is gathering followers around himself, sometimes only by his personal energy, sometimes more by other means. He somehow forms a school, a party organisation, whose weight subsequently realises its objective. It is the personality that carries itself out and only in second place the new thing that it represents (ibid, p.430).

In a Schumpeterian world the leaders engage and act imaginatively and creatively in their world, shape institutions and invite followership whereas the statically disposed individuals are created by such institutions or are coerced into compliance.

Having taken a glimpse at a discourse on leadership from 1911 I am turning to the research of Ulrich Witt (1998, 2005) as a way of showing how Schumpeter's thought has been taken forward, developed but as well sustained. For Witt the coordination of action in an organisation is of central concern and requires successful alignment with the imagining of the entrepreneur as opposed to alignment with imaginings of employees. The existence of different and rivalling imaginings is seen as problematic in his theory, in particular as staff may develop 'opportunistic' strategies. Witt is drawing on cognitive psychology and transaction cost economics to form an argument in support of this particular leadership outcome which he calls a *cognitive leadership regime*.

To Witt, similar as to Schumpeter and others, the concept of the firm is based on entrepreneurial imagination of a business conception which to him is a kind of cognitive frame that "consists of subjective, sometimes highly idiosyncratic imaginings in the mind of (potential) entrepreneurs of what business is to be created, and how to do it" (Witt, 2005, p.4). A business conception gives meaning to incoming information in relation to the imagined organisation. Business conceptions can be expressed partly in business plans but they are not these plans.

Witt relates the business conception to the "dual problem of coordinating and motivating" (2005, p.7) of staff to engage in the activities required to meet the very purpose of the organisation. He positions *cognitive leadership* as a preferred solution in response to this problem, proposing that ideally participants accept the cognitive frame of the entrepreneur as their own and with (or from within) that frame participate in the organisational activity in self-determined, intrinsically motivated and well coordinated ways. The alternative to such a cognitive leadership regime is a monitoring regime which involves specific instructions tailored to specific situations and is not equally motivating or preferable cost and control wise.

In relation to establishing and maintaining a cognitive leadership regime Witt (2005, p.13) observes as problematic

that cognitive frames are not subject to intentional choice. For this reason employees can not be ordered to adopt a certain cognitive frame. Cognitive frames rather emerge in a complex, unconscious, spontaneous process under the influence of information processed earlier, not least socially contingent experience.

Witt portrays the task of the entrepreneur as a struggle to achieve cognitive leadership by influencing through formal and informal communication processes the cognitive frame of organisational members; a quest that he suggests is mediated by the characteristics of the entrepreneur and the appeal of the business concept. In the case of a growing organisation, Witt recognises that for the entrepreneur the task of being on top of all communications gets increasingly difficult and time consuming; the entrepreneur hence needs to employ a group of executives, which he names level two entrepreneurs, to carry this work load. With this step the related problem of coordination between subordinate levels of entrepreneurs arises and needs addressing.

We are interested in Witt's theory mainly from a perspective of the importance of imagining in organisations. He follows a cognitive conception of imagining and also presumes that imagining is a guide to possibility and action and an agent for coordination in the organisation. Hence the question whose mental frame will prevail and be translated into action is a logical consequence to this starting point which, however, directly leads to a struggle of influence in conversations.

We can acknowledge the development of Witt's concept over Schumpeter in that Witt's theory is not based on degrading employees' capacity to imagine but rather he is acknowledging that all members of the organisation hold concepts about the future and have interests. However, with no consideration for merits of engagement with the ideas of staff and their imaginations, Witt positions the cognitive frames of employees and entrepreneurs in an unhelpful competition, "since at any point in time only one cognitive frame can be in operation, the employee's attention would be diverted from thinking up elaborate strategies, including 'opportunistic' ones, that rival with the entrepreneur's business conception" (Witt, 2005, p.6).

I suggest Witt's conception is limited at the outset in the use of concepts from cognitive psychology to frame problems that are more aptly addressed in social psychology, and that he is naïve with regard to the motivational effects he invites by the leadership strategies he suggests. In my view pursuing Witt's recommendations in many ways invites a practice that is prone to be ineffective, limiting and unethical. For instance it is ineffective because people are likely to see through the struggle of their 'leaders' in engaging in conversations intended only to conclude on the entrepreneurial frame which is also hardly motivational; it is limiting because there is no true dialogue possible and in

particular corrective feedback to the entrepreneur's mental frame is unlikely to take place; and it is unethical as staff at the outset are ill-conceived as following their own interests and to strategise in ways that are not contributing to the whole they are part of.

Coordinating as imagining from within the dialogue

Social constructionist researchers John Shotter and Ann Cunliffe (2003) present us with a very different and dialogical way of imagining. They amongst others address the very coordination problem that Witt has raised; however, with different starting and end points and as we will see with a different practice altogether. Developing the notion of a manager as practical author, Shotter and Cunliffe (2003, p.20) focus their inquiry on the ways how good managers imagine with others

a living reality, a dynamic landscape, which spontaneously offers us a set of action guiding advisories', a 'shaped and vectored sense' of where we are now and where we might go next. Indeed, from within such a felt and actively lived reality, what is 'in front' and 'behind, what is 'in reach' and 'out of reach', and so on, becomes directly apparent to us.

To Shotter and Cunliffe this activity of imagining is unfolding from *within* the conversation and the organisational discourse, it is exactly not something the manager brings *to* the situation or *into* it. The emergence of shared imagining requires a manager to engage with a special sensitivity to vague tendencies and possibilities. Shotter and Cunliffe name these vague tendencies *the imaginary*, which through a dialogic engagement with it and in it, is developed and transformed in the process of conversation to *the imagined*, such as a shared common sense, direction or practice. To engage effectively in such an activity, they suggest, the good managers "must be sensitive and subtle listeners, as well as sensitive and subtle talkers" (ibid, p.22).

The imagining Shotter and Cunliffe describe is emergent in dialogue, it is at no stage a mental activity as in the cognitive frame of Witt. Social accountability and ethical discourse are primary aspects of their development. This includes the relational ethics of participation with each other, giving rise to identity of those involved through dialogue and authoring, and an engagement in conversations in ways where "everyone being able to see each other's moral involvement (i.e., their rights and duties) and to come to a much more detailed grasp of what, justifiably, is expected of them and what they can expect of others" (ibid, p.32).

I am appreciating the aesthetics and ethics of practice portrayed by Shotter and Cunliffe, which requires, as they assert, special skills of listening, speaking and a poetic and

dramaturgic engagement with possibility. Shotter and Cunliffe acknowledge an unevenness in participation in authoring conversations between those who are focused on a particular task as opposed to managers whose task is to attend to, not “this or that specific job within the organisation, but to making a comprehensive set of connections and relations between them all” (ibid, p.33). Shotter and Cunliffe demonstrate their attending to concerns of power and call for reflective awareness and reflective practice that calls into focus the ethics of managerial practice. Whilst I believe that such ethical reflexivity can profoundly and ethically transform power differences and the way power manifests itself, power differences cannot be removed altogether. For instance, I suggest the legitimate share of voice participants have in such imagining is distributed according not to everybody’s choosing but the choice of a few. Also the manager who authors forth the organisation is not only created in the conversation with his or her conversational partner but also a commissioned agent positioned in organisational discourse. As a possible consequent development, I suggest, we need to find frames of attending to imagining that reflexively include how power gets constructed and how it becomes relevant in the imagining process.

Imagining of practice as organisational becoming

Having discussed two research contributions on imagining informing organisational alignment and coordination from a managerial perspective I will turn to research from Arne Carlsen (2006) who considers the relevance of imagining at the level of organisational discourse and in doing so he also touches the issues of coordination and motivation. Carlsen considers organisations as unfolding processual identities which arise from continuous authoring acts of the participants in it and “that this authoring may be motivated (and not exclusively so) by forward-looking striving for transformation, adventure, and purpose, and that it is productive to see it as imagination of practice” (ibid, p.135).

Carlsen speaks to the process of imagining at organisational level, engaging with the properties of the discourses that give rise to possible futures. Informed by his experience and learning from a case study he offers three underlying mechanisms: With *imagining as instantiating*, he refers to discourses on what has been done which inform coherent notions of identity and viable futures. For instance, having delivered very successfully a complex technology project, people in a firm could be imagining to engage in other similar projects of that kind. *Imagining as dramatizing*, a practice of rich storying and enacting of identity in the here and now, less founded on historic accomplishments but instead on compelling enactments of current reality and possible futures. For instance moving to a larger office with potential space for growth can be part of such an enactment. The third

mechanism he suggests is *imagining as reframing*, a reorientation that calls into question historic truths and projections of the future and gives rise to new discourse and orientations to what is possible.

Carlsen observes an emergent organisation-wide and dominant discourse of imagining practice that changes over time and is informed by the afore mentioned possibilities of imagining. He suggests that the prevailing frame of imagining may subjugate other alternative frames at a given time. This, in a way, theorises organisational discourse as a shared resource or property of an organisation that can also be seen to serve an overall coordination similar to the shared imagining that was important in Witt's (1998, 2005) theorising before. However, in Carlsen's account this discourse is not brought about by the executive or entrepreneur but rather emerging from a plurality of conversations across the organisation.

Carlsen also observes the motivational effect accruing from employees seeing themselves "as part of more enduring struggles, movements and mysteries at the societal level" (ibid, p.146). I understand the emphasis of his insight is the importance and motivational value of a frame of imagining of the organisation that gives rise to notions of self by meaningfully linking the individual with society. To provide an illustrative example an accountant working for Red Cross, with the Red Cross mission to save lives, becomes someone who is part of a life saving activity.

Compared to Shotter and Cunliffe's (2003) and Witt's (1998, 2005) research, Carlsen (2006) does not aim for normative insight in a sense of depicting good practice; his focus is rather to be inclusive in attending to what is or has been the case. His research speaks to discursive activity mainly at employee and middle management level as opposed to executives or entrepreneurs. He treats his findings on imagining of organisational becoming as organisational achievement, an authoring of many.

I suggest we can position the contributions from Schumpeter, Witt, Shotter and Cunliffe, and Carlsen to relate to a continuum of positions ranging from imagining of organisational futures as entrepreneurial or executive activity at the organisational top to a dialogic activity at all levels. Ralph Stacey (Knowledgelab.dk, 2011) speaks to this continuity of organisational becoming with reference to two theories: one theory is that organisations are shaped by a dominant coalition which plans the organisation as a whole and such plans being implemented through the organisation's administrative system; the other theory is that organisations emerge out of the interplay of the many local intentions of people doing their work. He suggests as a possible integrating view to these two theories to understand the plans from the dominant coalition as gestures to the members of the organisation which are then taken up into their local circumstances in different ways.

Such an integrating view, which I here apply to the topic of imagining, would permit to theorise imagining as dialogue at all levels whilst being inclusive of the relative differences in power, voice and participation that are also significant to organisational practice.

Looking back on the very different contributions I suggest a couple of themes stand out and a few things can be captured across these contributions:

- *Imagining is central to coordination and motivation:* Witt suggests that a common frame of imagining serves to make sense of information, to respond in a timely way, sensibly and effectively. For Shotter and Cunliffe it is the task of the good manager to invite such orientation through dialogic practice and also from within the conversation to affirm the rights and duties of the persons involved. Carlsen makes us consider that through imagining of organisational practice people also accrue a sense of what they are part of, their identity and motivation.
- *Imagining as poetic achievement:* Witt points out that it is not possible to instruct people what to imagine; imagining in organisations seems to happen through conversations, however in undirected ways. To Shotter and Cunliffe the imagined evolves as poetic achievement from within conversations. Similarly Carlsen who considers the emergence of organisations as an ongoing authoring of unfolding practice.
- *Imagining places demands on managers:* Witt emphasises the requirement for entrepreneurs and executives to stay on top of all conversations but upon reflection it is not so clear how his ends can be achieved practically and ethically. Shotter and Cunliffe present us with the how of aesthetic and ethical practice of managers as practical authors. They portray a frame of sophisticated practice and dialogical abilities that makes for a good manager.

2.3.3 Decision Making

Imagining has been related to decision making in different ways. Firstly we will locate imagining in the decision making process which can be seen as a counter narrative to the dominant discourse of rational decision making. Secondly we attend to the imagined implications for stakeholders and society, a moral imagining in decision making.

Decision making as imagining practice

With imagining giving rise to possibility we would expect that imagining plays an important part in decision making processes. The dominant theory of organisational

decision making is however informed by classic and modernistic ideas of rational choice between well defined options, supported by economic models which presuppose a level of certainty in available datasets, which casts the issue of imagining into the background (Mintzberg and Westley, 2001, Beckert, 2011).

Decision making is understood as part of a problem solving process which is *cognitively framed* (Weston, 2010). Henry Mintzberg and Frances Westley (2001) observe this implies a *thinking first* stance which preferences rationality, whereas they suggest that in reality decisions may as well be informed by an *acting first* approach privileging notions of art and craft, or by a *seeing first* approach where actors first engage with a sense of the whole. Similar to such a seeing first approach Jens Beckert (2011) suggests that actors develop fictional expectations of the future which provide them with the parameters that are required for decision making. These fictions bridge the gap between what is known from experience and the unknowable.

Considering imagining practice in decision making has implications on several levels. Cameron Ford (2002) for instance draws attention to the balance between knowing from experience or status quo on the one hand and the imagination of entirely new visions on the other, as a significant aspect to a decision making process. Ford observes that actors tend to be satisfied with current states as long as they are not obviously deficient or leading to failure which leads to an unhelpful bias to inform decisions on historic information rather than future vision. The consequence may be backward looking regimes that lose out on the potential to innovate. Making a case for less history and more futurity in decision making, he recommends that past experiences have to be cast in a less favourable light to create space for newness to emerge.

Sharon Alvarez and Jay Barney (2007) make us aware that the question of whether investment decisions can be seen as capturing fundamentally existing opportunities or as an imaginative engagement with an unfolding unknowable future has far reaching consequences, for instance for the way a decision is developed, positioned and executed. It has also implications for attracting finance partners, for how an organisation prepares for ongoing learning and revisions, or how the risk involved is understood. Similarly Beckert (2011) understands decision making as enactment of fictional stories which have implications for other actors, including investors, competitors and customers. These fictional stories profoundly inform relations of trust to these stakeholders and the participation of stakeholders in the imagined narrative may inform, validate or defect some of the significant assumptions implicit in these fictional stories.

Taking a systems lens we can see that the boundaries of imagining in organisational decision making transgress organisational boundaries as institution as relationships to a

wider system of players need to be considered. At least some of the fictions then no longer belong to the organisation but are part of even wider contextual discourses such as financial markets, consumer interest groups or unions. Also we can note that the imagining involved here includes engagement with possibility, fiction and mind-reading (Kind, 2013a).

Moral imagining in decision making

Positioning decision making in a stakeholder network which includes trust-givers and trust-takers (Beckert, 2011), but also dependents on the side lines, calls into focus the ethics of decision making. Patricia Werhane and Brian Moriarty (2009) link organisations' failure of ethical decision making to institutional narratives and practices which distort and restrict what managers deem to see as factual, the possibilities for action visible in a situation, and the power-relations and dependencies in a work place. Werhane and Moriarty advocate for reflexive practices of moral imagination and moral decision making which engage with the particular rather than the general:

Nothing short of a very active freeplaying imagination will enable us to distance ourselves from our scripts, roles, or narratives to envision new and better possibilities. Moral imagination entails an ability to consider a situation from the perspectives of various stakeholders—a facility that can help managers avoid the ethical trap of confusing reality with what they want it to be. Leaders will better prepare their organisations for the unanticipated situations they will inevitably face by expanding the notion of managerial responsibility to include moral imagination as a cultural practice and value (Werhane and Moriarty, 2009, p.17).

Concepts of moral imagination can be traced back to Adam Smith's thought and are related to ethical decision making in entrepreneurial, corporate, public and non-profit organisations. At the most basic level moral imagination means to engage with the implications a decision may have for others, to step into their shoes and consider their position as informing the decision as moral agent (Werhane, 1999, Stephenson Jr, 2007, Godwin, 2008, Werhane and Moriarty, 2009, Mahmood and Ali, 2011). From a corporate social responsibility perspective moral imagining cannot be separate but must be integral to organisational decision making processes. An integration that may also invite innovations for products and services and contribute to organisational opportunity (Werhane and Dunham, 2000, Werhane and Moriarty, 2009).

To Werhane and Moriarty (2009, p.17) moral decision-making involves situated judgements and solutions that are temporary in nature, a process that is seldom complete but rather an ongoing sensibility and practice. "Each new set of decisions is an

opportunity for moral growth, an occasion to further develop a moral imagination that perceives the nuances of a situation, challenges the framework or narrative in which the event is embedded, and imagines how that situation and other situations might be different.”

From this review of literature relating to imagining and decision making we may conclude that imagination takes a by far larger role in decision making processes than a modernistic discourse suggests. Decision making gives rise to new stories, discourses and possibilities with moral implications in a dynamic landscape of systemic interdependencies. These may include the possibility to engage stakeholders like business partners or investors into trust relationships and participatory narratives of shared futures which would not exist otherwise. Imagination may also be required to break free of containing and narrowing narratives and frames of practice, to develop alternative options, and to see afresh available possibilities with all their ethical implications. To these ends a wide range of imaginative performances are required.

2.3.4 Practice of imagining in organisation development or change

Whilst it could be said of many approaches to organisational development or change that they are in some or many ways imaginative practices, I have limited the review to sources where the process of imagining itself is positioned as instrumental to the approach or method that is presented and researched. Our purpose here is to relate to these practices and develop and understand how concepts of imagining are used.

From an initial orientation I grouped the practices of organisation development as (i) narrative imaginative approaches and (ii) imaginative approaches using metaphors.

Narrative imaginative approaches

Many practices of organisational development foregrounding imagining as a central concept have in common the imagining of stories of possible futures or organisational activities. A person or a group is asked to pretend to be in another time or in another particular situation or context, and then to imagine a hypothetical account or story from this position. These stories are then used as information of possibility, to inform insight and action, with a focus to achieve or to avoid the storied outcome. Here I provide particular research contributions and practice accounts as exemplars.

Exemplar 1

William Anthony, Robert Bennett, Nick Maddox and Walter Wheatley (1993) use imagining practices in strategy processes as a method of developing scenarios on the future. Their practice relates particularly to strategic environmental assessment, i.e. anticipations of future environmental conditions such as legal, competitive, technological, social or political circumstances. A task, they observe, of increasing difficulty based on an overload of data on the past and present, and the complexity of interdependent and fast moving environments. They suggest that imagining practice based on insights from cognitive psychology is a promising method to form realistic expectations of the future.

Anthony et al. (1993) invite participants, usually senior managers, to a strategic planning process to imagine possible future scenarios. This process is facilitated by staging a future situation, a story that situates the participant into a specific future, a script that invites completion through imagining. To illustrate what such an invitational script could look like I cite one of the examples provided:

It is five years from today. You are sitting in your office. The telephone ring startles you. It is your secretary informing you that Bob Johnson, editor of the local newspaper, is on the line. Bob asks you to appear on a panel to discuss critical issues of the day. The panel will be made of nine people with three each from government, education and business. Each person is to discuss the critical issues of the day as it affects their organisation, industry and the world in general. Mr Johnson will be the moderator of the panel discussion. You have complete freedom to select the issue you wish to discuss (p.48).

The approach is typically workshop based and centres on the executive group that is involved with strategic planning. The proximate purpose of imagining presented by Anthony et al. is the development of credible information of possibility which is then fed back into a strategy process which is an accentuated modernistic process: "Many opportunities for applying information technology exist in the Guided Imagery Staging and Process Model. One immediate benefit of applying advanced technology is that it is likely to temper participant concerns that imagery is too 'soft' a technique to be of any real use in strategic planning" (p.53).

I note that the process is positioned as cognitive discovery rather than a systemic constructionist and narrative intervention, as the reflexive insight of the people involved and their being changed and developing insight in the process seems of no overt relevance to design or outcome. Results from the process are treated narrowly as data. What could be seen as limitation or incoherence of approach is positioned as an advantage of a method that needs to speak to a modernistic oriented clientele.

Exemplar 2

Bill Phillips (1996) offers another seminar type intervention in imagining organisational futures he calls future mapping. The process is cognitively based and participants seemingly conduct the process on their own. There are three phases with several guiding instructional steps.

1. creating a compelling ideal future as if it were happening already;
2. mapping out milestone events and achievements that took you there;
3. managing accomplishment of the outcomes, beginning back in the present (p.12).

I understand the detailed guiding step by step instructions to facilitate the process, to maintain the imagining linked to actual resources and capabilities, to enrich the imaginative experience through inviting rich sensory connotations in seeing, feeling and hearing of achievements, to guide participants in note taking along the way of the exercises. The imagining process reverse-engineers the achievement into milestones and actions to then form a project management plan. The process seemingly can be used with individuals and groups and is theorised based on the cognitive psychology and modern management techniques.

Phillips (1996) observes that planning backward from an imagined successful outcome serves to build a compelling vision through rich and sensual imagination, makes for easier agreements, releases energy, is accompanied with positive emotions and is engaging for groups. Phillips accounts for the success of this practice in cause-effect relationships and the cognitive repertoires the process taps into.

Exemplar 3

Anna-Maija Lämsä and Teppo Sintonen (2006) present an approach they call participatory narrative which they use to influence how diversity is valued in an organisation. This training based format stages groups (in this example four groups) to imagine alternative scenarios of how an engagement with and integration of a new colleague, with different than the dominant ethnicity, could result in one of four outcomes. The specific scenarios and underlying social theory are discussed and shared prior to the imagining exercise and include archetypical outcomes for this scenario which are assimilation, integration, marginalisation or rejection of the new colleague.

Following from the developments of stories which have to end in the specified archetypical outcomes, the groups engage in structural analysis of the imagined stories.

Imagined actions are reflected on in terms of the function these actions play for subsequent action in the unfolding narratives. Narratives related to different outcomes can be compared and serve for further critical reflection and learning in the seminar.

Lämsä and Sintonen's approach is based in social constructionism, narrative theory and critical learning theory. The group work is designed to access and reflect organisational discourse in the light of moral outcomes and to develop a sensibility for ethical organisational practice. I suggest this approach can be adapted to address also different concerns; whilst in the described intervention the integration of colleagues with different ethnicity was the focus or concern, other focus areas are possible. For instance to address risk related behaviour in occupational work safety, groups could work on stories how teams respond to a safety hazard and construct narratives related to possible outcomes such as accidents, preventive measures or process innovations as consequence as basis for analysis, reflection and learning.

To recapitulate, the methods suggested by Anthony, Bennett, Maddox & Wheatley (1993), Phillips (1996), and Lämsä and Sintonen (2006) share as a common design feature, the initial imaginative engagement with a fictional organisational future. What could be possible and how it could be possible is then developed in different ways: story is used as data, as cognitive frame and plan for action, or as source for critical reflection of organisational discourse. The first two methods imply a linear model for organisation development, whereas the approach of Lämsä and Sintonen turns participants to engage critically and reflexively with their own imagining of organisational discourse and has a potential to give rise to moral insight and a reflexive ethical awareness of organisational practice.

Imagining practices using metaphors

Here I have related some imaginative practices that make use of metaphors to facilitate the process of organisation development. The use of metaphors seems to shape the process of organisation development in quite distinctive ways with regard to process and language use. The use of metaphors in organisation theory and in organisation development has been theorised in particular by Gareth Morgan (1993, 1996).

Morgan (1993) proposes a practice of *Imaginization*, which he positions at the intersection of organisation and imagination as a creative, co-creative and dialogic activity. He shares several exercises as interventive organisation development practices which include engagement in storying of present and future states where participants are

using metaphors, texts and pictures to express experiences and imaginations. The two practice examples I will relate here are based on small group work.

Exemplar 4

Morgan (1993) proposes an exercise with the organic metaphor of a spider plant to promote thinking of flexible and decentralised ways of operating. The spider plant then works as a counter metaphor to a dominant metaphor of hierarchical structures. There are two phases to the proposed exercise: in phase one the participants are required to map the properties of the spider plant and relate them to what they see as metaphorically similar properties of their organisation. This is followed by reflections on the fit of the metaphor to their organisation and insights from this initial phase. The second phase is similar to the first with a focus on imagining the organisation as it could be leveraging the properties of a spider plant more fully, hence inviting the possibility of change. Reflections are directed at comparing the characteristics of the organisation in its difference between phase one, as it is, and phase two, as it could be. Morgan claims that such exercises, choosing appropriate metaphors, lead to the identification of relevant topics that can be developed further in facilitated dialogues addressing dimensions such as what supports the flourishing of the organisation, what the development needs are or what dilemmas need to be addressed.

In this example imagining is not only involved on the part of the participants but also on the facilitator who needs to choose an appropriate metaphor, here a spider plant. Morgan (1993) acknowledges the importance of this choice but also cautions for attempting to 'getting it right', as this it is not about a perfect fit and there are many different metaphors who can be useful for a particular task or challenge.

Exemplar 5

A second example of the use of metaphor is the work of Michael Walton described by Morgan (1993). This work can be seen as building on the exemplar mentioned before and is presented in relation to team building under difficult circumstances. The exercise follows a similar logic of a phase one relating to a current situation and a phase two relating to a desired future situation. The main difference is however that participants are using metaphors of their own choosing to express the difficulties in their circumstance, this practice includes the drawing of pictures that depict difficulties in the metaphoric domain. Exercises are facilitated in an affirmative frame facilitating exploration but restricting judgement. Facilitation of expression in novel and creative ways is also giving space for humorous interpretation and leads to further development of possibilities expressed in the metaphoric domain before these are translated back into real life situations.

Exemplar 6

In the light of Morgan's work I also want to discuss organisation development practice contributed by Jean Hutton (1997) on re-imagining the organisation of an institution. Whilst Hutton is not making this claim I suggest that she is using a specific systems perspective of an organisation-in-the-mind as metaphor to co-create with her clients a comprehensive and generative perspective which expands insight into the properties and dynamics of the organisation:

Hutton suggests that "managers have more resources at their disposal than they may realise, which can be accessed by imagining and re-imagining the organisation of their institution" (ibid, p.66). Working from a consulting context she promotes a mental model of the organisation as a whole, which she names the *organisation-in-the-mind*. Hutton asserts that through developing such holistic insight managers can access a broader range of resources and attain a position of instigating effective change. The engagement with and development of the organisation-in-the-mind is a reflexive process focused on the task of identifying the core technology of the organisation in response to client needs. This core technology or capacity is developed in its relevance to the wider society but also in what it means at a personal or inter-personal level. It also includes to imagine or re-imagine the ways in which organisational processes are supporting core technologies and effectively maintaining organisational boundaries around them.

Hutton accounts for her practice from a modern, first order systems perspective, with her clients, the managers, her fellow consultants and herself taking an objective observer position in relation to the organisation. Her case examples however suggest a more reflexive, co-constructive practice and a process of co-creative authoring of the organisation using the particular metaphor of a system.

The utility of using metaphors as in the practices described by Morgan (1993) or Hutton (1997) is to open up new and potentially multiple ways of making sense of situations or organisational realities. Morgan (1993) building on the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) suggests that these images and metaphors are shaping the social construction of reality and that they have a formative impact on language. Practically this means that what has been unexpressed previously then can be foregrounded or expressed differently. Consequently new ways of relating to the organisation or to each other get invited. Morgan (1993) describes this practice also as a reading and writing of reality as a living text.

We can see imagining as presented in this subsection in a range of practices facilitating organisational development and change in a variety of ways: narrative performance of

imagined futures can serve to express possibilities which are then used as data to populate a frame of possibility (Anthony et al., 1993), it can be used as a desired endpoint that serves to plan actions (Phillips, 1996), or stories can be constructed as a pathway into a deeper understanding of organisational practice (Lämsä and Sintonen, 2006). Imagining processes can be seemingly enriched through the use of metaphors (Morgan, 1993, 1996, Hutton, 1997) which can help expanding the imagining process with vast amounts of meaning and discursive resources that otherwise would not be available or legitimate to use.

Imagining in these practices relates to possibility in different ways, though what is imagined may not necessarily be desirable as in the case of exclusion of colleagues. Imagining in organisation development seemingly can be used as a site for learning similar to the moral imagining in the previous section. The notion of play is also supported by the workshop and training character of many of the development exercises which often legitimise engagement in fiction, pretence or role playing for the purpose of learning.

Organisation development methods presented here can also be understood as forms of inquiry. The relationship of this inquiry between a consultant / trainer and client system has been mostly framed as workshop or training, and I note that the construction of these relationships and contexts that provide a frame and background to this work was not attended to in the case descriptions. I also note that cases have been constructed based on different paradigms however with an emphasis on systemic constructionist concepts of practising such as turning self reflexively to narrative, expanding discourse through metaphors, or reflecting on organisational processes.

2.4 On imagining in systemic constructionist practice to organisation development

Having invited an understanding of imagining as a relational and discursive activity and following from the initial introduction to systemic constructionist practice I want to explore how we can see concepts of imagining being part of systemic constructionist practice approaches to organisation development. This is still in pursuit of aim #1: *to cultivate sensibility and consciousness for imagining practices in organisations* but also of aim #2: *to learn to open up spaces for imagining through systemic constructionist practice.*

In sections 2.1 and 2.2 introducing systemic and social constructionist concepts and a relational discursive concept of imagining we have established important foundations for relating imagining to social constructionist practices. From a *modern paradigm* imagining

as orientation to possibility denotes something possibly real out there or something that could be made real; in a *systemic constructionist paradigm* we are not relating to 'reality' in this way but rather to discursive ways of being. Considering imagining as a relational discursive process, as developed in section 2.2, to imagine is already an intervention in a system or a discourse respectively, it invites an evolvment of discourse and is a creating and co-creating activity. This perspective can be particularly supported by several strands of insight or paradigms in systemic constructionist theory: to remind us, we have discussed earlier Maturana's (1988b) concept of a multiverse theorising the existence of multiple truths in the domain of explanation in relation to second order cybernetics and we have noted the contingent, historical, and local nature of discursive forms of knowing in relation to social constructionism (Gergen, 1985, Burr, 2003, Gergen and Gergen, 2004).

These conceptual observations can be related also to the last section reviewing organisational theory in relation to imagining where we have seen a confluence of imagining practice and systemic constructionist practice, for instance in the theorising managers as practical authors (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003), in specific narrative approaches to organisation development (Lämsä and Sintonen, 2006), or in the use of metaphors (Morgan, 1996). Conceptual thoughts on the topic are also offered by Celiane Camargo-Borges and Emerson Rasera (2013) who argue for the relevance of imagination as contribution in social constructionist practice with organisations, with particular focus on dialogic practice, circular inquiry and the concept of Appreciative Inquiry.

I suggest that building on the relational and discursive concept of imagining introduced in 2.2 we can now be more specific in locating imagining in systemic constructionist practice with organisations, in particular locating imagining in Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and in Brief Solution Focused Coaching. I have chosen AI because it is the currently most referred to constructionist method to organisation development, and Solution Focused Coaching to acknowledge the growing importance of systemic coaching practices in organisation development.

2.4.1 Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

I understand Appreciative Inquiry as (a framework to design) dialogic organisational development interventions that carry the potential to affirm people, practices, capabilities, histories and intentions and give space for imagining and enactment of a future that is emerging from such appreciative dialogue and intervention. AI has been firmly related to social constructionist practice and post modern dialogic organisational development

(Cooperrider et al., 1995, Bushe and Marshak, 2007). AI relates to a method and a practice that has attracted enormous interest and scholarship. I will relate to AI as presented in the contributions of David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney (1999, 2005) but also be inclusive of selected other contributions. I will not generally attend to significant and diverse research, critique and development of the field of Appreciative Inquiry as an organisational development intervention, as a sensibility and a practice which would be beyond the scope of this research.

Appreciative Inquiry is usually presented in a 4D cycle. The four phases are (1) discovery which gives rise to narratives of what works or what is positive, (2) dream, an engagement with what is desirable and ideal, (3) design is about the realisation of a distinct possibility and (4) destiny is dealing with implementation and sustainability. The process is contained by a topic that is framed as a generative metaphor and serves as a boundary to the process. The framework can and has been used in different forms including one off interventions, cascading or perpetuating designs. The development and definition of this affirmative topic itself is a significant deliverable of a wider process that holds the Appreciative Inquiry event, summit or meeting. This wider process includes also other considerations such as the role leaders will play in the process or considerations for sustainability and implementation from an organisational perspective (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, 2005).

Trying to relate Appreciative Inquiry to imagining we can follow different strategies. One would be to look at the different phases and if applicable locate imagining practice in them. For instance, based on my experience, imagining can already be part of the earliest planning stage of such a project, even before a metaphor for the AI process is thought of. After all what is involved is decision making on a profoundly unknown and unknowable project (Beckert, 2011). Also Cooperrider and Whitney (1999, p.11) suggest “there is no formula for Appreciative Inquiry” and “each AI process is home-grown – designed to meet the unique challenges of the organisation and industry involved”.

If we take a closer look at the phases then the achievement of the first phase is narratives that account for resources and capacities and that are meaningful to those participating in the process. The second phase of dreaming opens up a wide frame of possibility. So what is exactly meant by dreaming? Cooperrider and Whitney (1999, p.14) suggest that in the dream phase “the future becomes visible through ideals interwoven with actual experience” (1999, p.14), also that the task is to “envision the organisation’s greatest potential for positive influence and impact in the world” (1999, p.17). The task of imagining, as I have outlined above, is to relate to possibility and whilst some of what is dreamt of might be possible the frame seems to be set wider than that in an AI context. I understand this wider frame as deliberate space for engaging with generative metaphors

and practices to expand what participants consider initially possible. The third phase then, called design, is actually a phase that with some robustness is focused on imagining activities. The task is framed as to “craft an organisation in which the positive change core is boldly alive in all strategies, processes, systems, decisions, and collaborations” (1999, p.17). This seems to require a robust engagement with possibility. This third phase is followed up by more detailed action planning or planning for expanding the process which form phase 4. Looking at the language describing different phases, I suggest, we could claim that in phase 2 to some extent and in phase 3 we identify elements of imagining.

However, rather than dissecting the process of AI in relation to looking for imagining in particular phases, I want to suggest that we can make sense of AI as a whole, as a process of imagining, i.e. Appreciative Imagining. To invite this frame I want to draw attention to our development of imagining as a relational and discursive process in section 2.2 above and in particular Vygotsky’s (2004) theory of imagining. To remind us, to him imagining is related to the experiences available to us including social experiences others relate to us. Further to Vygotsky our emotional states serve as an index to what can or cannot be accessed from our memories in such processes of imagining. In addition we have established that emotions and emotional states can be understood as function of social practice and hence discourse (Harré, 1986, Lutz, 1990, Fredman, 2004, Boiger and Mesquita, 2012).

Relating Vygotsky’s thinking to the process of Appreciative Inquiry we can note that Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) also consider the importance of experience: “one aspect differentiating Appreciative Inquiry from other planning methodologies is that future images emerge through *grounded examples from an organisation’s positive past*” (1999, p.14, my emphasis). There has been significant discussion, critique and development in relation to the contribution and limitation that a *positive* focus on experience invites, as this can be seen to exclude or neglect aspects of lived experience and identity that are not positive. To that end it has been suggested that an affirmative frame of ‘what is’ can offer a more useful, inclusive and ethical frame of practice (Fitzgerald et al., 2010, Oliver et al., 2011). Such an alternative frame may lead (paradoxically though) to a practice and discursive performances that participants then *experience and evaluate* as positive (Oliver et al., 2011). This critique and developments are relevant not only from an ethical position but also, I suggest, essential from an outcome perspective as experience relates directly to emotional states (or are expressions of them) which have been linked to the accessibility of memories (Vygotsky, 2004).

Comparing the basic tenets of Vygotskian thought of imagining and how it relates to reality with the properties of the Appreciative Inquiry process, in particular framed as an

affirmative rather than positive process, it is easy to see that the process of AI not only satisfies but closely resembles the aspects of a social theory of imagining as (i) building on own experience (ii) including through social experiences the experience of others (iii) being linked to emotions and memory and (iv) becoming real through expression as practice, art or inventions (ibid).

2.4.2 Brief Solution Focused Coaching

Brief Solution Focused Coaching (also Solution Focused Coaching) is a practice that has emerged out of the work on Brief Solution Focused Therapy by Steve de Shazer, Insoo Kim Berg and their colleagues (De Shazer, 1979, 1985, 1991). It is generally understood as a postmodern approach and has been designed on the pragmatics of simplicity. Nevertheless comprehensive accounts of solution focused practice make reference to a host of sensibilities and practices that need to be considered (De Jong and Berg, 2008).

There are different ways of making sense of how solution focused practice works. I here draw on Steve de Shazer (1991) who, building from a Wittgensteinian sensibility to language and discourse, offers the following deconstruction of the concept of problem:

The concept 'problem' always presupposes the concept of 'solution'. In fact, the concept of solution is a precondition essential for the development of a concept of problem. Otherwise, what is called a 'problem' (i.e. a depiction of an undesirable state of affairs requiring the doing of something) would be simply a 'fact', just a depiction of *the way things are* (De Shazer, 1991, p.122).

De Shazer (1991) suggests that situations can be related to from a problem or a solution discourse and that both ways of talking invite and create very different possibilities. He relates the problem discourse to a structural way of thinking that constructs and maintains problems in relation to notions of cause and effect. Problems, causes and effects are all constructions from within a problem discourse and get talked about in a factual way, similar to how we talk about illnesses and treatments in a medical discourse.

The task of the practitioner is then to invite the solution discourse. This, I suggest, can also be seen as a particular form of narrative work as the conversation constructs a particular new narrative connecting past, present and future in a novel way. The task is together with a client to "enter into the language game of goal definition, thereby creating the social and interactional conditions for producing progressive narratives focused on change and goal achievement" (De Shazer, 1991, p.124).

De Shazer (1991, p.122) establishes that in this practice the focus is on the development of language games of three interrelated activities:

producing exceptions and / or prototypes (examples of the goal(s) in clients' lives that point to desired changes),
imagining and describing new lives for clients, and
'confirming' that change is occurring, that clients' new lives have indeed started.

We can understand the lived reality that a client brings to a consultation as a problem story or problem discourse that is already 'real' to the client. The solution discourse however is a story that needs to emerge out of the conversation with the practitioner, it is related to the past in the form of exceptions to problems, or lived and experienced prototypes of solution, but it also relates to the future as vivid description of what life would look like when the solution was achieved. De Shazer (1991) uses the term imagining for this practice of inviting the possibility of this future in the very same way we have been using it, as pointing to possibility, but also as something that coach and client are doing together, i.e. a relational discursive practice. The activity of imagining is required to make the possibility of achieving the solution real. To achieve this, solution focused practice uses a scaffolding of questions.

The most defining question of solution focused practice inviting imagining is the miracle question where a client is asked to imagine waking up in the morning and without her or him knowing it, in the middle of the night, a miracle has happened. It is then in the inquiry into the clients' *imagined noticing* of what has happened, changed, and can be observed as a difference that client and practitioner are developing a thick story of a world where the goal has been achieved. The miracle question and the conversation that emerges from this question is not the only instrument to engage in imagining dialogue. There are also several other questions that are inviting a rich description of the imagined solution or goal and a path of small and specific steps to goal achievement. For practitioners to engage in imagining solutions with clients they themselves have to believe that clients are already in the process of creating solutions. Practitioners have to act from a particular position which includes for instance that the client is the expert and has the necessary resources, that small change leads to big change, or that every problem has one or more exceptions (Simon and Berg, 1999, Berg and Szabó, 2005).

In summary we find that imagining is evident in Brief Solution Focused Coaching practice in the imagination of goal attainment, of a life and living with the solution, and then further an imagining of small steps towards the solution. Imagining here relates to possibility and is an unfolding discursive engagement between practitioner and client. It is a dialogical

and discursive process between practitioner and client which is informed by an intelligibility of practice that invites an imagining of the client being resourceful, knowing and active from the outset of the process. To build and maintain a solution discourse the process is aided by forms of inquiry that sustain the foregrounding of the emergent solution discourse.

2.4.3 Reflections

Based on conceptual thought and accounts of methods, we have located imagining as central to systemic organisational practice and specifically as essential to Appreciative Inquiry and Brief Solution Focused Coaching. We can further note that imagining in these practices is not only salient to the client or client system but that the unfolding process invites and requires imagining in the practitioner as well as in the client. The AI practitioner for instance is relating to every single client system as a unique and once occurring event, imagines a possible staging of the process, and engages in conversation of a generative topic choice. Also solution focused practice requires an ongoing orientation to and invitation of an emergent discourse of solution attainment.

I do not want to infer that all practices that are related to as systemic and social constructionist must be identified as imagining practice, but it appears overall that imagining is a defining aspect of systemic constructionist practice as a whole. A next question is then not if but how and in what different ways systemic constructionist practice contributes to the imagining of organisational futures which invites a more specific engagement with discourse and practice.

2.5 Research methods

We have now, I suggest, developed an orientation to imagining in organisational theory and practice with a particular focus on contributions informed by systemic constructionist theory and practice perspectives. The research question has served as a metaphor to foreground particular contributions and from reviewing these contributions I have produced a presentation on this topic. In that sense what we have done so far was already applying a research method, the creative performance of a literature review (Hamilton, 2005, Montuori, 2005).

The purpose of this section is to broaden the view on methods and choices of underlying paradigms used in this research and so setting the context for the second part of this research which is focused on reflections on conversations and practice of imagining. In

this section I will (i) locate the social constructionist research position in relation to alternative positions for researching, (ii) develop the research methodology and orientation for this research, and (iii) introduce specific methods of analysis or sense-making in reflecting on practice.

2.5.1 On doing social constructionist research

On paradigms

We have already discussed social constructionism as an approach and I will say more about a social constructionist research position later. I want to start, however, with positioning the social constructionist research position as a choice amongst other influential research positions. Research discourses differ in what is real, what is knowable and how we come to know it (McNamee, 2010, Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). John Shotter (2008) sees the dominant discourse for research as modernistic and scientific whilst Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldböck (2009) suggest that social constructionist approaches are currently most influential in the social sciences. Modern or positivist approaches to research are predicated on the empirical relationship to a discoverable world. Methods are designed to unveil this knowledge whilst minimising the influence of the researcher on the researched (Alvesson and Sköldböck, 2009, McNamee, 2010, Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

The positivist concept of objective and valid knowledge has been critiqued as naïve from scholars representing postmodern positions. Postmodernists claim that positivists overlook that the very procedures that come to discover reality are actually constructing it (Shotter, 1993, Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) and consequently critique that modern research positions miss a reflexive awareness on their assumptions and paradigms (Mattes and Schraube, 2004). Whilst for many postmodern researchers this does not mean to reject positivist research (McNamee, 2010, Denzin and Lincoln, 2011), it however contextualises positivist research outcomes and claims to truth as local to the community of scientific research. It also calls into question claims to a sole legitimacy of positivist research (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, Mattes and Schraube, 2004). Other critiques to the use of a positivist research paradigm includes a disregard for the change of the observed in the process of observation (Kuhn, 1970, Chen and Pearce, 1995) and the dogmatic and value laden nature of positivist research (Cisneros-Puebla, 2008).

Amongst alternative research paradigms to positivism and social constructionism in the social sciences, in particular critical realism has been positioned and discussed more prominently (Alvesson and Sköldböck, 2009, Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Critical realism is

a post modern research paradigm that is embracing discourse and discursive productions as a reality of life but also argues for underlying structural realities. To critical realists the world exists even if there were no humans to populate it. When we observe, we observe this world. Structure and mechanisms of the underlying reality are a central concept and hold in a way in place what can be socially said about it (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009). Knowing of the world is however socially constructed and as such a critical realist position occupies a place somewhere in between positivist and social constructionist positions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The critical realist project has been critiqued for a lack of inner consistency in its epistemological assumptions (Shotter, 1993) and for unsubstantiated claims to objectivity (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009).

An introduction of different research positions in the presented brevity is always at risk of taking simplistic views on matters, falls short of capturing the depth of the detailed reviews it builds on and is inevitably skewed to preferences. Also a choice for a particular research paradigm cannot be entirely engaged with from a position of reasoning as such reasons cannot be but based on paradigms (Kuhn, 1970). Reasoning for paradigms is hence bound to be circular as it presupposes a paradigm. I suggest that acknowledging the above biases and limitations and drawing reflexively attention to them is relevant to position the choice for a research framework and the consequences for the knowing invited as situated in history, community and individual preferences (Gergen and Gergen, 2000), rather than as a rational choice. Such a position of acknowledging that other paradigms can be equally valuable invites a celebrating of plurality of ways of knowing (Gergen, 2006).

In this research I aim to work from a social constructionist research position which seemingly supports the research interest into imagining as relational, dialogical and discursive practice. I acknowledge the obvious circularity in this relationship as the research topic and question have been developed from within a social constructionist paradigm. The following part of this section is to detail the implications of this choice.

Relating to systemic constructionist practice traditions

Following Kenneth Gergen, social constructionist research is both a meta-theory for locating ways of knowing in different communities but also a theory in use (Mattes and Schraube, 2004). As theory in use social constructionist research operates from a sensibility to language, discourse and the construction of meaning in relationships from which knowing cannot be separated. Knowing and discursive practice are seen as a unity and research as a performance that invites a utility such as possibility, choice or awareness in the way to go on (McNamee, 2010).

Mats Alvesson and Stanley Deetz (2000) suggest that social constructionist and post modern research pursue the goals of generating insight and critique which includes to unmask domination, address issues of power, reclaim lost voices and achieve plurality. Similarly Ian Hacking (2000) who observes that research into social constructions regularly takes the form of the task of challenging the necessity and inevitability of what is considered real, demonstrating the contingency and emergence of construction and the possibility of viable alternatives.

I notice that the research Alvesson, Deetz or Hacking refer to relates to already established discourses, narratives and forms of life. This, I suggest, needs to be distinguished from practitioner research that invites insight into practice and practical wisdom (Chen and Pearce, 1995) that inform a knowing relevant to engaging in unfolding conversations. Attending to such knowing of practising has been central to John Shotter's (1980, 1993, 2008, 2010) work on spontaneous, living, relational, responsive, dialogical ways of being: Shotter suggests that next to a theoretical knowing, a knowing-that, and a knowing of craft or skill, a knowing-how, there is a third realm of knowing-from-within a situation that is present to us, practically and morally available to us from being in relation with someone (Shotter, 1993, 2008).

Systemic constructionist practice research has amassed a whole body of knowing that informs practice, relating theory to practice and developing theory from practising (Lang et al., 1990). Also to inform practitioners in actions with situated sensibility, reflexivity and grammars in relation to discursive dialogical practice, several frameworks or approaches have been proposed. For instance, Vernon Cronen (2001) has developed the concept of *practical theory* and suggests that such theories facilitate, amongst others, the joining and co-creation and the exploration of unique situations; John Shotter (2010) suggests *descriptive concepts* to draw attention to emergent phenomena in the moment of living interaction; Kevin Barge and Martin Little (2002) invite the development of *dialogic sensibilities* for the engagement in conversations. Kevin Barge (2004b), Ann Cunliffe (2004) and Donald Schön (1983) amongst others draw attention to notions of *reflexivity in practice*.

Whilst there is no truth by method (Gergen and Gergen, 2004), nor a single or right way of conducting social constructionist research (McNamee, 2010), there are multiple intelligibilities possible to conduct research that inform ways of knowing valuable to local communities of practice (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, McNamee, 2010). I suggest a strategy for a research into imagining of organisational future, to be credible to a community of systemic constructionist practice, is to relate to, connect with, or build on grammatical resources, theories, concepts and sensibilities in the community, and to

apply, critique and extend them in their use and usefulness for inviting imagining practices in organisations.

In this research I will relate to systemic constructionist practice traditions through the use of Coordinated Management of Meaning theory which will be introduced later in this section, which is a *practical theory* (Cronen, 2001, Barge, 2004a), I will also develop findings where applicable as *descriptive concepts* (Shotter, 2010) that can be useful in preparing and reflexively informing conversations.

Contributing something useful

What research has a potential to be useful for practitioners? Donald Schön (1983, p.315) suggests that research can serve the purpose of building repertoire by “accumulating and describing such exemplars in ways useful to reflection-in-action”. The concept and use of repertoire is described as follows: “What I propose is this: The practitioner has built up a repertoire of examples, images, understandings and actions. [...] A practitioner's repertoire includes the whole of his experience insofar as it is accessible to him for understanding and for action” (p.138).

Alvesson and Deetz (2000, p.37) promote a view of theory as “a way of seeing and thinking about the world, rather than an abstract representation of it”. Similarly Karl Weick (1989) who suggests that the development of theory should better not be guided by the metaphor of problem solving which invites a linear and limiting frame and is overly dependent on issues of validation, but proposes the notion of sensemaking instead.

The contribution of social science lies not in validated knowledge but rather in the suggestion of relationships and connections that had previously not been suspected, relationships that change actions and perspectives (Weick, 1989, p.524).

In place of an emphasis on the empiricist criteria of validation Weick offers criteria of orientation to interesting and plausible research. He demonstrates how the criteria of affirming the questions ‘is it interesting?’ and ‘is it plausible?’ effectively measures validity in relation to past experience. “Whenever one reacts with the feeling that’s interesting, that reaction is a clue that current experience has been tested against past experience, and the past experience has been found inadequate” (Weick, 1989, p.525).

Building on the contributions above I hope to contribute something useful, and in particular will

- be guided by Karl Weick's notions of what is interesting but also what is plausible. I suggest this has guided already the literature review and will continue to be relevant in making decisions about what practices or conversations to explore.
- make use of the research question 'How are we imagining organisational futures?' as a metaphor for seeing the world in a particular way and invite new ways of seeing things.
- aim to develop repertoires (Schön, 1983) – a point that also relates to the the frameworks of Coordinated Management of Meaning and descriptive concepts mentioned above. This includes also developing insight into experience of conversations and practice.

Finally I want to acknowledge with regard to usefulness that this is also a subjective matter not only for the researcher or research team but also for the audience of a research. Usefulness is then I suggest at best a possibility but not something that can be established a priori in the relationship to and with an audience.

2.5.2 Towards a research framework – researching from within

Systemic constructionist practice research traditions frequently relate case vignettes to established or proposed ways of making sense or seeing things. A case can be related to illuminate a phenomenon, a way of thinking about practice or doing practice, or to be a learning site in itself. I suggest that this type of research draws on aspects of case study research, action research, and of ethnographic research, which become interrelated in one research performance. Below I aim to draw out specific aspects from these research approaches relevant to this research.

Ethnographic intelligibility

The term ethnography, whilst originally relating to anthropological studies, is increasingly used as relating to smaller units of observations (Silverman, 2000, Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2009). In that sense case research and reflections on practice can be seen also as ethnographic research. Michael Agar (2006) draws attention to rich points as constitutive elements of ethnographies, similar to Carolyn Ellis, Tony Adams and Arthur Bochner (2010) who speak of 'epiphanies'. Rich points in ethnography are surprises that create the research journey, unexpected events that change the trajectory and focus of the research and define new research sites. A process Agar (2006) refers to as abduction (from Latin lead away) as opposed to inductive or deductive, in a sense that the research process, giving rise to new learning leads away from previously held assumptions or

known theories, which no longer fit the new experiences. Relating Weick's (1989) criteria of validity to the experience of rich points, he would probably say "that's interesting". Following Weick's insight, surprises are constructed against the experience of the researcher. So we can see that 'what is interesting' and hence the unfolding journey of ethnographic research is constructed by the researcher, respectively by the researcher in relationship, as nothing is interesting in itself.

I suggest then the ethnographic sensibility as described above in practitioner research is one that foregrounds the learning process of the researcher-practitioner in practice and exploration. Whilst it orients the research process, for instance in identifying which part of an experience is 'interesting' and shall be attended to in greater detail (described, transcribed, reflected on, analysed etc.), it also has a potential to invite a reorientation to prior knowing, experiences, or taken for granted ways of relating to our circumstances, that are called into focus by the very surprise or rich point. Agar's (2006) research perspective is one of emergent learning and openness to the novel and unfolding. Research starts with one particular point of view to then, through learning, move to another point of view and so on.

Case study research

A case study "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 1994, p.14). Case studies can be based on artefacts but researchers can also participate in case studies as observers or interviewers, they are hence also a form of ethnographic research (Burns, 2000, p.461). Cases, like experiments, are however not meant as a sample of something else. The knowing from cases can be relevant beyond the case from theoretical or analytical positions but not as a statistical representation of something else (Yin, 1994, Burns, 2000). Similarly Victoria Chen and Barnett Pearce (1995) who, taking a social constructionist research position, suggest that a case is interesting in itself as a source of sophistication, intelligence, practical wisdom and local knowledge.

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009, p.4) claim a similar process of abduction as already discussed above in relation to ethnography to also matter for case study research. They see this process applied across several cases:

In abduction, an (often surprising) single case is interpreted from a hypothetical overarching pattern, which, if it were true, explains the case in question. The interpretation should then be strengthened by new observations (new cases).

I want to draw attention to a difference to the concept of abduction in Agar (2006) in that Alvesson and Sköldböck presume a regularity that can be known, as they speak of an underlying or overarching pattern, insight or wisdom that can be learnt in the process.

From a systemic and social constructionist perspective we have to be careful of the idea of overarching patterns in several ways. Firstly we have already noted above about surprises to be constructed by an observer (Maturana, 1988a, Maturana and Varela, 1998), and the same holds for patterns. This is not to dismiss useful reflective insights from multiple cases but to caution these insights to be local to the researcher, as one of many possible perspectives and at best intelligible to a wider community of practice. Secondly, if we established a pattern to 'fit' an experience, even if that fit is established in a community of practice, it is still just one way of relating to or constructing the experience, nothing is 'found'. Thirdly with such knowing being literally 'made up' questions of ethics and aesthetics take primacy in orienting us in the research activity; what concerns us is what gets created in a research practice, what is made possible for those participating in a research and what forms of life are invited by the ways of knowing we develop (Lang et al., 1990).

Research as action, ethical and reflexive practice

Classical action research in organisations goes back to developments of Kurt Lewin in the 1930s and was focused on action and research guided to organisational change and development (Adelman, 1993). Whilst in action research the change of the researched through the research process is part of the design, it has been established in the social sciences that *any* research is also an intervention into the domain of the researched. The landmark study that is often referred to in this context is the so called Hawthorne study or studies which relate to productivity in dependence of work place illumination: surprising outcomes could only be explained by theorising a process of inquiry that was more significant to the outcome than the independent variable of work place illumination⁹ (Weick, 1989, Draper, 2013). The consequences of these insights are a heightened awareness of implication of the researched and of the ethical accountability and responsibility of the researcher.

⁹ It is acknowledged that significant further research has been done on these studies which to discuss would not change the principal point made on research settings influencing research outcomes.

To systemic constructionist research positions which are using inquiry as intervention (Tomm, 1987b) any research is also action, intervention and co-creation (McNamee and Tomm, 1986, McNamee, 1988). Robyn Penman (1997) distinguishes between a primary and a secondary research position. For her primary research aims to engage with others in creating possibility and choice, whereas the secondary research position involves accounting for and reflecting on conversations. Penman suggests that we cannot do both, engage with the other and reflectively research the process of doing so at the same time, one focus precludes the other. Penman develops the requirement for relational ethics in the principles of respect, inspiration, and mutuality in engagement with research participants. Whilst Penman rightly argues that in a secondary research position we are relatively removed from the immediacy of relating also from secondary research positions multiple levels of relational ethics can be observed including implicating research participants and others, implicating the researcher, implicating relationships, concerns for privacy and safety (Ellis et al., 2010).

A social constructionist research frame sees research as action and performance not only in relation to the researched but also in relation to the audiences of the research (McNamee, 2010, Shotter, 2011, Simon, 2013). Gail Simon advocates for ethical and aesthetic sensibilities in writing in relation to audiences (Simon, 2013). The relationship with the audience is extended in the relationship with other researchers and scholars as part of the literature review and the drawing on literature generally. Barry Hamilton (2005) reminds us that in conducting reviews we are engaging with the minds of others. He argues for the literature review as a dialogical achievement, a construction, a situated, historically and mutually influencing practice.

Ethical relational practice is predicated on the insight of an actor on the consequences of his actions which connects ethics with reflexivity. Not surprisingly then, frameworks for research as action invite reflexive sensibilities to inform research practice and to invite transparency in research relationships (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Alvesson and Deetz, 2000, Alvesson and Sköldböck, 2009, Gilgun, 2010). In systemic constructionist practice reflexivity is used to attend to the interconnectedness of persons in communication, to develop consciousness and to invite ethical accountability (McNamee, 1988, Barge, 2004b, Oliver, 2005). Reflexivity is a resource in the research process (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000) but also forms part of the research performance to audiences. For instance, Ken and Mary Gergen (2000, p.1027) suggest

Investigators seek ways of demonstrating to their audience their historical and geographical situatedness, their personal investments in their research, various biases they bring to their work, their surprises and 'undoings' in the process of the research endeavour, the way in which their choice of literature tropes lend rhetorical force to the

research report, and/or the way they have avoided or suppressed certain points of view.

Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) remind us from a critical position that social science as a practice is always relating to and is hence supporting or challenging prevailing social conditions, interests, ideologies and political conditions. In that sense research can never be neutral but contributes to the construction of 'reality'. A critical research perspective to organisations is informed by insight that organisational practice and discourse involves power that structures and influences social processes in relation to its members but as well in relation to wider society (Weber, 1922, Foucault, 1981, Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). Social constructionist researchers can make power relations transparent by reflecting on discourse, asking whose interests are served and what voices are eliminated (Cisneros-Puebla, 2008).

2.5.3 Attending to discourse and dialogue

We have framed imagining as a relational, dialogic and discursive activity and the question is now how an inquiry into dialogue and discourse can or should be supported by particular research methods. In this research, I suggest that the primary research process is my hermeneutic reflective relating to discourse and practice; methods of analysis of texts or conversations are however useful in extending these reflections on discourse and practice. Whilst research methods in themselves are not revealing of any truths, they can serve to discipline and extend practice of reflecting in a significant way and also provide a grammar to render reflections visible and make transparent how experience and practice become related to assertions or propositions in the research process.

Based on these assertions I suggest that research methods should serve to expand sensibilities for what happens in unfolding discourse, which is to support inquiry, to help with reflecting and describing discursive performances. Viewing research as a performance (McNamee, 2010) and a conversation (Pearce and Walters, 1996) in relation to a community of practice research methods ideally also reflect resources of the community interested in such research and help to develop shared meaning making of research process and outcomes.

I have chosen to develop reflections using Coordinated Management of Meaning theory and a form of discourse analysis which I will introduce below:

Coordinate Management of Meaning

How come we are talking like this?

Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) is a theory of the human condition of being emergent in communication and was originally developed by Barnett Pearce and Vernon Cronen (1980). It has ever since been developed and contributed to from a theory and practice perspective within the community of systemic constructionist practice (amongst others by Lang, 1988, Pearce, 1989, Oliver, 1992, Pearce, 1994, Cronen, 2001, Barge, 2004c, Oliver, 2004, Pearce, 2004, Pearce, 2007, Cronen et al., 2009). CMM theory has been developed and used as a research methodology (Barge, 2004c, Oliver, 2005).

Being in conversations one has an acute even bodily sense (Shotter, 2008) of an unfolding morality but not always a language to expand on this sensibility or to reflexively relate to how come we feel engaged, committed or obligated in a particular way. CMM theory can be used as a tool that can serve to extend such reflections, to attend to what is “unique, situated, and patterned” (Cronen, 2001, p.28) in a situation and to expand insight into practice. CMM theory suggests that the unfolding conversation and the speech acts in it can be understood as moral activity of participants in relation to what to them are the most relevant contexts for acting in their social world in a particular moment. I will briefly introduce the terms ‘context’, ‘speech act’, and how they relate to each other:

The term context is used to reference an aspect, a construction of a participant’s social world. Examples of contexts are *the relationship* we have with someone, the *culture and cultural values* we feel part of, or the specific *definition of task* in a situation. Speech acts are practices, ‘things’ people do, their verbal and non-verbal action. The meaning of a speech act evolves from within a conversation and is mediated contextually and in the conversational flow (Pearce, 1989). Related to speech acts Christine Oliver (2004, 2005) offers the concept of an interpretive act as a deconstruction of what is involved in the moment of uttering in an unfolding conversation in the dimensions of feeling or bodily response, interpretation, and action. Contexts and speech acts are understood as interrelated and often in self-reinforcing ways. If, for instance, a manager acts the way *he feels*, *he has to act as a manager*, then the context of *being a manager* obligates an activity that reinforces the ideas or stories that a person has of what it means to be a manager. In that way *enacted* (Weick, 1995) contexts can feel very real and are also talked about as real (Pearce, 1989).

The way how contexts are organising us, as in this example of the manager, signifies the moral force contexts have on people in situations in informing their actions. With social situations being formed and informed by multiple contexts, some may call for quite different actions than others; also some may be more important or foregrounded than

others at a particular moment in time. Contexts can also be seen as interrelated with one context giving meaning to another context. By placing contexts in an order of relative influence, with the highest one up, we can express a hypothesis about relative influence of contexts for a particular action, in a given situation or episode. High up contexts can be said to give meaning, to contextualise or even to organise lower level contexts. For instance, the *organisational opportunity* an entrepreneur is following may well give meaning to *the way production is organised*, and *the way production is organised* may give meaning to how responsibilities are allocated to different *staff functions*. The order is not random but expressive of how to make sense of morality in this particular social world; however it is not the only order possible as different orders could equally be the case. Notably *organisational opportunity*, *organisation of production* and *staff functions* are social constructions, they do not denote anything real out there. However participants in this social world may feel a very real and bodily sense of obligation to act in a particular way in relation to a particular context, something referred to as contextual force.

Contexts can be relatively stable over longer periods of time and often are; they can also emerge out of conversations and change in the dialogic process. Speech acts that change the meaning or significance of contexts are said to implicate them, imagining different ways of organising production may in the end implicate how production is organised and this in turn may change other things (Pearce, 1989). The possible interplay of contextual forces and implicative forces are depicted in Figure 1.

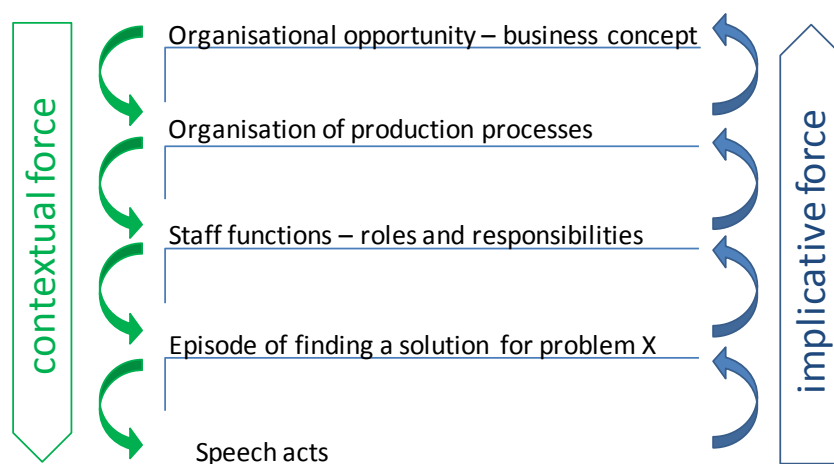


Figure 1: Levels of context

(based on Pearce, 1989, Oliver, 2005)

As I have tried to portray above CMM theory offers a framework and a language that facilitates an observer or a participant to a conversation or a social activity to reflect and make sense of the moral obligations and order that emerges from within the unfolding

discursive performance between people and to convey that sense-making. This form of contextual analysis is using CMM as a way of constructing a narrative of what matters in a conversation or discourse and how it matters. When we relate to a conversation CMM analysis invites a deeper level of clarity and congruence to the reflections and observation we have made on or in a conversation, and it renders our thinking and considerations visible to others (Oliver, 2005).

There is no calculus for how to construct contextual hypotheses but rather practitioners follow a hermeneutical process of making sense of a conversation or situation and use scaffoldings from CMM theory as frameworks that guide their reflections. CMM theory can add a level of diligence, scrutiny and coherence to their reflections and invites a more detailed and comprehensive relating to a situation. So developed reflections, however, are still the construction of an observer or participant and are not any more objective or true.

My use of CMM theory in this research is to reflect on the contexts and their relative influence in an episode of a conversation as a way of making sense of the discursive performances as a whole. This is different from other possible uses which reflect contexts and contextual changes in greater detail alongside every single speech act in a conversation and make meaningful distinctions on the different social worlds of all involved.

Discourse analysis in a discursive psychology tradition

What is getting done in this talk?

Derek Edwards and Jonathan Potter (1992) present discursive psychology as alternative to cognitive psychology. Their claim is epistemological in a sense of 'what is, is there in the production of language' and that hence language is not a representation of something else, and in particular not a representation of an underlying cognitive process. The research programme of discursive psychology is to attend to what people do in language, their language practice, and how they accomplish certain tasks:

Discourse analysis deals with natural occurring talks and text including interview transcripts understood in this way.

Discourse analysis is concerned with the content of talk, its subject matter and with its social rather than linguistic organisation.

Discourse analysis has a triple concern with action, construction and variability. In saying and writing things people perform social actions (Edwards and Potter, 1992, p.28).

Discourse analysis has a hermeneutic quality. The process involves a particular research question or focus in relation to the selection and reading of text. The researcher makes sense of the talk as action relevant to the research questions and then attends to the detail how the particular action has been accomplished through discursive achievements, for instance through performance of memory, management of stake and responsibility, or the constructing of truth or causality (Edwards and Potter, 1992, Willig, 2008). The unit of analysis is a sequence of natural occurring talk. The researcher names what she or he sees being done in the talk and how this action is accomplished. This can be seen as a deconstruction and reconstruction of text (Willig, 2008). To give two examples of how discourse analysis can be used that are relevant here, discourse analysis may be concerned with how we do descriptions that construct facts, i.e. manage the appearing of something being factual. Such constructing of something as factual is then usually serving a particular purpose and invites a particular morality. Discursive action can also serve to construct particular versions of identity, such as in attributing motives to action or constructing a particular world view that makes our action appear rational, ethical, sensible and so on, i.e. that constructs a world with us in it as being a particular character or person (Edwards and Potter, 1992).

My use of discourse analysis is also informed by positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, Harré and Van Langenhove, 1999, Tirado and Gálvez, 2007, Harré et al., 2009) which theorises the emergence of 'self' or 'selves' through discursive action. Whilst discourse analysis is attending to a wide range of action performed in language positioning theory foregrounds the particular dimension in our talk that achieves or invites us to be this or that 'self'. In positioning theory the concept of self is theorised as fluent and described as taking or assuming a position, being positioned or positioning others, whilst such positions include also a relational moral dimension. In conversations participants can be seen as making particular positions available to each other which they may take up or reject in favour of other positions.

One particular contribution of positioning theory is not only attending to the discursive achievement of self and the emergence of relational morality but also the foregrounding of the ever emergent nature of this achievement. In my reflection on what participants in a conversation do in their talk I then use the language of positioning and being positioned to point to the specific emergent nature of self or selves invited in a conversation. For instance I may say a consultant is *invited in an expert position* by a client asking about advice on a matter. Such statement is different from saying that the client is invited into *the role of an expert*, which implies stability in a way positioning does not. Consequently saying that the consultant becomes positioned is a particular and specific way of attending to the discursive achievement of the client and the consultant in this instance and moment.

I suggest discursive analysis can be usefully related to the construction and deconstruction of contexts and moralities. It can be used to detail reflections on how a particular context or morality has been constructed in a conversation. It invites me to stay very close to texts and to notice specific details that I otherwise would easily miss. It also provides me with a way of making my reading and meaning making of texts transparent. I found such scrutiny is adding a level of detail to the hermeneutic process of reflecting practice using CMM theory. Rather than analysing a whole text with discursive analysis it invites me to ask specific reflexive questions like, what have participants done here that makes me say they have agreed on a task and the task is X, or what is it participants are doing so I say they imagine Y to be possible? Using discourse analysis in this way positions it as a reflexive tool used from within an inquiry informed by CMM theory.

3 Aims and research question

I have started with an interest in imagining of organisational futures as a relational and discursive activity, with a hope to cultivate a way of looking into imagining as a practice, with an aspiration to find with imagining a generative conceptual frame for organisation development that may even engage participation across paradigms, and with an ambition to develop this research as contribution to systemic constructionist practice.

My research question was and is 'How are we imagining organisational futures?' and in coherence with Karl Weick's (1989) thinking I propose the purpose of this question is not to solve a problem but to make sense and create connections. The literature review has already contributed to sense-making on this topic and this chapter provides us with an opportunity to re-orient to the aims of this research, to briefly note how the literature review has contributed already and what perhaps might be of interest to develop this research further.

To do this I will revisit the aims of the research which I have articulated based on the themes covered in the introduction however now placed in a more structured way.

Aim #1 – Cultivate sensibility and consciousness for imagining practice in organisations

An initial aim of this research was to promote understanding of imagining in organisational practice and in systemic constructionist practice, to develop insight in how imagining takes place between people as relational activity, and to develop sensibility for imagining in organisations. This includes also developing an understanding of imagining as a discursive and dialogic process. I also hope to invite a frame of imagining that connects contemporary organisational practice with systemic constructionist practice and invites opportunities for the application of systemic constructionist concepts.

We have already developed a concept of imagining as relational and discursive practice rather than a mental and cognitive activity and we have developed an understanding of the significance of imagining to organisational process, in particular in the imagining of opportunity, achievement of coordination, organisational decision making, and development and change of organisations. We have also located imagining in systemic constructionist practice. We are now in a position in making reference to the emergent and imagined character of organisations to position social constructionist practice as

relevant to organisational practice not only in relation to organisation development but for all domains where imagining in organisations is situated as a relevant concept.

Having cultivated sensibility and consciousness of imagining to some extent, what we have not done is to look into the detail of discourse and dialogic discursive productions of imagining. To invite these sensibilities is a task for the following part of the research.

Aim #2 – Learn to open up spaces for imagining through systemic constructionist practice

Relating imagining to participation, voice, creativity, possibility and choice I hope to develop practical insight into ways of engaging in imagining practice or to participate in it to open conversational spaces for imagining with others. Here I think in particular of ways to create opportunity for imagining in conversations that are originally inviting a limiting or narrow discourse and focus.

We have established that systemic constructionist practice at large is oriented towards development of possibility and there is no shortage of accounts on social constructionist practice and methods that demonstrate an unfolding engagement with possibility. Knowing of such practices is certainly useful in opening up space for imagining. The focus of our aim here was however more specifically directed at beginnings, and possibilities to invite or legitimise systemic constructionist practice in situations where the organisational discourse is bound by modernistic paradigms of problems and solutions, or when the dominant discourse is excluding rather than including the voices of others.

What seems to be required in such situations is hence a discursive shift. In the review of solution focused practice we have already noted that different discourses can implicate what can be imagined and how practitioners can invite a discursive shift in practising by particular forms of inquiry. This could be a starting point for a sensibility to different forms of discourse. Noticing how different ways of talking invited different possibilities for imagining and indeed how practitioners can invite discursive changes is a focus for the second part of the research.

Aim #3 – Develop propositions in relation to systemic constructionist practice and theory

Systemic and social constructionist theories, approaches and methods are informing of and are informed by practice. Several useful theories and frameworks are alive in the community of systemic constructionist practitioners through being used, discussed extended, and critiqued. I hope to develop the propositions in this research in relation to

existing frameworks as a way of making them more relevant and accessible and also to strengthen the theoretical and practical frameworks used in the community.

The review of systemic and constructionist theory and practice has already developed some useful insights, for instance based on the systemic theory of multiversa, we can relate to imagining as a process for inviting alternative ways of knowing. Similarly in social constructionist theory we have heard about the contingent and historical use of ways of knowing inviting to imagine alternative ways of knowing. The literature review has brought to the fore several imagining practices related to social constructionist and post modern positions, for instance a critical engagement with gender discourse in organisations as a path to organisational opportunity, or a narrative exercise in developing sensibility to working with colleagues who have a different ethnic or cultural background. Each of these examples and all of them together are also a finding in this research, telling of an organisational theory and practice that is ethically transformed and re-imagined through social constructionist practice positions.

The opportunity of this second part of the research is to focus on imagining discourse and practices that invite imagining. In reflecting on discourse and the discursive production of imagining, I hope to invite further sensibilities of noticing imagining practice (aim #1) and also reflections on how to open spaces for imagining (aim #2). Relating these reflections to systemic constructionist practice and theory is an aim (aim#3) that I will attend to in an ongoing sense. This means I will invite connections between theory and practice in the developing of findings and will continue with relating findings to systemic constructionist theory and practice in the discussion of findings. I will also use the established framework of Coordinated Management of Meaning theory in the reflecting of conversations and practice.

To summarise the focus going forward from this punctuation of our research journey we have located attention and opportunity to expand understanding of imagining in

- Inquiry into the detail of discourse and dialogic discursive productions of imagining which can also serve to develop a sensibility for imagining practice.
- Inquiry into the shifts and changes in discourse that open up space for imagining in practice.
- An ongoing relating and developing of our reflections to established systemic constructionist practice and theory.

4 Methods

In this section I will provide insight into the research process. In particular I will share the development of my initial interest, research design, ethical considerations, early research experiences, reflections and re-orientation in the research methodology, relevant experiences, and the construction of propositions.

4.1 Initial interest, research design and ethical considerations

The topic of imagining of organisational futures emerged from my reflecting on my consulting practice during the early taught part of the doctorate. At this time I was consulting to an organisation and was making a case for an innovative and generative way of working to meet a particular development challenge. I was proposing forms of systemic constructionist approaches to organisation development which some leaders in the client system had an intuitive grasp of whilst others expressed concerns that this approach was too emergent and undetermined in its outcome. They were aiming to influence process and outcome of the consulting process in a way that I thought would restrict dialogue and participation with the potential consequence that current ways of relating to the problem and maintaining it would also prevail. I started to frame this difficulty as a difficulty of imagining of practising together.

The initial focus of the research related to ways for systemic practitioners and clients together engaging in imagining of ways forward which includes the commission for consultation or early phases of it. This focus emerged from conversations I had with other systemic constructionist practitioners who in different settings as managers, external and internal consultants were experiencing difficulties in engaging others in their work contexts in systemic constructionist practice approaches. Consequently I thought that this was a useful topic to research into. I also established based on an initial literature review that there were only few and thin descriptions of such initial engagements and the unfolding of imagining of futures in client-consultant relationships. The title of the research proposal was "A proposal for inquiry into ways of imagining organisational futures" and the original research question was "How are a systemic consultant and an organisational client imagining organisational futures?"

The research was initially designed as a case study research (Yin, 1994, Chen and Pearce, 1995) into my practice as well as the practice of participants in the client network I would be working with. I was making several assumptions in my research proposal including a particular consulting framework, with me taking the role of the consultant or being part of the consulting team. I was planning for meetings between consultant and clients to be recorded and intermediate interviews to take place with participants in the process. The focus of these interviews was to inquire into reflections on imagining conversations and sense-making from the meetings that have taken place, to engage with what participants in the process imagined in the present and their imagining of future conversations.

Data would hence include practice and practices evident in conversations and also interviews that reflect on developments with a backward and forward looking perspective on imagining conversations in and in between meetings. These experiences and information would be explored using appropriate qualitative methods including discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Potter et al., 1990, Edwards and Potter, 1992, Willig, 2008) and Coordinated Management of Meaning theory (Pearce and Cronen, 1980, Lang, 1988, Pearce, 1989, Oliver, 1992, Pearce, 1994, Cronen, 2001, Barge, 2004c, Oliver, 2004, Pearce, 2004, Pearce, 2007, Cronen et al., 2009), but also considering narrative theory (Riessman, 1993, 2001) and positioning theory (Davies and Harré, 1990, Harré and Van Langenhove, 1999, Tirado and Gálvez, 2007, Harré et al., 2009). It was also considered that the research process would be adapted following the learning from initial research outcomes.

Proposed research practices in conjunction with ethical considerations were presented in an ethics proposal to the KCC Ethics Committee. Ethical considerations with regard to participation in the research were addressing aspects of relational ethics (Penman, 1997, Etherington, 2007, Ellis et al., 2010) such as informed consent, client confidentiality, and management of data. Specifically it was considered that the research design involved an intervention at the level of the organisation which had to be agreed upon first with the organisation's leadership team. As a subsequent step it would be for the leaders of this organisation to endorse and invite participation of its respective members, and their consent, using information material from the research context.

In this process participants' confidentiality was considered in relation to a wider audience through anonymising of data and disguising of personal and organisational contexts. Notably with participants from one organisation knowing of each other's involvement in the research project no intra-group anonymity could be warranted to participants from the same organisation. Hence participants not only had to be informed of the research design as such but also of the limitation to confidentiality. To mitigate this limitation the proposal

included to give participants the option to withdraw from the research without having to give a reason and to request further disguise or omissions in addition to any initial anonymisation and disguise of transcripts. All the above considerations are reflected in the information sheets and consent forms included in appendix 3 – procedures.

Building on the research design outlined earlier the ethics proposal further detailed the planned interviews which were meant to take place alongside of organisation development intervention. This reflexive and reflective inquiry (Tomm, 1987b, 1987a, 1988) conducted with individual managers and employees was to include reflections on imagining in relation to past, present and planned future developments. The design of the qualitative interviews was informed by the systemic stance of circularity (Cecchin, 1987), understood as inquiry informed largely through the information and language provided by the interviewee, rather than imposing a detailed order or categories that originate with the interviewer. The interview guide with respective questions is also included in appendix 3 - procedures.

With regard to the management of data it was agreed that all data relating to participants was held at my private computer system to which only I have access, and that all participant information other than the final and agreed data was to be erased with the completion of the project. Another ethical consideration and requirement was for me to demonstrate appropriate cover through an indemnity insurance covering my consulting and research practice. Ethical approval was applied for on 24.4.2009 and was granted through the KCC Ethics Committee on 24.5.2009.

4.2 Early research experience

The 2009 world economic crisis significantly reduced corporate investment in organisation development and consulting and affected also my client network. The particular opportunity for consulting with a client organisation that knew me from prior work, that I was pursuing at the time to situate the research was no longer available. Trying to position a research context in consulting contexts with potential and new clients proved to be difficult.

Upon reflection and with the benefit of hindsight on these experiences I suggest these difficulties to relate to the following limitations of my original research design: on a pragmatic level the introduction of a research framework with requirements for recording, interviews and informed consent of multiple participants turned out to be a significant intervention in the client-consultant relationship and in the client system. This particularly at the beginning of such a relationship invited a significant preoccupation with satisfying

my needs in relation to researching rather than the clients' needs for consulting. Related to this limitation I suggest the more underlying and conceptual difficulty was that of a research framework with a rather static and preconceived nature that seemed not to fit the emergent properties of systemic constructionist inquiry and the unfolding nature of the emergent client-consultant relationship. What was missing in the design, I suppose, was an invitation to co-create a research context with the client and in a way that research adds value to the client system. So how was that difficulty overlooked, how did I fail to imagine it? One account could be constructed that the process of ethical proposal and research proposal does not support or at least not invite emergent research designs. Whilst this may be of some relevance I believe that when writing the research proposal I had already a potential situation in view, I was imagining researching in relation to a particular client network and for this client the research design would have been potentially more useful and readily agreeable. With this particular research context being removed I was also more open to learn from multiple contexts which I think of as an opportunity for this project.

With emergent doubt if there will be a possibility to find a client system which is interested and agreeable in research to produce a compelling single case study covering multiple perspectives I was also looking into alternative ways of learning about imagining organisational futures, maybe from different more diverse experiences and cases that allowed for fractions of insight on the research topic.

In autumn 2009 I had the opportunity to join a meeting of a group of four 'entrepreneurs' who considered starting a joint venture and who agreed to participate in the research. In this meeting I was involved as a *legitimate participant* (Lave and Wenger, 1991), observer and researcher and also contributed to the facilitation and close up reflection of the meeting. Subsequently I also conducted four individual interviews into the imagining practice of the participants of this group in a series of conversations which was concluded by June 2010. These interviews were qualitative inquiries into the participants' reflections on significant episodes of imagining in their relational contexts. Conversations were transcribed by me and the transcripts presented and agreed with participants as properly anonymised and disguised for use in the research project. This procedure included removing a significant amount of content relating to business concepts and imagined opportunities. The agreed texts are included as transcripts A, B1, B2, B3, and B4 in appendix 2.

With this initial research I could test and reflect much of the original research design. A significant learning from this experience was that my research design was reflecting a specific limiting frame of imagining. In particular I had, previously not reflected, implied that imagining is part of a larger process and context in a way that limits the meaning of

imagining to being a precursor for action. This frame did not fit with my experience from the specific conversation with the entrepreneurs and gave rise to new insight on imagining practice.

4.3 Re-orientation in the research methodology

Reflecting how I actually learnt from the initial case of imagining, I realised that what was involved was the noting of surprises and a reflecting of experience gained in the process, in its relevance and in relation to prior knowing. This brought me to connect my research methodology with Michael Agar's (2006) concept of recursive iterative abduction and also with Karl Weick's (1989) criteria for theory development on the bases of what is interesting as introduced in the research methods section above.

The concept of recursive iterative abduction suggests an inquiry into *rich points* and the meeting with the entrepreneurs to me was such a rich point that more specifically invited to reflect on how come that at times imagining was purely informing of possibilities, as it was the case with the entrepreneurs, and other times imagining was of influence of what we do and compelling of actions. This line of inquiry invited, as I will show in the following chapter five, a focus on discourse and the context of task in imagining of organisational futures. For the research project as a whole the shift was from an understanding of imagining in unfolding systemic organisation development practice to an understanding of imagining in organisational contexts as such, to then relate systemic constructionist practice to it. This meant also that the research site was no longer a particular single case and I considered a wider range of conversations, practices and accounts of practice as sources for reflections and learning of imagining practice.

To summarise, reorientations around spring and summer 2010 included an orientation towards an understanding of imagining practice on a more phenomenal level and the consideration of rich points as learning sites. This perspective also legitimised shifts from within the research process to attend to areas that appear interesting in the unfolding process and invited noticing learning that pushes back on original or naïve assumptions. With surprises, prior experiences and noticing in the present moment becoming central aspects of this research, I increasingly became reflexively aware of myself as a research site in this process.

This reorientation needs as well to be appreciated in relation to changes in the course context. Following from the financial demise of KCC Foundation and the transfer of the doctorate programme to the University of Bedfordshire the supervision of my research activity moved from Peter Lang to John Shotter. Whilst I am indebted to Peter Lang for

being inspirational in facilitating the choice of a research topic, I am grateful to John Shotter for inviting a sense of perspective into a research experience that at the time felt fragmented and derailed.

4.4 Collecting more data on imagining

Another opportunity to engage with imagining came up in the form of a visit to schools in Sweden in 2010. The visit was organised and joined by a friend involved in Swedish school pedagogy who was part of a network of principals from several schools. The purpose of the visit was for me and my wife, who is also a systemic practitioner, to learn from what is working well in Swedish schools. This inquiry was with the principals of schools and focused on achievements and practices they were particularly proud of or that were unique or special about their school.

Whilst the focus of the conversations was our learning this inquiry was also an intervention and was recorded with permission for my research purposes. Having reviewed the conversations from this visit I transcribed and reflected on a particular part where vice-principals engaged in an imagining conversation. I presented the participants individually with the specific episode I thought of as interesting, explained how I intended to make use of it, and suggested initial considerations for the anonymisation of the text. Following their permission in principal I presented them with the transcript in a disguised and anonymised format for their review, change and agreement, to which participants gave their consent. The agreed upon text is included as transcript C in appendix 2.

Another conversation that I recorded and that I decided to include in this research was with a learning manager of a corporate organisation. The specific conversation focused on the imagining of possible uses of systemic constructionist approaches and is included as an example of imagining practice in chapter five. Informed consent and anonymisation of data was achieved following the same process as in the conversation with the vice-principals above.

I also recorded, reviewed or reflected on many other conversations, such as planning meetings, bursts of inspirations in conversations I participated in, peer consultations on research during the taught part of the doctorate or work, a contribution I made to a conference and many others, all of which I did not include in this research mainly because these, to me, were not as interesting, relevant or useful as the material I chose to use. I deleted all participant data that was not used in the research from my computer system.

4.5 Rich-points and explorations

The first rich point (Agar, 2006) already mentioned related to the conversation with the entrepreneurs. Reflections on this conversation led to a consideration of 'task' as significant frame to imagining. I have developed this topic by reflecting into the relevance of the context of task in relation to other contexts and attending to how task and practice can be seen as interrelated. These reflections were aided by the use of contextual framework from Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory and by sensibilities informed by discourse analysis. This included also reflecting on my practice and prior experience as a practitioner and how I make sense of constructions of task in my practice, again using CMM theory.

A second rich-point relates to a reflection on a practice account from Elspeth McAdam and Peter Lang (2009) in their book on Appreciative Inquiry in schools. The surprise here was in how McAdam and Lang invited a difference in discourse from within a very small opportunity to engage with a group of teachers. Based on my reflection I came to think of their practice as appropriately storied as imagining of and invitation to a different discourse or form of life. I have developed this rich-point in making my reflections on McAdam and Lang's work transparent and also, using CMM theory, relating them to my earlier considerations on the relevance of task mentioned above. I also identified other accounts of practice to relate to and illustrate this insight, including a vignette from David Cooperrider (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005) and a vignette from my own practice.

A third rich-point relates to becoming reflexively aware of the use of the word imagining as denoting a discrete activity or practice and as compared to possible alternative ways of conceiving of imagining and describing imagining practice. This insight was triggered by several conversations and reflections including reflections arising from research interviews. I develop this rich-point in considering alternative frames of imagining which are equally possible and reflecting on the sensibilities for practice that would be invited by such alternative frames.

4.6 Making sense of parts and wholes

My sense-making developed largely in a hermeneutic process (Kinsella, 2006) that included a back and forth between the different parts of experience and reflections. I think of this process as a relational activity with research participants and audiences in mind, as a storying and re-storying of experiences to invite coherence and a utility for self and others.

I used CMM theory and discursive analysis not only to reflect but also to articulate reflections. A problem in the articulation of findings from rich points was how to account for insight based on prior knowing or reflecting of practice whilst case material from such prior work contexts cannot be included for ethical reasons, as there is no informed consent from other participants. To omit experience from prior practice however would have created partial accounts in relation to insights or rich-points.

To overcome this difficulty I followed three strategies: firstly where I found learning experiences of relevance in comparison to prior knowing and prior experiences I looked to articulate this relevance in comparison to my knowing from other texts that I could draw on ethically, secondly I was drawing on exemplars from published vignettes of the practice of others, and thirdly I isolated practices that I had used more often and which therefore were not pertaining to a particular case and placed them into fictional contexts. Fictional case vignettes make it possible to maintain confidentiality and anonymity and provide means of illustration and knowing from practice (Langs, 1998). The use of fictional vignettes as illustration of reflections on practice is made explicit in the text.

I am writing about my findings as propositions that could become part of another conversation of appreciating, critiquing, building on or relating other practice to them. I think of findings as punctuations of an ongoing learning process. I articulate propositions as abstract regularities as well as detailed reflections on case and practice experience of learning, to make them as useful, accessible and transparent as possible, and also to invite alternative ways of making sense of these experiences.

5 Findings as propositions

5.1 Introduction to findings

In this chapter I aim to show and share insight and learning in relation to the research question and aims of what I identified as most interesting and potentially useful from reflecting on imagining practice, imaginative conversations or accounts of imagining. My use of the word findings is not to denote something that is literally found in a world out there but rather something that I find relevant, interesting and useful.

Findings are reflections on experiences and relate to aspects of particular conversations and to insights into emerging patterns or regularities. I will try to present the findings in a way that makes my sense-making transparent and shows how come I arrive at particular assertions. The purpose in this activity is however not validity but an invitation into a way of thinking and a shared meaning making from which other conversations, ideas, reflections may emerge for you and others to access, critique, develop further or consider some of what I have learnt.

I want to acknowledge that in aiming to present the findings with clarity there is also an ordered quality to this presentation which does not represent the different, more messy steps in the hermeneutic process of reflecting on the experiences and trying to make sense of them individually and in relation to each other. Making use of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory and discursive analysis in developing my reflections I follow a systematic way of going about experiences which adds to this ordered quality and invites claims of situated experiences as if they were truths. They are not – but they may be useful stories or unfolding insight that can be linked to other experiences or practices.

In several ways I am present as an author and participant in the construction of data, reflections, selections and propositions in this research. However thinking of this presentation as a conversation there are also other participants in this performance like the research participants and their voices, those who have developed research frameworks for reflective and reflexive practice, my tutors, their expectations and their voices from teaching, and ideas of what might matter for you reading this research.

I am going to present findings in relating experiences and reflections to each other. I will start with a focus of inquiring into the dialogical and discursive structure of imagining. This is developed through reflections on two episodes of imagining, one with entrepreneurs, the other with vice-principals. I think of attending to the detail of emergent discourse also as a way of developing and demonstrating a sensibility and way of noticing imagining conversations in line with aim #1, to *cultivate sensibility and consciousness for imagining practice in organisations*. These initial case descriptions of sections 5.2 and 5.3 are not focused on systemic constructionist practice but on insight on imagining in conversations as such.

In the following section 5.4 I will develop learning from these two cases by relating them to each other and comparing aspects of their discursive structures using CMM theory. I will firstly suggest the relevance of the context of task in relation to other contexts for the imagining in conversations, and subsequently develop a framework of archetypical discursive forms I refer to as *games of imagining*. I will relate this framework to reflections on systemic social constructionist practice and to CMM theory in pursuit of the before mentioned aim #1 and in addition of aim #3 – to *develop propositions in relation to systemic constructionist practice and theory*.

Having suggested a framework of archetypical forms of imagining I will attend to systemic practices that invite a shift of imagining practice and in particular in expanding the possibilities for imagining through systemic constructionist practice interventions. In section 5.5 I will suggest how such *game changing* activity can be understood at the intersection of reflexivity, discursive practice and grammatical abilities. This section can be related to aims #1 and #3 but in particular to aim #2 – to *learn to open up spaces for imagining through systemic constructionist practice*.

Finally in section 5.6 I will offer reflections on the discourse of imagining that has emerged through my use of it and on alternative ways of how 'imagining' can be thought of and used. In particular I will offer possible implications of a frame of imagining that was an ongoing dimension of discourse rather than a discrete activity or category of discourse.

5.2 Being with entrepreneurs

Gert and I knew each other from a prior work context where he was part of a client system and I was contracted to support an organisation development project. He was at a stage of reorientation in his career and was thinking of options for what to do next. Gert knew of my interest in imagining organisational futures and had asked if I wanted to join a particular meeting. He and some of his friends planned to explore options for starting a business. They had worked together in a more distant past, and from there developed a friendship. I agreed to join. It was discussed between Gert and me and also agreed with his friends, that I would participate from the margins, facilitate if required or contribute ideas I might have. It was also clear that I participated as a researcher.

I was scheduled to join around 11 am on the day of the meeting in Gert's house. I understood the early morning was reserved for friends to catch up. When I came they were in the middle of a conversation. My arrival caused a break. Introductions. I was welcomed and sensed the conversation I had interrupted. I tried to be brief in introducing myself and also repeating what had been shared already about the research context, so that the conversation could go on.

We were sitting around a large wooden dining table in the living room. It felt awkward putting a recording device in its middle. I took a free seat on the head of the table, Gert was on the opposite table head. To my left were Rob and Paul, to my right sat Sam. Gert's wife was in the kitchen in the next room preparing food for us. I asked how I could contribute and Gert suggested I could help with keeping the talk focused on task. I felt what people really wanted was to go on with the conversation they were in when I arrived. I felt in many ways as a guest.

The conversation to me seemed fairly unstructured but it was flowing and I thought it was working okay for the participants. Over time I realised that Paul and Sam acted as a team, but each of them held their own ground on matters. They were also engaged in another venture with two other partners. The task was to establish opportunities for doing business and Rob contributed a particular large opportunity which took centre stage soon after I had joined. The talk then continued on another opportunity that Sam wanted to take further and which had been deliberated upon at an earlier stage. Also Gert's position who was about to change jobs was discussed in relation to how he could leverage his network and expertise in the developing of opportunities. Some of the talk related to a business concept that Rob and Sam had developed and shared beforehand.

The meeting was very much about sharing and deliberating a few specific possibilities to do business together, what people considered an opportunity, who else was involved, how they would apply themselves and what next steps would look like. It was also full of industry terms, and references to particular companies or countries which were not explored but were seemingly part of a shared understanding and connectedness of the group. The four also had in common the contexts of participating in related industry networks and experience with projects in developing countries. Considering an opportunity for doing business together involved the development of a shared understanding and an agreeing to boundaries of participation. Conflicts or misunderstanding were addressed head on, and with overtones that suggested good enough relations to do that safely. At the end of the meeting they counted two and a half ideas to develop opportunities for future business and there was a commitment to revisit these developments at some time in the future.

Already in the meeting I was impressed by how they managed to keep their conversation flowing with a minimum of structure and also by the ease with which they managed to stay with ambiguity inherent in their process at that time. However when I reflected on the whole experience I also sensed, to me, an unreal lightness or even light-hearted-ness in the conversation. After all, the possibilities that were discussed would, if materialising, involve them, maybe their partners or families, spending parts of their life in different countries, it would mean significant financial commitments, it would mean taking their life down a particular route. Whilst there was interest, energy and passion I had not felt an excitement that to me would warrant such an investment.

So maybe they were also just guests in each other's stories?

The experience with the entrepreneurs was particularly useful for me *because of* the difference from what I had expected. In my research framework I had anticipated imagining as an activity that, in great measures, influences a path for acting on emergent possibilities. The experience from this conversation was different because the task was not to imagine with the focus to act on a preferred way forward but on gathering different ways forward. The conversation had, as I will suggest, the character of mapping possibilities rather than pursuing them. It was this continued mapping and imagining of possibilities that informed the unfolding practice rather than the specifics of what got imagined in it.

The meeting with the entrepreneurs led me also to reflect on how to make sense of my pre-understanding, and my own experiences that had informed a concept of imagining as

a pathway to action. In these reflections on different experiences and their respective *discursive structures* the concept of *task* emerged as a meaningful and interesting marker of difference. With *task* I mean what participants enact as the unfolding and immediate purpose of their conversation, and with *discursive structure* I mean how participants weave the unfolding conversation and respectively are woven and created in it.

I here start to develop these reflections from a particular episode from the conversation of the entrepreneurs. This is also a beginning to building a theme of imagining in relation to *task* that will continue in the following sections of this chapter. Relating to CMM theory I will attend to several contexts in an episode where Rob is proposing a particular opportunity for doing business together (transcript A in appendix 2). I have chosen this episode because different from the other opportunities that were discussed, this one had not been discussed previously. The talk related to this opportunity was therefore less fractioned and is easier to relate to than the other parts of the conversation.

In a first step I will attend to the constructions and performances in the conversation in relation to *task*, the emergent possibility of opportunities, and the emerging identities of participants in the conversation. In a second step I will inter-relate these constructions as contexts of the conversation and reflect on the whole of it. I want to note that the reason for drawing attention to these particular aspects and constructions of the conversation is not self-evident either from the experience of the conversation or from the methods that I have chosen, but has emerged as meaningful in the hermeneutic process of sense making of different experiences of imagining and will become meaningful later in this chapter in inter-relating this experience with others.

5.2.1 A synopsis of the episode

Rob presented a particular opportunity that he was connected with. It related to an industrial development in a developing country. He was in contact with an entrepreneur who was closely involved with or part of this development. Rob suggested that they as a group together could become part of this development by helping with the set-up in its early phases, to then secure a part of the operation. This would involve also on-the-ground presence in the country. Sam and Paul were most flexible to take part on the ground, however Sam was concerned about the ethical content of the business. Sam not only wanted to be assured that the activity was ethically clean, but she also invited that her concept of doing business ethically became an explicit part of the value proposition of the possible joint venture. Rob assured Sam that the development would not involve any child labour or unduly unethical work conditions. At the point that all seemed agreeable to next steps a conflict emerged about the share of participation and pay for work: for a

moment Sam, Gert and Paul were under the impression that Rob wanted to exclude them from a financial share in the business but was just looking for someone to cover the on-the-ground requirement as hired employees. This would not have been acceptable to them. Rob managed to clarify this misunderstanding and that he never meant to suggest excluding the others from participating in the business.

5.2.2 Reflecting on discourse

The task

The task of the conversation was not set in a formal way. Considering what actors in the conversation were oriented to achieve in what they did, the task was to collect and develop opportunities for doing business together.

From reviewing the transcript of the whole episode I observe that an opportunity was deemed complete and the conversation could move on to the next one when conditions were met such as constructing a shared narrative of how the opportunity worked, i.e. a business model, appreciating the contextual specificity of the opportunity, i.e. country, location, others involved, and understanding how participants could imagine to contribute to the opportunity materialising. Participants also needed to understand and clarify the opportunity to be in a position to agree to be related to it, to understand what commitment would be involved, next steps and possible mandates. Involvement in that task meant for participants to ask clarifying and probing questions but also to offer contributions. Discussions of individual opportunities had clear beginnings and endings, however once ended discussions could be re-opened later on the basis of second thoughts.

Transcript A1: Beginning

Sam	Well, we're expecting great things of you, Rob.	001
Rob	Um, so, I, I'm always searching for, for opportunities.... and I	005
	realise that to marry up <u>us</u> to those opportunities we, we need to	006
	find, and fund it ourselves or we need to find somebody else to	007
	fund it, and if you get somebody else to fund it, it gives you much	008
	more flexibility. It's easier to spend other people's money.	009

Transcript A2: First ending with a commitment

Paul	I agree, I think where we [addressing Sam] can add value, you	247
	and I can add value, is, is where you [addressing Rob] can't in	248
	terms of, of having that mobility, and, and, and ultimately no need	249
	for job security in, in the short term. And so, so I suppose we can,	250
	sort of, vector in there to, to... [overtalking]	251
Sam	And Gert, surely.	252
Rob	Yeah.	253
Gert	Um, um, your question was, yeah, do we buy into it? I think I'm all	254
	for exploring opportunities and I can see that we have such a <u>wide</u>	255
	<u>field</u> that we can tap into, ah, that we shouldn't limit ourselves at	256
	the moment. I, I think we need to trust each other	257
Sam	yeah	258
Gert	in, in how	259
	we approach it	260
Paul	yeah	261
Gert	that it aligns with our, our core values.	262

Taking a closer look at the commitment achieved towards the end of a first discussion of the opportunity invited by Rob, Paul (A2, 247-251) made a specific suggestion and constructed a narrative of how he could see himself and Sam contributing to the opportunity and Sam agreed. Notably Gert (A2, 254-262) endorsed the opportunity to the point of exploring it, however placed it as one amongst many other things that the group could do. Responding to his rhetorical question "do we buy into it?" (A2, 254) he cautioned that being invested into a particular opportunity might be to the effect of limiting the potential of other opportunities. His response was met with agreement of Sam and Paul and in this way also framed the task for the whole meeting as exploration of multiple opportunities.

Imagined future

The specific opportunity that was imagined is difficult to trace in the transcript of the conversation because of the requirement to delete confidential content. What can be summarised though is that it involved a participation in a larger industrial development, and in the opinion of Rob required particular skills, such as structuring the engagement, involving a local tribal community in it, and having people on the ground with the respective experiences. They also imagined that activities required would include for Sam and Paul to be present at the location in developing this opportunity and that their

participation would be instrumental in securing a share of the activity in the larger development.

Imagining what it meant to be involved with the business opportunity Sam expressed concerns in relation to the ethics of the business concept:

Transcript A3: Imagining participation

Sam	Can I just ask you a technical question, about the <i>named business concept</i> ?	135
		136
Rob	I've just done it in as an idea, of course.	137
Sam	Yeah, okay, but you've clearly got something in mind about that.	138
	In a <i>named business concept</i> , [continues with content question]?	139
	Is that how they work? I know they work like that in some places	140
	where you, where you get all the sweat shops... um, do you know	141
	or not? I mean, you know, there are things that we can look into	142
	but...	143
Rob &		
Sam	<i>about 2 minutes of exploration omitted for confidentiality</i>	144
Sam	Okay.	145
Rob	But, but, but what you won't have is, is lots of 13-year-olds, ah,	146
	ah, ah... [overtalking] no, no, no, no, this is, this, this will be in	147
	support of, ah, [reference to several renowned companies], so	148
	their corporate social responsibility, um, demands will be higher.	149
	[...]	
	it'll be squeaky clean.	152

This little exchange shows, I suggest, how the clarification of content is interwoven with a negotiation of participation. In line 135 Sam negotiated legitimacy for her inquiring into Rob's proposed opportunity. I suggest this turn already positioned Rob's proposal as *his* rather than as something already accepted by the group to work on. Sam's second turn (A3, 138-143) was alluding to her ethical concerns which might make it impossible for her and potentially others to participate in the development.

Imagining this particular future possibility gave rise to specific action later in the conversation, for instance Rob wanting to take the interest of the others on board for his further development of the opportunity, and Sam and Paul committing to provide a revised version of a business concept to Rob for inclusion in his conversations with other stakeholders. In my view these actions are however only incremental to what Rob, Sam and Paul have done already or would have done anyway. From the conversation and the

closeout meeting there was no evidence of any further reaching consequences which could have been for instance a shift in the coordination of the group, a closer more proactive alignment on the opportunity, a sharing of further details, or a prioritisation of opportunities.

The actors

Rob, Sam, Gert and Paul were talking at large for themselves from a position of I-ness rather than from a position of we-ness (Shotter, 1993, 2008). They were also speaking from a context of a more enduring engagement with opportunities they were individually engaged in and which involved also other people. This situated the specific meeting at Gert's house as one of several ongoing engagements in the development of opportunities in a wider network of relationships (for instance in transcript A of appendix 2: Rob: A098-104, A400-417, Gert: A374-378, Sam: A513-525). From these contexts they were speaking with confidence and clarity about what they proposed, wanted, or were prepared to contribute, which was to a large extent informing the unfolding conversation.

In relation to this first opportunity the conversation was driven by Rob and Sam. Here are two examples of how they constructed identity and morality in relation to the opportunity:

Transcript A4: Example of positioning of Rob

Rob	Ah, I'm hunting a specific opportunity at the moment.	185
	I'm, I, I'm really exposing this, so if you don't like it I, I, I'll, um...	186
	What I would propose to do is, is, on the basis of some of the	187
	discussions we've had this morning I'm, I'm getting a feel for what	188
	we could do, and I, I, I'd be shaping my approach to, to the	189
	entrepreneur which back to funding to, sort of, offer something	190
	that I know would be, ah, would playing to our strengths.	191
	So, I don't... I'm desperate to keep this away from just a	192
	consultancy.	193

In the above statement Rob is repositioning himself and the opportunity he had introduced before. So far he had received more questions than enthusiasm for his proposal. In this assertion, I suggest, he does a couple of things using the metaphor of a hunt: First he positions the opportunity as something objectively existing, nothing that is created, thought up or brought about with others but something that can be hunted, hence exists as such. Also this metaphor implies the hunted to be something of value. Then, with him being the hunter, it is rightfully his. He is "exposing this" (A4, 186), i.e. putting it on the table so to speak, so he could also remove it, if it was not liked, a

sentence that Rob seemed to have started but not completed (A4, 186). In this short statement he not only makes clear his role in relation to the opportunity but also his agency to contribute to the group by shaping his approach to play to the group's strength (A4, 189-191).

Transcript A5: Example of positioning of Sam

Sam	But on the, on the other hand, you know, I come from a different background which is all about ethics and actually you all three are involved in <u>ethics</u> but I, I do... the only thing I have in my work environment is reputation building that I,	214 215 216 217
Rob	yeah	218
Sam	and I can't... You know, when, when <i>a named person</i> asked us if we would like to have some equity in the company, security company, um, and, you know, contribute to building its <i>regionally specified</i> business, you know, I don't want to be going anywhere near a security company that carries out activities in <i>named country</i> that I have no say over, that I'm linked to, you know, completely destroy... anyone does any due diligence and you'll find it out immediately and destroys everything I've done.	219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227

In this passage Sam positioned herself in relation to ethical concerns she had addressed earlier, making clear what she stood for and the consequences any ethically dubious activity would have on her. This also related directly to and contextualised her later requests on how the group should coordinate in informing each other on developments on the one or other opportunity.

Actor identity and what can and can't be imagined as a shared future are clearly interwoven in Rob's and Sam's talk. We can also see how the space for defining the emergent opportunity is negotiated. Rob (A4, 189-191) is storying himself as being in the driving seat of shaping the approach to the entrepreneur he is relating to whilst Sam (A5, 220-225) makes very clear where the no-go areas are.

Contexts of we-ness emerged next to influential contexts of selves as evident in several statements, for instance "to marry up us to those opportunities" (Rob , A1, 6), "if we come up with an idea" (Rob, transcript A, 36), "we would be, we should have, we should be able to sell ourselves on what we can do", (Gert, transcript A, 78-80), but also in proposals in rules for coordination which transcend the context of the individual opportunity (e.g. transcript A, 229-236).

Nevertheless notions of we-ness remained overall sparingly in use and fragile during the meeting. In the conflict situation below, it appeared to the others that Rob was making a shift that would have meant him taking a share of the proposed business opportunity whilst the others would have been salaried employees. The text presented below is only a part of this conversation where the second part (included with the transcript A in appendix 2) includes for Rob to go through pains in re-positioning the opportunity as a partnership.

Transcript A6: Fragile we-ness

Sam	Okay, those opportunities, there's an opportunity anyway there	428
	and it go into lots of different things.	429
Rob	Yeah, and it could build in a number of ways.	430
Sam	Yeah, okay, okay. If they're all, kind of, happy that you pursue	431
	that I think is what everybody said.	432
Rob	Yeah, yeah, and how it, how it, how it builds, I'm not, I'm not too	433
	sure.	434
Paul	No, that's right.	435
Rob	But I will have an interest in it, if you, if you see what I mean, so I	436
	might, I might, I might end up generating a whole lot of salaried	437
	income for you but I'm, I'm, I'm interested in this.	438
Sam	Yes but what we're not looking for is... [overtalking]	439
Rob	... I know.	440
Sam	Lovely, is for you to find something, get a percentage of the	441
	contract and employ us, that's... [overtalking].	442
Rob	I'm not saying I'd do that. But, but... [overtalking]	443
Gert	It sounded like it.	444

The situation was eventually resolved as a misunderstanding in relation to the start-up phase of the venture (transcript A, 446-510). Nevertheless, as I see it, although here were notions of we-ness and coordination next to notions of I-ness, the dominant theme of the meeting was that of *individuals* and their interests in coordinating possibilities rather than that of a team.

5.2.3 Contextualising imagining practice

The above reflections on discursive actions and constructions of different contexts can now be interrelated using CMM theory.

To summarise the reflections on different contexts portrayed above, the conversation was influenced by strong contexts of *individual actors* who, I understand, were individually involved in an ongoing networking for opportunities which I denoted as an overarching *level of process*. Individual contexts and the ongoing context of a process of networking for opportunities gave meaning to a meeting with the *task of exploring possibilities* for doing business together, and led to imagining of what would be involved in taking specific opportunities forward. The task of the meeting was however to collect such possibilities and not to commit fully into a specific one. Against the background of this task there is also evidence of an emergent sense of we-ness for the group.

Imagining of entrepreneurs



Figure 2: Levels of context – Imagining of entrepreneurs

The relative influence of the different contexts on the conversation in line with the above summary is depicted in a CMM contextual diagram (Figure 2). The order of the contexts in the diagram from top to bottom express relative influence on the unfolding conversation, with the most influential contexts at the top.

With the green and blue arrows I draw attention to the specific dynamics of influence in the discourse. I use the diagram and the arrows to portray the answer to two questions:

The first question is what got influenced through imagining in this conversation. In line with the reflections developed earlier I suggest that the speech acts have contributed not only to a shared perspective of an imagined future which is what we would expect from imagining in a more narrow sense, but also contributed though in small measure to an emergent sense of we-ness. Also the unfolding episode was constructed in its beginning and endings as a context for imagining of a business opportunity. I further suggest that in some ways this episode has informed the way the task for the whole meeting was understood and how other tasks have been approached. I suggest that the conversation did not impact in any significant measure on the contexts of actor identity and their ongoing networking for opportunities. The proposed implications are depicted with blue, upward arrows in Figure 2.

A second question is what contexts give meaning to the task of imagining during the meeting? As discussed earlier I made sense of the task in the contexts of actor's identity and their ongoing process of networking to develop opportunities. These contextual forces are depicted as green downward arrows in Figure 2. In relation to this question we can also note that the context of task remained more or less unchanged during the meeting.

I now want to offer another reflection on the context of task which also relates to my experience from within the conversation, that is how tightly task operated to structure what can and what can't be imagined: I have noted a moment of conflict above when Rob seemingly suggested that he would have a share in the business and others were employed – a suggestion that clearly was outside of the shared understanding of task and so it was immediately rejected by the group and rectified by Rob.

Also based on this contextual diagram I want to suggest that is useful to attend to the context of task as an effective moral frame or boundary of imagining in this episode. What I suggest is that the task here effectively functions to legitimate what may be imagined and what must not be imagined. To illustrate this point further, to raise the question "Sam, can we think about what your ethics would have to be so we could do business in country Y?" would address Sam's context of self and hence crossed the boundaries of the task. I suggest such a question would be rejected; indeed the topic would be out-of-question. Alternatively the question "Sam, can we imagine all ethical concerns to be addressed in relation to doing business in country Y" would not cross the boundary of task. This does not mean that Sam's sense of ethics cannot be talked about, this is actually what she did in the meeting, but it does not legitimate considering possibilities in relation to it.

5.2.4 Summative reflections on practice and discourse

This case can be related to imagining of organisational opportunity which we have attended to in the literature review (Schumpeter, 1912, Penrose, 1955, 1959, Bhide, 2000, Schumpeter, 2002, Pitelis, 2009). As a single case it documents that entrepreneurs are not only imagining opportunity in their mind but in dialogical and discursive engagement with others, that entrepreneurs are also ethical agents who are not only striving for economic wealth but set boundaries for what to them is acceptable as a business opportunity and practice. The case further shows that experience plays a vital role in this imagining and so do seemingly networks of trust relationships where people participate in and tap into the experience of each other. Despite these being reflections on a single case I believe these observations are significant in how they make imagining as a discursive, dialogical, relational and ethical activity relevant to an organisational theory of imagining organisational opportunity.

The focus of our inquiry was however not so much what has been the case but how was it accomplished as a discursive performance and I suggest the following key insights pertaining to this case:

We have inquired into the relevance of *discursive structures* and the concept of *task* in relation to what can or cannot be imagined. Based on the reflections I have offered here *task* seems to function as an effective boundary to imagining practice, in a way that imagining is legitimate to address contexts that *are given* meaning by the task of imagining and is illegitimate to address contexts that *are giving* meaning to task.

We have seen how *task* can be constructed for a conversation to engage in a mapping of possibilities rather than inviting a specific possibility to gain relevance. This was possible by an ongoing process of imagining that was contextualising *task* and not directly influenced by the outcome of the exploration of possibilities. In other words the imagined did not intervene in the process of imagining – an observation that also relates to the suggestion of *task* as an effective boundary above.

We have noted that in imagining what was possible for the participants, in what could be done together, they had to take each other and their mutual interests into account. In that way there was no space between imagining of possible futures, asserting themselves as actors, but also attending to each other as persons who have a stake in this conversation, who have rights and duties.

We will revisit this case in a comparison of discursive structures of imagining with the imagining of a group of vice-principals in section 5.4 to follow.

5.2.5 Close out

In addition to participating in the meeting I conducted with each of the entrepreneurs an interview inviting the focus of exploring exemplars of imagining practice. In these interviews participants were drawing on a range of imagining episodes, sometimes with little connection to the before mentioned meeting, sometimes making explicit distinctions between this and other ways of imagining. Upon reflections their stories and insights seem to relate to different aspects of my findings rather than just to this particular initial case example. I will therefore draw on their input selectively – here, but also in the later sections 5.3 and 5.6 of this chapter.

Specifically because of its congruence to the imagining I characterised in the case above I want to share a synopsis of Rob's account of imagining that was going on in his life, several weeks after the conversation of the entrepreneurs (transcript B2 in appendix 2). Rob explained he was interested in building a 'portfolio career' (B2, 640), which I understood to mean to be doing other things than being employed. He thought it was possible that he entered a venture with Paul, Sam or Gert but this was not a priority. He was looking at several opportunities emergent from different conversations. Rob was very clear on how he would eventually develop these opportunities through networking, assessment of interests and being flexible on how to engage with the interests of others, considering different models to generate income including participation in ventures, smaller engagements, or through introduction fees for brokering deals (B2, 638-700). Rob's reflection on a 'portfolio career' was similar to the conversation of the entrepreneurs, in that all possibilities were still emergent and there was no evidence to a particular commitment to one or a few of them at the time of the interview. He therefore seemed to be in a continuous process of exploring but not acting on multiple avenues.

Finally I want to suggest the relevance of this initial case of the entrepreneurs within the context of developing of findings in this chapter: firstly this case served to develop a sensibility for imagining as discursive practice and achievement through the use of discourse analysis; secondly it introduced the use of CMM theory for developing a coherent account of the moral structure of the conversational space of an imagining episode; and thirdly it portrayed the qualities of this particular case of imagining opportunities which seemed to be removed from immediate action.

5.3 Learning from vice-principals

It was our second day in Sweden. The day before, my friend Isa, my wife Dorothea and I had visited a school for younger children. Isa, a pedagogue, knew many of the principals in the country and had invited the opportunity for us to take advantage of our stay in Sweden to visit and learn from Swedish schools. In Austria the Swedish school system has a very high reputation and being interested in school development and working with schools we welcomed this opportunity.

We met Isa in the morning and she led us to the school we visited that day. On the journey we reflected about our experiences of the day before. The principal from the school we had seen had been very generous in sharing from her practice, and gave us insights into how she developed her school in very participative and egalitarian ways. Dorothea and I then had a reflective conversation in front of the principal, which meant we spoke to each other about what we had heard and learnt. We were sharing what had impressed us about the way the school was led, and how the vision of the school came to life in the stories of students and teachers. It also felt good to offer this feedback as way of appreciating the principal for inviting us and sharing her time and wisdom.

We arrived. The building we entered was rather modern. Isa introduced us to Alva and Freja who were vice-principals of the school. Erik, the third vice-principal, was coming from a different building and joined soon thereafter. We sat in a meeting room with a glass door, so that children walking by could see through. Our question to the vice-principals was *what was unique about their school and what they were particularly proud of*. We learnt about the structure of the school, and about the Swedish curriculum. That money walks with the child, that moves from school to school and the importance of managing a school well to secure its existence. The organisation of this school had seen some significant changes and the vice-principals shared how this mattered for their work and how they had set priorities to develop the school, what they did, learnt and had achieved already.

Towards the end of the visit Dorothea and I reflected on what we had heard, learnt, appreciated, and were curious about, with the vice-principals and Isa listening to our conversation. From there the talk continued as the vice-principals wanted to add to what had been said and had been understood, of what mattered to them and what their thinking was about developing the school further. They talked about communication, vision and the goal of the school. The

conversation had shifted in that they were talking to each other as much as to us about what needed to happen and what should and could happen to develop the school.

I enjoy looking back on the meeting with Alva, Freja and Erik, and I have picked this particular episode because it offers an interesting counterpoint to the episode with the entrepreneurs. Alva, Freja and Erik were also coordinating as a group of individuals but, as I will show, developed the talk about possible futures from a strong position of wellness. Similar to the reflection on the conversation with the entrepreneurs I will develop reflections on the discursive structure of this conversation by attending to different performances of the participants. I will then locate these reflections on discursive performances in the CMM model. A structured comparison of the two conversations, that with the vice-principals and the one with the entrepreneurs, will be part of the next section.

5.3.1 A synopsis of the episode

In the beginning of the episode Alva and Freja were developing ideas about what mattered in the development of the school. This started with a recent achievement of restructuring the order of meetings in the school, continued with a focus of what would be talked about in each meeting which seemingly was a current topic, and led to reflections on the development of goals and vision of the school and how these would be translated into practice by teachers at different levels. Whilst the dominant discourse to that point had been top-down communication Erik picked up on the theme of bottom-up communication and related an experience where he had been challenged by his team for not listening to them. He built this case to be an exemplar for how leadership could work top down *and* bottom up in serving the implementation of goal and vision. Alva then built on Erik's emphasis on bottom up and suggested the relevance and requirement for them to be present and listening from corridors and classrooms to facilitate bottom up input to their work as a team. This episode is included as transcript C in appendix 2.

5.3.2 Reflecting on discourse

The task

Alva, Freja and Erik were coordinating their activity in developing what they thought was relevant or interesting for us to know in response to our questions about the development

of the school. So the task at the outset was to provide information. In the last episode of the meeting the vice-principals moved from telling us what was the current thinking or plan towards a shared storying of what mattered in the present and for the future. This talk then seemed to be directed at them rather than at us.

Transcript C1

Alva ...if we think one year ago, 027
we did not have the meetings in the right order, 028
so we were kind of messed up, 029
so we had to think, 030
we had to think, where is the information, 031
where does it start, 032
where do we want it to go, 033
so it can go the right way. 034
But then, what we should talk about at each meeting, 035
what we should talk about, that changed from half a year ago, 036
what should this meeting be about, 037
because when we talk about this, on this meeting, 038
the next meeting will be effected upon talking about the same 039
stuff, 040
and if we talk about things that are happening here now, on this 041
meeting, 042
then this meeting will have the same conduct, 043
and the next meeting, and the next one. 044
So if we don't talk about the right stuff in the first meeting, 045
the last meeting will be destroyed,... sort of. 046
Because we gonna talk about wrong stuff, and to try to get the 047
flow moving we are not squeezing it together, up here, then it 048
won't reach them. 049

Freja And when you say talking about the right thing, then we are 050
talking about more pedagogic things and... look forward 051

Alva yeah 052

Freja where 053
do we want to go, what's the goal, and to list... have a vision over 054
there instead of >here and now< and what happened yesterday. 055

In the beginning of the talk captured in transcript C1 above Alva started in describing the achievement of a better communication through a cascade of meetings in the school. She

pointed to the order of meetings which we understood had changed half a year ago and which enabled an effective flow of communication top down. She then moved her attention to the content of the conversation, to “what we should talk about” (C1, 35-37), and invited a reflective awareness that the talk that started in the senior ranks was formative to the meetings that followed from it; following meant to “have the same conduct” (C1, 43).

Alva’s talk had a rhythmic quality to it; she was emphasizing the step by step cascading of meetings through intonation; also she tapped with her hand on the table as she talked about *this meeting* and *that meeting*, as if there was an invisible map charting the communication plan she would be pointing to, and the sound of her tapping on the table emphasised the rhythm of her voice even more. Alva’s talk was expressive of both some developments that had taken place already and a desired future. Her talk was framed from a we-position and this together with her use of *should* in relation to what was talked about invited an obligation on her and the other vice-principals to get it right. Her conclusion that if the wrong stuff was talked about in the first meeting then the last meeting was destroyed pointed to a purpose of the meeting that had not been discussed at that stage.

Freja (C1, 50-51) was expanding on the meaning of Alva’s use of the *right stuff*, which I understand was to move to forward looking and pedagogic concerns rather than attending to the day to day routine or fire-fighting yesterday’s issues. Specifying what was meant seemed of importance to maintain clarity in relation to coordination in the team, following from Alva’s expressive emphasis on what should happen. Also in extending the conversation to the next level of detail, Freja (C1, 50-51) in her response endorsed what Alva has said before as important in relation to conversation and content. Reversely Alva (C1, 52) in her response to Freja also endorsed the clarification added by Freja.

More details could be noted here about this conversation, but what I try to invite an attention to is the tight weaving or co-construction of possibility and oughtness that emerged at this stage of the conversation and continued for another five minutes. The task that participants seemed to orient to and enact is to develop a shared narrative of what mattered in the developing of the school and what needed consideration by them as a team. This narrative, I suggest, was implicating themselves as actors in the process, it was not just what could happen or what should happen in the organisation *somewhere* but what *they* should do in relation to others and the school. I suggest that the context of task in this episode was to define future communication and leadership action and coordination. It was a reflexive, imaginative and ethical practice which performed together also served to strengthen the coordination around future activity.

The actor(s)

Almost all activity was framed in the third, we-person, position. With *we* the vice-principals were referring to their own group. I see *we-ness* present in three ways: First they constructed themselves from a 'we' person position in their accounts of what they did, ought to do or in formulating propositions for the future. Propositions were also formed as from a first person, I-position, this however was an exception I will attend to later. Secondly they weaved into each other's talk re-assurances such as "yeah" or expanded on each other's accounts so they in a way performed storytelling together, and thirdly they storied their group as a collective agent in the context of school development as I suggest is evident in transcript C2 below.

Transcript C2

Martin	And in your school, when it is about the goal and the vision, would	058
	that be more a conversation that has to go top-down? Or would	059
	you think more this is a conversation going from the bottom-up?	060
	Or how are you thinking of that?	061
Freja	<u>Well</u> , I think it is about a conversation in our group. We are <u>not</u>	062
	<u>quite finished</u> so to say,	063
Martin	right,	064
Freja	We are finding our <u>way</u> together.	065

Individual identity seemed to have a subordinate position in the discourse. The example of transcript C3 below is the only extended use of the first person position in this episode and is used to relay a personal experience *in support of* a particular way of operating and communicating as a team of vice-principals.

Imagined future

There are several statements relating to the future of the operation of this team and the transcript below is an example of this which I have chosen also to be inclusive of Erik's voice in my discussion of this episode.

Transcript C3:

Erik	[...] and the flow [of communications] has to go <u>both</u>	081
	<u>ways</u> , otherwise it's not developing at all and it's top-leading...	082
Alva	Yeah	083
Erik	we have to have that... When there was the <u>darkest</u> period, er,...	084

	they always blame the boss: 'What are you doing? Why are you	085
	doing that?' And at one meeting I said <u>stop!</u> If, if <u>we</u> – because	086
	this is <u>we</u> – , <u>we</u> have it..	087
	you don't think that we are not listening to you...but I am not here	088
	to <u>boss</u> you, this is something we have to do <u>together</u> , and, that...	089
	when I got a bit angry	090
	[Empathic background noises]	091
Erik	and I, I lost it a little bit, I was pretty...	092
	<u>When I did that</u> , and they reflected on what I said: because yes,	093
	this is something <u>we</u> have to do, this is not <u>your</u> responsibility, or	094
	<u>your</u> responsibility, <u>we are a team</u> , and my role is to handle the	095
	information, I got the information and I take the information to you	096
	and my job is also to hand your information into <u>this group</u> [the	097
	group of vice-principals], and that's how we create where we are	098
	in five or two years.	099

Erik makes a point here about the importance of communicating upwards as well as downwards and how he has negotiated this with his team who had blamed him as they did not feel listened to. In his use of an account of his own experience and practice, he develops credibility in showing both his vulnerability as a leader who gets angry, but also his attending to the frustration in his team. However he demonstrates not only the pitfalls of one directional communication but also, I suggest, he offers a model of organising that justifies hierarchy and his position in it, not as a boss who is top-leading but as an enabler of two way communication. He presents this model as credible also from the position of the members in the team he is leading. In his conclusion "and that's how we create where we are in five or two years" (C3, 98-99) he relates the whole discourse to the ongoing conversation between the vice-principals of creating and enacting a vision for the next five years, implying a relevance of this exemplar of two way communication beyond the immediate experience of the case.

5.3.3 Contextualising imagining practice

Considering the contexts that influence the conversation and are emerging in it I suggested that the context of *task* in this episode was to contribute to the development of the school by defining future communication and leadership action and coordination. The task is meaningful in relation to the *purpose* of the school which, to be sustainable as an

institution, needs to meet targets and deliver the curriculum. The *process* of coordination of the vice-principals seems to be subordinate to and in support of this context.

The *actor* pursuing the *task* of school development is the group of vice-principals as a collective, a position of *we-ness* that they enact consistently. I suggest that the character of this *we-ness* and the morality of what it means to be part of this team was emergent and reflexively influenced by their imagining of a way forward. It is from within this challenge that they were “finding our way together” (C2, 65) that they also defined their identity or *self* in relation to others and with each other.

I further suggest that their ongoing process of coordinating as a team, in particular in the form of meetings, included the particular meeting with us and contextualised the *episode of imagining* we participated in. The *imagined future*, considerations of what needs to happen in terms of communication and leadership of the vice-principals emerges from a reflexive engagement with and imagining of their practice in relation to the *task* of school development.

Placing different contexts and moralities in an *order of relative influence* above reflections suggests that the purpose of the school is the overarching context which gives meaning to a task of imagining steps contributing to school development and securing the sustainability of the school. All other contexts seem to emerge from within this frame: the team of vice-principals is emerging purposefully from within the context of school development and is reflexively informed by the imagined action. The contexts of school development then seems also to be informing of the ongoing process of coordination of the vice-principals in meetings like the specific one with us. Within the particular part of the conversation oriented to imagining, also the use of *self* (as in Erik’s case example in transcript C3 above) was to serve the emergent context of what got imagined in it. This particular order, which is also a subjective construction, is represented in Figure 3 below.

As I have done in the previous case, I also here use the green and blue arrows to portray the answer to the same two questions: asking what was influenced through imagining in this conversation, I here suggest that the imagining process has been to some extent relevant to influencing all contexts with exception of the context of the purpose of the school. The way how experience was reflected, the imagined ideas on communication in the future, the unfolding visit have been formed through the conversation. Also the meaning of *we-ness* for the team of vice-principals or their way of operating in an ongoing sense was open to deliberation. These possibilities for implication are denoted with the blue arrows whilst the only exclusion, I suggest, is the imagining of the purpose of the school within the Swedish curriculum, the requirements for legal, institutional and

financial sustainability. This very purpose is holding the task of school development in place, so to speak.

Imagining of vice-principals

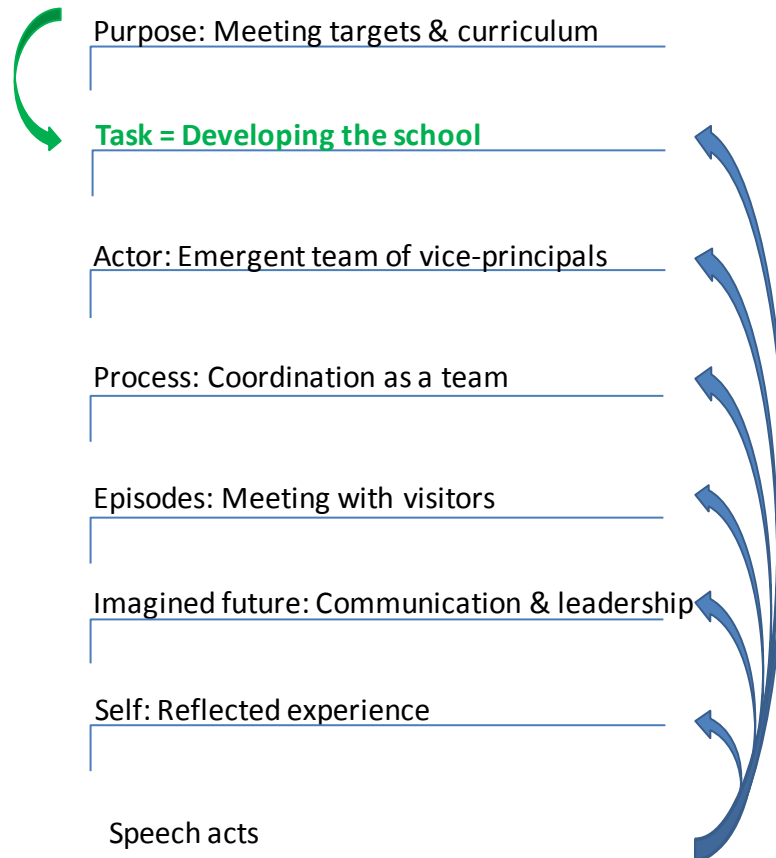


Figure 3: Levels of context – Imagining of vice-principals

Also here, similar to the case with the entrepreneurs, the context of task seems to draw an effective boundary between the contexts that could legitimately and intelligibly be impacted through imagining and those which could not. We can again test this conceptual thought with fictive questions crossing the boundary of task. To ask “If we imagined a different curriculum what possibilities would we see for the school” is a very interesting question but would have required a very different task than the one emerging from the conversation; in the context of the conversation we had this question would be nonsensical. So what we can observe again is that imagining and task correspond, and

specifically to imagine in relation to a task seems to legitimate speech acts that consider possibilities in relation to the contexts that the task gives meaning to but exclude speech acts that invite possibilities in relation to contexts that give meaning to the task, as shown in Figure 3.

5.3.4 Summative reflections on practice and discourse

I suggest this case is relevant in relation to theories of imagining in alignment and coordination in organisations. The theories we have visited in the literature on this topic were covering a continuum of how imagining influences alignment and coordination ranging from an attempt on exclusive influencing through the entrepreneur or executive (Witt, 1998, Schumpeter, 2002, Witt, 2005) to a co-creative storying of landscapes of possibilities by managers as practical authors (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003) to an ongoing imagining of practice across the ranks of an organisation through dramatising, instantiating and reframing (Carlsen, 2006).

The practice in this case seemed to be of a different form of coordinating than those discussed in these literature sources. What the vice-principals demonstrated was a reflexive imagining of practising together. Such a reflexive dialogic practice where people are engaging with what they create together in their practising has been proposed in therapeutic relationships as relational reflexivity (Burnham, 2005) denoting an explicit dialogic reflexive engagement with what gets created in practising together. I suggest that this case of relational reflexivity in imagining ways of coordinating and being in practice as presented in the case of vice-principals can offer useful evidence, inspiration and extensions to a theory of imagining for coordination and alignment in organisational contexts.

I suggest a relational reflexive engagement with practising as an instrument for alignment and coordination is usefully aided by a shared purpose or frame of reference. We have noted that imagining of communication and leadership practice was framed as 'doing the right thing'. Doing the right thing, I proposed, is such a shared purpose and moral frame, the purpose of the sustainable school, and not any other and in particular not multiple moralities, which could have been for instance doing the right thing as in 'how I see it', 'how a vice-principal should act in such a situation', or 'how my personal targets require'. Instead all organisational practices and actor identities become subordinate to a common purpose.

Reflecting on the discursive action we can also note that what got imagined as possible focus for development and action (what we can do) was immediately framed as desired

corrective and corrected practice (what we should do) and co-noted with a strong sense of oughtness (what we must do). Also there was little space between advocacy of possibility and a sense of agreement of all vice-principals (what we will do). The specific of what ought to happen, however, shifted in the process of the unfolding conversation.

Finally I reflect again on the context of task of imagining as a boundary for imagining, being positioned in the context hierarchy delineating contexts that can be implicated by imagining from those which cannot intelligibly be implicated by imagining.

5.3.5 Close out and making connections

Introducing this case example earlier I have suggested that this conversation would be a counterpoint to the talk of the entrepreneurs and indeed when the imagining of the entrepreneurs was informed by dominant I-ness this conversation was informed by we-ness. When the imagining of entrepreneurs appeared to be disconnected from acting into the imagined possibilities, this conversation was marked by an immediate relevance of imagining for action.

The starting point of the vice-principals was of course a different one than the point of departure in the conversation of the entrepreneurs. The vice-principals were more of a formed team to start with, with an institutionalised commitment to this team within the wider context of the school. They could also relate to a track record and continuity of overcoming difficulties together. However, acknowledging these differences does not mean that imagining processes, that privilege we-ness and are focused to action, could not have taken place in the group of entrepreneurs. This is, I suggest, the insight that Paul (the entrepreneur) conveyed in his interview (transcript B3 in appendix 2), pointing to an experience with a different entrepreneurial team, a team that wanted 'the same things at the same time':

I think that the advantage of a group working with a number of like minded individuals and talented people is that you can identify opportunities in, in your discussions with them. And I think for that to happen that the group has to all be in the same place, mentally if not physically and be hungry for the same opportunities ultimately. Ah, I think that, um, I've certainly experienced here, with the group I've been working with, that energy and synergy from... that I would have anticipated that (energy and synergy, sic) when Sam, Rob and I could also generate if we were all in the same headspace, if you like. So, headspace in terms of, we all want the same things at the same time or similar things at the same time (Paul, transcript B3, 055-066)

To me Paul's experience with this other group resonates with the imagining of the vice-principals. Wanting 'the same thing at the same time', as he continues to expand in the interview, was to the consequence of imagining leading to actions (Paul, transcript B3, 115-132). Similarities included also the notion of we-ness, which Paul referred to as being "in the same head-space", and a reflexive engagement of the group or team in their own process of operating to be fit to serve a purpose they pursue in common. As I will argue in the following section these similarities are of significance to what can be seen as a particular archetype of imagining practice.

5.4 Games of imagining organisational futures

We have now reviewed two case episodes of imagining attending to what got imagined and how it got imagined. Relating these cases to organisational theory of imagining I suggested they were interesting in their own right as illustrating how a relational discursive frame of imagining can be used to expand insight into imagining processes in organisations. I suggested they were also of interest because of the ethical content of entrepreneurial imagining and the relational reflexive practice evident in imagining as practice of coordination and alignment in the case of the vice-principals. However what captured my attention from these experiences was how imagining at times was effectively separated from action and an ongoing practice, as in the case of the entrepreneurs and at other times as in the discourse of the vice-principals, imagining and possible action were tightly interwoven by strong notions of oughtness, seemingly perturbing current organisational practice and inviting different action. This particular curiosity informed an attention to *task* and discursive structure of imagining conversations.

What gets invited by such a curiosity is a comparison of experiences and learning from drawing distinctions between different cases, looking for similarity and differences in the discursive performances of imagining in them. In this section I will start with developing one such comparison in relating the cases of the entrepreneurs and the vice-principals to each other. This initial comparison is also an exemplar of a hermeneutic process which included several reflections and distinctions I made in relation to *task*, discursive structure and permission to imagine, trying to relate different experiences in a way that increases the understanding of a particular case but as well interrelates different experiences in a meaningful way.

Through this hermeneutic process of observations and reflections using CMM theory I distinguish three archetypical forms of imagining organisational futures. With reference to Wittgenstein's (1953) metaphor of games I refer to these archetypes as *games of*

imagining. Using the metaphor of a game I firstly want to draw on the notion of rules and regularities which are present in my reflections through the lens of CMM theory and an attention to how rules are created and also can shift, secondly the notion of playfulness that seems important to creative forms of imagining and systemic organisational practice (Barge and Fairhurst, 2008) and thirdly the intrinsic openness of the games metaphor to countless variations, combinations and new forms, which to me presents a useful counterpoint to the notion of archetypes. Specifically I will detail a *solution game*, a *transformation game* and an *exploration game* of imagining organisational futures.

In the final part of this section I will inter-relate the different games of imagining in a similar way that I have started the comparison between archetypical forms and suggest implications for practice that is not bound by archetypes.

5.4.1 A case comparison

Having reflected on the discursive action in both case episodes and developing stories of how to make sense of how imagining took place using CMM theory, we are now in a position to compare the two discourses and reflect on what is similar and different along aspects and sensibilities invited by CMM theory.

To facilitate comparing the two contextual hierarchies I have named contexts consistently across cases: The context 'actor' denotes the significant identity that locates agency and morality for imagining in the discourse. In the case of the entrepreneurs the actors were the individuals, in the case of the vice-principals it was them as a team, talking from a position of we-ness. Also I have named in both cases one context 'process' to denote the proximate ongoing activity that gives meaning to the specific task of imagining. In the case of the entrepreneurs I have suggested this activity was networking for opportunities, in the case of the team of vice-principals, I understood this was their ongoing coordination of leadership and communication activities, mainly in meetings.

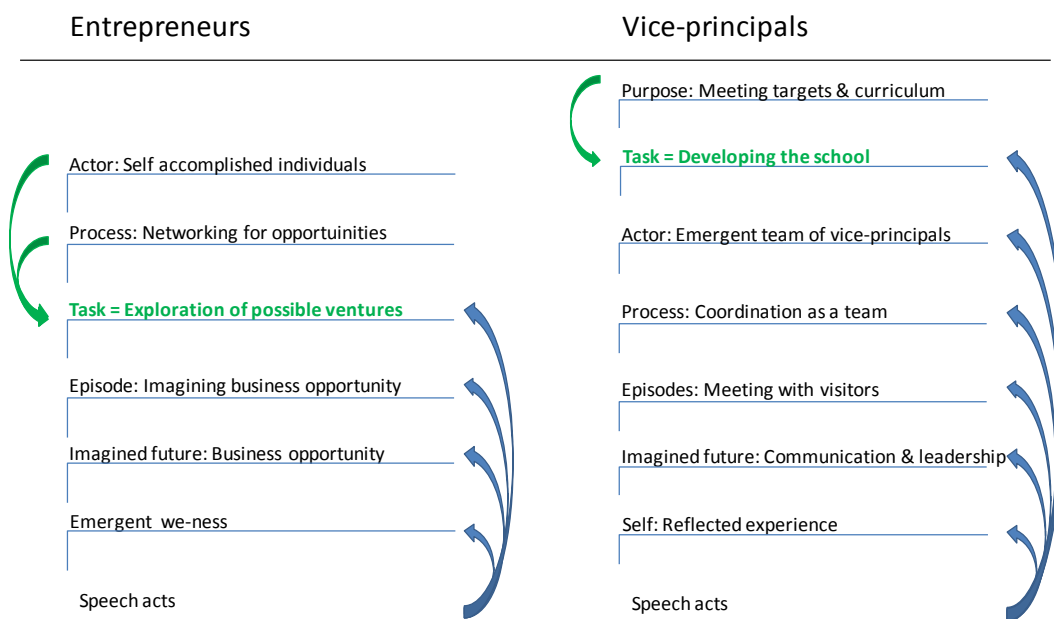


Figure 4: Comparison of discourses using CMM theory

So how shall we read such a comparison? First I think it is worth reminding that the comparison constructed here is of two episodes of imagining and not of two different groups. Groups can engage in very different tasks with very different contextual constellations and dynamics. A second reminder is that the contexts are not factually real but they are my stories of a discourse and provide a way of attending to and reflecting on discursive performances.

In comparing the contextual diagrams that relate to the two episodes and discourses in Figure 4, we can see that using CMM theory I have argued for similar discursive structures in that (i) the *context of task* is positioned and held in place by higher level and defining contexts; (ii) that the imagining activity that is unfolding from within this *context of task* cannot implicate the higher level and defining contexts that are giving meaning to the context of task; whilst (iii) all lower level contexts can be implicated..

In my reflections on both conversations I have observed that the set or emergent task seemed to play a pivotal role effectively governing imagining as legitimately focused on some but not all areas of social reality. The two presented cases were differing in the way how wide or narrow these *frames* were constructed and consequently how far reaching the imagining activity could be. The notions of task and frame are, of course, also constructions that serve for orientation in the reflection of ongoing discursive practice.

The idea that certain ways of imagining are predictably illegitimate or nonsensical seems to be a strange outcome at first, so I was wondering how to understand this. I offer the

following explanation in support of a possible regularity: when particular contexts give meaning to a task then any imagining of a range of possibilities of such particular contexts is also inviting a variation, a change of meaning in the task. We can however not at the same time pursue a task and engage in a conversation that serves to change or redefine the task. Hence to imagine in relation to a context that gives meaning to a task whilst pursuing such task is nonsensical and calls into question the commitment to the task, the legitimacy of the speech act of imagining, or the overall intelligibility of the situation.

What I also suggest can be drawn from the comparison is that discourses of imagining and hence the space for imagining practice can be significantly different in the way the task is framed to include or exclude particular parts of the social world. Specifically attending to the position of contexts of actor and process in an episode of imagining in the contextual diagrams we can note that in the case of the entrepreneurs the actors and their ongoing process of networking are placed as more influential, that is contextualising and giving meaning to the context of task, *outside* of the frame of imagining so to speak. Reversely in the case of the vice-principals, the actor and the context of process of coordinating are *inside* of the frame of imagining, with the context of the task of imagining in relation to the development of the school contextualising the emergent team and emergent process of coordination. In other words the episode of imagining can be seen as discursively contained by a set or emergent task frame to influence or not influence actor identity and the process of operation or coordination.

The above appears interesting in relation to imagining in systemic constructionist practice focused to invite change and development in organisation. We might then also be interested in how a particular task gets constructed in such practices so that a wider or narrower frame of imagining is invited. Based on the cases above and reflections on my practising I will suggest three archetypical games of imagining. Each game is characterised by a particular task structure and a particular position of task in relation to other contexts. As archetypes these portrayed situations are not meant to capture experience in a comprehensive way but to develop an understanding into particular possibilities of practice and their distinctive differences. I will illustrate these concepts with reflections on my practice.

5.4.2 The solution game of imagining

Consider these objectives or commissions:

- A pilot project conducted in one department of an organisation should be evaluated to benefit subsequent projects in other departments.
- A manager seeks coaching for how to best sort out a conflict amongst staff members.
- An organisation wants to develop a training to help managers reduce stress and the impact of stress on their teams.

These tasks seem to be meaningful against a background of an already established sense of a situation: there are learnings from a pilot project to be harvested, there is a conflict, there is stress. The descriptions also express clarity of orientation in what managers want and where they wish to lead the organisation.

If we compare above situations portraying a solution game of imagining to our earlier example of the imagining of entrepreneurs, the solution game is different in its focus on particular ends, and in a focus on action rather than on exploration of possibilities. Comparing a solution game of imagining with the imagining of vice-principals, the solution game is different in how the task and situation is framed: the end point of imagining in a solution game are already specified organisational states, actions or ways of being, whilst in the imagining of the vice-principals exactly this future ways of being and doing things were under reflexive consideration.

I characterise a solution game of imagining by a context and task that serve to maintain the trajectory of an organisation, a unit, a team or an individual through some sort of corrective or contributing activity. Whilst the principal direction and goals are not up for debate or redefinition, the way to attain the goals might be. With the goal – the what – being fixed, the solution game of imagining can be to imagine ways of achieving it.

How are such tasks and boundaries constructed?

I receive an email asking if I would be available to facilitate a workshop, place and date, one line of context. This call comes from a change manager working in a large organisation. I have worked before for him and the organisation so we know each other. I indicate my availability and interest in this work.

Later, on the phone I learn about some initial background and what the learning manager thinks needs doing. I also understand he would have been inclined to do this work himself but has a competing commitment. We discuss and agree

where my work starts and ends, checkpoints, time, and money. So I am commissioned to facilitate a cross-divisional workshop.

At our first meeting Ruth, a finance manager in a central function of the organisation, my ultimate client, gives me the background for the workshop, who would be involved and how come there is a workshop in the first place. Ruth's project was to bring members from different organisational divisions together, creating a cross divisional platform for learning. To Ruth this is a unique opportunity and I learn that to get to this stage of planning has involved a significant effort on her part and of others in the organisation.

The above vignette is fictional but constructed from several real experiences. We can note that the contract for this work was established with the change manager even before Ruth and I had met. In the first meeting Ruth and I were filling in the details to this contract and context of task. In the whole process of agreeing the task the meaning of *preparation and facilitation of a workshop* was not explored in great detail; we were working from an a priori shared understanding, a common sense (Geertz, 1983), of *preparation and facilitation of a workshop*. What I suggest here with regard to a solution game of imagining is that task is constructed through orientation in and joining of an organisational discourse. This discourse is present in the practice of all involved and joining others in their practising means also to join the discourse.

How is imagining located in this practice?

In a second meeting Ruth and I explore in more detail what success would look like and what that means for the workshop. I learn that there are political tensions around initiatives across business divisions as some leaders in the organisation are concerned this might impede line accountability and adversely affect efficiency in the organisation. I engage Ruth into thinking of participants' ways of relating to the workshop, one by one we discuss every person. Based on her knowing of them and also of their line managers and teams we imagine what it means for them to participate. We also develop a story of the ideal workshop in flow and outcome. What would be accomplished? How would participants leave this meeting? What would success mean for them? What would they have liked to accomplish at the workshop and how can we help them to prepare for it? Thinking backward into the present it gets clearer that more work needs to be done with all involved prior to the actual day. We plan how to engage the participants in this preparation.

In this vignette Ruth and I engage in what I above called a solution game of imagining. We work from a set frame of organisational objectives, a set time, set participants, set interfaces. When I joined Ruth in her project there was already a whole network of conversations set out in the past, present and foreseeable future that I was orienting myself to in order to become part of it and contribute in the particular way I was commissioned to. Through considering the wider system we eventually identified things we can do to make the workshop a success. The future we engaged to create however was informed by us relating to set expectations in support of the trajectory the organisation was on already.

A CMM perspective on a solution game of imagining

Capturing my reflections on a solution game of imagining in more general terms in a CMM framework the task of imagining is informed by an already established organisational discourse which is also positioning the actors in the discourse: organisational structure, the role of participants, the direction the organisation is taking – all are set. There is a particular framed process defined and imagining of how to best do this process is confined to this very process. The way this process is defined also is drawn from the organisational discourse. In my example the process was defined through its outcome to facilitate learning across participants in different divisions.

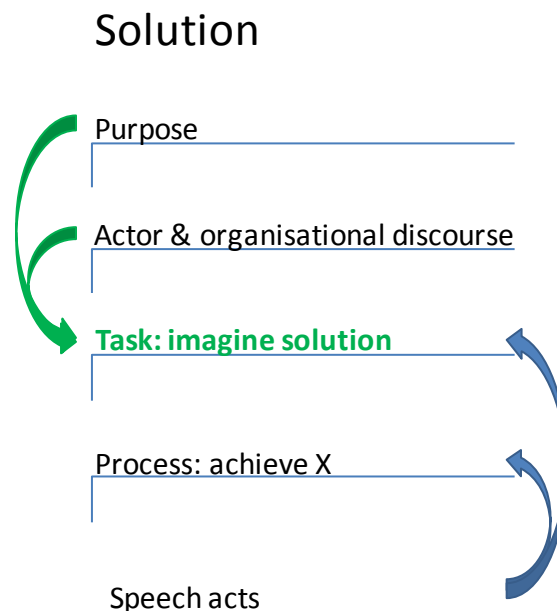


Figure 5: Solution game of imagining

Imagining in relation to this process is then permitted in extending and developing the process in its detail but remains contained by overall organisational discourse. The context diagram depicted in Figure 5 below captures these relative influences of contexts.

Reflections and learning

I have constructed the archetype of solution game of imagining against a background of experiences of working with and for organisations and in particular those experiences where I felt I was involved in imaginative work but also that the process and outcome was nevertheless very contained and after all not so transformational, that it did not perturb and also was not meant to perturb organisational discourse. Through reflections and drawing distinctions I 'landed' so to speak on the above portrayal of these practices.

Upon reflection on my learning I now wonder when and how I have been *taken in* by discourse in my work particular at the stage when the context of task is agreed and how I can become more reflexive and agile in such processes so to invite choices for me and for others and eventually negotiate a larger space for imagining of possibilities. I am however also aware that inviting choice, opening up spaces for dialogue, reflective and reflexive practice may not be welcomed and not always be helpful at such stages. The tightness of how task is constructed and contextualised often by several stakeholders to serve an organisational trajectory, the decisions on who does what, when and how, and the ability to rely on plans being executed, are valuable practices for many organisations (Charan and Bossidy, 2002).

Thinking of already established discourses I, however, also recall cases where rather than focusing on my practice felt invited to bend it. For instance in developing trainings or workshops which are based on dialogic forms of learning this can be the case when the time given to participants and the trainer is reduced with an expectation that 'content' or 'outcome' stay the same. Reducing participants' time for relating and sharing own experiences and repertoires (Schön, 1983) to develop meaningful implications for their work context, however implicates the process on many levels, including 'content' and 'outcome', but also what kind of persons the participant and the trainer can be or become in such practices. I now think of such situations as ethical dilemmas which I should make more explicit when they occur and in that way make use of boundaries of my practice as a resource for my clients. What I feel is needed is a reflexive wisdom in what discourses to accept and which to deconstruct or shift through notions of inquiry, curiosity, reflective and reflexive practice. I will say more about practices of relating to prevailing discourse in section 5.5 on repositioning practice.

5.4.3 The transformation game of imagining

Consider these tasks and commissions:

- Two competing companies form a joint venture. Staff and management of the new business come from the two parent companies. The leadership team anticipates tensions between staff members coming from two very different cultures and want to develop an entirely new culture alongside the new organisational processes.
- A team, newly formed to plan and organise an organisational restructuring in a large organisation, wants to kick off with a change management training which should also be formative to how they will work together in the future.
- The CEO of a company wants to transform the organisation he or she is leading by creating more autonomy in the business units and changing the orientation of central functions, including his office, to become less control and more service oriented.

The situations described above acknowledge the need for formation or transformation of an organisation or unit from a perspective that what needs changing is not out there, but includes us in it. The dynamic that is invited in these commissions is that the actors are reflexively part of the system that is developing. This way of defining the situation relates directly to the concept of second order cybernetics, with the change being understood as not being on a system but being from within a system. I suggest the earlier example of the imagining of vice-principals, who were reflexively developing considerations for their practising as part of the emergence of their school, also fits this frame.

With the *transformation game of imagining* organisational futures I refer to imaginative conversations which include, or are profoundly open to, developing the meaning making of actors regarding themselves, their acting in relation to others and the emergent discourse that holds identities and practices in place. Because this work is focused on development at the level of discourse pertaining to organisation and actors involved, it cannot be bound by these contexts but requires a different frame such as an overarching purpose or metaphor; it may also be informed by an alternative discourse that is brought to the situation.

How are such tasks and boundaries constructed?

As I have suggested in the literature review there is no shortage of accounts of systemic constructionist organisational practices that can be related to as transformative imagining practice. In particular Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a well documented approach that has the potential to perturb current discourse and develop new insight in foregrounding narratives of lived experience related to success and resourcefulness. In the framework of AI the step of generative topic choice involves the development of a metaphor or

question that is used as highest context to frame the inquiry (Barrett and Cooperrider, Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, 2005). As we have discussed in section 2.5 of the literature review Appreciative Inquiry can also be understood as an imagining process held in place by a particular generative topic choice.

Another context of constructing reflexive interventions is through learning and training. The idea that the learner changes in the process of learning seems not to be far from common sense. Many training formats have moved beyond cognitive knowledge transfer and invite a reflexive engagement of participants with imagining possibilities in relation to their work environment and practice. For example the social constructionist and narrative approach to the development of inclusive work place practices presented by Anna-Maija Lämsä and Teppo Sintonen (2006) which we visited in section 2.4 of the literature review can be seen as transformational to organisational discourse.

Differently from solution oriented imagining which can be seen as enactment of current discourse and already sanctioned ways of being I noted that transformational imagining often requires a sanctioned space or sanctioned practice to legitimate a task frame for imagining a different discourse. I suggest this sanctioned space emerges from reflexive insight into the potential usefulness and benefit of developing new or different discourses and practices. Such insight may be readily present in a client system or it may also emerge from within a practice, a process of consultation or coaching. We have noted the emergence of reflexivity in the earlier example of a conversation of the vice-principals.

In an example from the Collaborative Inquiry practice of Harlene Anderson and Paul Burney (1996, p.174) the CEO and owner of a travel agency is quoted:

The dominant culture of the airline industry has had a major impact on us. The negativity directed at us, as travel agents, from the airlines, and the continuous change in the industry, has caused us to be reactive instead of proactive. We need to find a way to circumvent it.

Consequently to this reflexive insight Anderson and Burney are invited to plan and conduct a day workshop with the owner and the employees developing insight and solutions to the organisation's difficulties. Whilst here is not the space to discuss their practice in detail there are two particular aspects I want to highlight in drawing attention to this case as an exemplar for a transformation game of imagining:

(1) *An emphasis on the emergence of the process from within the experience.* Whilst Anderson and Burney prepare, design the day and align it with the owner, they retain the flexibility to change the process in line with the needs and interests of the participants in the process.

Any idea about the format or direction of the consultation is tentative, and we are poised to change it at any time. The task is to create and continue the dialogue and discover with the client what is significant (1996, p.172).

With reference to a second order cybernetics framework I suggest that the process of consultation understood as recursively defined by the emergent discourse is a significant property of the process in transformative games of imagining. The alternative of a fixed process would imply it being informed by discourse outside of the task frame of imagining which would be akin to a solution game of imagining.

(2) *Imagining is evident in the case in multiple ways.* Anderson and Burney account for a *way of being* and *being with others in relationship* as the philosophical backdrop of their practice; they also suggest that possibilities emerge from the dialogue. Reflecting on their account of practice I suggest imagining is evident in several ways:

- i. In preparing the workshop Anderson and Burney already imagine a range of dialogical formats that build on each other and afford participants different dialogical opportunities.
- ii. In the way Anderson and Burney position the participants throughout as self-agent, i.e. with “the ability to act, or to feel that we are capable of acting, to handle our dilemmas in a competent and autonomous manner” (ibid, p.172) they imagine this position being both attainable and useful. This position is in particular invited through the way the day is introduced, through transparency in the process, the initial exercises but also by a marked absence of instructing people to define actions to be taken away at the end of the day.
- iii. Through inviting participants to express early in the process what they hope to leave with at the end of the day, they further support self-agency and invite an imagining of what a good result would look like.
- iv. Anderson and Burney’s use of a group juggle game that serves as a metaphor and metaphorical experience to good team work, successful communication and coordination processes.
- v. Through the use of reflexive questions participants are invited to imagine what others think or know about them, respectively what they do not know (mind-reading).
- vi. Participants are invited to pretend to be part of a particular stakeholder groups, so called ‘As If’ groups (Anderson, 2013) and engage from this position in reflective and dialogic practice (pretence).
- vii. Finally participants are invited to imagine solutions to current organisational dilemmas.

In producing this rather fragmented account of practices and conversations on the day I do not mean to suggest that the practice of Anderson and Burney is primarily an imagining practice which I think would be to lose the phenomenon of their relational stance to all their practising and the variety of dialogical opportunities that I have not attended to. I believe though it is fair to say that *imagining possibilities of practising*, *imagining being in other positions* and *imagining acting in a competent and autonomous manner* are significant invitations exerted in their dialogical practice.

A CMM perspective on a transformation game of imagining

I have suggested that in a transformation game of imagining possibilities about ways of being and ways of doing things as an organisation are imagined, imagining is directly implicating organisational discourse and the actors positioned in it. The task to such a practice is meaningful in relation to a purpose or the purposes of those involved and given the significance of the change or development often requires sanctioning of the approach. The process of dialogue is not set from a position external to purpose or task but is recursively informed from within it by the actors' ongoing discursive practice.

Figure 6 depicts the order of contexts in a transformation game of imagining in line with what has been stated above. With purpose as the highest context giving meaning to a task that frames what can be imagined and how imagining shall take place. Imagining implicates organisational discourse and the unfolding process of how the task is pursued.

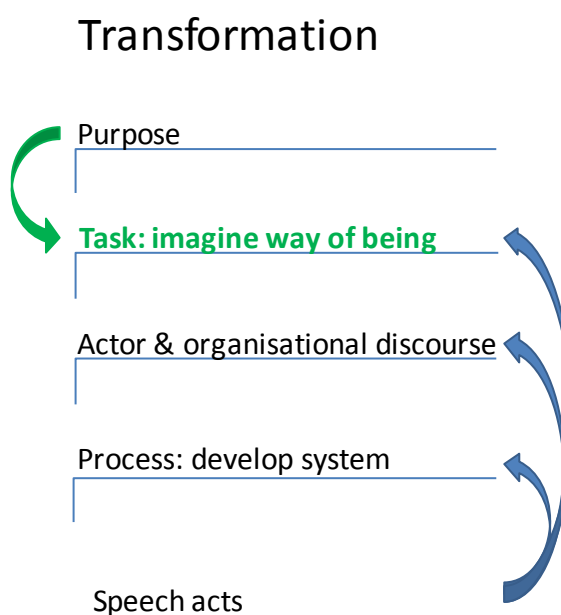


Figure 6: Transformation game of imagining

Reflections and learning

I have portrayed an archetype of a transformation game of imagining that is organised by a purpose and framed by a task that invites and permits imagining of possible futures that may impact changes in the way the organisation is structured or operates, the ways that actors are positioned in it and how they relate with each other.

Reflections on practice suggest that the task originates from reflexive insight on current discourse and practice. This leads to a couple of related questions: how can such reflexive insight and scrutiny be supported or invited, generally and through systemic constructionist practice in particular. I will come back to these questions relating to reflexivity later in this section and in the following section 5.5 on repositioning imagining conversations and in the discussion.

5.4.4 The exploration game of imagining

Consider these situations or commissions:

- A coachee wants to develop and play through different scenarios for how to respond to her manager in difficult conversations.
- A consultant maps out the implications of three different processes for restructuring an organisation to draw out the implications for staff, operations and organisational culture.
- An entrepreneur participates in different networks which engage in the development of business opportunities in a particular industry.

The above situations relate to imagining of possibilities in a way that informs orientation and choice. Such imagining can relate to what we might want to do but also what we might want to prevent from happening, such as in the imagining of accidents or risk scenarios. Imagining here in tasks and postures is similar to the imagining of the entrepreneurs in the case discussed earlier (in section 5.2), of not committing to any particular opportunity as a way of making sure they are all explored (transcript A, 254-257).

The nature of the task in an *exploration game of imagining* is an engagement with possibilities that serve as orientation rather than action. To stay with the task of mapping out possibilities can be a useful way of relating to our circumstances. For instance knowing of possibilities and implications may give rise to notions of choice which may impact the attitude or confidence with which we relate to our circumstances altogether.

How do such tasks get constructed?

Reflecting on my practice I have a sense that when people engage in the imagining of possibilities, there is often an emerging context of having to choose. This is different when it is clear upfront that the task is an exploration. This seems to require an explicit agreement as part of the conversation and becomes part of the context of task. To know that imagining is not implicating action, is also a context of training settings and removes the morality for making contributions that are immediately actionable. It can also legitimate playfulness in the interest of widening the map of possibilities or learning and can serve to widen participation in a process, for instance by involving people who would otherwise not be legitimate to contribute.

Neel, an acquaintance who is working in Human Resources I have met at a workshop is interested in imagining and systemic ideas. We agree to continue our conversation from the workshop in a teleconference. It is clear from our talk that this conversation is for our mutual interest and orientation. In the conversation we co-create possibilities of how systemic practice can contribute to imagining possibilities in his organisation.

My purpose for including this example is to show that imagining of possibility even in a frame of exploration without contemplating action is not just a listing of possibilities such as in a brain storming exercise, it is not a cognitive inventory so to speak, but a process of co-constructing possibilities responsive to a future situation which includes drawing on relevant experiences.

In the specific conversation Neel and I continue our talk as imagining together ways of how to engage a leadership group with ideas about different processes and tools in Human Resources in the future. Even when one of us was sharing ideas about possibilities this was always mediated by shared context of a situation, the relationship we were having and ongoing feedback with *mm*, *mhm*, *yes*, *yeah* or *well* helping us to maintain a space for imagining together. In the short extract below I suggest the possibility of storying the proposed changes in HR processes and tools through the lens and experience of a person being impacted and experiencing change.

Martin: When you said about things which have been done already, um, and 'I want people to, to imagine things', what... if... to sort of give a real life example in the sense that, um, I tell them a story, um, and that could be something like, you know, 'This is Peter M. Peter M lives in, um, in the Czech Republic,

Neel:

Yes

Martin: he's an engineer in our organisation, he is there for seven years and...

Neel: I, I've worked just like that.

Martin: and, and now we've interviewed him about his development and you sort of get the story of what, what he's using, you know, 'I get this from this tool, I get that from my supervisor, that's the sort of relationship I have with my peer group, ah, I use this tool and, you know, this is how... this is...'. So that people between the lines get a sense of the experience of what it means to be

Neel: Yes

Martin: in this organisation, um, and, and, and that is a, a way of, um, being able to show that and one could even juxtapose it and say, this is someone five years ago in our organisation, how people sort of learn and develop and this is him in five years.

Neel: I did that this summer and, and the response to that. Because I, I made up a fiction of a journalist who'd heard about the changes in *named company* and wanted to, ah, interview both the CEO and a staff member and then, ah, she had the chance to follow the CEO and a staff member one whole day

Martin: yes

Neel: and she reported about how did the staff member do and things like that and, and how was it in... how has all this happened since 20xx.

A CMM perspective

I have suggested that in an exploration game of imagining the proximal task is that of generating orientation to possibilities. The *task* of imagining is meaningful in relation to organisational purpose, actor and operation, which in Figure 7 are positioned in an illustrative order. Speech acts of imagining invite notions of possibility which are not meant to perturb contexts of actor identity, discourse or operation.

In the above example Neel and I are the *actors*, privileging the *organisational discourse* of Neel which includes planned changes and the requirement for engaging senior management. Neel's more ongoing *process* is that of mapping possibilities to stage this engagement which, I suppose, is relevant to the support he will receive and the success

of his project. Our meeting is set to be one of possible several conversations that inform his orientation to how to go about this particular future task.

Exploration

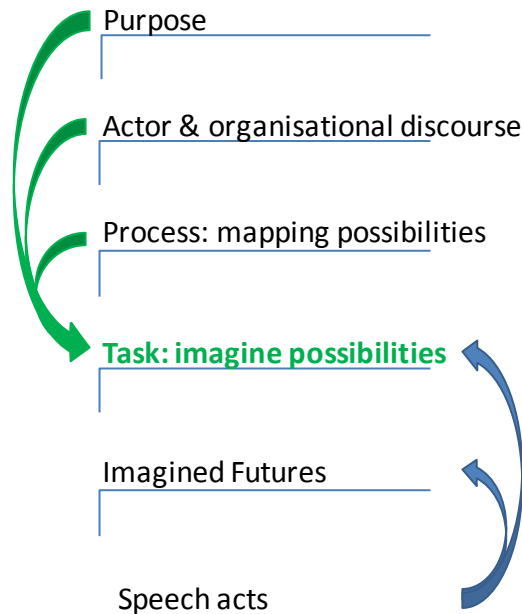


Figure 7: Exploration game of imagining

Reflections and learning

Upon reflection it is rather seldom that imagining in my practice with organisations is planned to be without contemplating action. I note however that in consulting practice there are often distinct phases of imagining purposefully contained to not move to premature agreement, to increase participation, legitimate different voices and invite a plurality of discourses. In a way these situations are similar, however they are also different because the eventual use of imagined possibilities, although deferred in the process, is clearly present to participants and hence the whole situation is structured differently.

Reflections on an exploration game of imagining created also interesting insight into the construction of safety in relation to imagining without inducing a morality for action. This safety for exploration can be present in coaching conversations, in training settings, in particular of open trainings with participants coming from different organisations, and, as suggested can be invited also in notions of playfulness and conversational structures that nurture inclusiveness without forcing participation.

5.4.5 Towards a framework

The research question was 'How are we imagining organisational futures?' and based on reflections from practice and as an outcome of a hermeneutic process of moving in and between individual experiences and ways of making sense of these experiences in relating them to each other, I have suggested a *possible way* of distinguishing archetypes of imagining of organisational futures. I have differentiated archetypes based on aspects of the discursive process of imagining and in particular on the effective constructions of task in relation to other contexts. We can now try to capture and inter-relate these games of imagining:

I have portrayed an *exploration game of imagining* where participants are imagining several alternative possibilities in a potentially ongoing process. The proximal task of this activity is orientation to what is possible at a given time, which in itself is of value. The boundary to imagining as exploration is the process of imagining itself, which remains separate from the output of imagining, the imagined. The orientation to a whole set of possibilities has an information value that each individual possibility has not. For instance imagining different ways of how a project may fail could be used to create a risk profile or rating of a project. Imagining as exploration is not focused on immediate action, i.e. doing what has been imagined; the imagining is already the activity that participants want to pursue.

The *solution game of imagining* is a process of imagining of ways to overcome a difficulty or achieve a target. The solution game of imagining is meaningful in relation to an underlying tension between how processes or states of the organisation are and how they should be. Imagining in a solution game of imagining is contextualised by current organisational discourse which is the boundary for the task of imagining and is focused on a specific process that can and should be developed to meet the requirements of the organisation. My experience of such situations is that boundaries can be generative in setting effective limitations to a task but also that they can be framed rigidly as tight expectations and power laden in ways that limit possibility and exclude the resources of those involved.

I have identified a *transformation game of imagining* as a process of imagining that legitimately calls into focus the organisational sense-making and functioning not of others but of the actors in the organisation. Imagining as transformation invites an intervention into organisational discourse, the proximate focus is to change the system or part of the system. I have noted that such frames of imagining can be invited through reflexive practice or through discursive change which can be constructed using a generative metaphor. I find that reflexivity and change of discourse often end up going together. For

instance in the case of visiting schools we came to understand from feedback we received later that the possibility to engage with strengths, pride points and being appreciated (here the discursive change) was experienced as rather exceptional, was encouraging and gave rise to further initiative. The games of imagining storied above are presented in interrelated form in Figure 8.

	Exploration Game	Solution Game	Transformation Game
Difficulty or opportunity	Orientation to possible futures and choices	Moving from current to desired states of operation	Organisational discourse, practices and identities
Task of imagining	Mapping out possibilities	Imagining process to attain solution	Imagine way of being
The task is meaningful positioned within	Process of ongoing imagining of possibilities	Prevailing organisational discourse including desired developments	Purpose, generative metaphor, alternative discourse
Narrative character of imaginings	Landscape of options or possibilities	Practices, actions	Ways of being and relating
Consultant / leader being positioned to	Create choices and invite orientation; Inclusiveness	Maintain or restore an order or discourse; deliver results	Facilitate dialogue, reflexive insight, participation and growth

Figure 8: Games of imagining – discourses compared

Another way of describing and relating the archetypical exploration, solution and transformation games of imagining to each other is using the archetype contextual diagrams developed before. These diagrams are presented in interrelated form in Figure 9 below. Building on the logic of task as boundary to imagining established earlier it can be seen that from exploration towards transformation the scope of what can be imagined is increasing as the contextual influence of the effective boundary of task of imagining is increasing.

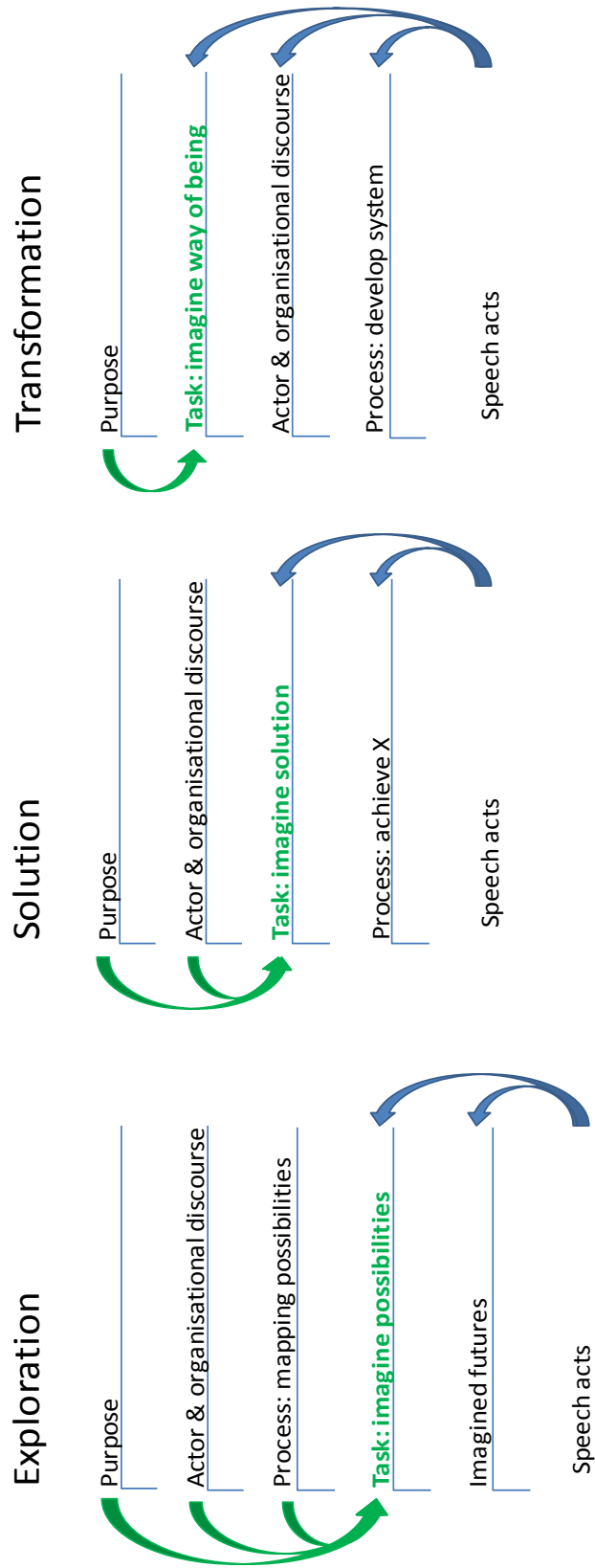


Figure 9: Games of imagining – a CMM perspective

Inter-relating the context diagrams in Figure 9 makes particularly visible that the higher the context of task of imagining becomes in relation to other contexts of an organisation, the wider becomes the space to imagine, as depicted in the blue upward arrows. To maximise opportunity for change and development one might argue for a transformation game of imagining as what practitioners should aim for to invite change. However, I like to caution against simplistic conclusions because such a wide frame for change and development has many implications. A transformation with a potential for reorientation of a whole unit or organisation may involve cost and risk. Also the contexts that have been constructed in the organisation may have been carefully designed and negotiated and can be effective boundaries to ongoing operation, execution and organisational functioning. Finally changes invited through dialogue and discursive shifts also need to be thought through as sustainable beyond the context of an immediate intervention.

Another way of attending to the framework of games of imagining drawing on the Figures 8 and 9 above is to reflexively relate to how tasks are constructed in ways that may limit but at the same time focus imagining activity. Whilst, as I have argued, I would not like to privilege a particular way of imagining I have also observed that organisations are often effective in imagining solutions in relation to the existing trajectory and discourse of their unit or organisation, i.e. resolve on a solution game of imagining, whilst they find it at times useful to engage a systemic constructionist practitioner or consultant with changes to organisational discourse.

Discursive reflexivity – beyond archetypes

Up to this stage we have discussed archetypes of imagining which I have related to episodes of conversations or practice. We have also worked with CMM as a theoretical framework that suggests a discrete order or hierarchy in the levels of contexts which can be determined as such. Whilst the reflection of archetypes may be useful it seems appropriate and realistic to consider conversations that are in between archetypal forms or where orders of context are indeterminate. We might think of blurring archetypes, creating different games such as for instance of conversations which combine elements of exploration punctuated by reflections on the process of exploration which might be transformational to the sense-making in a group.

I suggest that a framework of archetypes as presented in the games of imagining can be a useful resource in preparing for conversations, in reflecting conversations that have taken place and in being reflexively aware of the discourse we are part of. Whilst I have used CMM to discipline my reflections and observations I do not want to suggest a need to use tools to establish what can or cannot be said, what can or cannot be imagined in a conversation. Instead I believe that, as John Shotter (2008, p.29) notes, we already know

from within the ongoing conversation of such possibilities in “our embodied feelings – and the embodied anticipation and expectations to which they spontaneously give rise” and

It is just these contingent feelings (that are not properly called emotions) that work as the ‘momentary standards’ against which our more explicit formulations are judged for their adequacy and appropriateness.

However although we have such a knowing from within a conversation it is not always easy to be reflexively aware of this knowing, and to relate our feelings and sense of orientation in the ongoing conversation to it, to attend to what this means in reflection on task and possibilities to imagine and to engage with alternative ways of going on. What is required here is a reflexive evaluating of the unfolding discourse for the emergent possibilities in it. I suggest such a reflexive engagement with discourse could be called discursive reflexivity, a term that I have borrowed from ethnography where it is used to denote ethnographic practices of reflexive engagement with discourse (Cooper and Burnett, 2006, Carbaugh et al., 2011). In relation to games of imagining or other possible discursive frameworks practitioners would be reflexively, critically and appreciatively aware of the discourse they are participating in and make situated choices of how to engage in the unfolding discourse, for instance by inviting a change in the game of imagining. With these ideas I am already anticipating some of the learnings and reflections presented in the following section.

5.5 Repositioning imaginative conversations – Imaginative repositioning

5.5.1 A place of joy and pleasure

I was reading on Elspeth McAdam and Peter Lang’s (2009) practice, experiences and outcomes from working appreciatively with schools. Hearing of schools with high dropout rates, children being referred to mental health institutions, difficulties between teachers, I am getting a sense of the difficulties headmasters were experiencing. I try to connect to the challenges Elspeth and Peter are facing here. What is the task? How would I feel positioned as a consultant in such a scenario? What sort of questions would I ask getting involved in such work? What would I need to understand to know how to go on in such a situation?

At our first meeting with the teachers, we were given a challenging half an hour at the end of the day, as they were

exhausted and wanted to get home. We encouraged them to tell of something that had given them joy or pleasure that day at school. The first three teachers could think of nothing and just grumbled, but the fourth teacher said a named child came and thanked him for something he had done during that day. The next teacher said that a child who everyone thought could not read came and read to her that afternoon. This process developed and other teachers added their own descriptions of little episodes of positive everyday interactions that they had noticed. The first two teachers, listening to the others, then became aware of good experiences that they recalled and described in detail. The third teacher, however, [...]. (2009, p.15)

Beautiful. So how can I make sense of that? What Elspeth and Peter did in response to the commission was to engage staff into appreciative talk on what was good in the school which was the start of a journey of building a different school. If it would not be for the title of the book, how on earth did they come to do that? What was the work they were doing in the background to prepare for this intervention? What is involved in getting called to a place of misery and frustration and promptly responding with generative appreciative questions?

First I noted that, seemingly, Elspeth and Peter were exactly not responding to the frame of the teachers' experiences and difficulties that was suggested in the outset. They have not asked about their circumstances, their hopes, their insight, their way of making sense of this situation. They have also not asked what teachers wanted to talk about. Indeed what they asked teachers was so foreign to their circumstances that the first three teachers did not know what to say. One could ask, what is the morality of such deliberate ignorance to the discourse that people are living with?

Reading again what they did exactly I get a sense of unfolding emergence in a situation, into which Elspeth and Peter invite a possibility, not request it, not ask for it, but, looking closer at their text, *encourage* it to come forward. And I suggest that such a careful encouraging not only has a potential to invite the untold but also by the contours of it, the tone, the bodily expressions that go with it, acknowledges the strange or even awkward nature of such an attempt, that is, it actually *does* acknowledge the prevailing discourse.

Reflecting on this episode I came to consider the following suggestions on what is required for the practice presented here: (1) *A reflexive relating to the prevailing discourse*, this may include a sense of the position and positioning of teachers from the initial talk with the headmaster, the being in the room with the

teachers beforehand and noticing, the tone of voices, the level of energy, the way people relate to each other and so on. (2) The imagining of a different and more favourable discourse that could emerge from this current situation, a sense of untold stories that can be told, based on the *knowing from within the situation* (Shotter, 1993, 2008) and based on *experience* from other situations (Vygotsky, 2004) and (3) the *grammatical abilities* (Cronen, 1995, Lang and McAdam, 1995, Cronen, 2001) of Peter and Elspeth to act into their imagining, inviting a different discourse through what could be understood as a metaphor of school as a place of joy and pleasure.

What interests in relation to this research is, of course, the imagining from within the conversation. How come I suggest that this was imagining of a possibility rather than an application of an appreciative method or theory? One explanation is that the reading of their account of practice simply does not give rise to an issue of application of methods, but also the application of any method or framework of practice, as I see it, is secondary to an imagining of what is possible to develop from within a situation. Rather what I suggest is involved here are ways of being with others. This is for sure not the only way of reading this vignette but giving this reading some relevance how can I come to make such claims on practice that are not explicitly spelled out in their book? Firstly my making sense of the described situation is coloured by my experiencing of Peter Lang and Elspeth McAdam in training settings and workshops, a sense of their relating, noticing and their relational, voiced and bodily presence. Based on this what I propose is omitted in their account of practice is what John Shotter (2010, p.165) captures as follows:

What traditional research misses, and must always miss, in taking the events depicted in its objective transcripts or records as representative of already completed activities, are not only the invisible action guiding anticipations felt by each of the participants, moment by moment, as they judge how best to take the next step in developing or progressing an activity towards its desired end, but also all the other 'background' features of our embodied perceptions of our current circumstances. Thus the way in which our judgments are tailored to the momentary local circumstances in which they are made—taking all those background features into account—is rendered invisible.

But what are *desired ends* from within a situation that Shotter talks about? My sense of the situation as portrayed by McAdam and Lang was that what was present in the conversation was a deficit discourse that, as I suggested before, invites a solution game of imagining which we have characterised as more narrowly framed as 'moving from current to desired states of operation'. In other words I suggest in my reading of the

situation the desires of the teachers are bound by the discourse of a school as a problematic place and directed at solutions to these problems. The intervention of McAdam and Lang however has invited a different discourse and way of being and started what I have called a transformation game of imagining using a generative metaphor of a school as place for joy and pleasure. This shift, I suggest, is appropriately referred to as an imagining of a different discourse rather than a method, rather than sense-making or also reasoning.

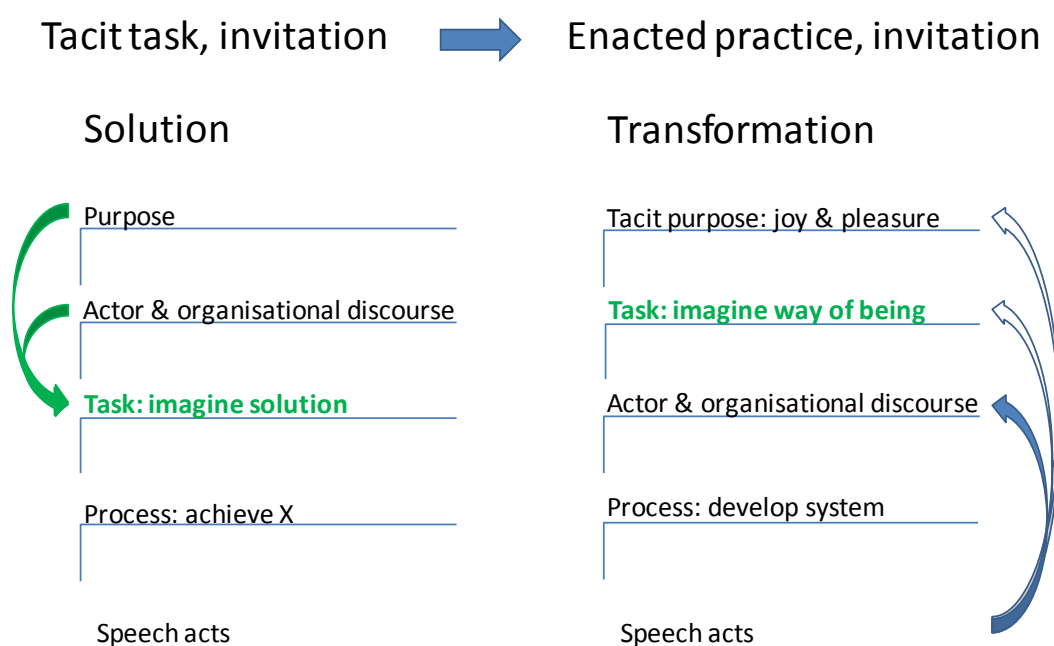


Figure 10: Repositioning using a generative metaphor

In Figure 10 I have drawn the discursive shift just described using CMM theory and the framework of games of imagining. Depicted to the left the situation that I characterised as deficit discourse inviting a solution game that McAdam and Lang did not engage with and to the right the emergent situation from an inquiry into what gave the teachers joy and pleasure (blue upward arrow) with a changed hierarchy of contexts. The question posed invited teachers into a different way of being as this question has also a reflexive quality: teachers had to think about themselves in relationship to others. We could say that with their questioning McAdam and Lang were implicating the boundary of what constitutes task in this situation and invited also a new tacit purpose of a school as place for joy and pleasure. This purpose later manifested itself in their work with the school. These further implications of their questions are depicted by the blue outlined upward arrows to the right.

With the idea of discursive reflexivity and discursive imagining being a rich-point in my inquiry I started to look at more accounts of imagining shifts of discourse in systemic constructionist practice with organisations.

5.5.2 A question of perspective

The following vignette is based on the practice of Internalised Other Interviewing (Tomm, 1998, Burnham, 2000) adapted to work as a form of reflexive inquiry in group setting. I have used this practice in settings as a line manager and as consultant to invite relational reflexivity and ethical accountability in practice. In the vignette below this practice is positioned in a fictional context but I also draw on emotions I have felt in similar circumstances.

I am working with a team reviewing a business change proposal for a medium size company. The scope of the project includes structural changes to the organisation, some changes of processes and changes to authorities. There are no layoffs planned; however, as a consequence of these changes, there will be less leadership positions in the future, some people may opt to leave the organisation, some other people may be disappointed about this development.

In a team meeting we are reviewing the draft communication to staff that will be used for engagement and communication purposes. Walking through the material I have a sense that the requirement for clarity of direction has created a tone that may leave some people behind, or even angry. I empathise with them as feeling being done to. I sense some resonance of anger in me having been involved in and affected by many change processes myself. At the same time I figure there must be a better way of talking with people and I wish to invite the others into this sensibility.

I propose an exercise for validating the change and communication plan from the perspective of others. I do not explain the whole process but just negotiate to try it as an exercise inviting reflexivity by stepping into the shoes of others. First I ask group members to make a diverse list of stakeholders, so that we cover different functions and different levels of authorities, different ages, gender, nationality, years with the organisation and so on. Not a long list but a diverse one. The people on the list are specific and known to some of us in the room. Then all members in the team 'take' a particular stakeholder role, to be specific the role of a particular person they know from the list, everybody pretends to be someone else.

I ask team members to imagine to be this 'allocated' person, to have their job –, their responsibilities –, their targets –, their authority –, their relationships in the company –, their tenure –, their concerns –. Then I invite them to consider the main parts of the presentations – and from a position of good intent to answer a few questions in relation to the presentation and the process.

Being 'enroled' in such way I ask them questions which are responded to in open conversation and eventually lead into a dialogue:

- How are the aims of the change process similar or different to what you are and have been doing in the past already?
- What are the things you and others have done to achieve these aims? Who has helped? What was done? What was involved achieving this?
- How can this change support you and the company to build on or even move beyond past achievements?
- How do you feel about this personally?
- What do we need to understand to get this process right?

The emergent conversations include many other voices and perspectives, some of them relate to my original concerns, others add new and different aspects and insights to the change plan and communication. We 'de-role' and reflect on the conversation and the new information. Based on this exercise the team suggests a couple of improvements to the change plan and the communication.

In this vignette I am commissioned to work on a task of developing a communication in relation to a change process. What is involved is moving the operation from one state to another which we have characterised earlier as a frame for a solution game of imagining. The actor in this vignette is the team and its members, the task is to develop the communication that should enable the desired changes in the way the organisation operates.

The discourse I was imagining was for participants to be more reflexively and ethically aware of their communication and appreciative of their colleagues; this would implicate the original task of change design and communication. A way of facilitating this was to invite participants into a reflexive position to their own acting. The reflexive inquiry positioned participants to engage with the proposed change from within the experience of

those impacted. Whilst they were positioned to appreciate their colleagues and to imagine their position as well as the possibilities of collaborative change, they were also experiencing the consequences of their planned communication on others. The exercise hence implicated them and the discourse they were using in multiple ways.

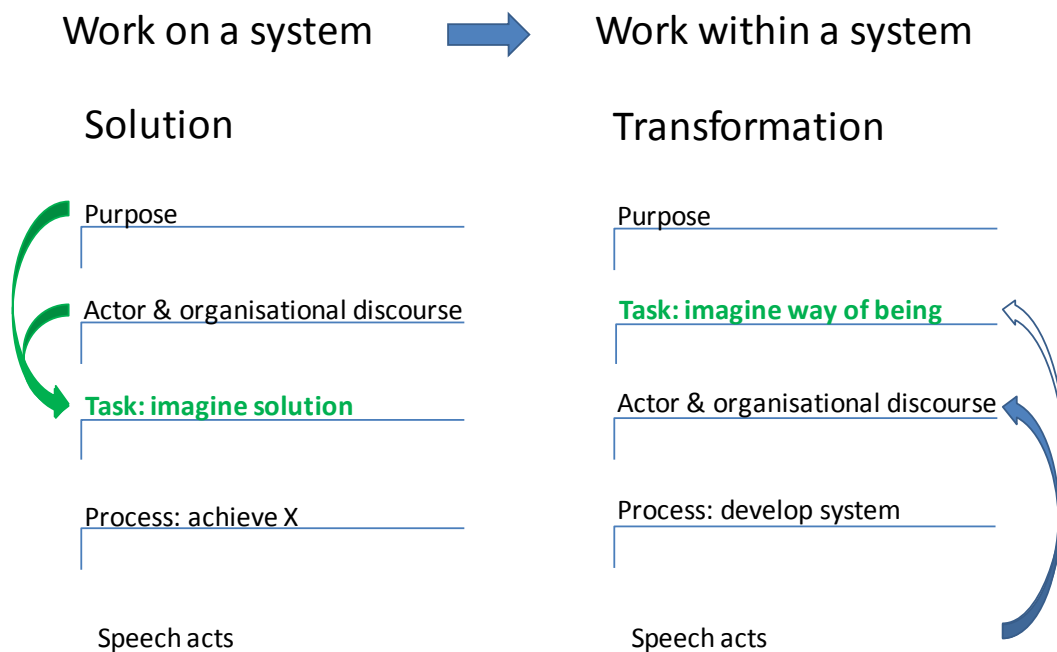


Figure 11: Repositioning using reflexive practice

Figure 11 shows the shift of task and discourse invited by this intervention. The left side of the diagram refers to a solution game of imagining where the team is working on how to communicate to achieve a particular outcome. Communication is used to convey facts and create clarity. The reflexive intervention invites participants to consider the communication as part of the discourse of the organisation and the way of being invited by it.

This exemplar also meets the criteria of discursive repositioning set out earlier: (1) being reflexively aware of current discourse, (2) imagining an alternative more favourable discourse, and (3) having the grammatical abilities to act into this imagining.

5.5.3 Is that all?

A third vignette I take from an excerpt David Cooperrider (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, p.12) offers from his conversation with Rita Smith, president of a consulting partnership that consulted him in relation to the work she was doing with a client organisation. The conversation is contextualised by a letter of Rita Smith presenting a case where she was not sure if the approaches and trials have done any good and she was looking for other solutions or approaches.

David: We have an important question. What is that you want to learn about and achieve?

Rita: We want to dramatically cut the incidence of sexual harassment. We want to solve this huge problem, or at least make a significant dent in it.

David: Is that all?

Rita: You mean what do we *really* want? (Long pause...then she blurts out)
What we really want us to develop the new century organisation – a model of high-quality cross-gender relationships in the workplace!

David: What if we invited people in pairs to nominate themselves to share their stories of creating and sustaining high-quality cross-gender workplace relationships?

So what is happening in this conversation? In the second turn Rita responds to David offering a framework that invites a solution frame of imagining. This response fits the delivery of objectives, moving from current to desired state and invites the question for practices and actions that make that happen. In the third turn David softly rejects this commission implying that there might be a larger objective than just the avoidance of trouble. We may even hear an undertone of challenge here, as if he said, 'Are you not inspiring to achieve more than that?' What is involved in this response? I suggest that David listening to Rita is noting a discourse of accepting difficulties as inevitable, striving for a good enough solution. What he is inviting is a wider frame of task that moves beyond what is currently imagined and considered as possible, in other words he invites

her to dream¹⁰ of the aspired change. Finally, following from Rita’s response David suggests an inquiry into what could be seen as the generative metaphor of ‘high-quality cross-gender relationships’ offered by Rita.

Figure 12 below shows how David Cooperrider and Rita Smith construct a shift of discourse. On the left side I depict the second turn informing a task frame that is given meaning by the organisational discourse. To the right side the revisited task, the blue arrows to the right depict Cooperrider’s response that implicates and invites a different task frame and also implicates a clarification of purpose.

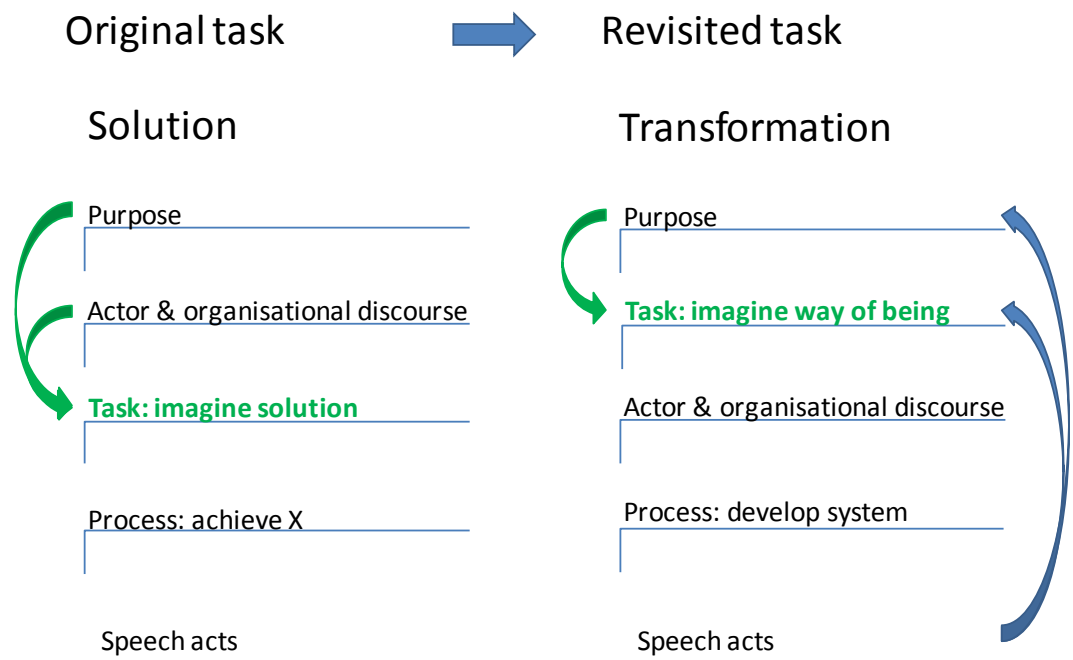


Figure 12: Repositioning using dreaming

5.5.4 Summary and reflections

Based on reflections on practice I propose that practitioners engage in ‘game changing’ interventions, that is conversational moves that shift the discursive structure of the

¹⁰ The notion of ‘dream’ in Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a frame for discourse that is not bound by what is possible has been discussed in section 3.4 in relation to Cooperrider and Whitney’s development of AI, and I here use it in a coherent way.

imagining conversation. *These interventions can themselves be understood as imaginative practice.* I suggested that what is involved in such imagination is (i) a critical discursive reflexivity that allows a reflexive engaging with the discursive structure and unfolding possibilities of the emergent conversation, (ii) a discursive imagining that allows connecting with possible alternative and preferable discourses, and (iii) grammatical abilities that invite co-created practice moving from one to the other.

I have discussed exemplars from systemic constructionist practice as relating to changes of archetypical games of imagining. These included specifically cases of moving beyond a prevailing or tacit solution oriented game of imagining and inviting transformational games of imagining of organisational futures. The exemplars discussed have covered different practices and grammatical abilities, specifically invitations using generative metaphor, the use of forms of reflexive practice and an invitation to dream beyond currently framed possibilities. An overview of these exemplars is provided in Figure 13. Other ways of shifting the discourse of imagining conversations can be considered so the practices presented here could be enriched further by continued sampling and reflecting on systemic constructionist practices.

	Discursive reflexivity	Imagined discourse	Grammatical abilities
Elspeth McAdam & Peter Lang	Problem saturated discourse; Tacit task of resolving difficulties	Affirmative discourse; A school as place for joy and pleasure	Use of metaphor; Aesthetic invitation
Martin	Factual talk and telling; potential disrespect	Collaborative and appreciative discourse	Internalised Other Interviewing
David Cooperrider	Problem - solution discourse	Generative metaphor	Invitation to dream beyond problem related aspirations

Figure 13: Exemplars of imaginative repositioning

With these reflections I describe a practice of imagining organisational futures at the level of discourse, this means reflecting our ways of being with each other in language, and that from a position of knowing that we could be with each other in a different way, we find ways of shifting the discourse altogether.

5.6 Imagining as an continual dimension in discursive practice

In this final section of my findings I will reflect on the frame of imagining that I have privileged in the research process. I will specifically articulate that my use of imagining was that of a category of talk or discourse and propose an alternative perspective of imagining as dimension in talk or discourse. Such an ongoing frame of imagining invites an attending to the ongoing properties of organisational communication processes and how they are conducive to imagining of organisational futures. These reflections relate to aim #1 – *cultivate sensibility and consciousness for imagining practice in organisations*.

In the literature review I have framed imagining as a relational and discursive activity, also as a practice and an action. Building on the reading of Theodore Sarbin (Sarbin and Juhasz, 1970, de Rivera and Sarbin, 1998, Hevern, 1999), Ludwig Wittgenstein (Wittgenstein, 1953, Flores, 2001), Lev Vygotsky (2004) and contemporary scholars of philosophy (Gendler, 2011, Kind, 2013b, 2013a) I started to refer to imagining as if it was a discreet practice, as if we could say 'here I imagine' and 'here I do not imagine'. In this discourse imagining is treated as a category of an activity. I could call this *imagining as discrete activity*.

During the research process I have developed some doubts if this is the only way of conceiving of imagining practice and started to entertain alternative frames of imagining. In reflecting on my practice in organisations what was perplexing was on the one hand that so many things and practices in my world inevitably must have been imagined and on the other hand my inability to point to the activity of imagining all these things and practices in a comprehensive way. Discussing the matter with a friend who is a senior partner in a large consulting firm I was presented with a process model of organisational practice that included cash, material and people processes but no imagining.

The following quotes from interviews with Sam and Paul (the entrepreneurs) relate to a sense of ongoing imagining. I have added *emphasis* to particular relevant parts of their talk:

Interview with Sam (transcript B4 in appendix 2)

Yes, I mean... well, we're still in the stage of exploring a number of, uh, of different avenues. And so we're not actually working yet, uh, depending on what you define as work. We're not earning anything, that's for sure. Um, so we're... you know, we're really... we're still... and I mean, *I think it's a constant exploration* (Sam, B4, 008-013, *my emphasis*).

I think they [important realisations implicating the future] happen more in informal spaces, and then they are discussed and shared with anyone who didn't happen to be there in that space, in a formal environment. But, um, I think because, you know, *we're living and breathing this thing*, uh, it's certainly not a nine to five, that, um, yes, *we talk about things all the time*. And that's when ideas come (Sam, B4, 322-327, *my emphasis*).

Interview with Paul (transcript B3 in appendix 2)

But, but, I would say in terms of the imaginative side of it, *it's not quantifiable to one meeting*, saying yes, this is going to be a decisive point on the way forward (Paul, B3, 167-170, *my emphasis*).

But, in terms of creating the ideas and, you know, exploring, not one pivotal meeting, much more a slow... Well, not always slow, but much more, sort of, *collegiate and ongoing*, um, *energy* rather than a flash of light if you like (Paul, B3, 179-183, *my emphasis*).

Taking the reflections of Paul and Sam seriously how can we think of imagining as something ongoing that happens all the time?

Reflecting on the analysis of discourses of imagining of entrepreneurs and vice-principals in section 5.2 and 5.3 we have seen that imagining is not the only thing that gets done in a dialogue. We have seen that the same utterances that serve to invite possibility and facilitate shared understanding of possible futures also accomplish other things like asserting the identity of the speaker, expressing a concern or placing a moral obligation on others. Following Edwards and Potter (1992) we are rarely doing just one thing in an utterance. So how can we say then an utterance is about inviting or developing a possibility in a conversation rather than saying this is about asserting authority or managing stake?

Consequently from this perspective imagining can be seen not as a category of discourse or speech act but rather as a dimension more or less present in a discourse or speech act¹¹. I suggest this resonates also with the notion of ongoing imagining in the citation from interviews with Paul and Sam above and it helps me making sense of how come I could, initially, not see the imagining in the everyday practice. I suggest that such imagining practice can be hidden behind other ways of making sense of what gets done: for instance when somebody in a procurement department of an organisation *follows a standardised process* of procuring goods and services, he or she may also be imagining how this process positions suppliers, how it contributes to the organisation's goal, how the process fits, or fails to fit, the circumstances of the particular requirements of the situation at hand, and what could be done about it from within the process. He or she may imagine about possibilities as an ongoing orientation to his or her circumstances. Such an activity could be called *to procure* goods and services using the standardised process, but it could also be called *to imagine* how to apply the process in a way that fits the situation at hand and benefits the organisation.

I suggest that a proposition of imagining as a dimension of discourse is also coherent with CMM theory. In this framework we could say that a speech act has multiple consequences and no fixed meaning: single speech act can have implications on multiple contexts, i.e. invite a difference to a variety of aspects of the social world such as relationships, self, task *or possible futures*. Also the meaning of a speech act is undetermined in nature: the meaning of a speech act is invited by the speaker but also arising out of the context, what has been said before and in particular how participants in a conversation then make sense of it in the way they respond in the unfolding conversation (Pearce, 1989, Pearce, 2007).

Attending to imagining as ongoing dimensions of discourse we might not ask if and how imagining is permitted or present in a particular context, process or task but rather what could strengthen the dimension of imagining in our discourse. Paul, Sam, Rob and Gert for instance in their reflections in individual interviews on experiences and practice accounted for the following factors that they saw as conducive to imagining in a range of situations:

¹¹ I owe this sensibility of distinction to Karl Weick's (1989) making reference to 'theory' which he claims is dimension rather than a category.

Relationship

- being friends and able to address tensions (Sam, B4, 108-112)
- being close, at the same wave lengths, with mutual understanding (Gert, B1, 061-064)
- wanting the same thing or similar things (Sam, B4, 118-119, Paul, B3, 059-060)

Conversational space

- having trust and confidence at the outset (Gert, B1, 087-89)
- a conversational space that is egalitarian (Sam, B4, 094-096) and informal (Sam, B4, 094-096, 322-324)
- being kept informed all the time (Sam, B4, 066-067, 080-082, 282-291)
- being preferably in the same physical space, to engage fully in conversation and notice all the none-verbal (Sam, B4, 040-044, 107-108)

Conversational practice

- entering the conversation with openness and interest in the position of the other, develop contextual understanding, rather than preparation (Rob, B2, 130-132, 204-212, 347-348, Gert, B1, 052-058, 200-203, 286-289)
- good questions make a difference - a form of inquiry (Gert, B1, 148-150)
- participants leverage each other's diverse contributions (Sam, B4, 092-094, Paul, B3, 132-139)
- having a laugh together, fun as a value (Sam, B4, 398-404)
- exploring consequences of possibilities also on an emotional level (Gert, B1, 131-132).

I suggest these observations and reflections in relation to imagining can also be read in relation to dialogue more generally. With imagining being a part of conversational spaces and conversational practices there seems to be a confluence between having good and open dialogues and imagining possibilities for the future. This suggests also a relevance of understanding ways to structure dialogical and discursive spaces in organisational processes more generally to support imagining and make organisations more imaginative in an ongoing sense as a possible and relevant research site, which I, however, have not foregrounded in this project.

6 Discussion and reflection

We have now in relation to organisational theory and practice more generally and in relation to systemic constructionist theory and practice specifically attended to imagining in contributions from scholars and in reflections on case examples and practice vignettes. These developments were covered in particular in chapter two on relevant theory and practice, and in chapter five on propositions from reflections on imagining.

To remind us, my purpose and use of the research question and aims was not to solve a problem but to make sense and create connections (Weick, 1989), and to relate to exemplars of practice in ways that serve to build repertoire and make experience accessible for practising (Schön, 1983). One particular hope related to these connections was to invite ways of inter-relating the organisational with the systemic constructionist practice discourses through a language that connects rather than divides these domains of practice. This process of creating connections includes not only my reflections on practice and discourse but also the relevant theory and practice. The opportunity I want to pursue in this chapter is to draw propositions together, to invite further connections between them and also to suggest possibilities of relevance for practising.

In the following section 6.1 I will offer a high level overview of outcomes and propositions in this research, in relation to the research question and specifically the aims articulated earlier in chapters one and three. This is to provide an orientation to key assertions in this project as it has been unfolding to this very point. In the following section 6.2 I will discuss the relevance of imagining as a discourse and the specific construction of imagining as relational discursive practice, as I suggest attending to imagining this way in itself invites a particular emphasis and relevance for organisational practice and systemic constructionist practice.

In sections 6.3 to 6.5 I will discuss specific aspects of organisational and systemic practice following from propositions in this research: I will develop the relevance of imagining as contributing to organisational emergence (section 6.3), discuss the proposed concept of games of imagining as a way of relating reflexively to imagining as a discursive practice (section 6.4) and attend to imagining in systemic constructionist practice (section 6.5). In the final section 6.6 I reflect on this thesis as a contribution to research traditions, its main limitations and possibilities for future research.

6.1 Propositions on imagining organisational futures

The research question is 'How are we imagining organisational futures?' and in relation to this question and more specific aims I have gathered concepts from scholars, reflections on experiences and accounts of practice, which I have framed as propositions, as ways of thinking and relating to certain phenomena of organisational life. Here I offer an orientation to what I see as key propositions that emerged from relevant theory (chapter two) and reflections on discourse (chapter five). I also map these propositions against my aims articulated earlier and discussed briefly below. References in brackets behind specific propositions refer to relevant chapters and sections of the thesis. The actual discussion of these propositions follows later in this chapter.

Propositions	Aims
(i) Based on, mainly, social constructionist and social psychology research and also supported by reflections on discursive practice of imagining I have proposed the practical relevance of imagining in relation to and with others. Imagining is something we do, a practice or activity to achieve practical ends, a relational, discursive, and dialogic activity (2.2.3, 5.2, 5.3).	#1, #3
(ii) Whilst actions in organisations are often accounted for as reasoned, rational, sense-making, or fact based, what is involved but often subjugated are aspects of imagining of organisational futures which are profoundly unknown and unknowable (Beckert, 2011). We have located practices of imagining of organisational futures in the relevant theory and practice in relation to the imagining of organisational opportunity, coordination and alignment, decision making and organisation development (2.3).	#1
(iii) In case studies and vignettes we have attended to some of the abovementioned relational and discursive practices of imagining organisational futures, specifically the imagining of organisational opportunity (5.2) and organisational coordination and alignment (5.3). Using CMM theory we have also noted that the practice of imagining is particularly organised by the context of a set or emergent task that serves as an effective frame for imagining practice delimiting what can and what cannot be imagined (5.2.4, 5.3.4, 5.4.1).	#1, #3

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|-------|--|------------|
| (iv) | Further reflections on the achievement of imagining in dialogue have led to the suggestion that imagining can be seen as a continual dimension of discursive practice. Imagining is not a category of talk but a dimension in talk. Reflections from interviews also have led me to suggest that what supports dialogic practice supports also imagining practice (5.6). | #1 |
| (v) | Imagining is overall central to systemic constructionist practice with organisations and we have observed a confluence of imagining practices present in organisational practice (2.4) and in social constructionist approaches to organisation development (2.3.4). We have specifically located imagining in Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, 2005) (2.4.1), Solution Focused Coaching (De Shazer, 1979, 1985, 1991, Simon and Berg, 1999, De Jong and Berg, 2008) (2.4.2) and Collaborative Inquiry with organisations (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988, Anderson and Burney, 1996) (5.4.3). | #1, #2, #3 |
| (vi) | I have suggested that different archetypical discursive situations of imagining can be distinguished and have proposed a framework of <i>games of imagining</i> which have distinctively different task frames with different kinds of permissions and implications of imagining practice. Specifically I have portrayed an exploration, a solution and a transformation game of imagining (5.4). I also have proposed that noticing of the task frame and discursive properties in actual conversations requires an ongoing reflexive attending to discourse which I have called <i>discursive reflexivity</i> (5.4.5). | #1, #2, #3 |
| (vii) | I have proposed that systemic constructionist practitioners are repositioning discursive practice by reflexively relating to the prevailing discourse or game of imagining, eventually <i>imagining</i> a different, possible and more favourable discourse and having the grammatical abilities for intervening in favour of the latter. Specific <i>game changing</i> practices observed include affirmative inquiry using generative metaphor, reflexive practice and invitation to dreaming (5.5). | #2, #3 |

Having related aims to propositions I take the opportunity to briefly remind of these aims and comment on how propositions contribute to them.

Aim #1 – Cultivate sensibility and consciousness for imagining practice in organisations

This first aim was informed by an interest in understanding of imagining, then in foregrounding imagining practice in both organisational and systemic constructionist practice. I suggest we pursued this aim throughout the project which is evident in propositions (i) to (vi). I was also hoping to invite a frame of imagining that connects contemporary organisational practice with systemic constructionist practice, and to make systemic constructionist concepts more relevant to organisations. I see one such frame in the concept of games of imagining together with the practice of discursive reflexivity (proposition vi).

Aim #2 – Learn to open up spaces for imagining through systemic constructionist practice

With propositions (v) to (vii) we have attended to practices of imagining and expanding frames of imagining using systemic constructionist practice. With this second aim I was also relating space for imagining to more participation, voice, creativity, possibility and choice. In relation to the framework of games of imagining I have reflected on the opportunities of expanding the frame of imagining but also that differently wide frames of imagining can be useful and ethical in serving different purposes. Propositions relating to aim #2 include reflections on imagining in frameworks of systemic constructionist practice with organisations (proposition v), the development of games of imagining (proposition vi) and the repositioning of imagining discourse through 'game changing' (proposition vii).

Aim #3 – Develop propositions in relation to systemic constructionist practice and theory

The purpose of this aim was to develop this research as a contribution to a systemic constructionist community of practice and specifically in relation to systemic constructionist grammars of theory and practice. I have addressed this aim generally by framing research and research methodology from a systemic constructionist practice position and in particular by relating to imagining from within a constructionist orientation (proposition i), by using CMM theory in reflecting on practice and articulating findings (propositions iii, vi and vii), and by introducing the concept of discursive reflexivity (proposition vi) which I will position in relation to systemic constructionist scholarship on reflexivity later in this chapter.

6.2 On the discourse of imagining

In this research I have proposed that imagining can be understood as relational and a discursive practice (proposition i) which has served as a starting point to invite coherence between the research topic and my assumed social constructionist research position and framework. It has further been of relevance in the appreciation of literature, and in justifying the choices of methods used for attending to imagining as discursive practice. Later in the research process reflections on imagining in episodes of organisational practice with entrepreneurs and vice-principals, as well as interviews with managers, have invited an understanding of imagining as an ongoing dimension in discursive practice (proposition iv) rather than as a category of discourse. I will here attend to the details and relevance of these developments including the relevance of theories I have drawn on in making above assertions. I suggest that framing imagining in this particular way is of relevance to organisational theory as it invites sensibilities different from those present in contemporary organisational discourse.

Much earlier in the introductory chapter, I have noted and sympathised with leaders in many organisations who find it difficult to consider that the structures and ways of talking can be of so significant impact to their operating *that this in itself* may be to the consequence that problems resolve or can be addressed in more effective ways. Adding to this earlier statement I suggest that organisational discourse requires managers in most organisations to consider problems in objective terms and consequently also develop solutions that can be appreciated in such objective terms. As John Shotter (2008, p.117) frames it:

In our everyday lives we are [...] embedded within a social order which, morally, we must continually reproduce in all the mundane activities we perform from our 'place', 'position', or 'status' within it. Thus we must account for all our experiences in terms both intelligible and legitimate within it, and currently, we live in a social order that, officially, is both individualistic and scientific. Everything which occurs must be made sense of in these terms.

This implies that when we have achieved something, when we have resolved an issue or imagined a solution, we are then bound to describe in rational and individualistic terms the outcome of our conversations thus making our world and achievements coherent in this particular way. With attending in our accounts to rational achievements rather than to a relational discursive process of achieving, with attending to lived practice rather than the living in it, we are routinely losing the properties of our unfolding participating in our circumstances, the relational orientations, anticipations and invitations that guide us in the

flow of being (Shotter, 2010) and systematically fail to grasp these phenomena of relational practices in their making which so remain a mystery to us.

According to second order cybernetics we can think of stories that we are making this way not as right or wrong but rather as presenting us with *one* possible discourse or way of knowing, which is likely good enough to provide us with a level of orientation to our circumstances (von Glasersfeld, 1984). I further propose such ways of knowing have a homeostatic or self stabilising (von Bertalanffy, 1968b) quality to them: As we have learnt to punctuate our experience that way, to attend to our accomplishments as reasoned and rational, we invite ourselves to believe it was *us as rational and reasonable people* who have achieved something rather than *us as dialogical relational imagining people*. Consequently we enter our next conversation prepared with facts and figures to help us to be rational and reasonable rather than preparing us for the dialogical movements in our relationships which we might see at best secondary to our endeavours. From such a modern frame of thinking, imagining and in particular imagining as relational practice plays a subordinate role in organisational discourse (Mintzberg and Westley, 2001, Matthews, 2002, Weston, 2010, Beckert, 2011).

From such a discursively mediated peripheral nature of imagining we can now turn to the difference and sensibilities invited by the concept of relational and discursive imagining, building mainly on John Shotter (1997), Rom Harré (1998), Lev Vygotsky (2004), Theodore Sarbin and Joseph Juhasz (Sarbin and Juhasz, 1970, Hevern, 1999) as that of an activity and a practice which involves human hypothetical abilities to relate to and act in relation to our circumstances. We recall that this relational, responsive, social, discursive and dialogical activity or practice can be conducted in private, as inner dialogue or in public with others. Also, as we consider imagining as discursive and dialogic activity, it must be conducted in ways responsive to our relational moral obligations. In such imagining we also anticipate the others from within the situation of unfolding practices in what we are coordinating to do together and we also express ourselves in it.

Furthermore, building on Lev Vygotsky's (2004) insight, imagining is based on experience, including socialised experience, and is also mediated by our emotional states which are relevant to what memories of experience we effectively can draw on in a given moment. This, I suggest, must be significant to organisations which value and rely on experienced staff. This is a relevance that is amplified by further considerations on how imagining plays a role in everyday processes and particularly in organisational practices: Based on reflections of discursive performance of imagining I have proposed that imagining can be framed as a dimension of talking rather than as a category of talk: Imagining as a category of talk invites a relating to imagining as distinctive discursive

event which may be intercepted with other discursive events, whereas imagining as a dimension of talk invites an attending to the ongoing developing of possibilities in our relational discursive way of being (proposition iv). What I have suggested is that in our talk we are imagining amongst doing other things from which imagining cannot be separated but is a part. Whilst at some times we are explicitly engaging in imagining activities in the sense of co-constructing narratives of future activity in many other activities, we are also engaging with unfolding possibilities whilst this may be less explicit. Reversely, if we say, 'we imagine doing this or seeing that as a possible way forward', we can also in such talk be doing other things than just imagining, such as asserting ourselves as a person with particular attributes or developing a relationship of a particular kind.

I have also suggested that we are not necessarily reflexively aware of our practices involving imagining. I have offered the example of somebody in a procurement department who imagines possible situations, desired and not so desired outcomes, and the relational consequences to practising, with the purpose of orienting her or himself in an ongoing activity. Such an activity may well be part of the task of writing an email to a potential supplier or writing an internal proposal offering recommendation or advice on a particular procurement task. Such activity is then likely referred to as communication to suppliers or giving advice, and the imagining involved in these activities may remain hidden.

I suggest a relational discursive perspective of imagining invites several insights and sensibilities for practising generally and for organisations specifically.

- Imagining as an activity makes our experiences relevant to our unfolding circumstances (Vygotsky, 2004).
- With imagining being a dimension in ongoing discourse or practice, and building on the previous point we can suggest it plays a significant role in task attainment (proposition iv).
- It can also be suggested that imagining can be enhanced through dialogue that invites a socialising of experience in relation to a relevant topic of imagining and also through the diversity of experience present in such a dialogue (Vygotsky, 2004), (proposition iv).
- With imagining being mediated by emotional states people in organisations may be mindful of situating imagining relationally and emotionally (Vygotsky, 2004), (proposition i).
- Imagining is not always a conscious activity, it is likely conscious if tasks are explicitly framed as imagining than if imagining just plays a role in achieving something else (proposition iv).

The above suggestions invite a relationship between imagining and organisational effectiveness and possibilities for advancing imagining practice. At the same time we can also critically reflect on whether and how organisations value or discount their participants' imagining of practices, contributions from experience and expressions of selves in the imagining of practice. There are thus economic as well as ethical interests to foreground and cultivate possibilities of imagining in our relational practices, through dialogue, by creating permission and by invitations to share and foreground imagining in our practices.

6.3 Imagining in the emergent organisation

Above we have listed suggestions pointing to the relevance of imagining as relational and discursive practice in the context of organisations, however attending to a more phenomenal level. Here we can build on this relevance observing the *specific organisational practices* that imagining is related to in the literature (proposition ii), namely organisational opportunity, organisational coordination and alignment, organisational decision making, and organisation development. Whilst the details of these contributions have been presented in chapter two we can observe the overall significance of applications of imagining covering key dimensions of organisational identity, practice and emergence.

I suggest that theorists aiming to explain organisational phenomena or practices are drawing on concepts of imagining because imagining is particularly compelling and meaningful in attending to notions of possibility (Gendler, 2011, Kind, 2013b, 2013a), or because they relate to the relevance of the hypothetical abilities involved (Sarbin and Juhasz, 1970). Furthermore other concepts of explaining such as sensemaking, implying a retrospective frame (Weick, 1995), or reasoning, privileging a logical frame, are not equally compelling or fitting. These choices of using imagining rather than another explanatory concept are often implicit, by contributors choosing this over that concept of explaining organisational phenomena. More exceptionally they are explicit in emphasising how and why imagining should be considered and foregrounded as a concept of practice over rational or modernistic approaches. An example is Jens Beckert's (2011) critique of storying decision making as a rational process. He suggests such decisions require imagining as relating to what is profoundly unknown and unknowable. Another example is Cameron Ford's (2002) concept of *futurity* as a quality aspect in decision making processes, calling into focus *the mix* of influences on decisions including knowing from established historic frames and knowing from imagined novel frames.

Whilst on the question of use of imagining in organisational practice we are relying at large on the literature, we have also reflected in detail on two case episodes: entrepreneurs imagining *organisational opportunities* and vice-principals imagining their *coordination and alignment* and also several case vignettes using systemic constructionist practice relating to *organisation development* (proposition iii). These reflections have served to confirm and further develop the relevance and understanding of imagining of organisational futures as relational discursive practice. These cases also strengthened the credibility of what we arrived at earlier in the literature review as uses of imagining in organisational theory and practice.

Below I offer further reflections on developing the relevance of imagining in relation to organisational emergence alongside three themes: *participation in imagining processes*, *foregrounding imagining in organisational practice* and *institutionalising imagining*. With the topic of participation I also relate to critical reflections on frames of inclusion and exclusion that were present and critiqued in the literature review. With the topics of foregrounding and institutionalising imagining I am also considerate of the alleged relevance of imagining developed earlier in section 6.2.

6.3.1 Participation in imagining processes

Michael Foucault has drawn attention to how activities and practices are regulated through systems of exclusion and control and delimiting discourse (Foucault, 1981, Foucault and Rabinow, 1984). With imagining being a discursive practice we have seen such delimiting discourse in the literature specifically inviting permissions to imagine or suggesting that the imagining of one group is authoritative over other groups. However with imagining being about future making many have a stake in it.

Classical texts like that of Joseph Schumpeter (1912, 2002) present ethics of power and control grounded in the personal traits of those participating in the organisation and which, in combination with an interest in economic wealth, serve to justify explicit power relationships and coercion. We have seen in the theorising of Witt (1998, 2005) that these earlier discourses from a century ago have changed but also remain influential today. Other theories explicitly challenged power structures and discourses, and call for imagining of organisations that contribute to communities, that are places of equality and a part of our social world worth inhabiting (Harris, 2002, Wallace, 2002).

I suggest also that discourses of imagining and sensitivities for practice have changed alongside a historic dimension and shifting paradigms (Kuhn, 1970) and specifically with a post modern sensibility a reflexive relationship to discursive practice itself has emerged

(Burr, 2003, Gergen and Gergen, 2004). The underlying questions and choices for imagining are regarding participation generally, but specifically also that of rights and duties of individuals and groups in the process, the generative quality of the relational practice of imagining, and eventually the process of decision making and privileging the imagining of some over others. These aspects are relevant in relation to the organisation as a whole and can be translated to the following questions reflecting organisational discourse on imagining:

- (a) Whose rights and duties exist or are validated in relation to an organisation and how are these people and interests included in the imagining of organisational opportunities, practices or decisions?
- (b) Who else could or should be invited to participate to improve the outcome of imagining, and how?
- (c) What is the link between imagining and decision making, i.e. how and by whom will decisions be made and resources allocated?

I suggest these questions can serve to reflexively and critically engage with discourse of inclusion and exclusion in an organisation, to make value judgements transparent and invite accountability for processes. They can also be understood as a form of *boundary critique*, an approach that inquires reflexively into the including and excluding of people and ideas in social systems as a way of understanding of its boundaries and dynamics. Suggesting that such boundaries are based on value judgement of stakeholder groups boundary critique has been presented as of significance in interventions addressing marginalisation, conflict resolution, institutional and social change (Richardson and Midgley, 2007, Midgley, 2008).

The above questions can be used to reflect on and powerfully strengthen the coherence in organisational practice, to address appropriateness of boundaries to participation, and to notice possible dissonances, for instance between what shiny mission statements say and what is expressed in lived organisational discourse. Further it offers an opportunity to reflect on ethical aspects of how choices on participation in imagining, in particular exclusions or limitations to participating, are accounted for and made meaningful to all involved.

Notably the answers to concerns of rights, duties and decision making are tightly interwoven with issues of organisational governance and ongoing governing of an organisation. I found the contribution of Steve Letza and Xiuping Sun (2002) useful as they not only make this link transparent but also propose that governance choices on participation can best be understood not as static matrix or theory but as unfolding, situated practising drawing on alternative and competing theories and polarities of a

shareholding paradigm that privileges property rights, and the *stakeholding paradigm* that privileges the perspective of an organisation as a social event.

I suggest that the participation in imagining in organisational practice is not only of interest from a development perspective but also an area of further research into the imagining of organisational futures and the pragmatic, economic and ethical dimensions of it.

6.3.2 Foregrounding imagining in organisational practice

Earlier in section 6.2 I have suggested the relevance of foregrounding imagining practice as potential opportunity serving organisational and ethical effectiveness. Here I want to offer perspectives to how such foregrounding can be accomplished, building from the literature and literature review on organisational theory.

I have introduced earlier (in section 2.3) Gareth Morgan's (1996) work presenting different perspectives to organisations and organisational theory using metaphors, such as the metaphor of a brain or a machine. I suggest that what is involved in creating such metaphoric perspectives is a selective attending to and developing the meaning of relevant theories, that so interrelated are supporting the meaning of the metaphor but also contributing to or shifting its meaning. In our reviewing of literature but also of vignettes of practice with the particular metaphor of 'How are we imagining organisational futures?' we have done something similar. The outcome of this process is on the one hand particular theories relevant for imagining, introduced briefly in chapter two, but also practices of imagining in various abstract and specific forms presented as exemplars in chapters two and five. In this way this thesis is an exemplar of and a resource to the foregrounding of imagining.

One way of extending the sensibility for imagining into particular organisations and in the practising of its participants is to make it a topic of choice in its organisational learning agenda and in organisation development interventions. More specifically I suggest that the theories and resources offered in this thesis can be used or adapted to draw attention to and invite reflective and reflexive activity in relation to imagining practices in particular areas of an organisation. I suggest, theory can be used as a metaphor to foreground imagining in organisational practice, which can be seen as an extension of the inquiry into imagining in organisational theory described above, as a metaphoric inquiry into organisational practice. How to do this practically of course depends on organisational objectives and circumstances. I suggest however that the organisation development interventions using narrative and metaphoric approaches presented in section 2.4 are a

possible and useful starting point for imagining how such interventions could be structured.

A second way of foregrounding and developing imagining practice is in reflexively attending to imagining in everyday organisational practising. Some people who value abstract thought and connecting theory to practice may find that the framework of *games of imagining* and the practice of *discursive reflexivity* are useful resources. I will attend to these concepts later in this discussion. For others exemplars from practising imagining may be more valuable, including reflections on their own experiences and exemplars from the practice of others. Donald Schön (1983) suggests that exemplars from relevant practice change the way how practitioners reflect in action. He observes that such repertoires of examples serve to see both what is familiar and what is different in past experiences. Consequently I propose, engaging richly with exemplars of the imagining properties in everyday living is likely to invite a different practice that foregrounds imagining in practice and different accounts and discourses of lived history with imagining evident in practice and in particular in our dialogic engagement with others. I hope that the exemplars and vignettes offered in this thesis, including my experiences and my retelling of the experiences of others involved in imagining, contribute to the socialising of practice repertoires (Schön, 1983, Vygotsky, 2004).

Thirdly I notice that imagining practice can be expanded or enriched in several ways which we will not be able to exhaust here. With reference to the observed relevance of dialogue, socialising of experience, and diversity for imagining practice (propositions i, iv) we can point to summative accounts on dialogic organisation development more generally, (for example Bushe and Marshak, 2007, Marshak and Grant, 2008, Marshak and Bushe, 2009) which draw attention to a variety of approaches and repertoires of organisational development informed by social constructionist positions emphasising dialogue and shared meaning making. Further, emphasising the relevance of diversity of experiences included in dialogical processes, I want to draw attention to the findings of René Bouwen (2001) regarding innovations involving different communities of practice (Brown and Duguid, 1991, Lave and Wenger, 1991). Bouwen asserts that participants of different communities of practice are living in different worlds, having different ways of discerning what is problematic and acting from different moral positions. He observes that achieving joint development of ways of going forward is dependent on achievements of joint problem definitions which serve as a vehicle for transcending boundaries of communal practice. I like to add with reference to the development of games of imagining (proposition vi) that such joint problem definitions to be inclusive of the resources of participants cannot be framed from within the discourse of either community of practice but requires a wider frame that spans to include the discursive resources of both or all communities of practice. The task is hence not finding solutions from within a given

discourse but the development of a new way of relating to discourses and practices; this suggests a transformational rather than a solution game of imagining is required to achieve such inclusiveness.

6.3.3 Institutionalising imagining

I suggest a further possibility to foreground imagining is to institutionalise imagining and imagining dialogues in organisations. Specifically I propose that imagining in particular instances where it is a dimension or part of another discourse and specifically another task (proposition iv) is more likely a limited, individualised and less reflective process than when imagining is emancipated as a task in itself. Further in relation to dialogue I suggest that in the absence of an explicit social agreement or task to imagine together, participants are likely to err on the side of imagining in relation to their own task and circumstances and not getting involved in and hence not contributing to the imagining of others. Relevant experience and insight into possibilities remain individualised and are not socialised. I support this proposition with the following reflections:

- With imagining being an often indiscernible part of task attainment (proposition iv), participants in organisations in pursuing their task are also imagining in relation to exactly their task. Consequently to imagine in relation to somebody else's task would mean *to do* part of their task and challenge social agreements on allocation of tasks in the organisation.
- Imagining in relation to task is also informed by particular knowing in relation to the task *from within* (Shotter, 2008) the process of task attainment, which is naturally excluding others. Consequently imagining in relation to somebody else's task is easily not grounded in relevant knowing.
- Doing a task, and hence also imagining in relation to it, is a way of contributing one's experience to organisational goals and is giving rise to a particular social identity (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), social self (Pearce, 2007) or selfhood (Lang et al., 1990). Consequently imagining in relation to somebody else's task may implicate their contribution or social identity or self.

Of course mediated by several other aspects of practising and discourse of an organisation such as notions of team responsibility rather than individual responsibility I propose that the benefit to imagining in relation to someone else's task requires trading off with the potential risk to the emergent relationship and sense of self of those involved. Systematically this risk placed on collaboration will work to individualise imagining in organisations and hence limit the socialisation of relevant experiences and repertoires in imagining processes.

A possible alternative to individualistic imagining is to institutionalise imagining as a separate collective task or practice. For instance in occupational health and safety it is a known practice in engineering that workers collate and imagine risk scenarios in relation to a work situation and map out mitigating strategies prior to starting the work. This imagining is a formalised task and practice in addition and partly in place of individual's imagining of considerations to their individual work practice¹². Another example of emancipation of imagining as a task and practice has been introduced in section 2.3 in the concept of moral imagining in organisational decision making (Werhane, 1999, Mahoney and Litz, 2000, Werhane and Dunham, 2000, Godwin, 2008, Werhane and Moriarty, 2009, Mahmood and Ali, 2011) which calls for a critical and generative review of moral implications as a separate task and practice in relation to organisational decision making.

To summarise what I suggest here is that to the extent imagining is a dimension in task attainment and tasks are allocated individually imagining will also more likely be individualised by the nature of the discursive structuring of practice. By foregrounding imagining as a separate task or practice and by inviting collective participation and open dialogue these limitations can be overcome and new imaginative practices drawing on wider participation and building relevant social experience through dialogue can be cultivated.

6.4 Relating reflexively to imagining practice

Reflexively attending to discourse and the properties of discourse in imagining dialogues has been a central aspect of this research. I have proposed the concept of games of imagining as a way of attending reflexively to discourse. I have further suggested the practice of *discursive reflexivity* as a frame to make the concept of *games of imagining* relevant to organisations (proposition vi). In this section I will develop the specifics and the relevance of these concepts.

¹² Such work practices to improve work safety through dialogue are well documented practice in engineering referred to as *tool box talk* or *tool box meetings* as instructive and/or dialogic practice.

6.4.1 On discursive reflexivity

We have previously attended to relevance and concepts of reflexivity introducing systemic constructionist practice in organisations (2.1.3) and in the developing of a systemic constructionist research framework (2.5.2). Both systemic and social constructionist perspectives invite the consideration of our social worlds being created through processes of relating and communicating. This world view seemingly requires us to relate reflexively to our circumstances, to consciously attend to the recursive and emergent relationship between what is known (otherwise referred to as reality) and the actors who are knowing (Pearce, 1998).

Different and increasingly comprehensive concepts of reflexivity have been developed to account for practice and theory from reflexive positions (for example Schön, 1983, Andersen, 1987, Tomm, 1987b, 1988, Andersen, 1995, Cunliffe, 1999, Barge, 2004b, Cunliffe, 2004, McNamee, 2004, Burnham, 2005, Oliver, 2005, Dallos and Stedmon, 2009, Oliver, 2013). Reflexive ways of knowing have also been linked to practice to serve particular purposes. Kevin Barge (2004b) for instance suggests that *reflexivity in managerial research* serves to explore how the researchers' properties and practices enter and shape the researched and the knowing emergent from the research. John Burnham (2005) offers that *self reflexivity* in systemic practice serves to attend to the effects of one's practice with the purpose of informing unfolding practising. He also proposes the concept of *relational reflexivity* as a practice of inviting clients in explicitly joining this process of reflexively shaping the unfolding relationship and conversation. Christine Oliver (2013) developed the notion of *systemic reflexivity* as a framework for exploration of organisational systems in ways that facilitate agency and responsibility in the consultant and the client system.

With discursive reflexivity I propose a focus not on a wider, or different, but rather a more specific and narrow frame of reflexive practice. In section 5.4 I have introduced discursive reflexivity as a *reflexive evaluating of the unfolding discourse for the emergent possibilities in it*. What I mean is an appreciative, critical and reflexive awareness of the situation and the way of talking we are participating in. I suggest that conceptually such a reflexivity relates to John Shotter's (2008, 2010) development of knowing-from-within and specifically his observations of our sense of what is possible and emergent from within a situation. Further in relation to explicit reflective practice I agree with Donald Schön (1983, p.138) who suggests that

When a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he sees it as something already present in his repertoire. To see *this* site as *that* one is not to subsume the first under a familiar category

or rule. It is rather to see an unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one, without at first being able to say similar to and familiar with respect to what.

Notably Schön's insight on reflecting draws on relevant experience, similar to Vygotsky (2004) in his insight on imagining. Comparably and similarly, Shotter (2010) suggests the relevance of *descriptive concepts* that remind practitioners of what is relevant in attending to the unfolding practice. I suggest that both Shotter's (2008, 2010) and Schön's (1983) insights can be related to knowing in a situation and are relevant for discursive reflexivity. Having framed the task of discursive reflexivity as *reflexively evaluating of the unfolding discourse for the emergent possibilities in it*, I propose the questions 'how are we talking here?' and 'what is this way of talking permitting and inviting us to do, create, and become?' respectively 'what are we making possible in our talking?' to frame this task as discursive reflexive inquiry (Figure 14).

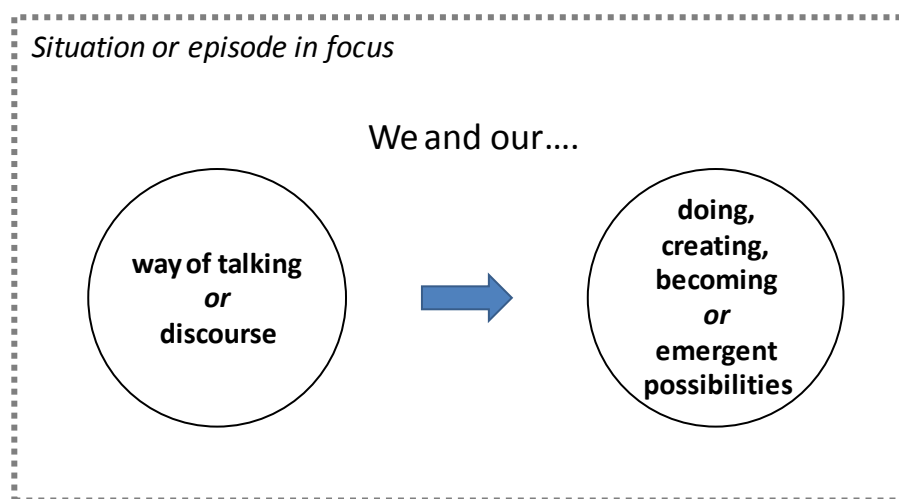


Figure 14: Discursive reflexivity

Relating to Barge (2004b) who observes forms of reflexivity in managerial practice, distinguishing *self reflexivity*, as a self-consciousness between managerial action and consequences for self and others, *invitational reflexivity*, including forms of reflexive dialogue and inquiry, and *reflexive descriptions*, as a form of making sense of organisational life, I place discursive reflexivity into the latter category of reflexive descriptions.

Whilst what I have said so far seems to point to a theoretical development, I promote the concept of discursive reflexivity because I think of it as quite practical and of an everyday nature. I suggest it does not require any prior knowing of systemic or social

constructionist thinking, rather I think that most people, with the benefit and flavours of life experience, have developed a sense of how situations become shaped through the way of talking in them. That a particular situation – quite independently if we describe it in objective or modernistic terms, or if we describe it in systemic constructionist terms – works out for us and others in different ways depending on how participants coordinate their talk in it. For instance we learn to discriminate how we are treated by one math teacher and another math teacher in school, we experience how we are participating in this group's talk and in that group's talk, and in organisational life we know if a meeting goes well or it does not, *depending on how participants talk in it*. Most people will find it sensible to think that situations can be quite similar at the outset including the challenges that we may think of 'objectively' needing addressing, yet work out very differently depending on what talk takes place in them. Hence I suggest that most people know and specifically managers know that the way we talk is not contingent on the situation as such but that different ways of talking are possible in the very same situations and that these differences can be discriminated quite clearly by all involved and are relevant to what gets created. I propose that good managers not only know this but also have the grammatical abilities (Cronen, 1995, Lang and McAdam, 1995, Cronen, 2001) 'to turn a conversation around'¹³. It is then intelligible to attend to a situation and ask the question 'is this the most useful way of talking?' or 'what can we see as emerging from this way of talking?'

In responding to these questions we can draw on feelings of tendencies, we have a sense of what is possible and emergent from within a situation, what we and others can do and who we can be in it. We can note and attend to the co-joint bodily production of talk between speakers and listeners, and also the emotions arising from how rights and duties are respected and acted upon (Shotter, 2010). I suggest this knowing also relates to a sense of feeling and becoming positioned in a talk in a particular way, being created as someone in relation to others, whilst also positioning others (Davies and Harré, 1990, Harré and Van Langenhove, 1999, Harré et al., 2009). Discursive reflexivity as described here is an imagining practice, it involves making projections and is also based on experiences (Vygotsky, 2004) and repertoires (Schön, 1983).

¹³ Interventions into the discursive structure of conversations have been conceptualised by Barnett Pearce (1994) as *game changing*. My language here saying 'turn the conversation around' is deliberate in this paragraphs that serves to portray the everyday nature of discursive reflexivity.

Discursive reflexivity as suggested here is the cultivation of reflexive insight into how our collective way of talking is invitational to what we can achieve or what gets achieved in a conversation, including a cultivation of the moral and ethical dimension in it. I like to note that discursive reflexivity does not necessitate reasoning why the talk is how it is, nor who is individually or collectively responsible for this or that way of talking. Somebody reflecting on the way of talking in a situation need not know if the current way of talking can or cannot be influenced or if there is a possible alternative for how to talk. Instead, I propose, all that is required to make discursive reflexivity intelligible as a practice of focusing on talk rather than something else, is to know that there is nothing in a situation that forces a particular way of talking on us and that the way we talk is consequential.¹⁴

I propose discursive reflexivity as a concept that offers a basic frame for relating reflexively to our circumstances and that can be made intelligible relating to experiences that are storied from a modern and / or a systemic constructionist perspective. As such it has a potential to invite participants in organisations which are working from a modernistic discourse to attend to aspects of practice that otherwise remain in the background. I further suggest that discursive reflexivity can be introduced in appreciation of current insight of participants in organisations, as something that managers and participants in organisations are familiar with already. It is also a form of imagining in relation to our circumstances and is informed by and informing of our relational and ethical practice.

What may flow from discursive reflexivity *eventually* is taking reflexive accountability for one's talk such as in self reflexivity (Barge, 2004b, Burnham, 2005), imagining of other ways of talking together such as in relational reflexivity (Burnham, 2005), or more complex reflexive ways of relating to our circumstances to unravel the paradoxes herein such as in systemic reflexivity (Oliver, 2013). What may flow from discursive reflexivity eventually also is the social constructionist insight that there is no such a thing as a situation in focus, the frame of attending in Figure 14 above, but just a way of talking in relation to it that is determining it in an unfolding sense. This latter insight flows directly from discursive reflexivity as a concept which as depicted in Figure 14 requires the following constructions: (I) us as actors, (II) the situation or episode as a focus in time, place and purpose, (III) the consequences of talking in what gets created, and (IV) the talk itself. The concept of discursive reflexivity however establishes or invites an

¹⁴ Here I draw also on Kenneth and Mary Gergen (2004) saying that there is nothing about a thing that requires us to name it this or that, and on their work on positive aging.

appreciation of what we as actors are, can be and become, what work gets done, and consequently also what purposes are served, eventually emerges from the way of talking in it – that is, our world is under ongoing social construction.

6.4.2 On games of imagining

The proposed concept of games of imagining is *one way* of attending reflexively to imagining practice, which can be placed next to other possible ways of distinguishing, foregrounding and relating reflexively to imagining, such as for instance differentiating imagining as to types of uses and applications in organisational practice. The development of games of imagining is privileging imagining as a relational and discursive practice discussed earlier in 6.2 and is particularly coloured by the use of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce and Cronen, 1980, Lang, 1988, Pearce, 1989, Oliver, 1992, Pearce, 1994, Cronen, 2001, Barge, 2004c, Oliver, 2004, Pearce, 2004, Pearce, 2007, Cronen et al., 2009) and discursive psychology (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Potter et al., 1990, Edwards and Potter, 1992, Willig, 2008) as lenses in this research.

	Exploration Game	Solution Game	Transformation Game
Difficulty or opportunity	Orientation to possible futures and choices	Moving from current to desired states of operation	Organisational discourse, practices and identities
Task of imagining	Mapping out possibilities	Imagining process to attain solution	Imagine way of being
The task is meaningful positioned within	Process of ongoing imagining of possibilities	Prevailing organisational discourse including desired developments	Purpose, generative metaphor, alternative discourse
Narrative character of imaginings	Landscape of options and possibilities	Practices, actions	Ways of being and relating
Consultant / leader being positioned to	Create choices and invite orientation; Inclusiveness	Maintain or restore an order or discourse; deliver results	Facilitate dialogue, reflexive insight, participation and growth

Figure 15: Games of imagining

In articulating games of imagining as archetypal discursive forms of imagining practice, I have attended in particular to the task structure, moralities for participation, and implications for those involved. Specifically I have proposed an *exploration game of imagining* focusing on mapping out possibilities creating a landscape of possibilities, a *solution game of imagining* concerned with finding a process, practices and actions to attain a particular outcome or solution, and a *transformation game of imagining* with the typical task of imagining of a way of being and relating, shaping organisational discourse and identity. In section 5.4 I have characterised each game of imagining, suggesting typical tasks or situations of organisational practice, practice exemplars and reflections on the discursive structure using CMM theory. For convenience I re-present the overview of the discourses in games of imagining as Figure 15 (introduced earlier in section 5.4 as Figure 8).

Games of imagining can be related and compared with each other in terms of how wide or narrow imagining is contextualised with a transformation game of imagining being the widest and the exploration game of imagining the narrowest of archetypal forms, something I have illustrated earlier in section 5.4 in Figure 9. Having said that I also have observed, reflecting on the morality of tasks, that wider task frames are not necessarily better but rather recommend to reflect on how framing imagining in this or that way contributes to organisational functioning and ethical practice. Whilst more narrowly focused tasks can be seen as unduly limiting, they may also serve as an effective boundary to focus an activity in relation to other streams of work in an organisation.

To me it was a significant observation that task frames of imagining seemingly have a self-sustaining quality to them (proposition iii). I proposed that once a task of imagining has been agreed in a conversation implicitly or explicitly, the contexts that have been agreed as or emerged as giving meaning to this task cannot be related to in imagining practice without challenging the task of imagining itself. I have specifically observed (in sections 5.2.4, 5.3.4 and 5.4.1) how such imagining in relation to contexts which are giving meaning to the task of imagining can be understood as nonsensical or illegitimate.

Consequently, I suggest, we can view task frames of imagining as explicit or implicit social agreements or achievements of orientation in a practice that (a) relate to the proximate purpose of our activity of imagining, (b) define what parts of our social world are *deemed* to be fixed, and what parts are *deemed* to be open to discursive deliberation and imagining, and (c) that what becomes imagined needs to be imagined in logical and moral coherence with the task frame and with what is *deemed* to be fixed.

Whilst with my use of 'deemed' in (b) above I am pointing to the socially constructed nature of such agreements and boundaries, notably, as Barnett Pearce (1989) observes,

such contexts that *are acted upon* as if they were real and confirmed through experience of *such action* achieve a *very real* quality to participants in conversations. They become reified in the process and achieve a factual status. Also it is important to emphasise the requirement for coherence between a task for imagining and the discourse that gets imagined (as in c above): based on CMM theory this can be thought of as *moral coherence* in the sense that what we imagine *ought to be* coherent with the moral logics of our social world, in particular coherent with what was reified with the set or emergent task frame; but also as a *poetic coherence* that emerges from the imagining as relational discursive process using the discursive resources that are permitted in it. As Barnett Pearce (1989, p.46) puts it “Usually, the practices in which we participate reproduce the resources that guided them in much the same fashion that they have existed before”. In other words I argue that *the way* the process of imagining is contextualised and conducted as a practice *is entering* what is imagined in it. I will expand on the relevance of this assertion to systemic social constructionist practice later in section 6.5.

Having characterised three archetypical games of imagining I have also suggested that in more complex tasks and challenges aspects of each game can play a role and different ways of imagining can become interrelated. Also the way we consider this or that game of imagining being applicable may vary depending on whose perspective is served. For a strategy unit of a large organisation, an organisational change may be imagined as a *solution* to a particular problem, whilst for those impacted who may have to imagine a new way of relating to their changed circumstances altogether the process may be of rather a *transformational* nature.

I propose that games of imagining are useful in reflecting appreciatively and critically on the way the space and morality for imagining is constructed and what is possible to emerge from this practice. In that sense it can be related to discursive reflexivity presented earlier and specifically used to cultivate forms of discursive reflexivity that foreground imagining practice in organisations. In its simplest form we can orient ourselves to the properties of ongoing discourse by asking the questions ‘are we *just mapping out possibilities*’ (exploration game), ‘are we finding a way (or ways) to achieve desired states, practices or results?’ (solution game), or ‘is this about inviting new ways of being and relating?’ (transformation game). These questions relate to Figure 15 above and also Figure 9 on games of imagining in section 5.4.5 which offer further invitations for reflecting on difficulties, task, contexts, outcome and positioning in imagining practices.

Reflecting on the discursive structure of a particular game of imagining can be extended in two directions. *In relation to task construction or task emergence* we are invited to be curious about what contexts give meaning to a particular task frame and how we make sense of the emergent relevance of these contexts. As discussed earlier we can be

sensitive to these contexts becoming reified and stabilised by a particular imagining practice. More specifically in relation to power we may ask who is involved, whose discourses are privileged and whose interests are served by constructing task in this particular way. *In relation to the practice of imagining* invited or sanctioned by a particular task we can ask who is included and excluded, what voices from experience are drawn on and what voices are silenced, and whose purposes are served in the emerging practice of imagining.

I suggest the concept of games of imagining can be useful in developing practices of imagining in organisations like the imagining of organisational opportunity, organisational alignment and coordination, decision making and development. It can be of use in foregrounding imagining through reflexive practice or in the institutionalising of imagining practice discussed earlier in section 6.3. It invites those in privileged positions of giving shape to a task or an intervention for development to reflect on how task frames of imagining are constructed, for instance between managers and participants in the organisations, which discourses are privileged and acted upon and with what ethical and pragmatic consequences.

What I see as a particular utility of games of imagining is that it not only invites a reflecting on this or that way of imagining that is seen to be the case but offers alternative ways of understanding and framing a task and alternative possibilities of practising. For instance if I reflect on participating in a solution game of imagining, that is a figuring out how possibly to achieve X or Y, I may consider privileging an exploration game, i.e. what it might mean if we shifted our practice to not developing a solution but to map the territory of solutions that could be invited. How could such a map in itself serve to orient us? Alternatively I may consider a transformation game, attending to contexts that give meaning to the outcome we are working to achieve and the forms of life we have taken for granted and actually reifying and reproducing in working that way. What are these ways of being that we consider relevant or possible to our circumstances? Reflecting this way, I suggest, invites additional depth, versatility and accountability in how we go about imagining organisational futures.

6.5 Imagining in systemic constructionist practice with organisations

Previously we have discussed the relevance of imagining in organisational theory and practice, the importance of imagining in the emergence of organisations, and participating reflexively in imagining practice. In this section I will attend to (1) how systemic constructionist practices contribute to the imagining in organisations and (2) the

relevance of imagining in systemic constructionist practice. I will be specifically drawing on proposition (v) regarding imagining in systemic constructionist practice, proposition (vi) the development of games of imagining, and proposition (vii) regarding on repositioning of imagining discourse.

6.5.1 Systemic constructionist practice as contributing to imagining in organisations

I suggest that systemic constructionist practices can be useful to organisational imagining in different ways. In exploring this topic I will attend to what I see as the main levers for contributing through practice: *organisation development interventions that perturb organisational imagining, specific initiatives for developing of imagining, and ways of changing the game of imagining* in organisations.

Organisation development interventions that perturb organisational imagining

With proposition (v) we observed imagining as signifying an element in organisation development practices informed by systemic constructionist theory such as in the narrative approaches to organisation development (Lämsä and Sintonen, 2006) and in approaches using metaphors (Morgan, 1993, Hutton, 1997). Further we located imagining in systemic constructionist approaches to organisation development, specifically in Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, 2005) (section 3.4.1), in Solution Focused Coaching (De Shazer, 1979, 1985, 1991, Simon and Berg, 1999, De Jong and Berg, 2008) (section 3.4.2), and in Collaborative Inquiry with organisations (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988, Anderson and Burney, 1996) (section 5.4.3).

Based on these observations and reflections of imagining being central to systemic constructionist practice (proposition v), many frameworks of systemic constructionist practice will invite participants into forms of imagining and developing of possibilities that impact organisational futures. These properties of systemic constructionist dialogue and inquiry to invite imagining in organisations have also been noted by Celiane Camargo-Borges and Emerson Rasera (2013). However I want to go further to suggest that systemic constructionist practices in addition to inviting participants into imaginative dialogue can have a perturbing effect on organisations.

I suggest systemic constructionist practices with organisations can be seen not only working towards a particular task but also as enactments (Weick, 1995) of a way of being and relating in coherence with it; and this being and relating comprises notions of inquiry, dialogue, sharing, listening and imagining in relation to our circumstances. For instance

the practices of Internalised Other Interviewing (Tomm, 1998, Burnham, 2000), respectively As-If groups (Anderson and Burney, 1996, Anderson, 2013), invite us to participate in a conversation from someone else's position. Such practising positions us into reflexively appreciating the situation of someone else, as something we can *know about*, but also evokes in us a bodily felt sense of being from this position in language including the morality, emotions, and felt bodily senses that come with it (Shotter, 1993, 2008). Participants hence are not only learning grammars of practice (Cronen, 1995) that they may apply in other circumstances, but what also gets invited are different ways of seeing, being and relating to each other. I suggest that participants in workshops are invited into positions of witnessing and practising imagining in very much the same way how social learning theory would consider participants learn from within a community of practice (Brown and Duguid, 1991, Lave and Wenger, 1991, Wenger and Snyder, 2000). Case vignettes from Appreciative Inquiry, for instance, document that processes unfold a self sustaining dynamic of imagining (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, McAdam and Lang, 2009). I therefore suggest that the imagining taking place in systemic constructionist practices with organisations can have a perturbing effect beyond the original scope of work. It adds to the repertoires (Schön, 1983) of participants' experiences, practising and relating.

Specific initiatives for developing imagining

Whilst the above considerations relate to systemic constructionist contributions to organisation development more generally, I suggest systemic constructionist practice can also be focused and oriented to the development of imagining practice in organisations specifically.

Earlier in this discussion (sections 6.2, 6.3) we mapped out the relevance of imagining in organisational practice along two dimensions: On the one hand we attended to the opportunity of foregrounding imagining, including explicitly drawing on individual experiences and socialising experiences of participants in the organisation in the process of imagining organisational futures; on the other hand we took note of the relevance of imagining in key areas of organisational emergence such as organisational opportunity, coordination or decision making. With these reflections I have suggested that measured developments of imagining in organisations can significantly contribute to organisational emergence, effectiveness and ethical practice. Further I have pointed to possible levers in attending to this opportunity, including changes in participation in imagining processes, foregrounding of imagining in organisational practices, and institutionalising imagining.

Relevance and opportunity to develop imagining in organisational practice are possible starting points to engage systemic constructionist ways of working which may eventually

give rise to local and specific insight into the ethics and pragmatics of pursuing such opportunities. Such a process of participants in an organisation attending reflexively to the practices of imagining in their organisation involves and may be facilitated as a transformation game of imagining that includes changing ways of being and relating of those considering these changes.

Further contributions from systemic constructionist practice may include forms of coaching, facilitation of organisation development, or training that are inviting participants to relate reflexively and imaginatively to their circumstances as well as to learn systemic constructionist *grammatical abilities* (Cronen, 1995, Lang and McAdam, 1995, Cronen, 2001) that facilitate imagining practice. Whilst it is here not possible to attend comprehensively to all grammars of systemic constructionist practice that lend themselves to such purposes, it may be useful to list those which we have drawn on at various stages in this thesis (Figure 16, in order of appearance).

Changing the game of imagining

With the concept of games of imagining we have framed imagining as a discursive achievement that includes a task frame that serves as a boundary delimiting what can be imagined from what is not permitted or not intelligible to imagine. We have also noted that set task frames, although social constructions, can have a very real and moral quality to them (Pearce, 1989) in the sense that they cannot be easily changed or challenged. Also we have noted that the way a task is framed is seen as serving a particular purpose or meaning by those involved in constructing the task in that way.

In section 5.5 (proposition vii) I observed how practitioners are engaging in ways that invite shifts that reposition imagining processes and give rise to different task frames. Specifically I noted that what is involved in such moves are (I) a reflexive engaging with the discursive structure and unfolding possibilities of the emergent conversation, something discussed previously as discursive reflexivity, (II) an imagining of alternative ways of talking that allows connecting with possible alternative and preferable discourses, and (III) grammatical abilities (Cronen, 1995, Lang and McAdam, 1995, Cronen, 2001) that invite co-created practice moving from the former to the latter.

Grammar of practice	Proposed focus or value in relation to organisational imagining
Domains theory (Lang et al., 1990)	Moving into and out of imagining conversations in ethical and aesthetical ways, exploring multiple possibilities but also making decisions on specific actions.
Systemic story creation (Lang and McAdam, 1995)	Dialogical practice of making sense of a situation in multiple ways.
Practical authoring (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2003)	Dialogical way of making sense and storying of a situation to invite orientations to future possibilities.
Imaginization (Morgan, 1993)	Way of developing different meaning and inviting different stories and possibilities using metaphors.
'As If' groups, and 'Internalised Other Interviewing' (Anderson and Burney, 1996, Tomm, 1998, Burnham, 2000, Anderson, 2013)	Participating, relating and imagining from somebody else's position.
Inquiring Appreciatively (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, Oliver and Barge, 2002, Barge and Oliver, 2003, Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, McAdam and Lang, 2009, Oliver et al., 2011)	Inviting possibilities through valuing what is.
Self reflexivity (Pearce, 1998, Burnham, 2005)	Relating reflexively to own practice of imagining.
Relational reflexivity (Burnham, 2005)	Explicitly coordinating with others how to best imagine.
Systemic reflexivity (Oliver, 2013)	Relating reflexively to emergence in a system.
Discursive reflexivity (proposition v)	Relating reflexively to how ways of talking invite possibilities.
Games of imagining (proposition v)	Relating reflexively to tasks of imagining.

Figure 16: Imagining in systemic constructionist grammars of practice

In relation to the concept of games of imagining this practice can be understood as inviting a *discursive change*, in the sense that the practice, task, morality and other contexts are shifting and a different game of imagining is enacted. Established or tacit task frames are challenged or moved in the background with different tasks being invited instead. Using CMM theory I have illustrated the speech acts involved in inviting different task frames than those prevailing or tacitly present. I have described these invitations as 'repositioning using a generative metaphor', 'repositioning using reflexive practice' and 'repositioning using dreaming'. Barnett Pearce (1994, p.142) describes such and similar achievements by the concept of *game mastery* as "action that fits into the emerging logic of meaning and action well enough that it is treated as part of what is being done, but sufficiently different from that logic so that it transforms the act from one thing to another". In the observed cases practitioners were sustaining the overall direction of the morality involved in the conversational activity, but also giving rise to a particular way of together "developing or progressing an activity towards its desired ends" (Shotter, 2010, 165). In this way the shift, whilst inviting a difference in the discursive structure, is also confirming the intention of the client and the overall direction of travel of the conversation.

Based on my reflections I have suggested that practitioners are not relying on methods or tools they bring to a situation but rather experiences and hopes. I propose that practitioners in inviting a way forward with so many things unknown and unknowable (Beckert, 2011) are relating reflexively to the ethics, aesthetics (Lang et al., 1990) and pragmatics of the discourse they are participating in, and the possibilities for other ways of talking they can imagine based on their experiences and their *knowing from within* (Shotter, 2008) the situation. Also my sense is that what needs foregrounding in attending to such dialogical moments is the relational responsive practice and coordinating in the moment of speaking and listening. I have proposed to think of such discursive shifts as dialogic achievements and joint actions (Shotter, 2008, 2010), respectively joint imaginings.

The relevance and usefulness of changing the game of imagining and in particular inviting a transformation game are the much wider permissions relating to an imagining of a way of being. Such a wider frame for imagining is particularly relevant when the current discourse and practice is seen to limit achieving organisational goals. It is then more likely that actors in the organisation relate reflexively to organisational discourse and practices, that current experiences in the organisation are appreciated, that information that otherwise would be excluded or discounted can be valued, or that wider stakeholder groups are included in processes of imagining the organisational future.

6.5.2 The relevance of imagining for systemic constructionist practice

In attending to how systemic constructionist practice can contribute to organisational imagining we have by implication already started discussing the relevance of imagining for systemic constructionist practice. The purpose of this section is then to extend this discussion by turning specifically to what concepts of imagining may mean for practising itself. The way I will attend to this purpose is in pointing to sensibilities or concerns rather than developing responses and strategies which I suggest have to be local in nature. I find that the framework of systemic domains of practice (Lang et al., 1990) offers a useful structure to relate the possible influences, sensibilities or consequences of the concept of games of imagining. This concept has been developed by Peter Lang, Martin Little and Vern Cronen as a comprehensive meta-theoretical and meta-practical frame of practising, distinguishing the professional domains of production, of explanation and of aesthetics. I will introduce these domains briefly as they become relevant in the discussion below.

Imagining in the professional domain of production

In the domain of production we relate to each other in objective terms. This domain is essential for coordinating our expectations and actions and is built on conventions of stable meanings and practices established in society, communities or relationships. The commission for systemic constructionist work with an organisation for instance is also defined in the domain of production. Ethical codes of practice and professional scripts may be manifest in forms of contracts or rules in this domain (Lang et al., 1990).

Whilst in systemic psychotherapy or systemic coaching contracts in the domain of production often have the dimension of participants, time, money, place, and task being defined in an emergent and ongoing way, it is typical for organisational development intervention that tasks and processes are contracted with upfront clarity on specific contexts, objectives, procedures which can make them tightly knit to organisational discourse. I have reflected earlier (in sections 5.4.2 and 6.4.2) that the process of commissioning of consulting work can be at times seen as limiting the space for systemic constructionist practice.

In response to such reflections I have proposed (in section 5.4.2) that a heightened reflexive awareness of how task frames are implicating imagining practice can serve to improve practice and benefit clients. Specifically this includes drawing attention to the boundaries that clients and practitioners are constructing together, the possible implications for outcomes from these boundaries, the power relationships expressed in them, and ways of how to attend to these boundaries in the emergence of a project.

Notably the ways that task frames are assuming contexts and discourses as for granted can be very subtle. To offer an example, the commission 'to develop a workshop training for managers to reduce the stress in teams' is already assuming the contextual frames of training as learning, of managers being in control of staff work load or work practice, of stress being of relevance to managers, staff and other stakeholders and so on. Following from the concept of games of imagining it is in accepting this commission and in acting in relation to it that these contexts become assumed and taken for granted discourses contextualising further work. Consequently we can expect them to be part also in the workshop practices to be developed. Paradoxically however, some of what in such discourses is taken for granted may be essentially constitutive for the emergence of stress in the organisations in the first place.

In summary I suggest that the concept of games of imagining places high relevance on how the initial tasks for systemic practice are framed, as expressive of how practitioners and clients are imagining their working together – at the outset and in an ongoing sense. Also I suggest that the concept of games of imagining invites distinct sensibilities to the consequences of any particular task frame and is helpful in attending reflexively to such implications in client relationships.

Imagining in the professional domain of explanation

The domain of explanation is concerned with multiple descriptions and meanings (Lang et al., 1990) and can be related to the concept of the multiverse (Maturana, 1988b) mentioned earlier. Save for moral orders exerted by other domains we would think initially that all questions can be asked and all stories can be told in the domain of explanation. However the talk that emerges is not random but responsive to the situational context and meaningful in relation to a set or emergent task or tasks. For instance a coaching client wishes to discuss 'how an organisational unit can be structured effectively'.

The concept of games of imagining suggests that, to the extent that client and practitioner are engaging in a process of imagining in relation to such task, this task and the contexts giving meaning to it tend to become reified in the process. The space for developing multiple options and possibilities can thus become limited in ways that are not intended by clients nor practitioners. Also, the way the space for explanation has been focused in a particular way can be helpful or limiting for the process of imagining.

I suggest that the concept of games of imagining invites a reflexive stance to such task frames and a curiosity how the task frame that has been set or that has emerged is useful and practical. It invites consideration to alternative ways of framing tasks in relation to a topic of inquiry as depicted in Figure 17. Turning back to the earlier example, if we

conceive of 'how an organisational unit can be structured effectively' as a solution game of imagining, what would a transformation game of imagining look like? With a transformation game focusing on imagining in relation to organisational discourses that serve the organisational purpose, we would inquire for example into notions of team effectiveness or the ways of achieving departmental goals. Such inquiry may invite a range of relevant reflexive considerations, of which only some may refer to the structure of the organisational unit. Alternatively if we consider an exploration game of imagining we may inquire into what situations or vignettes would count as exemplars of effectively structured practice in the organisation. In such an exploration game not a particular solution but an appreciation of the map of what counts would be the proximate focus in the domain of explanation.

Game of Imagining	Focus of inquiry & imagining	Possibilities / topic of imagining
Transformation	Ways of being	Work effectively as team, achieving goals as unit
Solution	Defining and implementing	Possible new structure(s) of the unit
Exploration	Mapping out	Possible structures, parts of structures, structured practices

Figure 17: Alternative games in practice

In conclusion I suggest that in the domain of explanation clients and practitioners may find themselves coordinating in relation to a particular task frame of imagining that acquires a real quality to it in the process and both limits and focuses the space of explanation and the way imagining can take place. The opportunity invited by the concept of games of imagining is to reflexively relate to the way of talking as one way of imagining in relation to a wider purpose, and it offers a frame to think of alternative ways of imagining in relation to it.

Imagining in the professional domain of aesthetics

This domain invites us into a reflexive relationship to notions of aesthetics such as ethics, harmony, beauty, coherence, uniqueness or inclusiveness. Whilst in the domain of explanation all stories are equally valid, they are not equally desirable in the domain of aesthetics. The domain of aesthetics is given primacy over the other domains of explanation and production (Lang et al., 1990).

I suggest the concept of games of imagining invites attention to two ethical concerns or sensibilities. The first sensibility is the reification of contexts in imagining processes, and the second sensibility relates to how the contexts and practices of imagining enter that which becomes imagined.

The reification of contexts in imagining processes is something we discussed earlier (in section 6.4.2). I have suggested that this process is very subtle because it is in our accepting of the task that we are accepting the contexts that give meaning to the task. Tasks come to work like embedded-suggestion-questions (Tomm, 1987b), that is questions like “Would you prefer your cake now or later?” that have embedded that you have cake at some time. Only that what is embedded here is the discourse and contexts that give meaning to the task. To invite a Foucauldian (Foucault, 1981, Foucault and Rabinow, 1984) sensibility, imagining can be seen to become a discursive practice in enactment (Weick, 1995) of the prevailing discursive order. Rather than inviting new ways of being it serves to enact current ways of being. We are invited into a sensibility to, not what is getting imagined but, how our imagining serves to enact (Weick, 1995), reify and legitimate the particular order that is giving meaning to it.

The second concern, also related to the prior one, we could call a concern of replication. I have argued earlier in section 6.4.2 on games of imagining that the properties of the task frame, the discourses and practices that are relevant in a process of imagining are entering it, becoming part of it. To repeat the earlier quote of Barnett Pearce (1989, p.46), “the practices in which we participate reproduce the resources that guided them in much the same fashion that they have existed before”. To illustrate this abstract thought in practice I want to use the earlier example of a commission to develop workshop training for managers to reduce stress. What I am saying here is that the organisational discourses of *workshop, training, manager, stress* are entering the imagined. How would that happen in practice? The dialogical processes by which this is effected can be various, for instance the consultant is given a benchmark document of another workshop as blueprint for how workshops in this organisation should look like, a draft is reviewed and feedback provided by an HR executive, the organisation has a training strategy that

needs to be considered, the participant population is profiled thus defining who counts and who does not count as 'a manager' and so on.

Above I have suggested that reification and replication limit the space for imagining and sustain current orders. Whilst I have attended to reification and replication on the side of the organisation we can also attend to replication and reification on the side of the systemic constructionist practitioners and practice. The values, metaphors, discourses and practices practitioners bring to the process serve not only to facilitate meaning making, change or development, but are also entering the imagined discourse, practices, relationships or identities. The concept of games of imagining hence invites an appreciative and critical perspective in relation to imagining practices in approaches to organisation development including systemic constructionist approaches. For instance in relation to Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, 2005) introduced in section 2.4, it invites attending to how decisions to take an affirmative approach are made, or how the affirmative topics, which come to frame the whole AI process, are chosen. We are invited to reflect how the participant can enter not only information into the process but give shape to the unfolding process rather than being shaped by it. This sensibility for participation and voice relates also to earlier considerations of participation in the emergent organisation discussed in section 6.3.1.

From these reflections, I suggest, the concept of games of imagining invites us to appreciate how prevailing discourses perturb process and outcomes of imagining. Whilst we cannot presume what is desirable, aesthetical or ethical in a particular situation, we can reflexively attend to the opportunities and limitations of a particular imagining practice, task frame and assumptions participants bring to a conversation or practice, the implications for those participating in it, and the implications for what gets imagined. I suggest that a sensibility to reification and replication of current resources and power relationships in processes of imagining invites participants to reflect on how they choose to participate and use their position and power to aesthetic ends, which may include the review and widening of participation, the privileging of diversity of experiences, and a critical and appreciative reflection of practices and processes of imagining, not only as means to an end but also as ends in themselves.

6.6 Contribution and limitation as research

In the previous sections of this discussion I was drawing on propositions from this research to develop their meaning and usefulness by relating them to each other, to other theories, and to possible applications in practice. In this section I aim, without repeating

much of what has been said already, to appreciate and critique the contribution of this research to systemic constructionist research traditions and in relation to research on organisational theory. I will also draw attention to main limitations of this research.

6.6.1 On contributing to research

My purpose of the research question 'How are we imagining organisational futures' was not to solve a problem but to make sense and create connections (Weick, 1989). The particular way of achieving this included the use of the research question as a metaphor to inquire into organisational theory, systemic constructionist theory and into actual discursive practices, vignettes and conversations. In this process I have privileged myself as a learner and author, I have been drawing on the voices of theorists and practitioners and my own experiences from practice.

I suggest with this research I have contributed to systemic constructionist practice by developing its relevance and contribution to organisational imagining. In particular I have articulated a concept of imagining as relational, dialogic and discursive activity and practice based on social constructionist and social psychology research (Sarbin and Juhasz, 1970, Shotter, 1997, Harré, 1998, Hevern, 1999, Vygotsky, 2004) and have developed its meaning in relating it to repertoires of systemic constructionist practice from scholars (De Shazer, 1979, 1985, Anderson and Goolishian, 1988, De Shazer, 1991, Anderson and Burney, 1996, Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, Simon and Berg, 1999, Berg and Szabó, 2005, Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005, De Jong and Berg, 2008, Anderson, 2013) and from my own practice and participation in conversations. These repertoires are including exemplars, understandings and practices that are potentially useful for practitioners to facilitate their reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983).

I have proposed the framework of *games of imagining* and the related practices of *discursive reflexivity* and *game changing* as a way of integrating reflections from practice and understandings from theories that inform systemic constructionist practice of imagining with organisations. To promote the usefulness to the communities of systemic constructionist practice I have articulated the concept of games of imagining in the grammar of Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce and Cronen, 1980, Lang, 1988, Pearce, 1989, Oliver, 1992, Pearce, 1994, Cronen, 2001, Barge, 2004c, Oliver, 2004, Pearce, 2004, Pearce, 2007, Cronen et al., 2009) and developed its implications in relation to domains theory (Lang et al., 1990). These developments can be positioned in relation to the *practical theory* (Cronen, 1995, Cronen, 2001) of CMM as extending its usefulness and application in the area of imagining practice by relating CMM theory to imagining practice and by using experience from practice to re-inform and

extend theory (Lang et al., 1990). The relevance of developing practical theory from reflections on practice has been emphasised by Vernon Cronen (2001) and Kevin Barge (2004a). I suggest that the concept of games of imagining can also be positioned as a *descriptive concept* (Shotter, 2010) that serves for practitioner orientation in the living moment of practising.

Alongside the focus on systemic constructionist practice research I have portrayed the relevance and potential of systemic constructionist practices generally and the concepts of *games of imagining*, *discursive reflexivity* and *game changing* as a way of contributing to organisational imagining. In particular I (a) portrayed, developed and critiqued the use and usefulness of imagining in organisational theory (section 2.3), (b) foregrounded the contribution of systemic constructionist practice to organisation development in current research and scholarship (section 2.3.4 and 2.4), (c) framed the opportunity of further organisation development taking advantage of imagining as relational and discursive practice and as an ongoing dimension of organisational discourse that contributes to organisational emergence, effectiveness and ethical practice (section 6.1 and 6.2), and (d) invited specific contributions of social constructionist practice to leverage this opportunity for the emergent organisation (section 6.5.2).

There exists little research explicitly directed to imagining of organisational futures. As to research from modern positions this seemingly relates to imagining being associated with subjectivity rather than objectivity (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, Matthews, 2002). Also in social constructionist research tradition the emphasis of organisational research orientation is on the past and present. In particular the development of Karl Weick's¹⁵ (1995) theory of organisational sensemaking which, whilst acknowledging the unfolding nature and relevance of our projects and activities *for* sensemaking, essentially theorises sensemaking as an explanatory process which he emphasises is retrospective in nature.

This research contributes to a small body of empirical case research into organisational imagining informed by social constructionist positions and ethnographic sensibility. In relation to the development of organisational theory I propose further development, empirical research and integration of concepts of imagining organisational futures is

¹⁵ I wish to acknowledge Karl Weick's (2006) more recent work on imagination which I understand however as focused on the relevance of imagination in the construction of knowledge in a way that is subordinated to sensemaking rather than, what is proposed here, an imagining as an ongoing orientation to emergent futures.

required. I suggest the research methods used in this research can serve as an exemplar for further research into imagining, as it offers a conceptual and empirical credibility for inquiring into imagining in organisational discourse. I suggest that the concept of imagining as relational and discursive practice, the proposition of imagining as a dimension rather than a category of discursive practice, and the particular research approach of reflecting the detailed dialogic discursive practice using discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Potter et al., 1990, Edwards and Potter, 1992) and CMM theory are useful points for departure of such future research.

6.6.2 Main limitations

Building on the prior point of future research I propose that drawing attention to limitations is also a way of saying how research into the topic of imagining could be developed further.

Firstly I suggest this research has been quite idiosyncratic. I appreciated the concept of making sense from literature, reflections on my own practice experience and detailed reflections on discursive performances to develop reflexively concepts for practising but suggest if this process would have been followed by a team of practitioners and scholars in a dialogic process it would have benefitted the research outcome in several ways. For instance through accessing a wider range of relevant experiences possibly different or more refined distinctions on forms of imagining could be generated, also there would be multiple perspectives involved in the selection and appreciation of the available data. The concept of research teams in guiding judgements of what is relevant or useful has been described by Karl Weick (1989).

A second limitation in relation to the research design is in the generation of relevant experiences and data that can be drawn on. To be able to build on detailed, transcript level case material of systemic interventions in organisations could have invited additional coherence and connectedness in this thesis. However, as I have pointed out in chapter four, the requirement for informed consent by all participants in organisational interventions can be ethically and pragmatically difficult to achieve. In this context I have suggested that flexible research designs that are co-constructed between clients and researchers could be a possible and useful development. Further work may also be required to develop practical boundaries for ethical practice research in organisations informed by ethnographic sensibilities.

Thirdly this research can be seen as both benefitting and suffering from a wide topic choice. The disadvantage or risk of a wide research topic is that it fails to appreciate

current scholarship or available information in the required depth. For instance, a research focusing only on imagining in decision making would have invited a much more specific and in depth focus on both literature and practice. The advantage of the width of the literature review, I suggest, was however the possibility to portray a discursive landscape of emergent relevance of imagining in organisational theory which I see as an affordance of the wide topic choice.

A fourth limitation that I would like to mention is the limited attention to emotions, feelings and contours of talking. As part of researching I more explicitly realised how the way we talk, in how we listen to others, what is involved bodily and relationally between people in conversations is essential to what can be imagined together and how we can change from one way of relating to each other into another one. This is quite evident for instance in my reflections on Elspeth McAdam and Peter Lang's (2009) work with schools in section 5.5. I suggest this sensibility requires attention already at the design stage of future research projects and specifically in the development of the research setting and methods.

Finally it is also a limitation of this research to be coloured by the research and practice informed by Kensington Consultation Centre in London and the practices and developments emerging from this community. In conducting this research and participating in this particular community I found several of the communal resources, concepts from training and practice contexts useful which inevitably have been of influence to this research. This has been extended by the specific research teaching as part of the doctoral programme. Whilst I suggest that drawing in depth on the scholarship of a particular community is not necessarily a weakness it is certainly a bias and to make a research relevant to wider communities research settings with collaborations across systemic constructionist communities could be envisaged.

7 Conclusions

We have pursued the question 'How are we imagining organisational futures?' which invited us to appreciate the relevance of imagining in organisational and in systemic constructionist theory and practice. Propositions in this research include imagining as relational and discursive practice, the relevance of imagining in organisations, and concepts that facilitate attending to and developing imagining practice.

The case for imagining in organisational practice

Privileging a systemic constructionist position we have attended to imagining articulated as a discursive, dialogic and relational practice rather than as a cognitive activity (Sarbin and Juhasz, 1970, Shotter, 1997, Harré, 1998, Hevern, 1999, Vygotsky, 2004), something that participants in organisations do together or at least in relation to each other. On a phenomenological level imagining refers to our human ability to solve problems by making hypotheses and anticipate outcomes in ways that liberate us from the immediacy of the moment (Sarbin and Juhasz, 1970). A process that according to Lev Vygotsky (2004) requires us to draw on, and hence put to use, our lived and social experiences, a process that creates real outcomes through practice.

The above already invites a relevance of imagining for organisational emergence, effectiveness and ethical practice. Specifically reviewing contributions from literature we have appreciated such relevance in the imagining of organisational opportunities, alignment and coordination, decision making, and development of organisations. We have also observed that there are several stakeholders to imagining processes which leads to the question of whose values and interests are privileged. We noted how participation in imagining processes can be mediated or limited by claims to personal traits, competence, or legitimacy of stake, with economic discourses often serving as pertinent background to such considerations. This was for instance the case in Joseph Schumpeter's (1912, 2002) relating to imagining as a capacity and trait of a few special people.

However alternative frames of imagining which transcend economic paradigms have been proposed, for instance Carol Harris (2002), in her inquiry into a school in relation to its community, invites a frame that foregrounds the possibility of organisations to emerge in relation to communities that are served. Janice Wallace (2002) imagines the gender

equitable organisation, proposing that organisations are also ends in themselves and should form parts of our social worlds that are worth inhabiting. Whose voice is being heard and counted and hence what is considered a good process for imagining is also central to critical and ethical reflections on imagining processes, evident for instance in the work of John Shotter and Ann Cunliffe (2003) emphasising relational ethics in processes of authoring organisational futures, or Patricia Werhane and her colleagues (Werhane, 1999, Werhane and Dunham, 2000, Werhane and Moriarty, 2009) emphasising the utility of imagining practice to improve ethical decision making.

We have discussed that in organisational discourse imagining has been cast to the background by dominant modern discourses, and that building on the above there is both opportunity and choice in foregrounding imagining processes. Consequently we have attended to ways of advancing imagining practices in organisations, the contribution of systemic constructionist practice to such initiatives, and possible further developments utilising systemic constructionist grammars of practice (Cronen, 1995). Specifically we observed imagining as dimension in the systemic constructionist practices of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, 2005), Solution Focused Coaching (De Shazer, 1979, 1985, 1991, Simon and Berg, 1999, De Jong and Berg, 2008) and Collaborative Inquiry (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988, Anderson and Burney, 1996) and suggested that imagining of possible futures is a signifying element to systemic constructionist practice.

The case for imagining organisational futures offers a useful discursive perspective to organisational practice that can serve as alternative to modernistic frames of rational decision making but also to Karl Weick's (1995) important but more retrospective concept of sensemaking. I suggest it is particularly usefulness in emphasising and facilitating ethical agency for what futures become co-created between us.

Relating reflexively to imagining as a discursive practice

In this research we have reflected on practice episodes, vignettes and accounts from discursive dialogical practice, by selectively focusing and foregrounding imagining processes in these practices using Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory (Pearce and Cronen, 1980, Lang, 1988, Pearce, 1989, Oliver, 1992, Pearce, 1994, Cronen, 2001, Barge, 2004c, Oliver, 2004, Pearce, 2004, Pearce, 2007, Cronen et al., 2009) and discourse analysis (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Potter et al., 1990, Edwards and Potter, 1992, Willig, 2008) as research methods. In attending to vignettes and discourses we were moving from a removed talking *about* imagining as an abstract concept or category of practice more pertinent in the literature (chapter two) to an orientation in *unfolding conversations*. This facilitated the development of sensibilities to

imagining practice and a reflexive engagement with what people actually do in their talk in relation to and with each other. I have articulated these reflections as concepts that can serve to cultivate noticing of imagining processes in organisations, that provide a language for naming practices, and that hence can be instrumental for practitioners to reflect and develop their practising:

Games of imagining is a concept suggesting archetypes of imagining practice which are similar in that they are organised by task frames that permit and focus the imagining in relation to some contexts whilst other contexts cannot be implicated. I have distinguished an exploration, a solution and a transformation game of imagining with differently wide or narrowly focused task frames. I also suggested that the contexts, tasks and practices that give meaning and organise the discourse of imagining enter what gets imagined in them. Games of imagining can also be seen as a purposeful development of the practical theory of CMM (Cronen, 2001, Barge, 2004a) in its specific relevance to organisational imagining practice.

I have proposed *discursive reflexivity* as a reflexive evaluating of the unfolding discourse for the emergent possibilities in it. I have suggested that participants in conversations have a distinct sense of such possibilities based on experience, but also that such reflexive abilities can be cultivated. Oriented to possible future outcomes discursive reflexivity is also an imagining practice. It can be related to other more comprehensive concepts of reflexive practice such as self reflexivity (Barge, 2004b, Burnham, 2005), relational reflexivity (Burnham, 2005) or systemic reflexivity (Oliver, 2013), not as a wider or different, but rather a more specific and narrowly focused frame of reflexive practice. Discursive reflexivity consequently locates the practice of imagining in such wider reflexive practice concepts.

Further I have observed that systemic constructionist practitioners engage in *game changing* activities, that is, they are repositioning the talk from one game of imagining to another, inviting wider and more generative ways of imagining. Specifically I noted that what is involved in such moves are (I) a reflexive engaging with the discursive structure and unfolding possibilities of the emergent conversation, mentioned prior as discursive reflexivity, (II) an imagining of alternative ways of talking that allows connecting with possible alternative and preferable discourses, and (III) grammatical abilities (Cronen, 1995, Lang and McAdam, 1995, Cronen, 2001) that invite co-created practice moving from the former to the latter.

Taking the case for imagining further

Having made a case for the opportunity and choice of cultivating imagining practices and having offered frameworks for noticing, reflecting and enacting such practices, I also suggested strategies or pathways for developing imagining practices in organisations. Specifically I discussed the possibilities to *develop participation* in imagining processes, to *foreground imagining* in organisational practice and to *institutionalise dialogic processes of imagining*. Furthermore, building on the observation that systemic constructionist grammars of practice (Cronen, 1995) are invitational to relational, discursive imagining, I explored how systemic practice can perturb and expand ways of organisational imagining. For instance systemic constructionist consultations can be focused on the development of imagining practice in organisations, they may serve to facilitate a reflexive engagement with current imagining processes, expand these practices, or invite changes to the ways of imagining being used in an organisation.

In this context I have proposed that games of imagining can be useful for systemic constructionist practitioners in informing a sensibility to the significance of how tasks for systemic consultations or interventions emerge in the process of commissioning and contracting of work, as such task structures are mediating the space for imagining practice. I invited attention to such implications of task structures from ethical and aesthetic perspectives (Lang et al., 1990), suggesting that the contexts, discourses, processes, metaphors, methods and practices that frame the imagining process also enter into what gets imagined and created in the process (Pearce, 1989). Acting on these sensibilities includes also reflecting on how systemic practice and practitioners' values, methods or discourses are both limiting and enabling participation in imagining in the process, and how practitioners can use their voice and influence to facilitate inclusiveness of participation and diversity of experiences.

Reflecting my learning

In this research I have used *imagining of organisational futures* as a metaphor, that served to foreground discourses of imagining in organisational theory, that invited a relevance of systemic constructionist practice to organisations, and that connected and interrelated these domains of practising.

My learning journey was characterised by surprises. To start with, the review of literature on imagining in organisational theory revealed this topic in an unexpected relevance across different practice streams such as coordinating, decision making or developing organisational opportunities. The case for imagining practice that emerged from this review allows to engage in certain and purposeful terms with managers, leaders and

participants in organisations on the relevance of imagining practices in organisations, which to me is useful for instance in consulting or training settings. Participants in organisations can relate to relevant theory and, what is more, to their own practice and lived repertoires of imagining (Schön, 1983). Such reflecting can also include considerations on power and power relationships, inclusion and exclusion of stakeholders and perspectives, and on the values expressed in such choices. Relating to imagining as something already present and of value in current organisational practice makes it consciously available and invites possibilities for developing imagining practice further.

Also in my relating to practice, as opposed to organisational theory, my inquiry was informed by surprises which formed a journey from a naïve appreciation of imagining conversations towards an ability to make more subtle distinctions. These surprises constituted as reflexive learning on practice experiences, rather than being planned in a research proposal, emerged in the experience of researching. Drawing out similarities and differences of experiences of imagining practice, in an attempt to create coherence for myself, led to the concept of games of imagining. Similarly attending to shifts in imagining practice required me to take a much closer look to what is involved even in the process of reflecting on discourse itself and led to the concept of game changing and discursive reflexivity. In this sense the research approach of recursive iterative abduction (Agar, 2006) and an ongoing orientation to what seems to be useful and interesting (Weick, 1989) were gaining an emergent relevance alongside the research experience. Reflecting on this research journey my learning for future research is to allow for researcher or research team to be moved and redirected in the research experience, to be awake to the emergent nature of methods, approaches or even purpose of a research journey, to anticipate for initial positions to be naïve and to embrace surprises or even set-backs as signposts to further developments.

I find that the proposed concepts of games of imagining, game changing and discursive reflexivity are useful for my practice, for instance as coach or therapist, in attending to how conversational spaces are shaped and to what consequences (entitlements and limitations) for imagining. These concepts facilitate to engage in inner or outer reflexive talk about possibilities and limitations to imagining, to make power relations explicit and to invite participants into positions to make reflected choices for how to conduct a conversation. I find they are also useful as a concept for me to critique my practice and to reflect on what happened in conversations that I feel not so satisfied with.

Having pointed to the usefulness of the ideas developed in this research I am also aware that all concepts or stories we develop to make our experience coherent are partial, that alternative stories can be made, and that I have to continue be open to learn from surprises. It will be in the next steps of presenting my research to wider audiences (at the

time of writing I am planning two workshops) when these ideas will be developed further as practitioners with their different experiences, backgrounds and reflections will join this dialogue on imagining organisational futures.

Academic relevance and future research

This research contributes to a small body of empirical case research into organisational imagining informed by social constructionist positions and ethnographic sensibility. For future research I suggest the frameworks and sensibilities proposed in this thesis could be used and developed further in action research settings, for instance aiming to develop the reflexive capabilities of participants in organisations to engage in the emergence of their organisation possibly using concepts like *games of imagining*, *game changing* and *discursive reflexivity* as a resource. Such research interventions could aim to serve the development of organisational capability, effectiveness and ethics in particular areas of organisational practice such as ethical decision making or strategy formulation. This flexibility of focusing the research within a frame of interest in imagining invites the possibility of conducting action research as client led rather than researcher led intervention, which would contribute to the viability and the ethicality of such research frames.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Literature review

This appendix provides background information on the strategy underlying chapter two on relevant literature and practice. It is an account of how literature sources have been identified and selected.

In this research I have engaged with literature as part of the overall research strategy of making connections and facilitate insights that are useful and interesting to practitioners, consultants, participants in organisations, and scholars. I have framed the review of literature as a discursive and dialogic performance in relation to these audiences. Each part of the literature review serves a particular purpose that emerges in relation to these audiences and in relation to the other parts of the thesis, in particular the research topic, question and aims. These purposes are the proximate reasons for including or excluding theory and other contribution in the thesis.

In the first part of this appendix I will provide an account of the purposes of reviewing literature which I will present as factual way rather than argue for them. In the second part I will account for strategies used to identifying literature more generally.

Purposes as criteria for inclusion and exclusion of literature

Systemic and Social Constructionist Theory and Practice

My purpose of inquiring into literature on Systemic and Social Constructionist Theory and Practice was

- to invite an understanding to this field of practice, in particular to invite making sense of how modern traditions informed by first-order cybernetics, second-order cybernetics and social constructionist traditions can be seen as interrelated.
- to do this in a way that invites an appreciation of the emergence of this field and a sense of its ethical foundations.
- to invite an understanding to fundamental concepts that are of relevance to later developments in the thesis, in particular this includes foundational epistemological claims of systemic and social constructionist theory.

Imagining

My purpose of researching in into literature on imagining in relation to the research question was

- to develop the meaning of the word 'imagining' in its use and an understanding of what we mean of 'imagining' when we talk *about* it rather than *use* it.
- to understand how imagining relates to other concepts such a memory, talk, relationships, action
- to relate, if possible, 'imagining' in its philosophical routes to the philosophy of language
- in support of my research question to try to develop an appreciation of imagining as a discursive, dialogical and relational practice or part of such a practice.

Imagining and organisations

My purpose of researching into imagining in organisations in relation to the research question was

- to understand how imagining practice is evident in, part of, or contributing to organisational practice
- to critically appreciate the discourse of imagining in organisational contexts
- to demonstrate diverse contribution and discourses.

Research methods

My purpose of researching into research methods was

- to situate choice and implications of researching from a systemic social constructionist position in relation to other research paradigms
- to develop and articulate sensibilities that inform research practice
- to articulate qualitative research methods

Search strategies

(a) literature already known

The research project has been developed against the background of an already established systemic constructionist practice which includes a living relationship to theory (Lang et al., 1990) in the community of practitioners. Examples are

papers relating to the emergence of major systemic constructionist schools of practice, for instance research papers constituting the Milan Systemic School (Selvini et al., 1980) or Collaborative Inquiry (Anderson and Goolishian, 1988).

(b) literature presented and referred to in the taught part of the course

During the taught part of the course several papers and sources have been presented and contextualised in their relevance for the course. For example Thomas Kuhn's 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions' (Kuhn, 1970).

(c) literature identified through research databases

I have queried databases for contributions useful to this research, in particular EBSCO Host Research databases but also Google Scholar and publisher databases of systemic journals. I have documented a core set of queries but not all queries I have made.

On the topic of imagining

From EBSCO Host research databases: Academic Search Elite, Business Source Premier, eBook, PsyArticles, PsycInfo, SocIndex, E-Journal

Searches included:

Imagination (title) and philosophy (abstract); full text

Imagining (title) and philosophy (abstract); full text

Imagination (title) and phenomenology (abstract); full text

Imagining (title) and phenomenology (abstract); full text

Imagining (title) and psychology (abstract), years 2000-2013; full text

Imagining (title) and psychology (abstract) and social (abstract)

Imagination (title) and psychology (abstract) and social (abstract)

On the topic of imagining & organisation

From EBSCO Host research databases: Academic Search Elite, Business Source Premier, eBook, PsyArticles, PsycInfo, SocIndex, E-Journal

For years 2000-2013

Imagin* (title) & constructionist (abstract)

Imagine (title) & organisation (abstract)

Imagining (title) & organisation (abstract)
Imagining (abstract) & psychology (abstract)
Imagine (abstract) & psychology (abstract)
Imagination (abstract) & psychology (abstract)
Imagining (abstract) & organisation (abstract)
Imagin* (subject terms) & organisation (subject terms)

(d) orientation through summative or structured reviews

I have used reviews on subject as a way of identifying relevant literature and gain an oversight of research subject. These reviews I gathered partly through the research in databases as under (c) above, for example Carmel Flaskas 'Frameworks for Practice in the Systemic Field' (Flaskas, 2010, 2011).

(e) extending and selective searches

I have extended literature searches to include topics of relevance that emerged from the review. An example is the topic of moral imagining in decision making (Werhane, 1999) that emerged in the wider topic of imagining in organisational theory. Once the topic was identified as of significance, I extended my review for other contributions on this topic changing search terms, for instance looking for 'moral decision making' which is neither related to the term 'organisation' nor to the term 'imagining' but still points to a practice relevant to imagining in organisations.

Such searches include also searches for literature or the work of authors referenced in other searches and the review of research pools. For example typing 'CMM research' into Google leads as first link to www.pearceassociates.com which offers a comprehensive set of articles on research and researching with Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM) theory.

Appendix 2 - Transcripts

7.1 Transcript A - Entrepreneurs

Sam	Well, we're expecting great things of you, Rob.	001
Rob	Yeah, yeah. If, if you, if you're not averse to me going outside and getting some funding, ah...	002 003
Sam	>We'll probably share it.<	004
Rob	Um, so, I, I'm always searching for, for opportunities.... and I realise that to marry up <u>us</u> to those opportunities we, we need to find, and fund it ourselves or we need to find somebody else to fund it, and if you get somebody else to fund it it gives you much more flexibility. It's easier to spend other people's money.	005 006 007 008 009
Sam	And we don't have any so... [overtalking, laughter]	010
Rob	So I might, I might need to start introducing <u>us</u> to other people.	011
Sam	What is it, is it the concept I have this, this is what I, this is a, yeah, a company really, this is what we, it's a product.	012 013
Paul	But at some point people are going, they'll want to meet you... us. Now what, okay?	014 015
Sam	Yes, yes. So, we, we'll move on.	016
Sam	Okay, so we'll do that. So we just start to talk about "Now what?" and, um, well, Rob's talking about going and get lot, lots of money, if that's okay with us. We said it's okay.	017 018 019
Martin	In this discussion, is there a particular role you want me to play? Obviously I can't be part of it. Is there a way you would like to be facilitated or kept on track, or if there's anything I can do,.. you just let me know.	020 021 022 023
Sam	(To Gert) Well, you probably know best about this one because you're more used, you know...	024 025
Gert	Keeping us on track and be, be very clear what we want out of this in terms of commitment, in terms of, ah, timing and deliverable, short term deliverables.	026 027 028
Rob	Here, here, here was an idea I had...	029
	[overtalking]	030
Sam	Can we plan to complete in two hours and then we know where, where our end point is?	031 032

Rob	Okay.	033
Martin	Is it okay if I interrupt here... to make a process check if this is delivering to you what you wanted to get out of... [overtalking]	034 035
Rob	So, if we come up with an idea, um, I, I, I'm not exclusively focused on <i>Country_V</i> , but <i>Country_V</i> is an interesting part of the world at the moment because there's, there's, there's, there's going to be a lot of <i>named industry reference</i> investment, um, a lot of <i>named industry reference</i> capability is going to come in. It's going to need a lot of enabling and support and therefore there is an opportunity... It's, it's, it's <i>Place_B</i> read large but there's going to be a lot of opportunities surrounding that, ah, and that could be the same in, in <i>Country_U</i> . Um, so, so... [overtalking] but it could be.	036 037 038 039 040 041 042 043 044 045
Sam	Bit less than <i>Country_U</i> , I think.	046
Rob	Um, so there's an area that, that I'm looking at now, so if, if I could come up with, um, a bundle of, of, of things that we could do, as a, as an opportunity, and I can find somebody who wants to seize that opportunity and put money into us, but doesn't know how to go about making it all work, then as a, kind of, incremental step towards bringing it all together I could say, well, we could put in one or two people now to start establishing, ah, the mechanics of a, of a plan and then bringing those components together and then starting to crank up the machine. You know, would, would that be something, a proposition that you'd be interested in now, and if the answer to that is yes, then, would you be interested in, in moving forward like that? Now that, that, that bundle of opportunities could... sorry, so, so those activities within that opportunity [clears throat] could be things like, um, trying to establish, ah, a number of small industrial, ah, concerns, um, in terms of bringing the right people together. It could be things <u>like</u> reaching out into [<i>concept with business partners</i>] for big companies like <i>Company_A</i> , <i>Company_B</i> , to come in and start, sort of, [<i>concept with business partners continued</i>] so that that feeds back into, in, into their <i>Country_V</i> 's content strategy. It could include things like [<i>concept continued</i>].	047 048 049 050 051 052 053 054 055 056 057 058 059 060 061 062 063 064 065 066 067
Gert:	Meaning what?	068
Rob:	So companies will arrive [<i>concept and possibilities detailed for about 30 seconds</i>] putting all the components in place and, and,	069 070

	and building up a <u>venture</u> .	071
Paul	For ourselves rather than for...	072
Rob	No, we would have to be going in with somebody.	073
Paul	<u>Yeah</u> , but, but, okay, but...	074
	[overtalking]	075
	[10 sec removed on request]	076
	[overtalking]	077
Paul	No, - happy with that.	078
Gert	One, one element in there that you said upfront is that we would be, we should have, we should be able to sell ourselves on what we can do and earlier we touched on that. We said, well, let's keep it very broad but I think we should still do that, that we have, like, a common, a common storyline of what these ideas are.	078 079 080 081 082
Martin	Can, can I hold you [to Gert] in this for a moment because it's almost another thing and - we should do this as well. I just wanted to, um, er, relate to, have the group fully relate to what Rob's <u>offer</u> was almost to the group, you know, "Are you happy with me doing that, packaging up opportunities, noticing them, bringing...", and, and <u>you</u> [addressing Paul] have responded but I haven't heard from <u>you</u> anything, Sam. I just wonder if you now open the next one to, to nail this one down.	083 084 085 086 087 088 089 090
Gert	[to Rob] And could we do that without any more work now that we just start looking for opportunities whatever they are?	091 092
Rob	So, I, I, I have an opportunity in mind. I, I don't want to go too, I don't want to go too far down because, ah...	093 094
Gert	You are being recorded.	095
Rob	Because, A, I'm being recorded, [laughter] because it's not as mature as I would like it at the moment. Um, but there is a <i>Country_W</i> dimension in all this. Ah, there is an entrepreneur, ah, and a from <i>Country_W</i> , is merely a subject matter expert who's, who's inputting on a, on a discreet basis so when I say end to end basis, so he is being paid to deliver a, a, a... so he's not, he's not a partner, he's just being paid to, to input some, some advice; um, <u>entrepreneur</u> , very, very keen to bundle up a whole series of activities into a <i>named business concept</i> , essentially. The <i>named business concept</i> will attract interest where people will want to go, well, well regionally we want to bounce out of <i>named location</i> in <i>Place_A</i> and bounce into, to one of the <i>named business concepts</i>	096 097 098 099 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107

	in <i>Country_V</i> , and so we <u>set up</u> , um, a concern, a <u>venture</u> in, ah, in a <i>named business concept</i> which offers a complete <u>spectrum</u> of, of, of, and I don't want to constrain myself by saying, [<i>part of</i> <i>business idea</i>], I don't want to constrain myself by saying, by saying, um, [<i>part of business idea</i>], it, it could, it could be anything depending on...	108 109 110 111 112 113
Gert	[<i>Briefly names further possible parts of business idea</i>]	114
Rob	Yeah, depending on what the needs are. That's relatively straightforward to set up from a business perspective, funnily enough, it is. What, what's tricky is the environmental piece and this is why I think we've got something to offer. Ah, it's, it's, it's easy to set up a [<i>part of business idea</i>] structure, for example, just the simple mechanics of it, very difficult to set it up in <i>Country_V</i> . It's very difficult to <u>harness</u> the differing, different components that might well come from different areas and different tribal... groups in, into one whole. Um, you can't just bring in an expat company; you've got to work with what you've got, you know that and, and, and there's a real need to start bringing all this together, ah, and so that, that will be part of the offering, um, as well.	115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126
	So there are, there are many <u>facets</u> to this business venture. There are some great ideas. Money is not a problem but what's needed is people who can make it all work... initially. I mean, the first, the first eighteen months is going to be tricky. Um, that engagement has to be structured from our perspective as a business engagement rather than four individuals working for that holding company, so we just need to be canny about the way we package ourselves.	127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134
Sam	Can I just ask you a technical question, about the <i>named business</i> <i>concept</i> ?	135 136
Rob	I've just done it in as an idea, of course.	137
Sam	Yeah, okay, but you've clearly got something in mind about that. In a <i>named business concept</i> [<i>continues with content question</i>]? Is that how they work? I know they work like that in some places where you, where you get all the sweat shops... um, do you know or not? I mean, you know, there are things that we can look into but...	138 139 140 141 142 143
Rob & Sam	<i>about 2 minutes of exploration omitted for confidentiality</i>	144

Sam	Okay.	145
Rob	But, but, but what you won't have is, is lots of 13-year-olds, ah, ah, ah... [overtalking] no, no, no, no, this is, this, this will be in support of, ah, [reference to several renown companies], so their corporate social responsibility, um, demands will be higher. So, so we will not be allowed to operate out with the <i>business reference</i> . We won't be able to do any, any, kind of, you know, it'll be squeaky clean. It'll just be within a <i>named business concept</i> .	146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153
Gert	And how do, how do you see the set up? What, what role would, would we play in there as a, as a company of whatever, whatever shape?	154 155 156
Rob	Well, this is what, this is what I'm trying to explore now, um, this is what I'm trying to explore now because it, it, it, ah, it will be very easy for somebody to set this up in <i>Country_Y</i> . You would, you would merely [describes simple way of setting up a named <i>business concept</i>]... it's a very straightforward exercise. In <i>Country_V</i> you just can't do that. It's <u>so</u> complicated. You need to be very attuned to what the regional agenda is or provincial agenda is. You need to be tuned into what the, the, the, the interaction is provincially to, to, or to national government. You need to know who the rising stars are in the organisation and what their agendas are, because <i>Country_V</i> is, is not like <i>Country_Z</i> . It's, it's, it's, in 15 years' time <i>Country_V</i> is going to be where we're all buying our holiday homes, you know, it's going to be, it's a very exciting place to be and people from <i>Country_V</i> are very industrious and hardworking. They're not, in my view, ah....., they're programmed for a contribution. They're not, they're slippery and that would be my view. So, so nobody knows, nobody knows how to deal with people from <i>Country_V</i> . They all know they have to, but they don't know how to, they, they don't how to do it, so what they'll do is they'll simply go to, um, an agent or a partner who, who, and that might necessarily be a good fit.	157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177
Sam	Is, um, so your, in terms of how this happens practically, were you saying you, you were proposing to write up a series of activities very much within the context of <i>Country_V</i> opportunities, so at least the things that we could do about, you know, the <i>Country_V</i> content and, um, [part of business idea], commercial... so that's	178 179 180 181 182

	what you're proposing to do, is it, to write something up like that, that you would use as a, as a, as a marketing tool?	183 184
Rob	Ah, I'm hunting a specific opportunity at the moment. I'm, I, I'm really exposing this, so if you don't like it I, I, I'll, um... What I would propose to do is, is, on the basis of some of the discussions we've had this morning I'm, I'm getting a feel for what we could do, and I, I, I'd be shaping my approach to, to the entrepreneur which back to funding to, sort of, offer something that I know would be, ah, would playing to our strengths. So, I don't... I'm desperate to keep this away from just a consultancy.	185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193
Sam:	Yeah	194
Gert:	Mhm	195
Rob	because obviously in simple terms I really want to, because, you know, we could set up, ah, ah, an industrial plant, ah, ah, ah, very easily.	196 197 198
Gert	Mhm	199
Rob	You, you, you're an expert in the <i>named industry reference</i> world, um, we can all structure a plan stemming from a concept through to implementation for quite a complex problem	200 201 202
Sam	Mm	203
Rob	and offer a solution. So, so it's, it's, it's a question of, of here's an opportunity, how can we exploit this to best effect?	204 205 206
Gert	Mhm	207
Sam	My, my feeling with it is there's no point, um, if we're going to try and seize opportunities, there's no, you can't muddle them. There's no point in saying, um, um, you know, you know, we've got to have a, you know, business plan written out that we've all agreed that you can present, you've got, you've got to let people go and we see where the opportunity leads them. But on the, on the other hand, you know, I come from a different background which is all about <u>ethics</u> and actually you all three are involved in ethics but I, I do... the only thing I have in my work environment is reputation building that I,	208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217
Rob	yeah	218
Sam	and I can't... You know, when, when <i>named person</i> asked us if we would like to	219 220

	have some equity in the company, security company, um, and, you know, contribute to building its <i>regionally specified</i> business, you know, I don't want to be going anywhere near a security company that carries out activities in <i>named country</i> that I have no say over, that I'm linked to, you know, completely destroy... anyone does any due diligence and you'll find it out immediately and destroys everything I've done.	221 222 223 224 225 226 227
ALL	Yeah / Mhm	228
Sam	So, I, I want to know what you've, um, you know, from a, kind of, what you're saying, not before you say it, but I want to know what I'm associated with, so if you're writing up these are the kinds of things that we can provide you with, you know, quite like to follow it... Um, what I'd like you to do in this situation is keep us <u>informed</u> rather than... [overtalking] don't want, you know, people write to me and you have to approve it... not, <u>not muddle it</u> but, kind of, follow and say there is a level of discussion at any <u>stage</u> . And, you know, I know <i>Country_V</i> too well, he's also quite a few years there, I know there is discomfort. There will always be. In all these places, whether <i>Country_V</i> , in <i>Country_W</i> , we were talking about it yesterday, for me the complicated area, maybe you too, Gert, I don't know, there's going to be an ethical issue always, you know, how far do you go because business is carried out differently in these cultures and we all know it. And, you know, what we understand as corruption is very different from... [overtalking] corruption and, and it's complex and you have to work with culture... [overtalking]	229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246
Paul	I agree, I think where we [addressing Sam] can add value, you and I can add value, is, is where you [addressing Rob] can't in terms of, of having that mobility, and, and, and ultimately no need for job security in, in the short term. And so, so I suppose we can, sort of, vector in there to, to... [overtalking]	247 248 249 250 251
Sam	And Gert, surely.	252
Rob	Yeah.	253
Gert	Um, um, your question was, yeah, do we buy into it? I think I'm all for exploring opportunities and I can see that we have such a <u>wide field</u> that we can tap into, ah, that we shouldn't limit ourselves at the moment. I, I think we need to trust each other	254 255 256 257
Sam	yeah	258

Gert	in, in how we approach it	259 260
Paul	yeah	261
Gert	that it aligns with our, our core values.	262
Sam	And if we find out what's going into other areas that we should bring it up, and we just share it by email and say, look, this has just come up, if there's anything we've discuss, how does everybody feel about it and just keep it open and informed, um, but, but open to, to move in different directions, because you will find out different things...	263 264 265 266 267 268
	[overtalking]	269
Sam	... this is what we want to do and you'll go, well, we can probably do that as well, or haven't talked about it.	270 271
Gert	And, and the structure to, to support these or, or make these opportunities come to life can be very different depending on the opportunity. And if we, if we see one and we decide to grab it then we would have to all four of us put time in it and move fast and set up the structure to make it happen. I personally don't see that as a blocker, not having the structure available now.	272 273 274 275 276 277
	[Removed on request]	278
Sam	Do you think there's any, any room... sorry, go on.	279
Gert	No, I was going to go after the next opportunity.	280
Sam	Okay, just note on that one	281
Gert	yeah	282
Sam	and on others of that type which are, you know, very much about seizing commercial opportunities for introducing an ethical element. I mean, what I'd like us to do, we have only talked about this Paul and I, is develop this, this thing [a business concept], um, and maybe alter it and make some changes after today, put it on websites for, um, um, <i>Company_H</i> which you can tie in when you go along and sell, say, look, you know, this is also, you know, this is part of this whole set up and, you know, have a look at this as a different angle on things. You know it doesn't, you know, it'll be up to you whether you think that's a useful thing or is a trap and use it or not use it, and perhaps you set it up as something that can be used to underline a point about, you know... These are very uncomfortable areas for lots of people in terms of what's going on in, in	283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296

	<i>Country_V</i> and, and so that, that maybe confidence [inaudible].	297
	So, you can use it as you want because it's not actually what	298
	you're selling, it's something additional.	299
Rob	Ah, ah, and what, and the clients that, that we will be looking at	300
	bring in, are, are, are of the, sort of, [names two large companies],	301
	sort of, stature so... these people would be interested in doing	302
	business in <i>Country_V</i> in a sustainable fashion. Um, you know,	303
	I'm not talking about bringing in, ah, fly by night sort of companies,	304
	bringing them from <i>named regional reference</i> or cheap, cheap,	305
	cheap sub- <i>Country_R</i> , subcontinent labour. I'm not, I'm not	306
	talking about that at all.	307
Sam	Okay, well, why don't you develop that as a contribution, you	308
	know, just put it all up there... [overtalking]	309
Paul	Give, give us a quick feel for timescale, timeline on, on that, on	310
	this idea.	311
Rob	Ah, the, the, um, <i>Country_V</i> government has gone through	312
	<i>[describes Country_V's industry specific action and expected</i>	313
	<i>future developments]</i> , um, over probably the next, ah, 18 months.	314
Gert	Do you think it's going to happen that quickly?	315
Rob	I do.	316
Gert	After the first round?	317
Rob	I do, I do, I do.	318
Gert	Um, do you see the Minister, the Ministry changing their terms of	319
	reference?	320
Rob	I...	321
Gert	Because they're not going to attract the big players with these sort	322
	of, ah, terms and conditions.	323
	[overtalking]	324
Sam	<i>[Provides industry_specific detail]</i> , is that we're talking about?	325
Gert	Yeah, that's what <i>Company_B</i> signed on for.	326
Paul	It's the <i>Company_F</i> as well.	327
Gert	<i>Company_A</i> also bid but they, they dropped out.	328
Martin	We are now a bit into content of that.	329
Gert	Ok	330
Sam	Yes. Can I just ask what another company, could cook because	331
	that's very conflict ridden and so, sort of, years ago we were	332
	looking at actually <i>Company_A</i> ...	333
	[overtalking]	334

Sam	Yeah? So, if that's not gone through on the first round it's a difficult one...	335 336
Gert	No, <i>Company_A</i> pulled out because of.... the terms and conditions.	337 338
Sam	Okay.	339
Gert	What the Ministry was prepared to offer was just not economically viable, and so they, they'll have to, I think the, the <i>Country_V</i> government will have to make a, a change of, of mind if they want to, to develop <i>named industry reference</i> .	340 341 342 343
Rob	And that's what people are thinking. So, elections at the start of the year, how they approach the second licensing round, these will all be... [overtalking]	344 345 346
Sam	When's that? Six months later or...?	347
Rob	Well, it's supposed to be, it's supposed be last month, so it's this month, probably back end of the year. A lot of people are now posturing politically with the <i>Country_V</i> government to try and get them to, to, to have a much more enlightened approach to <i>named industry reference</i> .	348 349 350 351 352
Sam	And how does that impact in terms of all these other services that could be offered?	353 354
Rob	Okay, so if anything up north, in simple terms, standby because you're competing with <i>Country_Q</i> for any kind of work. I mean, there's a massive <i>Country_Q</i> , ah, ah, influence there. Um, anything in the south; much more..	355 356 357 358
Sam	But the <i>named population</i> will be completely against that so presumably they've, you know, might prefer an impartial...	359 360
Rob	Could do. Ah...	361
Sam	[overtalking]...I thought there is conflict...	362
Rob	You know, in, in terms of roots there and it's all quite... [overtalking], you know, it's not that easy. Um, whereas in the south much, much easier in balance on comparison terms much, much easier. Ah, but you're going to get a number of players and we don't know who those players are because our, our experience from <i>Company_A</i> is <i>Company_A</i> doesn't really do stuff, they just orchestrate stuff. It's, it's the [<i>names companies</i>] who are, who are going to be doing all the stuff.	363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370
Sam	Do you have lots of contacts in all these companies?	371
Gert	Hmm, not so much but more in the construction, project	372

	management business.	373
Gert	I mean, I, I know the CEO of the biggest construction company in <i>regional reference</i> is <i>Company_E</i> , and, um, I talked to him a few days ago and I think he'd be interested in, you know, moving into <i>Country_V</i> as well, so the construction of roads, airports, ah, infrastructure, <i>industry reference</i> facilities.	374 375 376 377 378
	[overtalking]	379
Rob	So, so I'm, I'm sensing that, that, ah, that <i>Company_B</i> are starting to come much more forward leaning now, are very keen to get moving. I'm taking my temperature from that, really, and I just think that if they move fast the <i>industry reference</i> service companies will be quickly moving, ah, so, and that's all down south, so, so there'll be a lot of activity I think in the next eighteen months. And, of course, when, when, because it's a highly competitive world, ah, and so it's not so much when things will be delivered and start happening, it's all the posturing that goes on beforehand. So, in terms of selling, selling stuff you can actually do a lot of selling well in advance of, of, of, of your client... [overtalking], you know, so if you, if you, let's say we had a <i>described business concept</i> and we owned 50% of it, ah, you know, there'll come a point in time early next year where you could probably sell 100% of that <i>named business concept</i> , ah, to people who might not necessarily be operating from it for, for another nine months, but they've got it.	380 381 382 383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396
Sam	So in terms of the discussions that you, you might start with the, the, this concept that you have there, when are you thinking that, before the end of the year?	397 398 399
Rob	Ah, er, this particular, ah, ah, entrepreneur move, moves very quickly. He, he's already moving.	400 401
Gert	Is he talking weeks or months?	402
Rob	Lean and agile and I mean comes up... If you hit him with a good idea, ah, expose maybe some of the risks associated with it, talk about those risks and he decided on balance it's a, it's a, it's a decision worth taking, he just takes the decision. Ah, you know, he's <u>phenomenally</u> fast.	403 404 405 406 407
Sam	So you've got to do quite a lot of work in terms of what, like 50% of trading... [overtalking]	408 409
Rob	So the conversation I... This is exploratory. [overtalking] So the	410

	conversation I have now on the other side of the fence is, these are the people, let me introduce them to you, this is what we think we can do. So, if we, if we get involved in these sorts of activities this is where I think, you know, we might, we might have an advantage over somebody else who might be offering, offering the same, because you're right. Yeah, yeah, people will be all over this.	411 412 413 414 415 416 417
Sam	Okay, and so your timeframe is, is, is pretty much now for that, for those exploratory discussions?	418 419
	[15 s removed on request]	420
Rob	At the moment we're having offline conversation and I have no formal business relationship with them. I mean, I could, I could certainly generate, ah, you know, so if I, if I talk to, um, a <i>Country_D</i> colleague who, who likes this idea, wants to make it happen, I, I can give you some work. Ah, at the end of the day, you know, you're happy.	421 422 423 424 425 426
	[overtalking]	427
Sam	Okay, those opportunities, there's an opportunity anyway there and it go into lots of different things.	428 429
Rob	Yeah, and it could build in a number of ways.	430
Sam	Yeah, okay, okay. If they're all, kind of, happy that you pursue that I think is what everybody said.	431 432
Rob	Yeah, yeah, and how it, how it, how it builds, I'm not, I'm not too sure.	433 434
Paul	No, that's right.	435
Rob	But I will have an interest in it, if you, if you see what I mean, so I might, I might, I might end up generating a whole lot of salaried income for you but I'm, I'm, I'm interested in this.	436 437 438
Sam	Yes but what we're not looking for is... [overtalking]	439
Rob	... I know.	440
Sam	Lovely, is for you to find something, get a percentage of the contract and employ us, that's... [overtalking].	441 442
Rob	I'm not saying I'd do that. But, but... [overtalking]	443
Gert	It sounded like it.	444
	[overtalking]	445
Rob	Ah, well, it will be stepping towards... So, what I can't, what I can't give you is a nice little hugger-mugger idea where, where all four of us go ping on a, on a Monday morning, we're all working	446 447 448

	together and we're all making a lot of money. I can't, I can't do that. But what I might be able to do is step to it in, in, ah, in a, sort of, incremental, sort of, way, ah, and I'm more happy to start putting that in place, but, but on the understanding that, that I'm doing it because I'm, I'm working towards a business as we... [overtalking]	449 450 451 452 453 454
Sam	For you or for us?	455
Rob	For us.	456
Sam	Sure?	457
	[laughter]	458
Sam	Well, because the way you're talking has, has changed in that last, last discourse which is <u>you</u> be available to, to, to make this happen but I will have an interest obvious I need to get something out of it, but there's, also we're in a two themed [overtalking] thing going on.	459 460 461 462 463
Rob	By <u>you</u> , I said that you're available, you know, you've contrasted your availability with my availability. I said I don't have an issue with that because I think, I think this will grow...	464 465 466
Sam	Yes	467
Rob	in a slightly different way to, to, you know, the big bang theory.	468 469
Gert	I think where the discrepancy is, that you gave the impression that you would have, like, equity in it and that, that we would be salaried employees.	470 471 472
Rob	No, so I never seen, I've never seen that as a, as a, as an issue, so, so even if we start off in simple terms as, as four people in a company, then the profit's split four ways. The overhead is your salary so, so, so, so...	473 474 475 476
Gert	Ok, so as long as we are clear	477
Rob	You want 2000 a month, fine. You want 25,000 a month, let's talk about it, but what's left in terms of the profit and the, and the growing reputation of the business is split four ways.	478 479 480 481
Sam	Okay, because, because, I mean, that, that's, I mean, that's where we were with, um, <i>named business partner</i> as well. Absolutely we are mobile and we're available to go and work in places and, um, but we, we're not looking for work, we're looking for a business to set up and that may require going and being on the ground and	482 483 484 485 486

	doing that as part of building our business, um, but very much a part of building our business rather than an income generating opportunity. It was very welcome but that's not what we are. Have I explained it explicitly?	487 488 489 490
Paul	I think, I think you've summed it up saying, we want to work for ourselves.	491 492
Sam	Yeah.	493
Paul	Now, if, if we have to, if we have to use, use... [overtalking] stepping stone or a bridge to be able to do that then it will be nicer to, to, to have the aim of our own show at the end of the day because that's how we're going to make... [overtalking]	494 495 496 497
Rob	Yeah, yeah, and, and, and that's the way that I would discuss this with... Now, if, if, if, and I'll be honest, if, if, if on the other side of the fence the view is, no I don't want to do that, then, then,... [overtalking] but, but, you know, I, in that dialogue, have learned something which, which we, collectively, can benefit from.	498 499 500 501 502
Sam	I think a key thing that comes up, the point that Gert made about trust. It's about being a partnership, [unclear] down as a company, um, where we can all contribute different things, but operating as a partnership and that will mean that we, you know, get, contribute different, yeah, different things but then actually we're trying to build, um, something of <u>value</u> together based on those different strengths and commitments, availability, networks, etc.	503 504 505 506 507 508 509 510
	END CONFLICT ON OPPORTUNITY 1	
	START OPPORTUNITY 2	
Gert	Shall we, um, look at the...?	511
	[overtalking]	512
Gert	No, I think, I think the Country_U one that you were talking about with Company_C, ah, I think is worth, worth exploring. Do you know Named_Person?	513 514 515
Sam	Yeah.	516
Gert	And what position is he?	517
Sam	He's the MD.	518
Gert	For Company_C in Country_U?	519
Sam	Yeah.	520
Gert	So he's the man to talk to?	521
Sam	Yes, and he's extremely accessible and, um, it's been something	522

	that's been on my mind since I was there in April, since I left, but I	523
	need to pull up, I need to pull up now, what I'd like to do is I'd like	524
	to send him an email, um, with a...	525

7.2 Transcript B1 - Interview with Gert

Martin	Yes, so... the idea for this interview is to revisit conversations, and that may be past conversations, and in the second part is there to think about future conversations with the focus on what I call... imaginative conversations, so ... times when people together explore and develop probabilities, either intentionally, or sometimes it may be all of a sudden... in a conversation a new possibility may occur which no one has thought about. It was not even planned that this will be this conversation. So these conversations I've started to call imagining conversations. And I'm pretty open to what they are, and I'm not intending to say it's this or that conversation, but uhm, I hope at the end of the research I will be able to point my finger to it, and help other people to point their finger to these sort of conversations and how to enable them, and what makes a difference, but I'm not at this stage. This is why the research is there. But when I say imagining conversations where people somehow develop new possibilities, is that something you, we could relate to as a working descriptions of what we're interested in?	001 002 003 004 005 006 007 008 009 010 011 012 013 014 015 016 017 018
Gert	Yes.	019
Martin	Yeah? So in terms of the work of this group of entrepreneurs you are part of – people who think about new possibilities. The conversation in relation to that may have been sort of significant or been generative in that particular way. Are there any episodes, either in that group or maybe even talking with others, that you could think of.. that you say well this was a time when a new avenue has opened for a group, or for me as being part of that group?	020 021 022 023 024 025 026 027
Gert	... Hmm.. I think as a group we've only had two conversations. There was the one hmm in the <i>Region_A</i> and then the one here in the house,	028 029 030
Martin	Mhm	031
Gert	(2s) And yes, the main... not the main... trying to find the stimuli that I got from this probably have come from discussions with others outside the four.	032 033 034
Martin	Mhm	035
Gert	I just... dreaming and imagining the future, unconstrained ideas.	036

Martin	Mhm	037
Gert	I think what that did put me on... a higher level of awareness of possibilities.	038 039
Martin	Mhm... Okay, so if we were to... and I don't know now, would you think it's more meaningful to look at... we probably can pick two or three of those conversations or conversational moments. And obviously it's sort of your choice what you think you're as well prepared to talk about but... ahm, - which one would you pick? Would you pick some with the group and some with people outside?	040 041 042 043 044 045 046
Gert	I'll pick one with my sister.	047
Martin	Okay. (3s) So if we explore this one and would there be another one you think to explore, provided we have the time?	048 049
Gert	Hmm - Yes, we can try because I don't think it's going to take that long, the one with my sister.	050 051
Martin	Perfect. So, when you think about the conversation you had with your sister, and we go to the time prior to having this conversation, hmm... was there anything involved in preparing this conversation, like getting ready to? Planning it? Was there sense of that, or was it not, the sort of conversation that gets prepared and set up or planned in any way?	052 053 054 055 056 057
Gert	No, no preparation.	058
Martin	No preparation. So what was the context of that conversation? How come you and your sister met and...?	059 060
Gert	Ahm, that we've always been close, always been on the same wavelength, and with all the things changing in my life, I was at her place and then we just started talking about the future, about dreams, about what we want in life.	061 062 063 064
Martin	Okay. Was it your future dreams or was it both of your future dreams that were sort of...	065 066
Gert	Mainly mine, but we did touch on hers as well, and uhm yes, realised that she already has uhm gone a long way towards her dreams.	067 068 069
Martin	Okay, so she has realised a lot of that?	070
Gert	Yes.	071
Martin	Okay, so have you sort of emphasised this realisation? Was that of particular importance to you that you've realised, well, that you together realised, that she already has made so many things true	072 073 074

	which were part of her dreams?	075
Gert	Not a sudden realisation because yeah, I always knew that, that she wanted something else and that she pursued that and the dedication to go with it, and now she's... yes, she's there where she wants to be.	076 077 078 079
Martin	Right... Right.	080
Gert	So then I challenged her – what's next?	081
Martin	Okay. And I get this sense from how you're describing this conversation that the context of talking with your sister and the closeness that the two of you're having, ahm... in staying in touch in the way that you do and the relationship. That was the bigger context for the sort of conversation you were having.	082 083 084 085 086
Gert	Yes, because there has to be trust, there has to be confidence, there has to be this mutual understanding of minds before you can, I think, enter in such a conversation.	087 088 089
Martin	Right. Right, and I'm thinking then as well that trust, confidence, mutual understanding ahm... is interesting, so it is sort of family context. Is there something about how conversations are in your family, or do you think it's when you're there exploring futures, is this more a family context, or would you say that's a cultural aspect, or is it just a very specific uniqueness of that relationship that you have with your sister?	090 091 092 093 094 095 096
Gert	No, I think it's ahm linked with the relation you have with a person, because there's a few other persons that I could have similar conversations with.	097 098 099
Martin	Okay. So then it's these qualities, trust, confidence that...	100
Gert	There's a number of I think parameters that have to be fulfilled before you can have such a conversation.	101 102
Martin	Right.	103
Gert	You can have a factual conversation with a lot more people but the intuitive part and the dreaming part and the letting go and imagining part I think requires a, ahh sort of closeness of relationship that you have with a few people only.	104 105 106 107
Martin	Right. Okay. So in... the consequence of having that conversation with your sister, what sort of... difference did that specific conversation have, in terms of what made it possible for you then to do, or to engage with?	108 109 110 111
Gert	I think it allowed me to... make a number of decisions.	112

Martin	Right.	113
Gert	And it strengthened my resolve in making those decisions.	114
Martin	Right... Right, and the decisions you're talking about, they are... how are they related to the conversations you had and the sort of imagining you did with your sister? Did you imagine these decisions in the conversation with her or, ahm, was it not that directly related?	115 116 117 118 119
Gert	No, it was quite specific. Whether to stay with <i>named company</i> , whether to go, and yes, how the future would look like in both, and what that would mean in terms of quality of life, and the family and the impact on myself.	120 121 122 123
Martin	Okay. Okay Great. So [overtalking]...	124
Gert	I think it's the kind of discussion whereby - you put the facts that you have in a kind of emotional context.	125 126
Martin	Okay... Okay - Facts in an emotional context. Is that sort of evident from the conversation would you say, an emotional context? I'm just thinking probably everyone would understand something different; I'm not sure if I would make the right...	127 128 129 130
Gert	What that mean is if you do A, what do you feel then, or how does that make you feel? What sort of energy does that give you?	131 132
Martin	Okay. Do you think you have... have you discussed this in this sort of really expressive way, that you were really exploring the feelings of different possibilities or was this more implicit, that you have sensed whilst you were talking, oh, this feels good?	133 134 135 136
Gert	Initially implicit, but later in the conversation explicit.	137
Martin	Okay. Now that's quite interesting. Okay.	138
Gert	My sister has studied a <i>named humanistic / social study</i> .	139
Martin	Right.	140
Gert	And so she's working in that area, so hence the sort of questions that she'd ask.	141 142
Martin	Okay, so she was asking useful questions in that conversation?	143
Gert	Very, yeah.	144
Martin	Very useful questions. That's interesting. Okay. Is there anything more to be said about the sort of questions she was asking?	145 146 147
Gert	..Yeah ... Probing, going beyond the monetary aspects of decisions, going to the quality of decisions related to the quality of life, family values and the like.	148 149 150

Martin	Right.	151
Gert	Because, uhm, in making decisions, uhm, it's easy to just look at a few aspects only.	152 153
Martin	Yeah.	154
Gert	I think what we did on the Wednesday here with the four of us, we touched upon the influence of the decisions on our lives, but we did not really drill it down.	155 156 157
Martin	Yeah. (3s) So just staying with the conversation with your sister then, that... I get a sense of this conversation... and I guess what I'm starting to wonder now is moving a bit away from it but using it as a benchmark, you were saying you had a couple of conversations with people outside of the four. And... I guess you were saying you hadn't planned for the conversation with your sister, but is there something about [overtalking]...?	158 159 160 161 162 163 164
Gert	Again?	165
Martin	Sorry, I said you hadn't planned for this conversation with your sister?	166 167
Gert	No, I had <u>not</u> , yes. Correct.	168
Martin	Exactly, but I was wondering if you had a couple of conversations with people outside of the four, uhm, entrepreneurs, if there was something about wilful engaging into these sort of conversations with people that you have that relationship with and exploring possibilities with them, or had it just happened, like it happened with your sister in the other case?	169 170 171 172 173 174
Gert	The latter, yes.	175
Martin	It just happened. Interesting. Okay, so other than the conversation with your sister, what other things do you think may be interesting to reflect on when it comes to this imagining? Is it another outside of the group or would it be a conversation within the group? If we just pick another one... that is relevant.	176 177 178 179 180
Gert	Yes, let's take the start of the... oh, but you weren't around then.	181
Martin	It's fine, I don't need to be around.	182
Gert	The start of the discussion, the four of us.	183
Martin	Oh yes.	184
Gert	"What do we want out of this venture?"	185
Martin	Okay, so this was on the day when I was coming in the morning, right?	186 187
Gert	That's right, yeah.	188

Martin	And, if you now again go to the time before this conversation happened. Uhm, in this case there was a sense of preparation to some extent,... of the coming together.	189 190 191
Gert	Aha	192
Martin	So, how has this... how did this preparation flow, and who was involved in preparing it?	193 194
Gert	Paul, Sam and myself.	195
Martin	The three of you? So it was three out of four.	196
Gert	Yeah.	197
Martin	And as you were preparing it, what were our <u>aims</u> for this conversation?	198 199
Gert	I think to <u>explore</u> , where we each were coming from. What our expectations were. What our limitations and constraints are, and then to identify the common ground in those, uhm, to see if we could take this forward.	200 201 202 203
Martin	Right. So was the sense that the common ground in your personal positions will be important for how you take it forward?	204 205
Gert	Extremely important.	206
Martin	Extremely important? Can we go more into extremely? Why did you say extremely? I have a sense of that there is more to be said. Maybe I'm wrong.	207 208 209
Gert	No, you're right - In that this venture would most likely involve a lot of travelling and whilst Paul and Sam are okay with that, I'm okay with a little travel, and Rob somewhere in the middle, between a lot and a little,	210 211 212 213
Martin	Mhm	214
Gert	and I think to find a common ground there is going to be very important to move forward.	215 216
Martin	Right.	217
Gert	If there's acrimony or misunderstanding of misappreciation of what people put in the venture,	218 219
Martin	Right	220
Gert	related to perceived effort in terms of travel that could be a stumbling block.	221 222
Martin	Right. Right. But when you were preparing for the meeting, did you really know that travelling is one of the topics that you were planning to table as part of that agenda point?	223 224 225
Gert	Yes.	226

Martin	Okay. So that was already clear at that stage. Did you have other things that you felt this we need to test,... other than travel?	227 228
Gert	I think preparedness to take risk....	229
Martin	Right	230
Gert	in terms of dropping what we're doing and then jumping in with something new.	231 232
Martin	Okay....	233
Martin	Okay - and so you had quite specific objectives for that part of the meeting. What was your thinking what other people want to get out of sort of looking at each other's positions? Did you have the idea they had similar points behind it or, was it not too relevant what they wanted?	234 235 236 237 238
Gert	No, I think it was all relevant. We were all coming from a very, very similar angle.	239 240
Martin	Right,... and in terms of preparing this very relevant agenda point of, uhm, where everyone is coming from and what they want to get out of it,... can you help me where you have learned, or how you...you know, how did it come up in the first place? I'm just thinking another group may not have that agenda point if they come together because they may have had different experiences in their lives before they meet. Is that something you had seen already somewhere being done, or has it been suggested by someone else, or how did you come to make this... acknowledge this individual person position as something very important, so that it was going to the agenda?	241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251
Gert	I'm not sure I understand the question entirely, but [overtalking]	252
Martin	Okay, let me then try to rephrase it. To put it on the agenda of the meeting at that time, prior to it there must have been a sense of this is a valuable agenda point. That's good spending time on, and I'm interested in where did this sense of this is important come in from?	253 254 255 256 257
Gert	I think just (clears throat) common sense and we're all mature adults and yes, these are things that are automatically, I think, included.	258 259 260
Martin	Automatically included. Okay.	261
Gert	You have your values, what you want to do. None of us had to think twice before the agenda, it was so obvious that that was a key issue.	262 263 264

Martin	Right. When you met before, did you discuss the same issue as well, like in the <i>Regional Reference</i> ?	265 266
Gert	Yes, we touched on it. Yeah.	267
Martin	You touched on it already then, okay.	268
Gert	And I guess if you're twenty you don't think so much about it, but if you're fifty then I think you have some experience in life and you know what is important and what isn't.	269 270 271
Martin	Yeap.	272
Gert	(laughs)	273
Martin	Something about the position in life and the experience you have had... yes. Okay, as I'm saying I'll ask you sort of odd questions and it's not that I wouldn't be able to suggest answers to it, but I don't want to make these suggestions. Because something is - how come a particular conversation is happening and what made it possible, and therefore I'll ask you sort of maybe sometimes odd questions.	274 275 276 277 278 279 280
Gert	That's okay.	281
Martin	Okay. So then, when you had the conversation in the meeting, how did that go, what sort of happened there in terms of exploring the individual positions? Can you describe it a little bit for me so that I get a sense?	282 283 284 285
Gert	Yeah we all indicated what is important for us in life and what do we want out of it and important in life of, uhm I think intellectual challenge, uhm family values uhm travel as I said earlier, and also the monetary aim.	286 287 288 289
Martin	Mhm... And how did you experience this conversation? When people they're sharing all these aspects?	290 291
Gert	No particular.... feeling either way. It was fairly factual.	292
Martin	Fairly factual? In terms of trust and confidence, was it different than the conversation with your sister?	293 294
Gert	Yes, I was just going to say that. Quite different in that the dreaming aspect, the imagining aspect, uhm, was.. not there, or was there to a much smaller extent.	295 296 297
Martin	Right. And how do you make sense of that difference? (1s) How do you explain for yourself that it was not that imaginative?	298 299
Gert	(5s) Mmm. Don't know. Good question. We were not really in a dreaming mode, or in imagining mode like... yeah, putting all the constraints aside and thinking what it would look like it. It was	300 301 302

	fairly... yeah, fairly factual.	303
Martin	It was fairly factual. Okay, and... yeah, I guess I... you as well have been fairly factual then in this conversation or do you think you have tried to make a difference by being a bit more dreaming?	304 305 306 307
Gert	No, I didn't.	308
Martin	Okay.	309
Gert	I had way too much wine the evening before.	310
Martin	Okay, (laughs) so that as well, how it's sort of set up,	311
Gert	Aha	312
Martin	...and I mean, I was wondering was there a sense of this is actually a work meeting as well? You need to produce something in this meeting compared to one you had with your sister.	313 314 315
Gert	Yes, because we had... we wanted a number of deliverables out of that meeting.	316 317
Martin	Right. Okay. And in terms of the implications now, from this meeting, uhm - what are the consequences of having had that sharing of positions about travel and money and interests and so on? ..What is the significance now of having shared that?	318 319 320 321
GertI think a better acceptance and understanding where each of us is. And that's why at the moment things on this entrepreneurship is pretty, pretty quiet, because Sam had to go off and do some work, earn some money, I had to go and... yes, get out of Company_A, Paul is busy with the boat and Rob is doing his normal job.	322 323 324 325 326 327
Martin	Right, so uhm a sense of now, currently it is a bit silent but that is better accepted and it doesn't... do I understand, better accepted as it doesn't constitute a threat to the group because everyone knows that that's the situation?	328 329 330 331
Gert	Yes, but I think it does constitute a little threat.	332
Martin	Okay, but if you hadn't talked about these individual positions?	333
Gert	It would have constituted a far bigger threat.	334
Martin	Okay, so then in a way, having talked about that creates at least some safety for the group to continue?	335 336
Gert	Yeah.	337
Martin	Interesting. Okay. Is there anything else significant about that conversation in the group on individual positions that we haven't touched upon?	338 339 340

Gert	(5s) Yeah, also what... I think we touched on travel, we touched on uhm, personal ambitions and what constitutes a challenge for us. And, and for Rob it's much more about money, for Sam it's more about changing the world, for Paul it's... uhm, that's my interpretation of course... it'd be interesting to see the others think about it.	341 342 343 344 345 346
Martin	Yeah	347
Gert	For Paul it's a combination of money I think, mainly money, and for me it's far less money driven but more a combination of having the intellectual stimuli that I need in my life and the sense of achievement.	348 349 350 351
Martin	Right ... Okay, and having shared that as well in the group is now of relevance as you... develop further the group or provide some safety or does it have a different consequence to it?	352 353 354
Gert	I think it's a better understanding of where we each come from, and, and if you understand where each of us is coming from then you can understand better people's decision, remarks, ideas, actions.	355 356 357 358
Martin	Right	359
Gert	You understand the person as a person better.	360
Martin	Okay. Good. Well, thank you. So we have sort of explored two very different conversations about future possibilities and having talked this through, do you think that that was a good, uhm exploration or do you now have the sense we should really look at a third one which is yet different or is... would be very interesting to look at?	361 362 363 364 365 366
Gert	We've covered a significant range already in that conversation.	367
Martin	I'm just thinking, we now have looked at two conversations in the past, and I was thinking if there are future conversations that you say well this next conversation, either a conversation in the group or maybe as well a conversation with someone outside of the group is important for creating the next set of possibilities for how this will develop further. Are there any of these conversations that would be interesting to look into how they are going to be prepared?	368 369 370 371 372 373 374 375
Gert	I honestly haven't given that a lot of thought... We know we have to get together again, either over the phone or... yeah, probably over the phone, in the next couple of weeks but we haven't really	376 377 378

	planned anything.	379
Martin	Right, and do you think it's going to be planned somehow, and if so, who do you think is going to do that planning?	380 381
Gert	Yeah - good question. I think all four of us are beavering away on our own things at the moment. I don't know, maybe Paul will do it, but... not clear at this moment.	382 383 384
Martin	Right, not clear. And if the meeting goes ahead, what, what would you like to get out of it, or what would you like to see happen there?	385 386 387
Gert	At the moment my expectations are very low in the sense that, yeah, we all know that the next couple of months not much was going to happen, so my expectation for that conversation would be, everybody coming back in the room from where they are and their own developments that were going to happen and touch base and see if there's any opportunities that have come out, but I think for me the main purpose would be to, yeah, touch base.	388 389 390 391 392 393 394
Martin	To touch base. So what is the importance then of this conversation to happen? How is this question, because I sense... that it isn't very high on the priority list, so let me just... what if the conversation wouldn't happen? Is it important for this group?	395 396 397 398
Gert	I think so, because we have to keep the momentum, or we have to keep the idea alive, and that means touching base with each other. If we don't, people grow distant, and by growing distant the idea that germinated between the four of us will die.	399 400 401 402
Martin	Right	403
Gert	... a natural death as it doesn't get watered, it doesn't get fertilised.	404 405
Martin	Right. And there's something about frequency then that I sense, to touch base in not so far distances so that the idea is kept alive.	406 407
Gert	Aha	408
Martin	Is that... I'm just wondering on the interval, do you have the sense that this is the right time and you're planning it now, or is it already too late, or is it too early now that people have no appetite because it's not the right time?	409 410 411 412
Gert	Uhm, no, early November I think is fine.	413
Martin	Okay, and preparing it closer to the time is probably fine as well?	414
Gert	That I'm not so sure of. (laughs)	415
Martin	Are you not so sure?	416

Gert	Yes, maybe we should do some preparation.	417
Martin	Okay, well, let me ask you at the end of the interview if there is something which I can do... for you as a group. Okay, I guess... and I'm just thinking, if that meeting, this next meeting was working out the way you would hope it works out in terms of catching up and keeping the idea alive, what would be the outcomes for you that you then say this is... you know, what would it allow you individually or as a group to be able <u>to do</u> at the end of it?	418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425
Gert	I think to maintain the belief in the idea. That for me would be good enough for now.	426 427
Martin	Yeah	428
Gert	I know for the next couple of months I can't do anything but yes... leaving <i>named company</i> , packing up, setting up base somewhere else, getting another job.	429 430 431
Martin	Right. Okay. Good. So, uhm, if we step now back a little bit from looking at three conversations, two in the past and one in the future, having talked in that way about these conversations, is there any sort of reflections on your side that this may... have... you realised something or you think about doing things differently? ... And there may be not. I don't have any expectations to this question, so it's not... it's not a fishing question.	432 433 434 435 436 437 438
Gert	Nothing immediately big jumps out.	439
Martin	Yeap.	440
Gert	Like that I would have realised that oops, we forgot something or we haven't touched on something or we behaved in the wrong way.	441 442 443
Martin	Right.	444
Gert	The one aspect that intrigues me is the... I think the lack of, or a certain lack of imaginative power we had in the meeting with the four of us as compared to the meeting I had with my sister.	445 446 447
Martin	Interesting.	448
Gert	And the energy level that it creates in an individual.	449
Martin	Okay. Is there a consequence to that... sort of you... is it something you actually think would be useful to do more in the group of four?	450 451 452
Gert	I think so, because if you can create the energy or if you can create more energy, then that's good.	453 454

Martin	Right. Okay. I think, as far as I'm concerned it probably brings me to the end of the interview. Uhm, in terms of... I've written all of that up, but basically, I'm still finishing the transcript of the other piece of work which I could record, but as I have transcribed this then I will sent it to you.	455 456 457 458 459
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7.3 Transcript B2 - Interview with Rob

Martin	I'm interested in imaginative conversations. I'm thinking of these moments where people together talk and explore future possibilities, they develop possibilities, <u>maybe intentionally</u> , or you have a good conversation and all of a sudden a new possibility is on the table, which nobody... you know, people didn't come and gather for that very purpose, but it, sort of popped out of the conversation.	001 002 003 004 005 006 007
Rob	Okay.	008
Martin	Now, looking at the past,	009
Rob	Yes	010
Martin	do you have any... does anything come to your mind that you said this is... this would be an example related to this group, where you said, well, in this conversation some new ideas emerged or popped out of it? And that could be the meeting which I have been part of, but any other meeting that may be relevant in that context may be interesting to explore.	011 012 013 014 015 016 017
Rob	Okay. Um, well, I mean, clearly Paul and I have worked before in a different environment. We weren't physically in the same place together, but we, we were involved in similar activities and would speak once, twice, maybe five, six times during the day over the telephone.	018 019 020 021 022
Martin	Mhm	023
Rob	And then we would meet occasionally, and got on well, and struck up a friendship, which clearly has endured. And I think the situation that we were both in, we were both pivotal in separate organisations, working similar issues, and, um, we both knew that we were very influential in our respective organisations. And, so, I think we appreciated that if we could lock in together somehow then our, sort of, intellectual, ah, competencies, let's call that, ah, combined could be quite a potent, ah, ah, combination.	024 025 026 027 028 029 030 031
Martin	Okay. And has there been a significant conversation where you had this, sort of, realisation, why don't we two lock together?	032 033
Rob	Yes, I think we've done that on a, on a number of occasions, where we've said we should really work together or we should really do something together, and part of me thinks that in terms	034 035 036

	of the outputs from that, sort of synergy, ah, you would be delivering something of value, and the other part of me thinks, ah, not only that, but, actually, we get on well together, ah, and it would be quite enjoyable, and we know what our tolerances are, so we can push the bounds of a particular problem or an issue, or a venture. Um, and, so, our, kind of, relationship tolerances are greater, because we would be friends. Ah...	037 038 039 040 041 042 043
Martin	Right.	044
Rob	That was one... And then I met Sam subsequently, and Gert, together, and Gert and Sam think very differently. Ah, though I would be very much, ah, relationship based, very much a communicator, very much, ah, intuitive feel for opportunity and very much a lateral thinker, ah, I like to throw myself into structuring things that are... I'm less comfortable with ploughing through the detail,	045 046 047 048 049 050 051
Martin	Right	052
Rob	because I, personally, think that investing in the detail is not a particularly good use of my time.	053 054 055
Martin	So, Rob, if we wanted to pick a very specific conversation now, um, and that could be, like, when you first time met Sam or, I don't know, whatever conversation that may be relevant, do you think you could nail one down? Or you could... is there so much in the flow that we can't focus on a particular one in the past?	056 057 058 059 060
Rob	No, because my relationship with, say, Sam, or Gert, was initially very much, um Sam and I shared an office together, we were two <i>named profession</i> , I was taking over a portfolio from Sam, she did things very differently. I mean, at no stage in that, sort of, three, four months together did I ever think, gosh, I must go into business with Sam. I recognised, um you know, this phenomenal competency that she's got, but I never thought for one moment in that time, must, must go into business with Sam. And similarly with Gert, I only knew Gert for about two weeks in <i>named country</i> , but I got on well with him and I liked him, um and Gert was always at that stage committed to <i>named company</i> , ah, um. I have phoned him up subsequently and asked him to connect me to people, but that was always on the assumption that Gert was a, sort of, career <i>named company</i> man. It wasn't until very recently	061 062 063 064 065 066 067 068 069 070 071 072 073 074

	that, ah, ah, I suppose at <i>named occasion</i> , which will be in the summer, July, when it was quite clear that the four of us were starting to think about, um, what opportunities would there be for going into business together.	075 076 077 078
Martin	Right.	079
Rob	I don't think it was, ah, one particular conversation, or one moment, but I think that our circumstances in the summer were such that we all met at <i>named occasion</i> , and that was the opportunity to bring us all together, when we just had a number of conversations around, um, let's do something together.... I would be attracted to that, but I would want to know what we were getting into. And, so, in the margins of <i>named occasion</i> I had separate conversations with Paul just to work out what it was, in outline that Paul wanted to do, um, because I think his start point and his situation is probably different to my start point and my situation.	080 081 082 083 084 085 086 087 088 089 090
Martin	Right. So, this conversation you had with Paul, in around... I think it was at <i>named occasion</i> there, could we pick that and unpack that a bit for the purpose of this research?	091 092 093
Rob	Yes, of course. So, um...	094
Martin	So, in terms of preparation for it, when you went into this conversation, or before, had you, sort of, planned this is going to be a conversation where we're going to take some time and sit and see what, you know, could that mean for the two of us, what would Paul want to do, what would I want to do?	095 096 097 098 099 100
Rob	Yes. I've... the preparation, from my perspective, was I just wanted to make sure in my own mind that, what I wasn't getting into, was a convenient business arrangement, ah, for Paul and Sam to do, ah, regular, occasional <i>named professional occupancy</i> without the need for, um, working for somebody else. And, so, they wanted to have their own business that they could dip into when it suited their circumstances. And to me that is just a convenient, ah... a model of convenience rather than a business model that you put value into and grow with a view to selling on or it enduring for five or ten years to make you a lot of money. So, I just wanted to have that offline with Paul as a, sort of, first check that Paul and Sam were going to be going into a business where	101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112

	they wanted to build it, add value to it, and then there was a, sort of, longer term objective.	113 114
Martin	Right. So, and did you prepare in any way for this conversation, or was it, sort of, all fresh and very clear in your mind what you wanted and what you wanted to check, or did you have other conversations or think [unclear] I need to prepare for that. What is exactly what I want to get out of this meeting?	115 116 117 118 119
Rob	No, I, um... no, it was just an intuitive concern that, ah, knowing that I'm in a different situation where, if I was to commit to something, I, um, would want to know that, ah, you know, whilst I'm committing to it other people aren't using it as a convenient vehicle to cut out, um, a, sort of, corporate overhead, effectively. Ah, um, so, Paul I always knew, when he was a <i>named profession</i> , didn't particularly like working for other people, because he felt that he could do the work himself and not lose a significant percentage of the profit margin, ah, in paying for somebody else's overhead and, ah, um, somebody else's profit. So, I just wanted to know from Paul, ah, where are you going with this? What, you know, what's driving...? You know, what are your drivers for this? And that was a very short conversation, um, and on the basis of Paul's response I was pretty comfortable that the drivers were aligned. So, from that I was more than happy to go forward and go to the next level, which is really to get all four of us together, identify where, you know... what it is we want to do, because at the moment, ah...	120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137
Martin	Can I slow you down a little bit?	138
Rob	Yes.	139
Martin	Um, this is just for, sort of, flashing out some of the detail of the aspects you've mentioned. Um, when you, sort of, set this conversation in a... you planned for that conversation, you said we should have it, or whatever, um, and you wanted to check the intentions of Paul in relation to what your ideas were, of what you wanted it to be, what, sort of, had informed your position in this that you did... you wanted it to be a business, I think, as you said, one would want to invest in, and what... and the idea of, sort of, building a business and maybe selling it on after so-and-so many years, um, was there anything that, you know, had to do with, I don't know, your professional career to that date or the way you	140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150

	have run or been involved in businesses prior, sort of? What has informed this particular position?	151 152
Rob	Okay, ah, well, that's an interesting question. Ah, um, no, I think what was driving <u>my</u> approach to it was to work out what Paul's own drivers were in all this, because I had sat in an office with Sam for four months and so I, sort of, knew her... the way she operates. I know what her strengths are. I know how she goes about solving problems and I've got a reasonable idea what her drivers are. And what I, what I don't really know, at this stage, is what Paul's drivers are. Is it because Paul just wants some money to tide them over for two years? Is it Paul wanting to just get some tick over income so he can go sailing around the world? You know, what are your drivers for this, Paul? It's more me trying to understand the, sort of, softer human side of it rather than me making any kind of judgements on, ah, the propositions that Paul might have, ah, the business models he's got in his mind. Ah, no, not at... at that stage that's not of interest. Ah, it was the softer side, you know, what is actually pushing you towards starting up on your own and therefore being prepared to take a bit of a risk, ah, and, you know, what is the appetite for risk here? Ah, you know, are we going to throw thousands of pounds in on this or, ah...? So, it was that, sort of, softer side, the human side, that was of interest at that stage.	153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173
Martin	And is this something you've done before, before you go and you enter in any, sort of, close, um, business relationship with someone, that you, sort of, do this, sort of, testing out of interests and motives? What is... how come the other person is, is creating that possibility or inviting that possibility? Is that a way of working of yours?	174 175 176 177 178 179
Rob	Yes. I think that would be, ah, um, one of my paramount considerations, you know. What is driving the other person? What are they really wanting out of this? Because if I understand those drivers, then when we get to the next stage, which is when we start to, sort of, identify opportunity, look at the proposition, step to a model, then I've got all those discussions in context, um, because, clearly, if you're going to commit to something in whatever way it is, you want to know what the risks are of all the other parties changing their mind, going off in a different direction,	180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188

	ah, only loading up 10% of their effort in this. So, even when I'm doing other things, you know, my first driver is to look at the guy who I'm trying to connect with, or the woman who I'm connecting with, and thinking, you know, what is making them tick here? What is their circumstance? Where are they in relation to the company they're representing? And then I can get through to, ah, the next stage.	189 190 191 192 193 194 195
Martin	Okay. So, it is something which you do in your job, so to speak? It is...	196 197
Rob	Well, I wouldn't say... when you say that it's, um... it sounds as if, let's say the company I work for, <removed>, had said to me, the first thing you must do is this, and... or the <i>named organisation</i> or when I worked for <i>another named organisation</i> . I've never ticked like that, because, clearly, after thirty odd, you know, years' working experience you've got your own ideas about how to approach building a relationship or looking at the relationship in context before you then get into... and I might not necessarily do it as a discreet preliminary. I might well do it in parallel with other discussions. But to me that broader contextual side, um, in a previous job that would be very much a broader political context, then these things are important, because then when you drill down and look at specifics you've always got the opportunity to come back up again and look at that in context, and that, to me, is very important.	198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212
Martin	Right. Very clear... thank you. So, when you did have that conversation with Paul, what, sort of... what happened in that meeting? What was your experience of that meeting? You said it was a very brief conversation?	213 214 215 216
Rob	Yes. And, ah, I... ah, two things happened, really [laughs]. The first was that I got a very, ah, passionate response from Paul about this not being a convenient, ah, endeavour that was going to just generate opportunity for him now and again, it was something that he wanted to work at, and something he wanted to commit to, and add some value to. So, he said all the right things, and, so, I was reassured that, ah, um, you know, we're going in the right direction here. Um, or, you know, if Paul had said no, actually, Rob, what I want is I just want a little agency set up so whenever I feel the need to work I dip into it, and that's that, that	217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226

	would still have interested me, but at least I know what it is we're... you know, what's driving it and the context, um. And I might have had a little bit of that, you know... I might have, sort of, involved myself with that, because maybe that suited me, but, but I needed to know that, so. And the other thing was I noticed at the time that you can't split Paul and Sam. So, Sam was off to a flank and was clearly irritated that Paul and I were having a, sort of, offline conversation together. So, that was... again, that softer context for me, and I'm, you know, at the end of that meeting, more than happy that I know where Paul and Sam are going together on this. So, that's first tick done.	227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237
Martin	Right. Now, in this conversation you said, well, sort of, Paul did or said. What, if you, sort of, recollect, did you do in that meeting? Did you share your idea? Did you ask Paul questions and explore fully what his understanding or his passion is? Do you have a recollection of what you did in that conversation?	238 239 240 241 242
Rob	Yes. I would have given him a couple of, ah, you know, things to talk about. You know, I would have said to him, Paul, are you interested in starting up a business, investing in it, absorbing the risk, sustaining that interest, adding value and then maybe selling it and making a lot of money, or are you just looking at a situation where you're irritated that you've worked for other people in the past, you want your own company, but that company merely signposts opportunity which you get on with individually and get a nice, healthy salary, and that's that? Ah, so, I would have, sort of, posed, you know, those two models and just waited to see what the response was.	243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253
Martin	Right. So, you as well shared your thinking about possibilities, which were sort of... in the reach of, yes, this could be one or it could be that?	254 255 256
Rob	Ah, correct. I mean, we would never have enough time together, because it was, you know, you were sharing that space with about 100 other people and clearly <i>limited in a way that relates to the occasion</i> . So, I was conscious that I didn't have enough time with Paul, um, and so, you just had to cut to the quick, as it were. You just had to get to business straightaway, and, and that was useful. So, you know, no more than, probably, half an hour walking on the beach, but enough to give me... a sensing to what Paul's thinking	257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264

	was.	265
Martin	Right. And in that conversation... that may be a bit of a strange question, but do you have any sense of that... the way you related, your relationship, changed somehow, was different through that conversation than it was before?	266 267 268 269
Rob	Not really, because I, I you know... I know Paul pretty well, and I suppose it's the same in any relationship. When you start to know people <u>well</u> , their question, ah, if their, sort of, human response is not normal, ah, um, then you know that, you know, maybe there's an issue there, but I never got that with Paul. I mean, I felt he was being pretty straight with me and, you know, and absolutely very comfortable with what he said. So, I, ah, didn't have a... he's being guarded here, he's not, ah, telling me everything, or,... You know, I didn't walk away with any particular cause for concern. I just wanted to see what the drivers were, ah, got a reasonable view, got quite a passion view, passionate view, um, more than happy at that stage that, ah, I could see where he was coming from, so.	270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282
Martin	Right, right. So, does his... his being so passionate hasn't changed you or the relationship between the two of you? Is that...? Sort of, going out of this meeting, and you relate different to Paul as you know this is Paul, the entrepreneur who is wanting to build something big, or this is...? But it... I sense it was, sort of, more reconfirming your view of Paul? Having that conversation was quite what you had expected? It didn't change substantially how you relate and your relationship?	283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290
Rob	No, it didn't, ah, change at all, no.	291
Martin	Okay.	292
Rob	So, on the basis of that I, ah, thought, yes, okay, well, let's move forward. Um, of course, outside of the relationship with the four of them, ah, there are all sorts of other things that are happening, which are shaping, like my approach to this. Um, and I think Paul is aware of that. So, I think, you know, this is very much an iterative thing. I get, ah, the impression from, ah, Paul that he understands my particular predicament and he knows that I'm a, sort of, competent operator, and that although we might not necessarily end up all sitting in a little office together, all four of us, you know, in inverted commas, in business, we may well be	293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301 302

	connected, ah, in some other commercial way, and I'm starting to see now that there are, you know, any number of opportunities and ways of doing that. You know, we don't need to be sitting together, all committed to one business opportunity, um.	303 304 305 306
Martin	Right. How does the conversation you had then, the two of you, how, sort of... what direction did steer that, the whole idea of co-operation so that it's still relevant today? Has the conversation then set boundaries or created a space which is still relevant, given that you had many, many other conversations since then?	307 308 309 310 311
Rob	No, I don't. I... no, we don't want to bring too much significance into that. Ah, I mean, we were simply just doing a gross error check that, ah, there was some scope to do business together. And then I knew that Paul would go away with Sam and that they would spend a lot of time thinking that... thinking the specifics of what it is that the business was going to do, you know, because we've gone about this all ass about face, you know. We haven't said, you know... I hadn't discovered a great opportunity and thought to myself, what I need is I need two people who can do this and one person like... ah, Paul, Sam and Gert. I mean, we haven't done that. What we've done is we said that we're four people who have worked together in the past, ah, and could maybe work together in the future. Let's go and find an opportunity. And you've got Gert and Sam who are saying, actually, what we did for Company_A is a very good model, um, you know, a very good delivery model, ah, so, let's now talk about how we can make that as the basis of the business. Ah, and clearly that was the, sort of, thrust of that meeting at Gert's house, where I'm not convinced that that is the opportunity or the delivery model that is going to make us a lot of money, um. Ah, so, um, I knew that when we met, wherever it was, at Gert's house it transpired, that Paul and Sam would bring an awful lot of thinking to the table.	312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322 323 324 325 326 327 328 329 330 331 332 333 334
Martin	Yes	335
Rob	and I was looking forward to what is that thinking. How is this, you know...? How are we now going to step from four people who want to work together to four people who have identified an opportunity and we're now going to pursue that opportunity, build up a, ah, business, ah, ah, model and then	336 337 338 339 340

	make sure that it's commercially sound so that we're going to make some money out of all this?	341 342
Martin	Right. So, this has been, like, your objectives going into the meeting at Gert's house, breaking that, sort of, framework which is connecting the thinking down to how is this going to work and how will it deliver money?	343 344 345 346
Rob	Ah, well, there was no real thinking beforehand. I... you know, there were some loose ideas, I think, but I... we all sensed that because Gert, and Sam, and Paul, and I were getting together, I think... I don't know if there was an assumption, but from my perspective I thought that whatever it was we were going to do by way of a business venture, it would be about advising people on the sort of things that we advised <i>named company</i> on and then maybe taking that through to some sort of project, you know, defining a project for them and then going through project definition through to, ah, implementation for them. Um, I thought it would be migrating that, sort of, way, which is, I think, the way it went, if your recollection is the same as mine?	347 348 349 350 351 352 353 354 355 356 357 358
Martin	Yes.	359
Rob	Um, and I, ah, think there's a need for that, but I'm not too sure that that is the best way, ah, to make, to make money. But then I stand back from that and I think to myself, well, of course I don't have to commit to it, ah, to the tune of 25%, so I don't have to be an equal partner in all this. What I could do is I could have a role to play, a commercial role, um, and, ah, you know, we might find other opportunities where my role is bigger and theirs is smaller, you know. So, I've always tried to keep an open mind about this, which is why I would always appear reluctant to, sort of, commit to something. And, of course, on Paul and Sam's side, you know, ah, Sam is now working, ah, underwriting, Paul doing some exploratory stuff on another business idea. So, you know, we're not too different in terms of our need for a bit of stability, ah, rather... you know, and evolving this over time rather than going for a, kind of, big bang. Um...	360 361 362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369 370 371 372 373 374
Martin	Right. Okay... I'm just thinking, maybe to take us into the future at this stage.	375 376
Rob	Yes.	377
Martin	Just think about conversations yet to happen that, um, potentially	378

	make a big difference for your working together with each other. And I'm really not tuned in what sort of exchanges you have, and it may well be an email conversation, but maybe the meeting in January, but I don't know how often and how you, sort of, stay in touch?	379 380 381 382 383
Rob	Well, we, you know... so, I tried to phone Paul, ah, end of last week, never, never connected. You know, I might email in a couple of weeks' time. So, it's very occasional, but I do this in my day job at the moment, if you see what I mean. I mean, I will get together with a number of people with a, sort of, loose idea that we want to work together, albeit corporately rather than individually, and at every stage, or, sorry, every occasion that this happens, what we do is we just work out initially whether the chemistry is right and whether the outlying concept is right. And if the chemistry is not right, then fine, we leave it. If the chemistry is right, then we say, okay, we could do this sort of thing, and then there's a consensus to be built on whether or not we could do that sort of thing together.	384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393 394 395 396
Martin	Right.	397
Rob	And I think that's where we are, the four of us, um, at the moment. The next stage, corporately, if I go back to my day job, would be for me or some of the other stakeholders to come back and say here is a specific opportunity. So, let's now go away and brainstorm this and see how we, commercially, could get together and what sort of organisation and structure we would have, and then turn that over and say how does that look from the client's perspective, and then do a little bit of brainstorming on the connectivity to the client and how that would appear. Ah, and then once we've done that we can then start to look at the details of the commercial structures, and away we go.	398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406 407 408
Martin	Right. And this second step, which you now described, would be really... would that be the objective for the next coming together, or one of the next coming together of your group, ah, that you say, well, is now something... do we have a specific opportunity? And then do the work of how could we work it, what would it mean from a client perspective?	409 410 411 412 413 414
Rob	Correct. I mean, I would like to, you know... what I don't want is, I suppose, for Paul to say, you know, it's really great and exciting in	415 416

	<p><i>named location</i>. There's lots of opportunity. Ah, we're almost closing the deals. If we... if you came over to <i>same named location</i>, you know, with your competency and your experience we could do... I... That's not what I want, because I could flip that over and say, <i>same named location</i>, it's really big, you know, <i>named business opportunity</i> almost completed, ah, you know, <i>named business opportunity</i> in <i>same named location</i> are immense, bigger than <i>other named location</i>. Why don't you come over and have a look at this? You know, we don't want that. I think what we want next time is, ah, for one of us to say, here is a specific opportunity. This is how we could get involved together. Ah, let's now just brainstorm the detail of how we might do this, what kind of skin we might bring into the game, ah, what we're looking for by way of a reward, ah, and, you know, what the positive next step is.</p>	<p>417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425 426 427 428 429 430 431</p>
Martin	<p>Right. What did your take of what the three others have in mind as how the next conversations... what the objectives are of the next conversations?</p>	<p>432 433 434</p>
Rob	<p>You know, I think they're... they would, you know, broadly fall in line with that. We need to come up with a <u>specific</u>... and then work out, you know, if the four of us working together is going to differentiate us, in other words, for that opportunity the person who's going to pay the bills would want to pay us, ah, and then we work out, ah, you know, what responsibilities and what level of activity is required from each of us. And, you know, I have no difficulty in, sort of, keeping this, ah, kind of, not low key, but ticking over, because the chemistry is right and that's the most important thing for me, other than finding the specific opportunity, because that will come our way. Ah, it might be big. It might be small. The... my reluctance in all this is I don't want to commit to something where there is a degree of risk. You know, my appetite for risk at the moment, ah, is different to Paul's, but then I would argue that Paul has underwritten his risk, because Sam's gone off to <i>named country</i> to work there. You know, it's the same with me. I have to work the day job for the moment in order to, ah, if you like, cover the risk. But that's going to change, you know, as I go on with this journey. There will be more opportunity for me as I become more successful in other ventures. So, I don't see this as</p>	<p>435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445 446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453 454</p>

	being... I don't know what the word would be, but I don't see this as not being be all and end all, but I don't see that at the next meeting we have to come up with a project;	455 456 457
Martin	Right.	458
Rob	And if we haven't come up with a project, clearly it's not working between the four. I don't see it that way. Um, ah, I think we have got different skill sets and if we bring them together in a balanced, configured way that is appropriate to the opportunity we do stand a chance of being successful. Um, therefore, from my perspective, it's well worth keeping this debate going on. And I think Paul and Sam think that way as well. Ah, um, you know, I don't have a driving need to work with Paul and Sam. You know, it's not what my life plan is based on, um, but if I did work with them I'd find that uplifting and that would add another dimension to my life beyond, ah, just working. So, yes, I'm keen to work with Paul and Sam, but to me it's not the be all and end all.	459 460 461 462 463 464 465 466 467 468 469 470 471
Martin	Right.	472
Rob	And I think that's exactly the same with them. So, we're all in roughly the same place, I think.	473 474
Martin	Right. And in this, sort of, um... the way how you relate to, or the team is relating to, <u>opportunities</u> , and the way you relate to the team as something, you know, could be uplifted, is happy to do that, but only if it, sort of... if something specific arises out of our collaboration so that it really makes sense. And this way of <u>staying with the possibility</u> , if you see what I mean, is that something you would relate to? That is how you professionally operate in many spaces or is this something rather unique around a couple of teams or this particular team?	475 476 477 478 479 480 481 482 483
Rob	No, I, um, I mean, if the chemistry is right. So, I meet people during the course of the day and, ah, you know, I know, gosh, I like that person, I think they're very competent, we get on well together. Ah, and I would then actively try and keep in touch. I mean, it wouldn't be on a daily basis. You know, it would be on an occasional basis. And then, if in my conversations with other people suddenly they were talking about an opportunity and I thought, <u>ah</u> , I can make a connection without me being involved, then I would do that, because I know that, having done that, then	484 485 486 487 488 489 490 491 492

	somebody would either do it for me <u>or</u> , if I can see something in it specifically for me, if I say, look, I want to connect you with Paul and Sam. These are two people I've worked with. They will be able to do this. I can structure that approach for you, and for that I want an introductory fee of, you know. So, I will always be keen to keep this dialogue going, because there is always something in it.	493 494 495 496 497 498 499
Martin	Right. With these, sort of, meetings like the one you may have in January, is there a way you're preparing for this or you help others to prepare for it so that a sort of meeting is created that you would consider being useful at that time?	500 501 502 503
Rob	Yes. Ah, I'm not, you know, I'm not sure. I, I'm becoming more and more involved in <i>named country</i> . I see that as being an area where there is significant opportunity. Um, you know, I could input into that meeting in January a little bit about what, in broad orders, those opportunities are, and the timeframe, and the scale, and maybe the areas where we could get engaged, but at that stage I will not have a specific opportunity.	504 505 506 507 508 509 510
Martin	Right.	511
Rob	Um, now, Paul may well say to me, Rob, there is a... there is something <i>named business opportunity in a named country</i> . It requires you, ah, and if that is an attractive offer, if he wants me to, to come in, um, on the basis of whatever, then I would consider that. But, ah, you know, that's the kind of dialogue that I'm expecting. What I'm not expecting, ah, is for, ah, Paul and Sam to say this is our business model, this is, ah, how we see it all being structured. Can you comment on that? Um, ah, I don't think we're at that stage yet.	512 513 514 515 516 517 518 519 520
Martin	Right.	521
Rob	Because I don't... because that is all driven by an opportunity.	522
Martin	Yes. No, I can understand that.	523
Rob	Um, because I don't think we're the type of people, ah, and I don't, well, think I would be overly keen in this to say here is the business we think we should be in. Here is a business model. Now let's go and find an opportunity.	524 525 526 527
Martin	Yes.	528
Rob	Because I don't think that's realistic.	529
Martin	Yes.	530

Rob	In the area in which they want to operate, if you see what I mean, I don't think in <i>named business opportunity</i> ... I don't think <i>same named business opportunity</i> is the area to be in in a recession, to be quite frank. Um, ah, I don't, on a <i>named location</i> side, see there being the crying need for the sort of thing we delivered in <i>other named location</i> opportunity at this stage, and I don't think that's an easy sell, corporately, in the medium to long term either at this stage. And, so, I don't think that the opportunity is there at the moment in terms of timing.	531 532 533 534 535 536 537 538 539
Martin	Right.	540
Rob	And, so, you know, I'm more than happy to sit down and discuss, um, that sort of <i>named business opportunity</i> business model and I would have a lot to contribute, because, you know, I've done a lot of work already on this sort of thing. Um, but the front end loading in terms of the money you have to put in and generate in terms of, kind of, business financing, you know, will be significant. It's, kind of, US \$3 to US \$4 million, ah, for a relatively small endeavour and I'm not sure you'd get the kind of project financing from people for that for a <i>named business opportunity</i> . If you say you want to build a <i>named business opportunity</i> company in, ah, <i>named location</i> , for example, and that's, you know, a venture in the order of US \$50 million, funnily enough, I think that's much more exciting. Ah, and the likelihood is you probably would attract project financing for that. Um, so, ah, you know, I don't know where that's going to go. I'm not too sure if that's... that's Sam's core strength, <i>named business opportunity</i> .	541 542 543 544 545 546 547 548 549 550 551 552 553 554 555 556
Martin	Right	557
Rob	And I think Gert enjoyed working with Sam, and I think that's the area that they would want to get into. I don't mind doing my bit in terms of business development and marketing for that, and I would not want to... you know, I would not expect to be, you know, on equal shares with everybody else if I'm not doing that work, but I wouldn't want to be a <i>named professional occupation</i> , ah, ah, doing that sort of stuff. You know, I want to deliver something. I don't necessarily want to <i>further reference to business opportunity</i> . I mean, I don't get a personal lift out of that.	558 559 560 561 562 563 564 565 566 567
Martin	Yes. I understand. You know, one thing that I want to test with	568

	<p>you is um.... the way how I understand your, say, model of the conversations you're having here, is that people come and they, um, contribute what they already see as specific opportunities and then they get developed further in, you know, is there something we can lift? How would we do that and go into the client perspective? Um, what I wonder is... are there opportunities which neither of you hold as a specific opportunity, but out of your conversation you would see that there is one. So, let's just say... I'm going to make this up now. Let's just say, Rob, if you would say, you know, a couple of things happened in <i>named location</i>, but I don't see anything specific right now, but it's really very interesting, and I keep you posted. And let's just say, Sam would say something like, well, tell us a bit more what is happening there? So, she wouldn't think it's good enough you closing it there, she is interested, although there is no opportunity. And then we have, sort of, a conversation and all of a sudden between the three or four of you, you see, well, actually, there is something we can do now. Um, and it doesn't... feel to me, please don't... this is not a criticism. I'm just testing this. But it doesn't feels to me as if you, sort of, favour that model of doing a lot of dialogue around possibilities and trying to create something, but it's relatively clear cut, everyone has a competence going into the meeting, knowing what specific opportunities look like. You pledge them and you see if you can lift them or not, but the opportunity must already be there. It's, say, identified prior to the meeting, so to speak. It doesn't happen in the meeting.</p>	<p>569 570 571 572 573 574 575 576 577 578 579 580 581 582 583 584 585 586 587 588 589 590 591 592 593 594</p>
Rob	<p>So, I... no, I could, um, work that way. I, ah, suppose what drives me is where are the players in, say, <i>named location</i> or, if we talk <i>named geographical region</i>, in, you know, <i>named part of a geographical region</i>, where are they investing the money? You know, you have to follow the money. And I'm more than happy then to discuss, ah, you know, potential areas around that, ah, because there will be other parts of this jigsaw that Gert puts in. You know, when Gert goes over to the <i>named country</i>, ah, and starts to get very much a <i>named region</i> focus then there will be an angle from Gert which may just expose, ah, a unique perspective which adds something to this. No, so, I have no difficulty in talking around where the money is being invested, ah, and trying to work</p>	<p>595 596 597 598 599 600 601 602 603 604 605 606</p>

	out an angle to find the opportunity.	607
Martin	Right.	608
Rob	Ah, that would be wholly comfortable with me, but I think you have to follow the money.	609 610
Martin	Right.	611
Rob	And in, ah... yes, you have to follow the money and we have to be using our strengths somehow, ah. Those are the two, sort of... I can't... so, if someone says, this is what we're really good at, let's go and do this...	612 613 614 615
Martin	Yes, I understand it.	616
Rob	...you know, my first response is where's the money, you know? Why would people want to spend money on this? And is there a surplus of money in a recession that's in that area? If the answer is yes then, you know, I'm getting warm. Ah, um, and then I say to myself, okay, so, there's the money. There's the opportunity. Why aren't other people, ah, ah, there, you know, mining that opportunity? What is unique or what differentiates us? And then if I get to that stage then I'm starting to get comfortable, ah, and then I can start to apply the, kind of, entrepreneurial, ah, you know, creating the condition type stuff by talking round it.	617 618 619 620 621 622 623 624 625 626
Martin	Okay... clear. Thank you. That was explained well. Okay, as we are conscious of time, and I think I spoke about one hour, and I already have this hour from you, so I'm just thinking about finding an end, because I can go on asking you questions forever, and I'm sure your time is limited. So, um, from our conversation, um, has there been any, sort of, ideas or reflection regarding the past or the future that, and just out of curiosity as well, that we say, well, having looked at this now in this conversation with Martin, there are some aspects that came up, that affects you, that's interesting, or that is different from, in terms of your awareness, than it was before?	627 628 629 630 631 632 633 634 635 636 637
Rob	No, I think things have moved on slightly since our meeting with Gert, um, ah, and I'm now starting to be much more comfortable with putting together a portfolio career for myself and, as part of that, you know, one aspect of that portfolio career could well be a venture with Paul, Sam and Gert. So, funnily enough, I'm, you know... it's something that I would be actively considering, because I think with all... maybe even with Gert, I mean, Gert's	638 639 640 641 642 643 644

	been <i>named company</i> for a long time, so we're all used to one particular career set of circumstances, ah, Sam less so, but Sam has always been a <i>named professional occupation</i> . So, although she's been exposed to, um, a lot of situations, you know, it's always been more or less in the same... so, we've all got limited commercial experience, but we're gaining it quite quickly. So, I'm starting to get a better appreciation of what my commercial value actually is.	645 646 647 648 649 650 651 652
Martin	Right.	653
Rob	Ah, and, so, funnily enough I think I've got even more to offer as the months go on, um, but it might not necessarily be in a classic four-way venture on one opportunity. It might pan out to be something very different to that, but I know that if we do work together that the chemistry is right. So, the venture is likely to be successful on the basis of that.	654 655 656 657 658 659
Martin	Fine. And this idea of a portfolio career, is that...? That really came out of the last, I don't know, couple of months engaging with this group, or is this already...?	660 661 662
Rob	No, it's come from another place. It's come from, ah, um, trying to work out what value <removed as request>, ah, I've found myself struggling to work out [laughs] what value I... you know, they clearly want me and they clearly want me to do a lot of things, but I'm trying to work out what things I should do in order to maximise my own value to them. Um, ah, and that was a journey, funnily enough, I started on a few weeks after we met at Gert's and I'm still, kind of, struggling with it. <Removed as requested>. I could do that for that particular company over there. I could do a little bit of helping of that <i>named business opportunity</i> over there, and then I could do a little bit for Paul and Sam over here. Um, ah, and I'm starting to get excited by all of that.	663 664 665 666 667 668 669 670 671 672 673 674
Martin	Right.	675
Rob	So...	676
Martin	So, these possibilities are widening, actually, for you as we speak, or since we've met last, really?	677 678
Rob	Yes, they are, but I do... I'm conscious that I need to, you know... what is my own personal contribution to these things? Why do people want me to come and work for them? Or why do people want me... want to engage with me or give me some stake in their	679 680 681 682

	business? And, so, I'm trying to narrow that down. It's all very well saying, oh, I'm a competent bloke, you know. I can communicate well. I write well. I've intuitively got a feel for an opportunity. Ah, um, what actually is it? Is it...? And I'm starting to think it's building and owning a relationship, funnily enough. Um, I seem to be quite good at that. So, I seem to be good at, ah, building commercial relationships, um, in the round, top to bottom, in an organisation, and that then has some value. So, when you're proposing for work, you know, the company will have a threshold, you know, for that contract. Let's say it's US \$50 million. If you, through your own personal engagement and the depth of penetration that you've got into the client, if they're tolerant, is to go up another US \$10 million, then you've suddenly got your personal worth, you know, so, 20% of the contract. Um, you could lift a contract by 20% on the basis of your relationship with the client. Well, now, I mean, that's... I'm starting to get exposure to that. Well, that's causing me to think about, you know, where it is that I should be applying myself.	683 684 685 686 687 688 689 690 691 692 693 694 695 696 697 698 699 700
Martin	Right. I can see that.	701
Rob	Does that make sense, or have I not explained that well?	702
Martin	No, I think you explained it very well. Okay. Good. Well, um, is there anything, because I have [unclear] to some extent with questions, is there anything that, um, we, sort of, rushed over and... or interrupted you and you thought, well, this really needed to be brought to the picture?	703 703 704 705 706
Rob	No, I think when I went in for the meeting with Gert I, you know... my organisation was a bit, sort of, how, you know...? There are four people. Therefore you start with a quarter share in this endeavour. Ah, you know, how can I tailor this so that maybe, depending on the risk I do and the input that I put in, I might have 30% or I might have 5%, you know, just depends. And I struggled with that. Now I'm much more comfortable with it. Um, I'm much more comfortable that, depending on the situation, the proposition, the model that was gone for, will depend on what I bring to it and therefore what my perceived value is. And I have no difficulty negotiating now, ah, around that. So, I'm much more confident and relaxed about, ah, how this may pan out. I may have a small interest. I may have a large interest. It just	707 708 709 710 711 712 713 714 715 716 717 718 719

	depends.	720
Martin	Right. And that may be new information for the others, I think, that you have that clarity?	721 722
Rob	Yes, I think that that, um... I think, probably, Sam thinks that I am utterly risk averse, ah, and, um, that, you know, I want a corporate package and I don't want to move away from it. I'm not too sure I laboured the point, but I don't see myself as a corporate man. I may well work for a corporate, but I may now want to work in a capacity where, you know, I'm doing five days a month for a corporate. And, ah, you know, my risk in all this is my domestic situation. You know, I don't want to be changing my domestic situation or putting it at risk needlessly. And, so, that's my check. It's not whether or not I can move away from a corporate package, because [laugh] I will have no difficulty doing that.	723 724 725 726 727 728 729 730 731 732 733
Martin	Okay. Excellent.	734
Rob	Okay, Martin. Hey, listen, thank you.	735

7.4 Transcript B3 - Interview with Paul

Martin	<p>Now, this specific, um, conversation I'd like to have now is about, um, relevant conversations; conversations that I call imaginative. Um, that is when people as they come together, but they may as well be on an email, and they explore something, um, <u>deliberate</u> that opens up new avenues, um, for them or for others. But, it could as well be conversations that, um, are more say <u>spontaneous</u>, they're not planned, people come together and it seems that in that space that is not willfully planned for a particular purpose, things just, ah, happen and new ideas come up. So I want that to be... have the full range and really be free to what the, sorts of, conversations could be. I would ask <u>you</u> to let me know what, sorts of, conversations come to your mind and I would like to explore one or two, um, conversations that come to your mind say, oh that could be an interesting one to explore, preferably in relation to the group you are... we are working with, our, sort of, shared context, our work with Gert and Rob and so on. But, not necessarily a conversation you've had with Gert or Rob or Sam but maybe there are other conversations around, let's say a conversation with <i>named person</i> or someone else, who you found was inspiring you to open up this way of working and so on. I would <u>then</u> like to go on and start to ask you, in the, sort of, the second half of this little interview what conversations could come up, which you give an input to or prepare yourself, I mean, have objectives, wishes or dreams how they could evolve and how you, sort of, prepare for that and how you think how that would develop. So they are the two parts of it. Um, do you have any questions so far?</p>	001 002 003 004 005 006 007 008 009 010 011 012 013 014 015 016 017 018 019 020 021 022 023 024 025 026 027
Paul	No, I'm comfortable.	028
Martin	<p>Okay. Let me just extend that for another step. <u>Because</u> we're talking about this conversation between the two of us is held by the same approved confidentiality, what we talk will not go to the others, it will just go to you. And I will, sort of, take out names and references and so on. But, it is <u>possible</u> that when we agree on bits and pieces and it will go into a dissertation project later on, Gert or Sam or Rob may actually take that book from the shelf</p>	029 030 031 032 033 034 035

	and say, although it is disguised, we would certainly know from each other who had said what and take a look into it. And I just want to be that factual and detailed in being clear about confidentiality. So if you were to say something, although no one else probably will make sense of it, in the inner group of the four of you, if people would know this is there and they read it carefully will probably say, oh this is something for sure Paul has said, if you see what I mean. Yes?	036 037 038 039 040 041 042 043
Paul	Right.	044
Martin	I mean, just to be constructive, I just need to be transparent because I don't know what...	045 046
Paul	That's absolutely clear. I mean, I certainly don't anticipate saying anything to you that I wouldn't say to the others.	047 048
Martin	Yes.	049
Paul	Yes, that's... No, I appreciate what you're saying.	050
Martin	Okay, great. Good. So thinking about these conversations that made a difference with new things come up, does any of those come or did come to your mind when I started introducing that topic that would be one of these conversations in the past?	051 052 053 054
Paul	Yes. I think that the advantage of a group working with a number of like minded individuals and talented people is that you can identify opportunities in, in your discussions with them. And I think for that to happen that the group has to all be in the same place, mentally if not physically and be hungry for the same opportunities ultimately. Ah, I think that, um, I've certainly experienced <u>here</u> , with the group I've been working with, that <u>energy</u> and <u>synergy</u> from... that I would have anticipated that when Sam, Rob and I could also generate if we were all in the same <u>headspace</u> , if you like. So, headspace in terms of, we all want the same things at the same time or similar things at the same time. So, um,... it's very much that the, sort of, collegiate style of working that Gert, that we worked with Gert previously.	055 056 057 058 059 060 061 062 063 064 065 066 067
Martin	Yes.	068
Paul	And that has been hugely creative in terms of what I'm doing now and why I believe that we could do with, that, with Gert, Rob and Sam. So, yes I suppose in summary it's about the bouncing around of ideas	069 070 071 072
Martin	Yes,	073

Paul	and leveraging of contacts	074
Martin	Yes	075
Paul	to create opportunities.	076 077
Martin	And is there a specific..? Sorry I will interrupt you at times, so I apologise for that. But, is there a specific conversation or episode? So that we can say, and this is an example of it, this is when we had such a conversation?	078 079 080 081
Paul	Not with Gert, Rob and Sam	082
Martin	Right	083
Paul	because I think our discussions so far have been relatively immature. But, I think, um, I think that is purely a function of us not being on... all singing the same song at the same time.	084 085 086 087
Martin	Yes.	088
Paul	I think we're at different stages with different wants and needs in terms of what we're trying to achieve out of, out of our lives. Um, I think that we could easily <u>be there</u> if the four of us worked a lot... if we were working a lot more closely together. You know, I don't think it... anything that I'm doing now or doing in the future will preclude that happening.	089 090 091 092 093 094
Martin	Yes	095
Paul	It's just that... But, I think we're all in a different place in terms of what we want in time and space.	096 097 098
Martin	Okay. So if we were to, to think about... I mean, I'm just thinking now at this point, as I say, should I abandon the idea of having a conversation with you about a <u>past</u> conversation that was creative in that way, um, and go straight into the <u>future</u> or would it be actually useful to explore maybe <u>another</u> conversation, not one with Gert, Sam and Rob. Um, so we have a reference point of what is happening then and then we go to the future. And I'm a bit biased towards the second, um, if, if you were prepared to share from another conversation, but if you say no, actually there hasn't been one, let's think about what will develop in the future and how could it go, if it goes well. I would, I would find that fine as well. So where are you on this question?	099 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109
Paul	Well, it's much easier for me to talk about one that's actually	111

	happening, because it makes it much more empirical rather than theoretical.	112 113
Martin	Great.	114
Paul	But, if I... The kind of group I'm with, we identified in, shortly after the meeting with Rob and Sam that a number of opportunities that we would pursue or could pursue or, sort of, think that we'd be interested in doing. And we identified about twelve different projects that, that we could look at, um, and they were a combination of either things we were interested in or we <u>know</u> or areas or we thought there are interesting things, um areas in which we thought we could make a difference and perhaps achieve something. Um, and from that discussion we decided to pursue all twelve projects for a period of time and review our progress on each of them. And... the last, that appraisal, has been hence forward figure that from those twelve projects, we're now pursuing two very <u>hard</u> because they're going to be lucrative perhaps in the shorter terms and for some duration, and the other, <u>the ten</u> are taking more of a back seat as slow burning. So effectively a combination of prioritising our time and expertise and leveraging of, of the things that each one of us can bring to the party. For example, one of our partners is a fluent <i>named language</i> speaker which allows us to operate in, in <i>named region</i> and has worked, a lot, in <i>named country</i> ... Um,.. another has very, very good contacts, all sorts of, from within <i>a different named country</i> , I have a substantial planning background, now we can harness all three of those skills and use them and to create and develop this opportunity, which is effectively what we're doing now. Um, I think that, that the strength is in terms of the differences they are, working as one team with the different sense of eye looking at the same problem and inevitably it's expensive in time, but the product at the end of the day is better because it's not just one man going to do it by himself.	115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143
Martin	And I was wondering Paul, if...	144 145
Paul	Now, that's a, sort of, tiny example.	146
Martin	Yes. And I was wondering Paul if in this work there was a specific meeting you could recall we can use as a reference, that we say what	147 148 149

	happened at this meeting, what happened before, what happened during the meeting and so on? In this work group would there be one meeting that it said, oh that probably was a significant one that made a large amount of difference for how we <u>then</u> could move on as a group and what we then were able to do.	150 151 152 153 154
Paul	Um, no. I'd say there's no one single event, if you like in that way, it's much, much more evolutionary. It's sitting together with heads together and being clear what we want to do, but identifying the steps we need to take to get there. And then dividing up the tasks and reporting back with results and adjusting our course of action accordingly. I would say absolutely <u>not</u> at one single meeting.	155 156 157 158 159 160
Martin	Right	161
Paul	But, I think in terms of looking for the, sort of, intangible side of it, the imaginative side that you spoke about earlier, I think that the real <u>energy</u> and <u>synergy</u> surrounding the creation of the opportunity comes from the qualities of the people in that meeting. And, you know, we all got very excited at various stages and had some highs and lows as we try and move the project forward. But, but, I would say in terms of the imaginative side of it, it's not quantifiable to one meeting, saying yes, this is going to be a decisive point on the way forward. I do envisage in the future that there will be certain pivotal meetings as we take this deal forward, specifically with regards to financing and the whole, sort of, financial aspects surrounding the deal, that will be an absolute pivotal meeting. And the second one is in terms of our trading the commodity afterwards in terms of deciding which buyer we're going to sell to under what conditions of which buyer we're going to enter into a contract with. So, so, I would have said they're landmarks or milestones on the way ahead, but they will be pivotal in terms of taking the things forwards. But, in terms of creating the ideas and, you know, exploring, not one pivotal meeting, much more a slow... Well, not always slow, but much more, sort of, collegiate and ongoing, um, energy rather than a flash of light if you like.	162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183
Martin	So when you say it is evolutionary, um, do I have to think, just to unpack what that means, because that could mean different things for different people, does this mean something like you meet every day in the morning and you see each other during the	184 185 186 187

	day time and have all sorts of conversations? Or does it more mean, you have a weekly or a monthly meeting and seems... can fall from one conversation to the other? What is the, sort of..., you said the same headspace as well..?	188 189 190 191
Paul	It's, at the moment it's much more sharing an office and working together <u>each and every day</u> . And we haven't formalised it much more than that, but we do say weekly, certainly once a week, run through all the things we're doing and where we are at with each of them and attempt to project forward in terms of the next steps we need to take to deliver a result. We're so small and informal <u>at the moment</u> that apart from, I'm sure you're familiar with the planning, developing and synchronisation matrix where you try and synchronise events over time and space and I've... , just because it's a tool with which I'm familiar, I've put that together for us and I have just revised it for the first time this month that I have looked at it in terms of all the things that we're pursuing, the things that we've got to do to deliver them. But, it's not a formal process it's just me keeping a handle on what's happening and using it if you like as map for our colleagues. Is that a pretty long winded way of answering your question?	192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207
Martin	Yes, I think the, sort of...	208
Paul	Does that make sense?	209
Martin	Yes, it makes sense and we're getting into the detail of it, because you're saying it's not formalised but it seems that at a particular time <u>you</u> had the idea that there is now maybe, I don't know, there are so many different things in the room or there are so many complexities, or there is so much to be said or done that is of <u>value</u> , that you want to make sure it is kept and it is... that the relations between one activity and the other is really in the clear. That what you understand is transparent to others, um and there is some continuity from one meeting, from one week to the next and so on. Do I get that right or..?	210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219
Paul	Yes, that's absolutely right.	220
Martin	And, and that is such a moment that as well the group starts to... you start to create some organisation around what you're doing and you start to relate then differently to it than you have related to it before, I guess in some way. Maybe it's just a very tiny difference, as you say it's evolutionary.... But, um, say the	221 222 223 224 225

	accountability....	226
Paul	Yes, but it also... You're breaking up a bit, Martin. But, I think yes, evolutionary and what we're doing is now perhaps putting more structure into it in order... inevitably the further we go into any one of these projects the more complex the project becomes, but the more moving parts are identified and it's in order to keep track of those and to allocate our time and resources effectively to develop the opportunities. So yes, it is becoming more formal in that respect, but only as a result of the complexity of the issues surrounding that and to be blunt the amounts of money surrounding it as well.	227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236
Martin	Right	237
Paul	We've got to be tight and formal if we're going to be in a game of spending large quantities or borrowing large amounts of money.	238 239 240
Martin	Okay. Is there..? Now the way you're working at this stage and I understand it's still an <u>evolutionary process</u> , but is there a way how you prepare yourselves or each other for this coming together. Is there..? Have you developed some routines around that or you for yourself, um, some routines around how you are having these weekly meetings so to speak?	241 242 243 244 245 246
Paul	No. Um, we haven't, haven't done that <u>yet</u> . I can see us doing that in the future. Early speak we're going to have to start track more. And to put one of us on the ground in a country with, with which we're dealing to see the project through. And, ah, because we will at that point be separated geographically, it will become much more important to, to formalise it so that, you know, we can make time as you and I, have to do what we're doing, and have and catch up with ideas with a conference call to... Not that that would be the only time that we meet, but to, sort of, formally take stock and make sure that each of us is in each other's minds. It also gives us... One of our principles has been to share each of the projects in terms of the relationships that underpin those projects. By doing that that gives us a redundancy, so we've identified effectively a lead partner and a second for each of the projects. But, because there are only four of us, the, ah, there is a lead and a second, but each one of us knows what's going on as well, but I think we will have to formalise it. We want to formalise it more as	247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263

	we go forward and I think I don't anticipate any negative reaction to that. I think it'll really be positive.	264 265
Martin	Very interesting. So....	266
Paul	I don't think it'll... I think what we will... There's an interesting one just to override you there, Martin. The interesting one is, I think, it'll be interesting to see whether the energy that we have around creating the opportunity by working together in one room dissipates as we become separated geographically in pursuing the projects, whether we can still be as creative and innovative as we have been all sitting together. It'll be an interesting challenge and I'll tell you that in a year's time.	267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274
Martin	Right, right. It is quite interesting. I get this sense, and please do expand on it and correct me if I'm wrong, but I get this sense when you said each apart is sharing their projects and all the relationships happening and so on, that you have as well a particular relationship with <u>each other</u> in the way you're sharing things, or I don't know, be open about what's going well, not so well, concerns and so on, that you feel you can step into each other's shoes almost to create that redundancy. So I guess, I was wondering a little bit of, whilst it is emergent, how have the relationships between you in this particular group have developed and unfolded so that you now can work the way you can... be together the way you can be together. Does this make any sense or is this just my imagination here? (laughs)	275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287
Paul	No. I think there are a couple of threads there that I will pick up. Um, I'd say that one big difference is, in terms of... we have all either resigned from jobs or, um, have chosen to change direction at the same time, that's the first point. The second, and I think there's a fundamental difference through Gert, Rob, Sam and I and my current group of co-workers. So it's all making that decision at the same time is the first thing. The second thing is, in terms of putting money in it. It's not an inexpensive exercise to change continents and establish a company with proper foundations, capitalising it and so on. The four partners... The three partners that I'm with at the moment we each own 25% of the business and we share 25% of the costs and we will share 25% of the profits. Um, so it's very equal, open and transparent between us, nobody is trying to do a little side deal off to the side,	288 289 290 291 292 293 294 295 296 297 298 299 300 301

	developing his own business or interests there. It's... And I think that's one of the <u>important bits</u> in terms of the <u>creative energy</u> we have. It brings transparency of ideas and contacts and ability that mean that we have, sort of... I keep saying it, I'm beginning to sound like cracked record, sort of, collegiate and equal working stile. Does that make sense? Does that help?	302 303 304 305 306 307
Martin	Absolutely. No, it does make sense. It's very, very clear. So, um, I am still thinking maybe to now move onto future conversations and ideas about future conversations, and really think about that being very practical thinking now, so this is not about lots of theory. Um, and I guess in relation to... Um, I'm just testing this with you, because we could explore it in relation to the group of yourself and Sam, Gert and Rob, because it's not <u>unconnected</u> the experience of what you are <u>currently</u> in and participating in and <u>maybe</u> your ideas of what would have to happen, what sort of conversations, um, would be <u>useful</u> to have and <u>when</u> and <u>how</u> , so that at a least your experience of how things could, could unfold and how people are best positioned to participate is, is fully leveraged. So, um, so I guess I was thinking, how do you think that should go? How should that go forward from your perspective, in terms of what are the next conversations to have?	308 309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321 322
Paul	Um, ah, well I've taken a... I haven't been proactive in terms of the email trail that's been going on at the moment really about our next meeting and the... But, in terms of, of the future I think Rob has come up with a very interesting little synopsis in his last email. Have you got that, sort of, in the forefront of your mind?	323 324 325 326 327
Martin	Yes. But, what did you find particularly interesting?	328
Paul	Do you recall the points he was making?	329
Martin	Yes.	330
Paul	Um, what I found interesting was that, um, (a) for me it's very clear about looking for opportunities (b) then when we find one that we think can make work, then coming together to make it work. Um, I, ah, and the way to get there, Rob's solution was to let's formalise it by having a half page update every month about what each one of us is up to. Um, the only trouble would be in terms of your last point there, in terms of being best positioned to participate in developing those opportunities. Um, if what I'm doing here with Sam, which is very, very demanding in terms of	331 332 333 334 335 336 337 338 339

	time and energy it would have to be a huge opportunity and I'd like to take my, our other partners along...	340 341
Martin	You're breaking up.	342
Paul	...so we could work together as two groups or bring them into this group or whatever. But, that's between what... > there is a fundamental difference< of what he's suggesting in that email, you know, and with what, um, I am doing now, which is that, um, Rob wants to find the opportunity and then, exploit it. What we're doing <u>here</u> is <u>creating</u> the opportunities and then exploiting them. We're not just out there looking, we're physically trying to create it and I'd say that's the fundamental difference.	343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350
Martin	Right, right, And I think you're making the difference now very explicit and clear to me.	351 352
	8 min on group coordination removed	353
Martin	Right, okay, very clear. This was so, sort of, looking into the future if we look back on our conversation which we've just had for the last fifty minutes or so, is there anything from this conversation that, ah, you know, you would say that is something I'm not more aware of or I will think more about, or I don't know, which has changed or moved you in a particular way? And I'm not fishing for anything, I just want... If there is something it would be nice to say it, um, but if there's nothing then that's perfectly fine.	354 355 356 357 358 359 360 361
Paul	Ah, I think what it's done is it's, ah, forced me to look at the relationship between the four of us and where we're at and what we want to achieve. Um, and that's, ah, I think that's a positive thing because it was a bit like, sort of, drawing a comb through your mind if you like in terms of straightening things out and, ah, you know, identifying the wheat from the chaff and a potential way forward as well. I'd say, so yes, it's useful in that respect aside from which seeing you is always good.	362 363 364 365 366 367 368 369

7.5 Transcript B4 - Interview with Sam

	The recorder did not work in the first eight minutes	
Martin	It seems that you as well have, uh, an ongoing exploration of other business opportunities like, when you said, um, when we are... would you be interested, let's do something in <i>named country</i> , or would you be interested of doing something else in this or that area, um..., I had that sense, when you said that these opportunities may not be that supported by data as yet but are on a rather early stage..... Is that...	001 002 003 004 005 006 007
Sam	Yes, I mean... well, we're still in the stage of exploring a number of, uh, of different avenues. And so we're not actually working yet, uh, depending on what you define as work. We're not earning anything, that's for sure. Um, so we're... you know, we're really... we're still... and I mean, I think it's a constant exploration. I mean, it's new business where we've developed a model that is unlike anybody else's. What we're trying to do is, is quite different from a content perspective, so it... I think it'll be a... you know, it'll be a constant re-evaluation where we look at opportunities to build on previous ones, and that can take us to new places. And, you know, introduce us to new areas and in... and where we can build synergies and, you know, and I, I don't think that will change. I don't think there's going to be linear in a sense... I don't think it's linear in the sense that okay, we've found our business that I... you know, we all focus on that, and we stop thinking. I mean, that's never... the concept that we had for the business, it was very much, um, you know, constantly, uh, yes building on new things and moving forward. It's not, you know, the idea isn't... we're not taking [unclear] shot. It's not to be static and with one objective. And it's very much okay, let's investigate, you know, building <i>named industry</i> , let's investigate <i>named business opportunity</i> , let's investigate, um, you know, working with <i>named community</i> . Let's talk to government about the way forward, and thinking... so it's quite multi-level, um, with the hope that that would all come together and, um, synergies...	008 009 010 011 012 013 014 015 016 017 018 019 020 021 022 023 024 025 026 027 028 029 030 031 032
Martin	Right, right, and this talk, which seems to be quite essential, is that... you know, how do you hold that talk in a particular space? Is that happening all the time, it's like it... I had this idea of it being	033 034 035

	a constant flow? Do you have particular meetings where you say well, this is our, um, I don't know,.... assessment meeting or we look at opportunities? Um, is there any particular structure or preparation going into that?	036 037 038 039
Sam	Um, I mean, I... my kind of, my personal opinion is that it is always better face-to-face. Uh, I think we get a huge amount done when we're all in one space, um, however good the Skype connection is or... and they're all very useful tools. But they're not as good as, um, living breathing the same experience. Um, when we went... when Paul and I deployed first and came to the <i>named country</i> first, and we... it was very much going down a different route than the colleagues that we'd left behind in <i>named place</i> , you know? Very much fed by the realities of what is possible here, and they were very much fed by what... where we had left, you know, what we had started with in terms of, you know, the investors and our plan. And so we had to, you know, pull those two opinions together and that happened via one of the people from <i>same named place</i> coming out here and, you know, one of the agreements that we've taken is, we are going to be led by the field. And, you know, kind of, in terms of reality check. Uh, but in <i>named region</i> that's where things go wrong, you know, is actually the delivery, because it's difficult because it's so corrupt, because of all those things. So, um, that just took somebody coming out here and then for us to re-group, re-think, um, and what we have decided is that we will... the three key players will be based here together, living together, certainly, you know, for the foreseeable future, because it is so much more effective that way, um, than when we're apart. But, you know, so we use Skype and we... um, you know, we have meetings, we update each other, um, by email, you know, send a report of the meeting, and so that everybody's continuously kept up-to-date. And we share that with everybody so, you know, we have a minor partner who's really our accounting wizard, um, it's... you know, sort of, it's very important, because we have to keep testing what the margins are, you know, are going to be okay, and that the finances, are they sort of... Because it's global, huge amounts of money for very little margin. Um, and so... and we have to get that right, or we won't last long. So we copy him on everything, so he's involved in... he	040 041 042 043 044 045 046 047 048 049 050 051 052 053 054 055 056 057 058 059 060 061 062 063 064 065 066 067 068 069 070 071 072 073

	follows all the discussions, whether they're related to him or not. And the idea is to get as much information out and everybody aware of everything that's going on, um, and that's the way we've operated, you know, at this stage when we're very small. If we get larger and it gets more complicated, um, you know, then we'll have to, I think, be a bit more, uh, efficient with our management of information. But at the moment, the idea is very much as long as everybody knows everything that's going on, um, that's the best that we can hope for.	074 075 076 077 078 079 080 081 082
Martin	Right, so it seems that, um, I'm not suggesting at all that the way you are doing it should or could be improved at that stage. Uh, it does sound a very engaged way of how your communication is going. Um, it sounds to me that this, um, this minor partner who has an accounting background, who seems to, uh, relate himself quite diligently to all the communications, uh, is adding a particular perspective that is valued by the group, that is... no one else in that way, um, emphasising as he does. So there's something particular about his role in the group, if I understood you correctly?	083 084 085 086 087 088 089 090 091
Sam	Yes, I think we all have, you know, we have different angles that we look at the information from. Um, there are, you know, as a whole, they're... you know, they're all useful put together, and you get a better result from that [overtalking] so then it operates very democratic.	092 093 094 095 096
Martin	Yes okay, but when you said it was an important decision for all of us to operate in the same space, operating face-to-face, rather than Skype, although, you know, um, I tend to immediately agree to it, and then not to ask the question and learn what is it exactly that makes for you the difference. Therefore, I don't agree immediately and say, what is it in your experience then, that now being in the same space... I mean, you have been outside of that space a lot with your other engagements. You know, what... can you help me putting the finger on what difference it makes to be in the same physical space,... from your experience?	097 098 099 100 101 102 103 104 105 106
Sam	I think there's a whole, you know, a whole load of non-verbal communication that happens. There's that mix between, um, you know, we're friends to start with, so there's the banter and the joking and it's all mixed in with the serious discussions, and so that when you do have disagreements you can be quite robust	107 108 109 110 111

	about expressing those. But, um, you can... you know, you can minutes afterwards have a laugh together, and, uh, it just makes it much... for me it makes it much much simpler, um, than, you know, a regimented, you know, time set aside to get through a number of things on an agenda. Um, I think, you know, to be fair, it's probably less efficient, uh, but it's... I think it's okay at this stage, because I think the most important is that we share a common vision and, um, that we can rely on each other. I think over time that would have to become quite different.	112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120
Martin	Right, right, so I think you said something very important, and I wouldn't have thought about that. Uh, if I understood you correctly, you're saying because you are in the same space, and you have ways of... let me put it in my words, the way I understood it; you have ways of, um, repairing the relationship again. You have ways of having fun together. You have ways of strengthening the relationship. You can on the other hand, maybe, um, as well disagree, and be very, um, strong about disagreements, have constructive conflicts which, when you are in different spaces, on email or Skype, you don't have that sort of resourcefulness in your conversation. Did I get that point right, or have I misinterpreted it.	121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132
Sam	Yes I think you have to be much more careful when you write, than, uh, when you talk.	133 134
Martin	Okay, I think that's quite, that's quite interesting. And then, you said something else about, you wish to be more efficient, uh, I just pick up because you mentioned it twice, um, not critiquing how it is today, there was a clear sense that it could be different in the future. Is that something that...?	135 136 137 138 139
Sam	Yes, I think you can get away with a lot of inefficiencies when you're very small, um, and when you're a bigger team, um, you know, you need clearer divisions of labour and, um, responsibilities for certain things. And also, there's the scale of... the amount of work becomes too large for people to handle every detail of everything. Um, but at the beginning, you know, we're all interested in (laughs) understanding, you know, how the internet's going to work here, and how we're going to get it, um, which of course, you know, when you've got a company of twenty people, one person looks after it, and the other people benefit.	140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149

Martin	<p>Yes, so when you spoke about inefficiency, I can relate that in my understanding, to a sort of, a redundancy as well, if I get the experience right, people being copied all sorts of conversations. Everyone gets involved in getting the internet going and so on. So there's that sort of inefficiency that everyone gets involved a little bit into everything. Is that the right interpretation?</p>	<p>150 151 152 153 154 155</p>
Sam	<p>Yes I mean... well, not... I mean, it's probably a bad example, because actually, we didn't all get involved in the internet. But I think we certainly got all involved in the choice of a house, uh, because we all felt that we had to feel comfortable with where we were going to live, and that's enormously time-consuming, going and looking at houses. So yes, it's inefficient, if you were a bigger team, one person would look at it and everyone else would just, you know, agree to it, and take their view. Um, and those I think... but it's not, um, sort of, an <u>issue</u> in, um, for us, um, it's just the way that things are now, um, except that when we're, you know, a bigger team, and when we actually get down to doing work instead of doing lots of research on work, um, you know, we'll have, you know, more specific responsibilities. And they're quite clear what those will be, because they then actually fit with our background.</p>	<p>156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170</p>
Martin	<p>Right, right. Interesting, so there is an element in what you're saying that points towards a possible future where you start to organise yourselves a little bit different, um, so that will be like one of...</p>	<p>171 172 173 174</p>
Sam	<p>The structure that we have set up for this business is multi-layered, with, you know, businesses that own other businesses, you know, boards and percentages, and equity, and so set up very much so that it, um, has the room to grow into, you know, quite a complex structure, with different operations in different countries and, um, you know, and different people who'd be involved in <u>different parts</u>. And some people would be involved in, you know, <u>various parts</u>, and some people would be involved in <u>all the parts</u>. And so we've got profit in part and not in other etcetera. So there's a lot of structural work that went on in the beginning, um, so yes, the... you know, the purpose of doing it is, um, to enable it to grow into something that's, you know, um, is going to be sizeable and, um, where we can, uh, you know, make a, uh,</p>	<p>175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187</p>

	you know, a much bigger impact.	188
Martin	Right, right... When do you think your current way of operating, um, you know, when or how do you think that will shift into a different way of operating at a future stage? Because you hinted to it now a couple of times, is that triggered by an external event or by, um, by...?	189 190 191 192 193
Sam	Yes I think so. I think it'll be a natural step when, um, the workload demands it. We don't have the luxury of getting everybody's opinion on everything, um, so, you know, in my case, you know, my involvement will probably be more about, um, >you know<, working upstream with <i>community reference</i> , and seeing how we can instil development etcetera. Um, and so that part of the work will more likely be mine and the others have different backgrounds, and so they'll deal with other aspects of the work. And so naturally, um, you know, there'll be one person leading the different aspects.	194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203
	I think also that when it... we, um [inaudible] team members, um, whether that sort of, basic equity or salary, whatever it may be, uh, they would also, um, you know, force us into a system where people have terms of reference and, um, you know, [inaudible] is at the moment. But I think [inaudible] it's a good way to go while we're in, you know, while we're a few people putting, you know, all our money into, um, into something and seeing it succeed. I think it's, you know, we need to share the decision-making very openly.	204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211
Martin	Right, this sort of, conversation about how you're organised now, how you do things, what is efficient, uh, or not so efficient today, how it may be, uh, in the future. As you were saying, from the very beginning, things were thought and considered in the structure of the organisation,	212 213 214 215 216
Same	Yeah	217
Martin	and I get a sense that it is... it may as well be part of your ongoing talk with each other, to project some of that future. So it's nothing... I'm just testing this really, it feels to me as if this is <u>not</u> a particular conversation at a particular time, but it is something that you have all in the <u>back</u> of your <u>mind</u> , so to speak, and maybe as well... and sometimes talk about it, in one or other way.	218 219 220 221 222 223 224
Sam	What is in the back of our mind, the efficiency aspect?	225

Martin	Well, I guess the efficiency, but as well the need maybe to change division of labour at some stage. The need to, um, get clearer responsibilities, maybe according to your, um, team set-up and the capabilities people bring to it and so on. I... For a moment I had the sense that although you currently do what you do, and you're probably content in doing it, you as well have at times conversations where you say, well, this is how it is now, in the future, it's going to be like that. Is that the case, or is it rather just <u>you</u> sharing it now with me, and at the appropriate time, in the appropriate context, you may raise or Paul may raise, or others may raise it, for an open discussion within the group?	226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236
Sam	You know, I think we're probably a very, um,... <u>unusual group</u> , because we are, you know,... We're very close, we understand each other, come from similar worlds, we have a similar approach to work. We've worked together in the past and we know what to expect of each other. So other than these synergies you are dividing up into very small parts... are actually a <u>very natural flow</u> for us. They are just no issue, um, there's a job to be done and we're all trying to succeed, and we're all... you know, we've got our sleeves rolled up to try and make it work out. Um, and of <u>course</u> in future it will be different, because in future we'll be working, and at the moment we are... you know, looking at concepts and developing those, um, you know... we're not <i>in a named business activity</i> at the moment. Uh, so, you know, yes, and I think very naturally those roles will kind of, we all know what our areas are and what we're good at. And, um, so if there are, you know, meetings that are particularly relevant to one area now, it's the person that is related to that, that goes there, but keeps the others informed informally when they come back. And, um, and so we go on. So it's not, are we having those conversations? Not... it's all kind of, very much part of how we set this company up, was to get those skill sets identified and, um, and so that we can, we can draw on them. But, you know, if we go a visit a <i>named community reference</i> , it's good for everybody to come along because, um, you know, you learn so much on a day like that, um, which will be useful for the business. So we all go, rather than one person going, but in, you know, in future, when other people are busy and, you know, you've seen enough <i>named community</i>	237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263

	<i>reference</i> to know what one looks like, you know, you wouldn't necessarily do that again. Um,	264 265
Martin	Right	266
Sam	it's... I think our approach to it is much more fluid than, um, than may be normal, um, because of the relationship that we have with each other, which is, you know, fundamentally one of trust.	267 268 269 270
Martin	Right, right. And I get this sense of that relationship in the practice, in your group as well as a group where everyone has an understanding of the whole, and how the whole develops, the whole working together, the whole enterprise. It... and out of that understanding, people seem to know what to do, what to report; what needs to be told to whom and so on, um, and it... there isn't a formality around it, because it's just not required because everyone acts out of the, um, say, the morality of their understanding of what is required in such a situation. What would I have to tell Sam, because Sam will do things with it, or would need to know? And hence, there is no...	271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281
Sam	Well there's only three or four of us so, you know, so it's just not that, you know, it's not that organised. There's four of us, you know, sitting and sharing an office, you know? It just flows very naturally, um, and we have... when we were in <i>named place</i> we would've had, you know, regular meetings, at least once or twice a week to make sure that everybody was up-to-date on everything. And we task-lists, which are the areas that one person or another would follow up and then brief the others on, you know, at a regular interval. So [unclear], you know, some structure beneath it, but, uh...	282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291
Martin	Was this a larger group?	292
Sam	[Overtalking].	293
Martin	Was this a larger group in <i>named place</i> that it feels you had formal lists and things like that and...?	294 295
Sam	No, but I think we were operating, you know, this is a field operation, um, so we're all living together. It's, uh, you know, it's much more easy to work out what everybody's doing. Um, you know, we're three here, so I think yes, we have regular... we have meetings when we need them. We have, you know, time-outs for... you know, take a day out to think about the strategy and,	296 297 298 299 300 301

	you know, we do it in that way. But it's very much needs-based, rather than set up for, for the sake of it.	302 303
Martin	Sure, but then, you do actually have planned meetings like, having a meeting for strategy, if you feel there's a need for it?	304 305
Sam	Yes, absolutely.	306
Martin	Absolutely, okay	307
Sam:	Yeah, yeah	308
Martin	Okay.... Well, I'm thinking, um, I'm getting a good sense of how you're operating and how you're developing the ideas in your organisation. Um, it is not, um, compartmentalised in any way. It is happening in a very fluid way so, um, ... It would be interesting maybe, the question then, from your experience, when important things happen in conversations, important realisations, is that often happening in that fluid space, or is it in the sort of, planned, let's-have-a-strategy-meeting, or let's-have-an-update-meeting? Do you have any sort of, reflections on, um, the conversations that... where you felt were very significant or impactful, or moving for the organisation, or for you in the organisation? Were they more in the sort of, structured space, or were they more subtly emerging?	309 310 311 312 313 314 315 316 317 318 319 320 321
Sam	I think they happen more in informal spaces, and then they are discussed and shared with anyone who didn't happen to be there in that space, in a formal environment. But, um, I think because, you know, we're living and breathing this thing, uh, it's certainly not a nine to five, that, um, yes, we talk about things all the time. And that's when ideas come.	322 323 324 325 326 327
Martin	Right okay, good. Well, I have this sense of knowing too much about how you are operating to be curious and asking you more questions, because I probably, on a much much smaller scale... we are a team of three here, operate in a very similar way to a great extent. So obviously it's a very cosy space to work out of an office in Vienna, compared to maybe having to buy a house, moving countries and all the lot. But I'm really running out of curiosity here, so I'm thinking I get a sense of how you're working and it's just really interesting to have had that conversation.	328 329 330 331 332 333 334 335 336
Sam	Good, well I (laughs) don't know whether it's going to succeed, but we're hanging in there.	337 338
Martin	Yes, no thank you very much. I have...	339

Sam	You're very welcome.	340
Martin	No, I really appreciate that. I have, um, I have recorded this conversation. I think you've gathered that, probably from the invitation and the whole context of it. I had a bit of problems at the beginning with the recording. Somehow it didn't work, so I guess the first six, seven minutes probably are not there. And I will transcribe that and I take out all the business references that, um, and names, just to be sure. And I would send that to you. Um, if you could be so kind and take a look at it, and, um, feel free to, um, take out what you think shouldn't be there, or whatever. Um, and if I could then use that, um, as one of the sources of people who are involved in, you know, developing a business and how it's done, and how things are created for the organisation to develop at that stage, um, would that be okay for you?	341 342 343 344 345 346 347 348 349 350 351 352 353
Sam	Yes absolutely fine, no problem.	354
Martin	That's great. Is there anything that you were particularly interested in, um, from our conversation? Was there anything that you thought... that's, um, that's an odd question? Um, this Martin, he doesn't have the foggiest idea of what we are doing here, but maybe the question that was interesting or not interesting, was there anything that you, upon reflection now, you look at in a different way?	355 356 357 358 359 360 361
Sam	Um, nothing that absolutely comes to mind. Just one second Martin [inaudible background talking]. There's someone at the gate, just one minute.	362 363 364
Martin	Sure.	365
	(40s silence)	366
Sam	Sorry Martin, someone's just arrived, um, and I'm going to have go and wake up Paul who's out cold with fever. So, um, I'm going to run off. But there's... yes, to be honest, we are so focused on, you know, survival at the moment, that yes, that's our focus right now, um, yes, so we're not quite there. I think we're not quite in the same space as you... hello?	367 368 369 370 371 372
Martin	Yes I'm here.	373
Sam	Did you hear that?	374
Martin	I can hear you.	375
Sam	My computer went dead. Yes, so I think, you know, we're just not analysing ourselves now. We're just trying to see if we can make it	376 377

	to see.	378
Martin	Yes no, I can see that, but there is something about all of you feeling... I don't know, have learned how to operate in that space good enough to be able to do that jump which you were doing.	379 380 381
Sam	Sorry, I didn't catch that.	382
Martin	Well, you were all sort of, making that jump, of being part of that enterprise which sounds very adventurous, and you all, um, have, um, I think, signed up on that adventure to some extent, with each other, um, and that, and that way of operating, which probably is not anybody's... well, not everybody will feel convenient with that, would be convenient to subscribe to this, um, and take on that risk as well. Um, and it feels that there's something about... I don't know, you've learned to do it in that way, the prior experiences maybe you have had together with each other, or you had individually, that allows you to, um, to make these sorts of career choices?	383 384 385 386 387 388 389 390 391 392 393
Sam	Yes I think we're... I think that's right. I think we are similar, um, you know, uhm you know, in our backgrounds and more importantly, in our take on life. And one of the things that we decided when we set up this business was, it's going to be all of our working day, you know? It's got to be fun too, uh, I don't know if that's a particularly recipe for a project but, um, we try and stick to that, um, and make it an enjoyable experience, and, uh, so you know, I think what we're trying to do is quite... you know, quite different to, um, to other reasons that people might set up businesses, um, you know? We had a quite a fun life before this, and so it wasn't, um, so it was very much a choice to do it. Uh, and it may work, it may not work, and we'll see where we go, but it's certainly been an experience.	394 395 396 397 398 399 400 401 402 403 404 405 406
Martin	But what is the main different reason then? Because you said you're driven by money, now, a lot of people would be driven by money. What is the difference that you're pointing to when you said, we made a different choice?	407 408 409 410
Sam	Um, well I think what we're trying to do first of all is, um, you know, certainly for me is, I am trying to prove something that I'd been working on for many years, which is <i>[detailing the idea]</i> . And so there's a kind of, academic interest, um, in what we're doing, and we're not just going sort of, you know, just to make a profit. Um,	411 412 413 414 415

	and it's about doing things differently and, um, inverting a business model, of the current way that people do business in <i>named region</i> . Um, so we're trying to set out a number of different ways of operating, so you know, obviously, um, you know, most people will find it very strange that, um, you know, what we're doing and how we want to do it. Um, it's quite different to other businesses around here. So it's an experiment and, um, I think we will see it that way. I mean, it's a risky one, yes it's a lot of money, um, but it's kind of, an interesting one, and, um, and we'll see where it goes.	416 417 418 419 420 421 422 423 424 425
	And so I think we are... we're not, yes, I think we're just trying to do something quite differently. We've all got to a stage in life where we know we can go off and find a job if we... you know, if we run out of money. Um, so it, uh, yes, it's a kind of, you know, an interesting step. I mean, I certainly hope it'll work but, you know, I think we're not at the point where we can say that it will work. Um, yes.	426 427 428 429 430 431 432
Martin	Okay.	433
Sam	Sorry, that's not very helpful. I don't know what's different. I think what's different is that, uh, you know, we have an approach that's quite irreverent. We're, uh, we're enjoying ourselves while we do it. We recognise our shortfalls, we're not at all afraid of risk. Um, and, you know, and we've had some success from that, you know, and people who've invested in us just say I must be mad. I don't know why I'm doing this. Here's, you know, here's half a million, so it's kind of... you know, we're all equally surprised that anyone wants to give us any money. Uh, but... so yes, we... it is a very tongue-in-cheek approach to it. But that said, we're all very hardworking and, um, you know, I think that, you know, if other people succeed, we should be able to, so we'll see.	434 435 436 437 438 439 440 441 442 443 444 445
Martin	Okay well, I think there were a lot of things you said now in the end which sets a context that may be quite relevant for how you can be creative in a way, and imagine the way forward on a daily basis, the way you can as a group, which may be very different from what other groups would do if they would form an organisation with a totally different mindset of recruiting people to do certain things because it seems like a good idea. And it seems that there's a totally different dynamic regarding risk, regarding,	446 447 448 449 450 451 452 453

	um, the risk-taking safety, being able to do other things as well, doing things together, having fun. And a lot of things, uh, I probably can't repeat them properly, that are very relevant for all the things you've said before, so that they are possible in the way they are.	454 455 456 457 458
Sam	Yes, no I think... yes, that's right.	459
Martin	Okay, I see you're jumping probably for running to Paul or welcoming your visitor. Do I get that right, yes?	460 461
Sam	Yes, we've got... I've got someone that, um, that has arrived and I've probably got to do some translation, so I should run and... but, um, yes. I mean, we'll, you know, we'll see how it goes. That's all I can say.	462 463 464 465

Transcript C - Vice-Principals

Erik:	You asked a question, a very good one, about how the information flows, I believe... how if we have a meeting, how we communicate...	001 002 003
Martin:	...how is this related to the meetings the teams are having, yeah, I was wondering how... what is happening at all levels?	004 005 006
Erik:	Yeah, I believe, this is something we are working out now. When our superintendent..., that was something that he pointed out that we have to work on this, and, and...	007 008 009
Alva:	that's much on the focus, not being on the economics, but other questions. But we, we made <u>one thing</u> , this year, we didn't do before, that is better, because in [unauditable] they have the meetings among the principals, they are on Tuesday, often the whole Tuesday they meet together; and then on Wednesdays we meet, the vice principals and the other ones on that level; and then on Thursdays, we have a meeting with the team leaders; so that the information that comes on Tuesday can go to the next group on Wednesday and then to the next group on Thursdays, and on the next week on Tuesday they have a team meeting so they can bring it to the – the people on the floor, so to speak. So the flow of information can go the right way.	010 011 012 013 014 015 016 017 018 019 020 021
Martin:	So when you say the right way you assume it goes from the top to the down?	022 023
Alva, Freja:	Yeah	024
Isa:	Can it be the other way around?	025
Alva:	Yeah, we can bring stuff that way also, er, and, if we think one year ago, we did not have the meetings in the <u>right order</u> , so we were kind of <u>messed up</u> , so we had to think, we had to think, where is the information, where does it start, where do we want it to go, so it can go the right way. But then, what we should talk about at each meeting, what we should talk about, that changed from half a year ago,	026 027 028 029 030 031 032 033 034 035 036

	what should this meeting be about,	037
	because when we talk about <u>this</u> , on this meeting,	038
	the next meeting will be effected upon talking about the same	039
	stuff,	040
	and if we talk about things that are happening <u>here now</u> , on this	041
	meeting,	042
	then this meeting will have the same conduct,	043
	and the next meeting, and the next one.	044
	So if we don't talk about the right stuff in the first meeting,	045
	the last meeting will be destroyed,... sort of.	046
	Because we gonna talk about wrong stuff, and to try to get the	047
	flow moving we are not squeezing it together, up here, then it	048
	won't reach them.	049
Freja:	And when you say talking about the <u>right</u> thing, then we are	050
	talking about more pedagogic things and... look forward	051
Alva:	yeah	052
Freja:	where	053
	do we want to go, what's the <u>goal</u> , and to list... have a vision over	054
	there instead of >here and now< and what happened yesterday.	055
Martin:	Right	056
Freja:	Just that.	057
Martin:	And in your school, when it is about the goal and the vision, would	058
	that be more a conversation that has to go top-down? Or would	059
	you think more this is a conversation going from the bottom-up?	060
	Or how are you thinking of that?	061
Freja:	<u>Well</u> , I think it is about a conversation in our group.	062
	We are <u>not quite finished</u> so to say.	063
Martin:	right,	064
Freja:	We are finding our <u>way</u> together.	065
Martin:	yes	066
Alva:	We are just gonna presume in five year we wanna be <u>here</u> ,	067
Freja:	yeah	068
Alva:	and then we gonna talk to the teamleaders and say, this is	069
	our vision we want to be <u>here</u> in five years, and then, they gonna	070
	have to discuss how to get there, its your job to take after this and	071
	then they go talk to their teams, ok we have got a vision over	072
	here, five years from now, we want to go there - how do we do	073
	that?	074

Martin:	Ok. - And these teams are they waiting for you coming and have this vision?	075 076
Alva:	Yes. They do, [With a humorous undertone] They have been waiting for some while now. [Laughter]	077 078
	[Overtalking. Laughter]	079
Alva:	Of course they have some visions by themselves, of course.	080
Erik:	[unauditable] and the flow [of communications] has to go <u>both ways</u> , otherwise it's not developing at all and it's topleading...	081 082
Alva:	Yeah	083
Erik:	we have to have that... When there was the <u>darkest</u> period, er,... they always blame the boss: 'What are you doing? Why are you doing that?' And at one meeting I said <u>stop!</u> If, if <u>we</u> – because this is <u>we</u> – , <u>we</u> have it... you don't think that we are not listening to you...but I am not here to <u>boss</u> you, this is something we have to do <u>together</u> , and, that... when I got a bit angry	084 085 086 087 088 089 090
Some:	[Empathic background noises]	091
Erik:	and I, I lost it a little bit, I was pretty... <u>When I did that, and</u> they reflected on what I said: because yes, this is something <u>we</u> have to do, this is not <u>your</u> responsibility or <u>your</u> responsibility , <u>we are a team</u> , and my role is to handle the information, I got the information and I take the information to you and my job is also to hand your information into <u>this group</u> [the group of vice-principals], and that how we create where we are in five or two years. And after that we had a whole different, er, atmosphere, they talked more and more and more, and they are feeling that we are going somewhere because the first step in reaching for, is the thought. And they have started to think... and they have ideas.	092 093 094 095 096 097 098 099 100 101 102 103
Martin:	So they have now ideas, and they come back with ideas to you.	104
Erik:	Yeah, not just to me but to the whole group	105
Martin:	To the whole group. And you are part of this, and you are part of other conversations.	106 107
Erik:	That's some good news [?], around.	108
Some:	[acknowledging hmms]	109
Alva:	I also think that, to make this to work, especially to say to get the flow <u>upwards</u> , we need to do the right things, because if we are sitting here all of us and not out there in the classroom in the	110 111 112

	corridors. Then it will never work. Because then [unauditable]. But when we can be out there instead and only be here when we need to, then we gonna see what happens, then we can take the discussion as what is today, then we can talk about it, and then [unauditable].	113 114 115 116 117
Martin:	So you are actually in the process of defining how to go about all these things.	118 119
Alva:	yeah.	120
Martin:	This is in the very, <u>in the now</u> , isn't it?	121
Alva:	Yes	122
Martin:	Ok, I am conscious we are coming to the end of our time, what is a good way of, of ending? - For you? Anything? – – – How do you do endings in school?	123 124 125
All:	[Laughter]	126
Someone:	The bus is coming.	127

Appendix 3 - Procedures

Information Sheet for the Organisation

NOTE: This information sheet is intended to clarify the research project with the Client Organisation at a stage when preliminary conversations have already taken place and it seems appropriate to summarize what has been discussed and provide further details on the research framework

Introduction: Proposal for consultation and research

This information sheet relates to a proposal which combines (a) a proposal for a possible consultation relating to development of your organisation and (b) a proposal for a single case research into this consultation.

The proposal is presented by Martin Miksits, a doctorate student of systemic practice, who is managing director of SYDE Consultations GmbH (Ltd), a consulting firm. The doctorate program is delivered by Kensington Consultation Centre Foundation (KCCF) and is accredited by the University of Bedfordshire, UK.

The intention with the consultation is to *benefit your organisation* in working towards the task or commission identified and pursued by your organisation. The exact task or commission of the consultation will be agreed based on your interests and priorities.

The research is a *single case study* into the process of consultation. The focus is to understand the experience and participation of managers and staff in this process. The research is intended to be of additional positive effect on your organisation achieving or sustaining the development that relates to the task or commission.

The purpose of this information sheet is to explain and document the consultation and research framework.

The Systemic Consultation

What is a systemic consultation?

We call our approach to consultation 'systemic' to point to specific principles that we use to orient us in the way we aim to be useful for our clients. We found we can best illustrate these principles presenting case examples, nevertheless we have characterizing some key ideas below

- **Clients are the expert.** We work from a position that our clients are experts in their work environment, organisation or industry.
- **Situations are unique.** Because clients and client situations are unique we do not believe in standard solutions.
- **People and opinions are diverse.** We expect that within an organisation there are different opinions and ways of making sense and we consider this plurality a resource for the organisation and for our working together.
- **Organisations are resourceful.** We think of organisations and their members are uniquely enabled. People in organisations, individually and collectively, often have more ideas, aspirations and resources than usually might be 'visible' in the day to day of organisational life.
- **Relationships matter.** The way people in organisation relate, talk and make sense is significant to them and the organisation.

When is a systemic approach useful?

We consider that a systemic approach is useful and effective to development of individuals, teams and organisations. If and how we can be of use to you in a specific task or challenge is something we would like to (continue to) explore with you.

How much does the consultation cost?

Once a commission or task is specified an approach to work can be estimated and agreed. As part of the research agreement we undertake to allow for < preferential terms to be specified here >. This means practically that within such agreed frame <implications specified here>.

What is required from your organisation?

It is required that we agree on a specific task or commission for the consultation work. As much of our work is in meetings with you we will wish to agree availability of relevant staff, for instance to participate in meetings or workshops.

Details of any such commitment can be clarified at later stage in the consultation process.

Information Letter and Information Sheet for Participants

Participant Information Letter (Draft)

From 'The Client Organisation' to 'Members'

<Brief description of the current / planned consultation undertaking>

As part of this project we have agreed for Martin to conduct a research into the consultation he is doing with us. As part of his doctorate studies he is interested to research how organisations develop through consultations.

Martin plans to record the meetings that relate to his work here, and to use this material for research and publication. He has suggested and we have agreed several measures to protect the interests and confidentiality for all who agree to participate:

- There will be confidentiality of all participants and of the organisation. Identifying details will be removed or disguised in the research report.
- A participant to a meeting that was recorded will receive a copy of the transcript and can request any of her spoken text to be deleted (without having to give reason).
- All material taken for research will be centrally reviewed by <person in client organisation> to safeguard the interests of <The Client Organisation>.

In addition to recording meetings Martin asked for the opportunity to interview five to eight participants, two to three times during the course of the project. The focus of these interviews will be the experiences and contributions of participants in the process of consultation.

Data from these interviews will be managed with the same diligence and confidentiality as described above.

Findings from the research will be presented to us and we will be able to comment prior to publication.

We/I support Martin in this project and hope it will as well provide useful insights for all who participate.

Martin will appreciate if you are interested and will be happy to answer any questions you may have. He will ask for your consent to use the data from meetings you have been part of, respectively your specific consent to interviews. An information sheet about the project is attached with this note.

Information Sheet

What is the purpose of this study?

This study is conducted with participants to a consultation process. The purpose is to learn more about how organisations develop through consultation processes, in particular to more fully appreciate the perspective of the client organisation.

The research will be used to gain insight on organisational change processes and aims to benefit other organisations and consultants.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part.

What will I have to do if I take part?

Consultation meetings that you participate in will be audio taped.

Conversations will be transcribed and all names of persons or organisations and other identifying details will be removed or disguised. You will receive a copy of the transcript for review and may request any deletions without having to provide reasons.

In addition you may consent to be interviewed 2 to 3 times during the course of the consultation project. The interviews will be about past and future conversations that might make a difference for the organisation. Interviews will be recorded, transcribed and reviewed by you in the same way as stated above.

What will if I do not take part?

Consultation meetings with you will not be recorded. In case some persons who participate in a meeting take part in the research and others don't, the meeting might still be recorded but the any text spoken by those who do not take part will be removed from the recording and transcript.

How much time will it take to take part?

To participate in three interviews will take a total of 3 hours of your time (estimated 1 hour per interview). In addition you will receive transcripts of meetings and interviews which you want to read and feedback. This may take another 1 – 1.5 hours.

What are the possible advantages or disadvantages of taking part?

Experience from similar research was that people experienced the interviews as useful to appreciate more fully their contribution to the organisation and the choices they have

made. Being a participant might heighten your awareness and agency on how to play a part in the development of the organisation.

Consultation project and research project have been agreed together. If there is not sufficient interest into the research the whole project, including the consultation, may not be viable.

Will my taking part in this research be kept confidential?

Yes. All the information about your participation in this study will be kept confidential.

Are there any limits to confidentiality?

The data released for research and research outcomes will be published and shared within your organisation. There might be people who know your opinion, or style of expression, and hence may be able to link even disguised text from the study to you as specific person.

I will therefore align with you prior to using any material from interviews or conversations to disguise or remove any text that you do not agree to be used for this research.

What will happen with the results of the study?

The results will be presented to you and other interested member of The Organisation and any comment will be appreciated.

The whole study and parts of the data that has been used in the research will be published.

Who has reviewed the study?

The study has been supported by the KCC Foundation Ethics Committee. The objectives and design have been discussed and agreed with <Member of The Organisations>.

Interview Guide

Introduction of the Interview

- *Remind of the use of data and confidentiality.*
- *If not done already, present information sheet and receive written consent for the interview.*

Introduction of the topic

Related to ‚Project/Aim‘ I am interested in conversations that are of marked difference from, say, usual ways of talking in the organisation.

The differences I mean are

- People talking or involved who otherwise are not
- Emergence of new topics or ideas
- Different ways of talking, informing, engaging, planning and so on
- People relate differently with each other, for instance more open or closed, more or less hierarchical

Is it understandable what sort of things I am interested in? (*Validate understanding at this stage*)

Above points presented on a flipchart as a reference throughout the conversation

A1. NOMINATION OF PAST EXPERIENCE

What conversation comes to your mind that has been different in that way?

Clarify date and participants. If more than one conversation is mentioned agree to focus on not more than 2-3 most relevant and ask following questions A2 – A5 for each conversation.

How was this conversation different?

A2. PAST ORIENTATION / PREPERATION

So if we go back to the time before this conversation (meeting) happened -

Who was involved in the conversation? (What were their roles?)

How did people make sense of this upcoming conversation?

What was your take of the objective people had?

How about yourself? What were your objectives? How have you prepared for this conversation?

How come you related to this conversation and prepared in this way?

Inquire into the logic of meaning and action of preparation to the extent that meanings can be related to personal, relational, professional, organisational, team or other contexts.

A3. PAST PRESENCE OF THE CONVERSATION

What happened during the meeting? How did you experience the conversation?

When and how did you notice that the conversation was different?

Inquire into difference in terms of participation, emergence of new topics / ideas, different ways of talking, different relationships.

What did people do that invited such differences?

What did you do? How come you acted in that way?

Inquire into the logic of meaning and action of participation to the extent that it can be related to personal, relational, professional, organisational, team or other contexts.

A4. PRESENT IMPLICATIONS

What difference made this conversation?

How do the ideas or ways of talking live on beyond this conversation?

How has this conversation been significant for you?

Inquire into new meanings and any new/different actions emerging from them.

A5. OTHER IDEAS / REFLECTIONS

Any other ideas or connections that come to your mind regarding this conversation?

B1. NOMINATION OF FUTURE EXPERIENCE

So, if you consider conversations that will happen in the future... Are there any conversations or meetings that come to your mind that will make a difference, where you hope or expect that new topics or ideas emerge or the way people talk and relate will be different?

If more than one conversation is mentioned agree to focus on not more than 2-3 most relevant and ask following questions B2 – B5 for each conversation.

How do you expect this conversation to be different?

B2. PRESENT ORIENTATION/PREPARATION

Who will be involved in this conversation (meeting)? (What are their roles?)

How do people make sense of this upcoming conversation?

What is your take of the objectives people have?

How about yourself? What are your objectives? How are you preparing for this conversation?

How come you relate to this conversation and prepare in this way?

Inquire into the logic of meaning and action of preparation to the extent that meanings can be related to personal, relational, professional, organisational, team or other contexts.

B3. FUTURE PRESENCE OF THE CONVERSATION

What do you hope or intend to happen during the meeting?

How would this conversation then be different?

Inquire into difference in terms of participation, emergence of new topics / ideas, different ways of talking, different relationships.

What do you hope or intend to do during the meeting?

How come you would act in that way?

Inquire into the logic of meaning and action of participation to the extent that it can be related to personal, relational, professional, organisational, team or other contexts.

B4. FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

What difference could this conversation make in the future?

Inquire into potential new meanings and any new/different actions emerging from them.

B5. OTHER IDEAS / REFLECTIONS

Any other ideas or connections that come to your mind regarding this conversation?

Closing Topic & Final Reflections

Thank you for your time and patience sharing your experience and ideas on these conversations.

What difference did this conversation make to you? Any new ideas came out of it?

Is there anything we have not discussed but you would like to bring up?

Closing the Interview

Can I just take a moment to remind of the next steps:

The interview will be written up and I will send it to you as plain text. I will remove all references to people's names and call them A, B, C and so on. *In line with the confidentiality agreed with organisation.*

You will find that the transcript of the interview has all our aamms and ohhs and so on, this may feel strange but it is how people speak.

Sometimes at the end of an interview people already sense that they have said things they are concerned for others to hear. Is there anything that we have discussed that concerns you and you would like to let me know?

It will take a few weeks before I send you the transcript. I will ask you to let me know within a week if there is anything that you would like to delete from the transcript because it may identify you or you don't want things to be seen by others, or for any other reason. Of course, if you need more time you can let me know.

Following from you agreeing to use the interview data the transcripts as any other material from this project will be reviewed and then released for research and publication purposes by your organisation. *In line with the procedure agreed with the organisation.*

This and further details are described in the information sheet that was discussed prior.

Do you have any questions regarding the next steps?

Thank you very much for your participation in this interview!