

Beyond command and control

Citation for published version (APA):

van Baarle, S. (2021). *Beyond command and control: designing for voice and empowerment*. [Phd Thesis 1 (Research TU/e / Graduation TU/e), Industrial Engineering and Innovation Sciences]. Technische Universiteit Eindhoven.

Document status and date:

Published: 01/07/2021

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:

- A submitted manuscript is the version of the article upon submission and before peer-review. There can be important differences between the submitted version and the official published version of record. People interested in the research are advised to contact the author for the final version of the publication, or visit the DOI to the publisher's website.
- The final author version and the galley proof are versions of the publication after peer review.
- The final published version features the final layout of the paper including the volume, issue and page numbers.

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B E Y

designing

O N D

for

C O M

voice

M A N D

and

A N D

empowerment

C O N

Steven van Baarle

T R O L

Beyond command and control

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Cover & layout: Suzanne Bakkum

Printing: Ridderprint

ISBN 978-94-6416-568-5

A catalogue record is available from the Eindhoven University of Technology Library

Van Baarle, Steven

Beyond command and control: Designing for voice and empowerment

Eindhoven: Eindhoven University of Technology, 2021

Keywords: power, empowerment, voice, actionable knowledge, organizational change, design science, positive power, intervention study

Eindhoven University of Technology

Department of Industrial Engineering & Innovation Science

Beyond command and control
Designing for voice and empowerment

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor
aan de Technische Universiteit Eindhoven,
op gezag van de rector magnificus prof.dr.ir. F.P.T. Baaijens,
voor een commissie aangewezen door het College voor Promoties,
in het openbaar te verdedigen op donderdag 1 juli 2021 om 16:00 uur

door

Steven van Baarle
geboren te Hilversum

Dit proefschrift is goedgekeurd door de promotoren en de samenstelling van de promotiecommissie is als volgt:

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Het onderzoek of ontwerp dat in dit proefschrift wordt beschreven is uitgevoerd in overeenstemming met de TU/e Gedragscode Wetenschapsbeoefening.

In memory of Ben van Baarle
August 5, 1945 – November 27, 2000

In this short Life
That only lasts an hour
How much—how little—is
Within our power

—*Emily Dickinson, In this short Life*

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 RESEARCH MOTIVATION: THE MISMATCH BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Research motivation and stance

In 2015, I had a series of conversations with the deputy commander of a large military organization in the Netherlands (MIL). As a senior executive, he had been responsible for several change programs. Looking back on his experiences of the past couple of years, he reflected:

I want to do the same as we've done in the past [embark on change efforts], but not in terms of power. Not in terms of structure. Not in terms of hierarchy. But in terms of work, because I think that we can be smarter in how we do it together. So, I think we should approach change differently in this organization.

Having worked as a change practitioner within the Ministry of Defense for many years, I also felt that a different approach to change was in order. I remember sharing my thoughts and experiences and with the deputy commander as I struggled to make sense of these trajectories within MIL. In my experience, organizational change appeared to go hand in hand with writing many formal documents such as business cases, project plans, restructuring documents and so forth. Some of my concerns were the countless working groups, brown paper sessions, management meetings, and speeches. All these interactive sessions struck me as efforts either to mobilize others to think along with the change initiatives or to minimize 'resistance' and build a support base for the ideas of those leading the change programs. Whichever alternative reason prevailed, it depended on who I was speaking to.

I perceived these experiences to be at odds with my 'formal' change education. A couple of years before I started my doctoral journey, I enrolled in two master programs that were inspired by or rooted in social constructionist thinking. Until today, this constructionist perspective has been informing my professional and academic work. One of the main ideas in social constructionism is that people continuously try to make sense of their (work) environment, and that their actions are based on these processes of sensemaking (Gergen, 2009; Weick, 1995). Facilitating change, from this perspective, implies intervening in these processes of sensemaking in such a way that employees voice and enact more desirable organizational futures. However, in my practical experience, the interactive processes within MIL appeared not to create these new, alternative perspectives as I mainly witnessed struggles about who was right. In my organizational change education, different viewpoints were considered to be key to generating novel ways of thinking and acting. However, what I witnessed that within MIL major differences divide people into separate groups, working alongside each other.

At one point the senior executive posed an open-ended question: "we call our change approach the 'MIL Change Method'—why does it suit our organization?" This

seemed a relevant question and I proposed to explore the issue. He agreed, and looking back, this was the starting point of my PhD trajectory.

Theoretical background

Organizational change goes hand in hand with complexity. This dissertation focuses on the specific complexity of change initiatives that involve some form of empowerment. This type of change initiative is nothing new: for example, employee engagement involvement (Maynard, Gilson, & Mathieu, 2012; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015), dialogic approaches to organizational development (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Bartunek & Woodman, 2015), and organizational changes that promote less hierarchy and more self-management (Lee & Edmondson, 2017; Robertson, 2015). All these forms of empowerment are about increasing the *power to* act throughout the organization. In other words, practices referring to actors' abilities to get things done autonomously (Hosking & Pluut, 2010; Morriss, 2002). Power-to practices are frequently contrasted with *power over* ones. Power-over refers to practices, speech acts for instance, that demonstrate the power of an actor A over another actor B. That is, "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do" (Dahl, 1957, p. 202-3). An actor can be an individual or a group, and is not gender-specific. Here the change initiatives that involve empowerment are efforts to strike a new functional balance between 'power over' and 'power to' (Clegg et al., 2006), and thus transform power-over to power-to or facilitate power-to in organizational settings (Hosking, 2011). Whereas power-over typically involves domination, coercion and/or manipulation, the power to act draws on the idea of self-determination (Göhler, 2009; Haugaard, 2012). Common change approaches that facilitate power-to are, Future Search (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010), Open Space (Owen, 2008), and The World Café (Brown & Isaacs, 2005).

Against this background, this dissertation investigates how to combine the 'vertical' processes of governance with the 'horizontal' practices of participation. The central question is therefore:

What hinders and enables organizations that have long thrived on 'command and control' to become better at combining power-over with power-to practices?

Theorizing the dynamics between 'vertical' power-over practices of governance and 'horizontal' power-to participatory practices is important for several related reasons. Organizations adopt some form of empowerment to improve their results. While aiming to increase power-to, many initiatives often fail to achieve their intended outcomes (e.g. Lorinkova, Pearsall, & Sims, 2013; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Understanding the dynamics such initiatives trigger will help to find pathways towards virtuous patterns between power-over and power-to.

The mainstream discourse on power in organizational settings portrays it as a rather negative and restrictive force (Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Haugaard & Clegg, 2009). Several

studies question power relations instigated and sustained by management (e.g. Barker, 1993; Mulder, 1971; Willmott, 1993). This focus may have clouded people's understanding and appreciation of the more positive perspectives on power, for example the alternative ways to use a position of power (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Spicer et al., 2009). This dissertation sheds light on power as a positive force. It can serve as a generative idea and inspire alternative actions and practices (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012a; Cooperrider, 2017).

The previous two arguments rest on the assumption that improving our understanding of the dynamics between power-over and power-to will advance organizational performance and inspire more fruitful governance and participation practices. Furthermore, increasing power-to through practices such as voice and more inclusive decision-making could foster normative values such as democracy, autonomy, and participation (Huault et al., 2014; King & Land, 2018). I outline the central question in this dissertation in the following subsections.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF STUDIES: ADDRESSING COMPLEX CHALLENGES

Along with my supervisors and co-authors, I address key organizational challenges facing the MIL, by conducting three studies. The study described in **Chapter 2** is an in-depth analysis of key actors' narratives in two MIL projects. The highest-ranking MIL actors (generals) have stressed the need to empower military personnel in order to address the complex challenges facing the organization. To do so, the generals tasked team leaders of key projects to empower and engage a large number of personnel in their projects. I selected two of these empowerment projects. As empowering actors is far from straightforward (Cheong et al., 2019), studying such projects helps us to better understand an undertheorized dark side of empowerment initiatives (Lee et al., 2017; Sharma & Kirkman 2015). The research question in the first study is:

What kind of power-related tensions arise from empowerment initiatives by powerful actors, and how do these tensions affect the empowerment efforts?

To answer this question, we draw on key notions from the literature on power and conceptualize empowerment as the transformation from 'power over' to 'power to.' This way to uncover the power dynamics and tensions arising from empowerment initiatives digs much deeper than previous studies. Specifically, we argue that powerful actors actively try to use their power to empower others, and their power stance influences how they interpret and respond to empowerment initiatives. Power-related tensions can emerge at two levels: in an actor and between actors. These tensions undermine efforts to transform power practices and enhance empowerment throughout an organization. This study makes several important contributions to the literature on empowerment

and power in organizations: it deepens the knowledge on processes and complexities that generate unintended outcomes of empowerment initiatives; it sheds light on the complex relationship between power-over, power-to, and transformative power in an actual organizational setting. Finally, it adds to the research on empowerment *and* power by demonstrating how the cross-fertilization between these two (largely separate) bodies of literature can advance both fields.

The study described in **Chapter 3** adopts a positive perspective on power in organizational settings. As previously mentioned, power is predominantly conceptualized as a rather negative force, restricting the behavior of others (Haugaard & Clegg, 2009). However, this is not necessarily the case, as power does not equal domination (Allen, 1998). Power can also be conceived as a necessary and positive force in any organization (Foucault, 1977). Here, a positive perspective implies that all actors have (some) ‘power to act’, not just those sitting at the top. From this point of view, power functions as a mechanism that can transform relationships within an organization, steering them in the direction of empowerment and emancipation, rather than hindering them. Interestingly, positive perspectives on power have hardly been developed and utilized in organization research (Carlsen et al., 2020). To fill this gap, we review and synthesize the literature. The corresponding research question in this study is:

What are the main characteristics of positive power and how can positive power foster desirable organizational outcomes?

Our review identifies four mechanisms: formal authority, languages shapes action, community formation, and the interpersonal dynamics of safety and trust. We identify the actions and interventions that trigger these mechanisms and, in turn, foster desirable organizational outcomes such as empowerment and emancipation in organizational settings. This review contributes to the literature by developing an integrated framework of power as a positive force, an antidote to the mainstream discourse. Our proposed framework provides a foundation for further research on the positive role of power in organizational settings. Integrating various separate discourses, this framework extends prior literature reviews that focused on ‘power over others’ and thereby creates novel avenues for research on power. Additionally, it may open up new opportunities for developing interventions that empower actors to actively improve their work lives.

These first two studies are descriptive in nature and rely on the observation and synthesis of what already exists (in practice and theory). In contrast, the study presented in **Chapter 4** adopts an intervention perspective and thus aspires to shake up existing power stances. This study draws on the idea that in-depth knowledge of human systems can be best obtained by deliberately trying to change them (Grant & Wall, 2009; Schein 1987; Starbuck, 2003). We combine insights from the second study, the literature review of power as a positive force, to develop the intervention perspective. As an example of an empowering organizational design, we apply insights on the circular organizing of

transformative power acts and participatory research approaches. In the intervention a facilitator uses their powerful position to guide, invite, and challenge participants in the context of their team meeting. The intended *outcomes* of the intervention are to foster power-to concretized as team performance, collaboration, and co-ownership of team decisions. As such, the intervention deliberately seeks to adjust the process of decision-making within teams. This is effectuated by separating team decisions from team operations. Team decisions are made by team members in team meetings (offering opportunities for increasing voice), whereas in team operations, the practice of power-over prevails (arising from the team leader's unity of command). Team meetings thus offer a setting where employee voice can be most likely enhanced and sustained. The intervention restricts (the power-to practice of) team decision-making to negotiating collective boundaries, which may in turn reinforce the team leader's efficacy in (the power-over practice of) managing the team's operations. The intervention is designed to facilitate the team connecting and switching between the power-over practice of managing the team's operations and the power-to practice of team decision-making.

After pilot-testing the intervention in an academic setting, I tested the intervention extensively with ten teams in different MIL contexts. The data obtained from these interventions allow me to answer the following research question is:

How and when does a voice solicitation intervention foster voice in settings characterized by major power tensions?

Drawing on 120 hours of recorded meetings and additional qualitative and quantitative data, the findings suggest that fostering power-to is a dynamic learning process, for both the powerful and less powerful actors involved. By developing a causal loop diagram based on the findings, I demonstrate how the intervention can trigger a virtuous process leading to enhanced psychological safety, voice capability development, increasing voice, and more inclusive decision-making. However, it can also lead to a vicious process whereby team members' expectations increasingly diverge, psychological safety is compromised, and tensions build up in ways that ultimately demotivate voice.

This study contributes to the literature by conceptualizing voice solicitation as a collective, interactional process rather than a one-time dyadic event that can be both virtuous and vicious. The findings thus extend earlier work on voice solicitation, which focuses on supervisor-employee dyads (Li & Tangirala, 2020), the role of other team members in cultivating the outcomes of voice solicitation (Satterstrom et al., 2020), and the motivational origins of (not) soliciting voice (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Fast et al., 2014; Sherf et al., 2019). The three studies are summarized in Table 1.1 at the end of this chapter.

1.3 RESEARCH APPROACH: DESIGN SCIENCE CONNECTS ACADEMIA AND PRACTICE

The divide between academia and practice is recognized by many as a key problem for professionalizing management in general (Romme, 2016), and organizational change and development in particular (e.g. Bartunek et al., 2011; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). Scholars suggest this division is caused by two types of problems. This first concerns a mismatch between the type of knowledge that academics produce and the type of knowledge that practitioners can actually use. The second problem involves complexities in transferring knowledge between these two rather separate worlds (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011). Based on the motivation for this dissertation, the adopted research approach should enable mitigation of these problems concerning transferring and producing practitioner-relevant knowledge. Hence, this dissertation aims to generate *actionable knowledge*, in other words, knowledge that is relevant to academic and practitioner discourses alike (Coghlan, 2007).

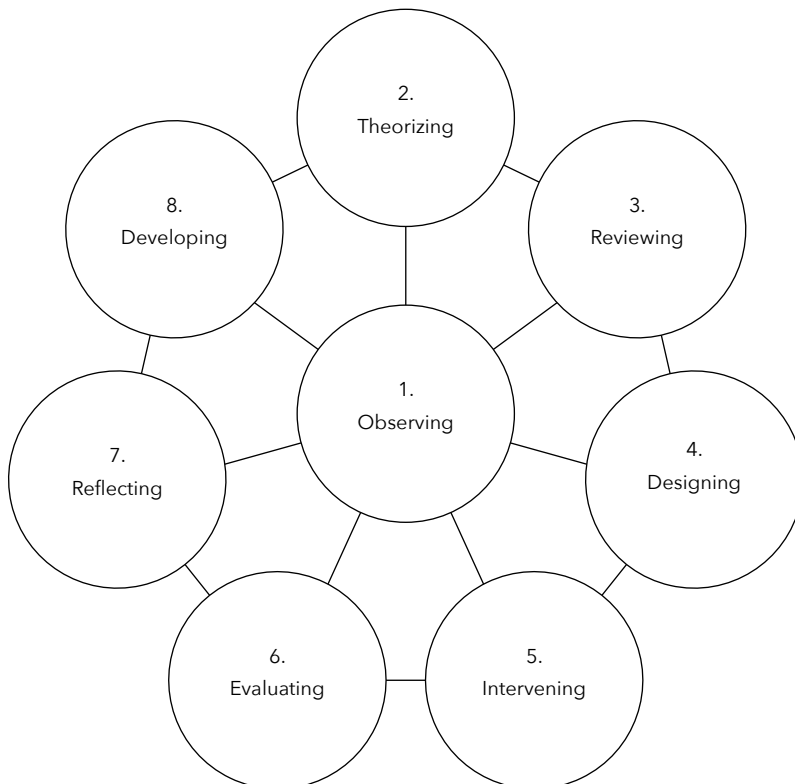
Design science, also known as design-based research (Andriessen, 2007) or science-based design (Van Burg et al., 2008), connects academia and practice in the context of a research project (Romme, 2003). Design science is problem-centered and has a solution-oriented nature (Nicolai & Seidl, 2010), thus aims to identify real-world problems, develop solutions, and test them (Van Aken, 2004).

I draw on an eight-step design science methodology as visualized in Figure 1.1. This approach produces knowledge about a complex problem in collaboration with academics and practitioners. It combines practical and scientific knowledge. Practical knowledge concerns understanding how to deal with the contextual conditions and challenges in a specific case (Calori, 2000). Scientific knowledge draws on academic research and involves explaining more generic cause-effect relationships. Despite being different, these two types of knowledge are also complementary (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). The processes and practices that combine these types of knowledge are dialectical in nature and address an evolving common understanding of the problem in practice by confronting different views (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006) central to the design science methodology.

This methodology involves eight steps: observing, theorizing, reviewing, designing, intervening, evaluating, reflecting, and developing (see Figure 1.1). Step one, *observing*, perhaps a continuous activity—and therefore in the center of this figure—is being aware of the problem in practice and the particularities of a certain organizational context. This can be an awareness of differences between theory and practice, recurring (dysfunctional) patterns in practice, or remarkable elements in an organizational discourse. Observing is also key in intervention and evaluating this intervention. This step involves being sensitive to participants' perceptions, and making many (largely practical) choices regarding adjusting these processes to a specific organizational context (e.g. framing the intervention with regard to participants, taking into account their specific back-

grounds, expectations or needs et cetera). The second step, *theorizing*, is selecting a theoretical lens relevant to the problem in practice. This step leads to the identification of a research problem. That is to say an issue that begins to fill a meaningful gap, relating to the problem in practice. The third step, *reviewing*, concerns identifying and reviewing the best evidence available to develop an intervention that will simultaneously enable a contribution to solving the research problem and the practice. Fourth, *designing*, develops an intervention by applying a combination of deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning (Warfield, 1990). The fifth step, *intervening*, involves the actual execution of the intervention protocol. It can only be executed once the overall research problem's key elements are established in the specific organizational setting where the intervention will be tested. Sixth, *evaluating*, concerns the evaluation or assessment of the intervention with all participants present, as opposed to only management. Step seven, *reflecting*, comprises theoretical reflection on the intervention process and its outcomes. Step eight, *developing*, closes the cycle by producing (actionable) knowledge based on the previous steps. A key element of developing (actionable) knowledge is making it transferable both to other practice sites and to academic audiences. Each

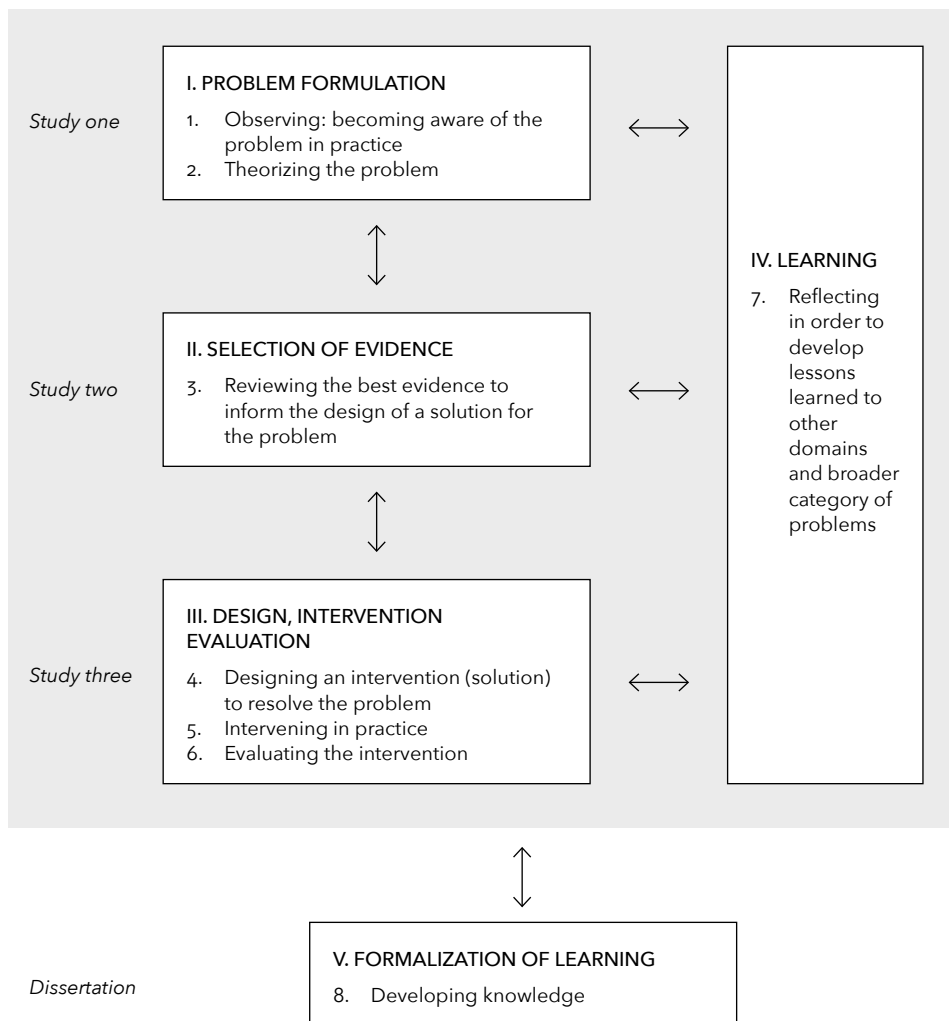
Figure 1.1 Eight steps within a design science research approach



step involves many iterations, steps overlap, and are connected and intertwined. The design science research approach connects processes conducted in the ‘practice stream’ (observing, intervening, evaluating, and reflecting) with activities in the ‘knowledge stream’ (observing, theorizing, reviewing, designing, reflecting, and developing).

Figure 1.2 is an overview of how the aforementioned eight methodological steps were applied. Here, these steps are clustered in five stages: (I) problem formulation, (II) selection of evidence, (III) design, intervention, evaluation, (IV) learning, and (V) formalization of learning.

Figure 1.2 The five stages and eight methodological steps in a design science research approach (adapted from Sein et al., 2011)



Stage I. Problem formulation

The mismatch between theory and practice was the motivation for this PhD trajectory:

1. Observing

As a practitioner, I observed a remarkable difference between what I had been taught about change—dialogic change in particular (Bushe & Marshak, 2009)—and what it looked like in practice. I captured this practical struggle in thick descriptions (Ponteretto, 2006) and notebooks. Drawing on the idea and relevance of narratives about practice (Rouleau, 2010) to discover what actors are actually *doing* when trying to accomplish change, I complemented my own narrative with those of other key actors in the change projects.

2. Theorizing

After reading the transcripts several times, I realized I was observing power-related struggles. From my studies on change, I remembered reading Hosking's (2011) suggestion that dialogic power-to practices need to be added to the power-to repertoire. These rather broad concepts were, to the best of my knowledge, hardly used in empirical analysis within the field of organization studies. I therefore broadened my search and consulted the literature on political power and power in organizations (e.g. Haugaard & Clegg, 2009; Pansardi, 2012; Wartenberg 1990). This search uncovered an overarching research problem:

What hinders and enables organizations that have long thrived on 'command and control' to become better at combining practices of 'power-over' with 'power-to'?

Chapter 2 presents a detailed overview of this first stage and its outcomes.

Stage II. Selection of evidence

The second stage of this work concerns selecting the best available evidence in (academic) discourses relating to the problem in practice. This involved step 3 in the design approach. In Chapter 3 I present the findings of this stage.

3. Reviewing

In order to be able to devise an evidence-informed intervention, I made the first search query (Appendix 1) long before the intervention was developed. This revealed that few empirical studies could inform our design. One of the few theories actually dealing with power-over and power-to dynamics, albeit in slightly different terms, was circular organizing theory (Romme, 1999, 2003; Romme & Endenburg, 2006). At a later stage the literature review was geared towards power as a productive force in order to increase the theoretical relevance.

Stage III. Design, intervention, evaluation

Stage three, the third study in this dissertation (see Chapter 4), involved steps 4 to 6 of the design science approach. These steps represent the core activities to develop a solution for the problem in practice. Moreover, they demonstrate the interconnect- edness of the research and the practice stream:

4. Designing

This step applied deductive reasoning by starting from key constructs and principles inferred from circular organizing, empowerment, and power theories (resulting from the previous step). It drew on inductive reasoning, for example by testing the intervention prototype with pilot users and expert facilitators, then adapting the intervention accord- ingly (the feedback loop in Figure 1.1). Designing also involves abductive elements, because devising the intervention requires making a number of (largely practical) choices regarding its embodiment in a specific organizational context (e.g. focusing the intervention on participants, available meeting times, meeting frequency).

I tested a prototype of the intervention in an academic setting. Next, I moved to the empirical setting and conducted intake interviews with MIL team leaders. These inter- views aimed to establish whether there was a match between the research problem and the problem in practice as perceived by the team leaders. Many team leaders appeared to struggle with the relational—power related—dynamics in their teams. They describe some participants attempting to dominate a meeting, and others as silent. Or, leaders feel they are doing all the work and perceive the participants as passive, whereas the leaders would like participants to take ownership in team decisions. If these or related dynamics were present (i.e. the research problem matched the problem in practice) *and* the team leader (voluntarily) agreed to participate in the intervention, I proceeded to the next step: intervening.

The intervention consists of seven key elements, and it took on average five meetings to test these elements with the ten teams in the third study. This implies that each team underwent the cycle intervention evaluation on average five times (with the exception of the team that rejected the intervention after one session). To introduce and explain the intervention to the teams, I used an infographic with the seven key elements (see Appendix VIII). To connect with the team members (i.e. connect research and practice), I framed the intervention in terms they commonly use and recognize. This explains why the key constructs to frame the research problem differ from the terminology used for the problem in practice (e.g. the terms in Appendix VIII).

5. Intervening

Intervening was done at regular team meetings, using the intervention protocol. The first four meetings were facilitated by the researcher and/or expert facilitator. In most cases the final team meeting was facilitated by a team member (not the team manager).

All facilitators made sure they employed the same procedures to guide, invite, and challenge the participants in the context of their team meeting.

6. Evaluating

Evaluating was done with all participants at the end of each meeting. At the last team meeting, guided by the protocol, the entire series was evaluated.

Stage iv. Learning

Stage four involved step seven of the design approach. This learning stage moves from building a solution from a particular organizational problem, and testing it in a specific team setting, to applying lessons learned to different settings and a broader category of problems.

7. Reflecting

Reflecting the lessons learned from every series of team meetings were used to both refine the intervention protocol and develop actionable knowledge. Further, it involved continuous reflection on framing the problem in different fields (e.g. (em)power(ment), voice, and change literature) to identify the contributions to knowledge.

Stage v. Formalization of learning

Stage five involved the final step of the design approach and aims to formalize the lessons learned. More specifically, at this stage the lessons learned are being made transferable to move from the “specific-and-unique to generic-and-abstract” (Sein et al., 2011, p. 44)

8. Developing

Developing (actionable) knowledge by analyzing the research/facilitators’ meeting transcripts, notes, and thick descriptions.

1.4 AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Doctoral student Steven van Baarle has compiled this dissertation in collaboration with his supervisors. Table 1.1 contains an overview of the three main studies conducted for this dissertation. Table 1.2 subsequently provides an overview of the contributors to each study.

Table 1.1 Overview of the three studies conducted as part of this dissertation

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Title	Beyond command and control: tensions arising from empowerment initiatives	Conceptualizing positive power: a mechanism-based review of the literature	Designing for voice: developing and testing a voice solicitation intervention
Objective	Identify the organizational challenge: understand complexities of higher levels of involvement, interaction, and dialogue in the context of change initiatives (i.e. empowerment)	Select the best knowledge available to address the complexities of empowerment initiatives	Design and test an intervention to address the organizational challenge (increase empowerment by becoming better at combining 'power over' and 'power to')
Domain	Empowerment and power literature	Empowerment, power, and change literature	Voice and empowerment literature
Level of analysis	Team level	–	Team level
Research question / objective	What kind of power-related tensions arise from empowerment initiatives by powerful actors, and how do these tensions affect empowerment efforts?	What are the main characteristics of positive power and how can positive power foster desirable organizational outcomes?	How and when can a voice solicitation intervention foster voice in settings characterized by major power tensions?
Methodology	In-depth case study	Literature review and synthesis	Intervention study
Literature and Theoretical contributions	Empowerment and power literature	Power literature, critical management studies	Voice and empowerment literature
Practical implications for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Change agents · Organization development practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Change agents · Organization development practitioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Team leaders/members · Organization development practitioners
Publications / Recognition	Published in: Organization Studies (2021)	To be submitted	To be submitted / Best doctoral student paper award, Organization Development and Change division, Academy of Management (2020)
Target journals		Human Relations	Academy of Management Journal

Table 1.2 Contributors to the studies

	Van Baarle	Bobelyn	Dolmans	Romme
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION				
Writing main text	•			
Corrections and feedback	•	•	•	•
CHAPTER 2 - STUDY 1				
Study design	•			
Literature review	•			
Data collection	•			
Data analysis	•			
Interpretation of the results	•	•	•	
Writing main text	•			
Corrections and feedback	•	•	•	•
CHAPTER 3 - STUDY 2				
Study design	•			
Literature review	•			
Data collection	•			
Data analysis	•	•		
Interpretation of the results	•	•		
Writing main text	•			
Corrections and feedback	•	•	•	•
CHAPTER 4 - STUDY 3				
Study design	•			•
Literature review	•			
Data collection	•			
Data analysis	•	•		
Interpretation of the results	•	•	•	
Writing main text	•			
Corrections and feedback	•	•	•	•
CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION				
Writing main text	•			
Corrections and feedback	•	•	•	•



An earlier version of this chapter was published as: Van Baarle, S., Dolmans, S. A. M., Bobelyn, A. S. A., & Romme, A. G. L. (2021). Beyond command and control: Tensions arising from empowerment initiatives. *Organization Studies*, 42(4), 531-553.

CHAPTER 2

Beyond Command and Control: Tensions Arising from Empowerment Initiatives

ABSTRACT

In this study, we explore how empowerment initiatives can be understood by drawing on key notions from the power literature. By conceptualizing empowerment as the transformation toward ‘power to’ by actively using ‘power over’, we uncover power-related dynamics and tensions arising from empowerment initiatives in ways that go beyond prior work. Our in-depth case study of an empowerment initiative in a military organization highlights the complex challenges that powerful actors face when attempting to enhance the power to act elsewhere in the organization. Our findings demonstrate how power-related tensions arise between and within actors, as actors combine and shift between different power practices. We find that power tensions are not merely relational in nature (i.e. between actors), but also arise when individual cognition differs from action. By showing how the interplay of different power practices may result in major tensions, our findings provide a new perspective on why organizational empowerment initiatives may produce unintended outcomes or even completely fail. Moreover, while power-over, power-to and transformative power practices are typically explored separately, this study is one of the first to shed light on the complex relation between these power practices, thereby examining them together. Finally, this study demonstrates how cross-fertilization between the empowerment and power discourses may advance both fields.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Many organizations have been adopting some form of empowerment, for example in employee participation programs (Maynard et al., 2012), dialogic approaches to organizational development (Bushe & Marshak, 2009) and organizational changes that promote less hierarchy and more self-management (Lee & Edmondson, 2017). All these forms of empowerment are essentially about increasing the power to act throughout the organization. However, empowerment initiatives often fail to reach their intended outcomes (e.g. Lorinkova, Pearsall, & Sims, 2013; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). In this respect, empowerment initiatives may give rise to cynicism (Brown & Cregan, 2008) and increase job-related tensions (Lee et al., 2017). Empowerment is also likely to generate tensions because key actors do not give up power, control and autonomy that easily (Yukl & Fu, 1999). These unintended outcomes may even reinforce the existing power balance, instead of transforming it (e.g. Bunderson & Boumgarden, 2009; Mulder, 1971).

In this study, we aim to explore these unintended outcomes of empowerment initiatives, by drawing on key notions from the power literature (see Boje & Rosile, 2001; Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). We conceptualize empowerment as the transformation from 'power over' to 'power to', which serves to uncover power dynamics and tensions arising from empowerment initiatives in ways that go beyond prior work. In essence, empowerment initiatives can be conceived as efforts to strike a new functional balance between 'power over' and 'power to' (Clegg et al., 2006). Whereas power over others typically involves domination, coercion and/or manipulation, the power to act draws on the idea of self-determination (Göhler, 2009; Haugaard, 2012).

We therefore explore what kind of power-related tensions arise from empowerment initiatives by powerful actors, and how these tensions affect the empowerment efforts. To this end, we draw on an in-depth case study of a large military organization, in which senior executives try to introduce and enhance empowerment throughout the organization. Our findings illustrate how powerful actors actively (try to) transform their power practices, as they attempt to empower others. We show that individual actors' preferences for a power practice (e.g. a preference for 'power over' practices), as reflected in their *power stance*, influence how these actors interpret and respond to empowerment initiatives. In this respect, power-related tensions emerge at two levels: between actors and within an actor. *Between-actor* tensions arise when some of the powerful actors attempt to transform power practices, while others adhere to more traditional and rigid ways of working. This finding extends insights obtained in previous studies of empowerment (e.g. Cheong, Spain, Yammarino, & Yun, 2016; Lee et al., 2017). Additionally, we identify *within-actor* tensions between an actor's cognitive disposition and public behavior, which have not previously been theorized in the empowerment or organizational power literatures. Cognitive disposition refers to what actors think they do or believe to be important, while their public behavior refers to what they actually do and what others see them do. Notably, within-actor tensions may further

fuel between-actor tensions, as they undermine efforts to transform power practices and enhance empowerment throughout the organization.

By showing how the interplay of power practices may result in major tensions, our findings provide a new perspective on why organizational empowerment initiatives produce unintended outcomes and may even completely fail (see Barker, 1993; Humborstad & Kuvaas, 2013; Lorinkova et al., 2013). This responds to recent calls to deepen our knowledge on the processes and complexities generating these outcomes (Cheong et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Moreover, power-over, power-to and transformative power practices have mostly been explored separately, and our study is one of the first to shed light on the complex relation between these three power practices in organizational life, by examining them *together*. Many authors have been recommending this inclusive approach (e.g. Haugaard, 2012; Pansardi, 2012). Lastly, this study contributes to research on empowerment *and* power by demonstrating how the cross-fertilization between these two (largely separate) literatures may advance both fields (see Boje & Rosile, 2001).

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Empowerment in organizations

Empowerment can be seen as the process of driving authority and responsibility down the ladders of the organizational hierarchy (Maynard et al., 2012). The notion of empowerment in organizations can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when Follett (1918) raised the idea to develop organizations democratically, as places where powerful and less powerful actors learn together. Later work focused on, for instance, engaging less powerful actors such as employees (Lewin, 1947) and developing the quality of work life in organizations (Kanter, 1977). While empowerment may have had its 'heyday' in the 1990s (Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998), it is coming back into vogue, albeit in slightly different shapes and terminology: for instance, in terms of eroding hierarchies and the simultaneous rise of network-like ways of organizing (Cunha, Rego, & Clegg, 2011; Lee & Edmondson, 2017) and efforts to increase voice, engagement and participation of those with less power (Bartunek et al., 2011; Bushe & Marshak, 2009). Yet, the core idea in all these approaches has remained the same over the years: empowerment is assumed to enhance performance, work attitudes and well-being of organizational actors (Hempel, Zhang, & Han, 2012; Wagner, 1994), by distributing the power to act within the organization. Accordingly, empowerment appears to positively influence various work-related outcomes such as task performance, job attitudes, citizenship behaviors, and creativity (Maynard et al., 2012; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015).

However, empowerment initiatives have also been associated with unintended outcomes (e.g. Cheong et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017; Lorinkova et al., 2013). For example,

the introduction of empowerment initiatives is often met with cynicism (Brown & Cregan, 2008; Labianca, Gray, & Brass, 2000), which may even reinforce the existing power balance rather than shift power toward those with less (Barker, 1993; Mulder, 1971). To better understand why organizational empowerment initiatives often produce unintended outcomes or even completely fail, we will conceptualize empowerment in terms of key notions and insights from the power literature (as advocated by Boje & Rosile, 2001).

Driving authority and responsibility down the ladders of the organizational hierarchy inherently involves some form of (re)distribution of power in organizations (Kanter, 1977; Maynard et al., 2012). The dominant conception of power in organizational life is ‘power over another’ (Clegg et al., 2006); this *power-over* is commonly conceptualized as a restrictive force, and often a synonym for domination (Göhler, 2009; Pansardi, 2012). In contrast, power can be conceptualized as a facilitative force, as *power-to*, which reflects the ability of an actor to bring about outcomes (Clegg et al., 2006; Morriss, 2002). As an alternative to using power to impose their will or ideas on others, powerful actors can also use power in a *transformative* manner, such that it increases the power-to of other actors, as can be the case in teaching or parenting (Allen, 1998; Wartenberg, 1990).

In this study, we therefore conceptualize *empowerment* as the transformation toward ‘power-to’ facilitated by ‘power-over’, which includes the practices that powerful actors use to increase the power to act by others in their organization. To better understand any tensions arising from empowerment, we thus need to explore how power-over, power-to and transformative power interact. The overarching research question in this chapter, therefore, is:

What kind of power-related tensions arise from an empowerment initiative by powerful actors, and how do these tensions affect the empowerment initiative?

In the remainder of this section, we first review the literature on previous conceptualizations and definitions of power-over and power-to. We then turn to various attempts to bridge these two concepts, especially focusing on (notions related to) transformative power, and conclude by revisiting our research question.

Power over others

Dahl’s (1957) definition of ‘power over’ has been very influential: ‘A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’ (Dahl, 1957, pp. 202–3). As of the 1960s and 1970s, several scholars set out to conduct empirical research on different facets of ‘power over’, which served to identify its various dimensions (Göhler, 2009; Lukes, 1974). In organizational settings, coercion and manipulation are frequently identified as two key (episodic) dimensions of power-over. *Coercion* refers to actors directly exercising power to achieve certain ends (Fleming & Spicer,

2014). *Manipulation* refers to power being exercised in order to limit what is discussed, that is, power as a force that shapes and restricts agendas (Clegg et al., 2006; Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). A third, more systemic, dimension of power-over is *domination*, that is, any process in which actors influence others by constructing ideological values that become hegemonic (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). These three dimensions share Dahl's underlying notion of A's power to get B to do something that B would otherwise not do (Clegg et al., 2006).

Inspired by Foucault's (1977, 1998) work, several scholars have been arguing that *subjectification* is another systemic dimension of power. Subjectification goes beyond domination, by shaping the subjectivities of subjects (Clegg et al., 2006; Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998) and determining 'an actor's very sense of self, including their emotions and identity' (Fleming & Spicer, 2014, p. 244). Foucault's work has inspired critical management scholars to study how, for example, a particular discourse serves to discipline the ways in which actors construct reality and engage in particular behaviors (Grant, Hardy, Oswick & Putnam, 2004) or how they are produced by a discourse (Huber & Brown, 2017; Thornborrow & Brown, 2009).

In sum, the various notions of power-over appear to assume that 'having power' is about prevailing over others (Göhler, 2009). Thus, the vast majority of the literature conceives of power-over as a relational concept that refers to the *coercion, domination, manipulation* and/or *subjectification* of others, rather than individual dispositions (Fleming & Spicer, 2014). As a consequence, the notion of power-over is relational and asymmetrical in nature, where one of the actors is able to execute more power than others (Göhler, 2009; Hosking, 2011; Morriss, 2012).

Power to act

The *power to act* involves the ability of an individual or group to act or decide rather autonomously (Hosking & Pluut, 2010). Similarly, Morriss (2002) defines power-to more concisely as the ability to bring about outcomes. The concept of power-to is embedded in a long research tradition (e.g. Arendt, 1958; Follett, 1918). One of the first authors with a strong interest in power-to was Mary Parker Follett (1918), who explored ways to democratize organizations in order to enhance learning and cooperation. She believed that people had to be able to execute power at the grassroots level and that society would flourish from doing so.

The power-to-act can be conceived as an individual concept, referring to the ability to act or decide autonomously (Göhler, 2009). More recently, the individual nature of power-to has been contested by those who believe it is a relational concept (e.g. Hosking, 2011; Pansardi, 2012). In this respect, all organizational members are considered to be key subjects in the power-to discourse. This serves to acknowledge multiple local realities of actors as well as to value the differences between these realities in non-hierarchical ways (Gergen, 1995; Hosking, 2011). Power-to can thus be conceptualized as the ability of an individual or group to act or decide rather autonomously, giving rise to

practices that allow the construction of different local worlds (Hosking, 2011). These ideas strongly resonate with Follett's work on empowerment.

Some scholars consider power-to and empowerment to be equivalent concepts (Clegg et al., 2006; Pansardi, 2012), even though most of the empowerment literature does not directly address any power issues (Boje & Rosile, 2001; Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). Furthermore, a large part of the empowerment literature stems from psychology, drawing on motivational theories regarding job characteristics and self-efficacy (Maynard et al., 2012). Empowerment is thus conceived as a psychological phenomenon that involves individual-level effects of various types and facets of autonomy, but does not take into account any structural or relational dimensions (Stokes & Clegg, 2002). In this study, we intend to move beyond individual facets of autonomy, and focus on the tensions and potential complementarities between fundamentally different ways of engaging with power.

'Power over' and 'power to': toward transformative power

As our review thus far shows, power-to and power-over are generally regarded as two major but largely separate approaches to power in organizational settings (see Clegg et al., 2006). Despite various attempts to reconcile the two approaches conceptually (e.g. Allen, 1998; Haugaard, 2012; Pansardi, 2012), scholars have typically focused on either power-over (e.g. Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Thornborrow & Brown, 2009) or power-to (Labianca et al., 2000; Maynard et al., 2012). Some have explicitly acknowledged the need for organizational practices that involve both power-over and power-to (Hosking, 2011; Romme, 1999), yet more insight is needed to understand how these practices coexist and reinforce each other.

Interestingly, Wartenberg (1990) has argued that power-over can, besides being used to coerce, dominate or manipulate, also be used in other ways. For example, power-over can be used in a rather paternalistic manner, for example, when the subordinate actor is (perceived as) not able to judge his own interests rationally. Moreover, power-over can be used in an empowering and transformative manner (see also Allen, 1998; Morriss, 2002). In the latter case, the dominant agent 'attempts to exercise his power in such a way that the subordinate agent learns certain skills that undercut the power differential between her and the dominant agent' (Wartenberg, 1990, p. 184). As such, we consider *transformative power* as a distinct notion, on par with power-over and power-to. Interestingly, the introduction of transformative power as a separate construct serves to open up the dualism between power-to and power-over. These three notions may together help to make better sense of how powerful actors engage with various tensions and challenges in a given organizational system. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the empowerment phenomenon as well as the three core notions of power, in terms of their key definitions, assumptions and historical roots.

Notably, the various notions outlined in Table 2.1 are not mutually exclusive. For example, people with substantial power over others also tend to have a signif-

Table 2.1 Definitions and assumptions regarding empowerment, power over others, power to act, and transformative power*

	Empowerment	Power-over	Power-to	Transformative power
Definition	The processes and mechanisms that actors with substantial power-over use to increase the power-to-act of others	Actor A makes actor B do things s/he would otherwise not do; power-over can be shaped in episodic (coercion & manipulation) or systemic forms (domination & subjectification)	The ability of an actor to bring about outcomes (e.g. act and/or decide) rather autonomously	Actor A uses its power-over to enable and enhance actor B's power-to
Assumptions	Actors with substantial power over others can transform or give up (part of) their power, to enable others to develop power-to-act	A single actor is in charge of, or can direct the organization or a key part of it; the objects of power-over are relatively passive recipients	Each actor constructs its own unique reality; organizational practices arise from negotiations and other interactions between actors	Within a web of systemic power-over relations (e.g. domination or subjectification) that shape identities and behaviors, actors with substantial (initial) power-over can become aware of and flexible in their power stance
Theoretical roots	Lewin (1947) Kanter (1977)	Dahl (1957)	Follett (1918) Morriss (2002)	Wartenberg (1990)

* Based on: Clegg et al. (2006); Dahl (1957); Fleming & Spicer (2014); Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan (1998); Hosking & Pluut (2010); Morriss (2002); Pansardi (2011); Romme (1999); Wartenberg (1990). Notably, the term 'actor' can refer to an individual, but also to a group.

icant amount of power to act (while power-to does often not imply power-over), so power-over can be conceived as a subset of power-to. Moreover, the notions of empowerment and transformative power assume that someone is in charge, that is, has sufficient power-over that can be used to transform and enhance the power to act of others in the organization. Table 2.1 also demonstrates that empowerment and transformative power are highly similar constructs, with the former emphasizing the processes and mechanisms of enhancing power-to and the latter emphasizing the intentions of those in charge.

While many empowerment initiatives are taken to 'open up power-to' (Hosking, 2011, p. 60), in practice these initiatives are often closed down by way of power-over acts (e.g. Barker, 1993; Romme, 2015). In this respect, the notion of transformative power assumes that powerful actors can deliberately seek to enhance the power-to of

others, whereas the power-over literature signals that any such transformation attempt is likely to run into many (covert) barriers and forces working against it. Such tensions have remained largely unaddressed in empirical work (Göhler, 2009; Haugaard, 2012; Hosking, 2011; Pansardi, 2012). Therefore, in the remainder of this study, we draw on the above notions from the power literature to explore what power-related tensions result from an empowerment initiative by powerful actors, and how such tensions may affect the empowerment initiative.

2.3 METHOD

Case selection and data

To answer the research question previously introduced, we draw on an in-depth case study in a large military organization. In this empirical setting, power practices can be studied in a rather straightforward manner due to the organization's long tradition in command-and-control. The large military organization is part of the Dutch Armed Forces and employs over 5,000 people. Since 2011 the highest ranked actors in this organization have stressed the need for empowering military personnel in order to engage the complex challenges the organization is facing. To address these challenges, the generals leading this military organization tasked the leaders of key projects to empower and engage many employees in their projects.

We selected two specific projects, taking place in the same period, to collect narrative and other data. The first project, Newops, aims at developing and implementing a more advanced operational concept. The second project, Connect, aims at improving the agility of the organization, making better use of the potential of its personnel, and improving the connectivity between people in the organization as well as between the organization and its surroundings. We collected three main types of data for both projects, covering a four-year period, supplemented with archival documents such as project papers, speeches and presentations for triangulation purposes.

Participatory observation

A primary source of data involves an extensive period of participatory observation (41 months in total), to gain insight into the dynamics and power practices within and around the two projects. One of the authors contributed as an insider-researcher as he has been employed in the organization for a long time and was thus able to work closely with the informants, resulting in many open talks and discussions. Being an internal advisor, he was asked to participate with an explicit focus on the organizational development aspects of the projects. He participated for 22 months in the Newops project, and subsequently in the Connect project for 19 months. He kept field notes (12 notebooks) and developed thick descriptions (33 pages) to describe and interpret critical incidents in and around these projects.

Semi-structured interviews

We also draw on the detailed accounts of key actors, obtained from 15 in-depth interviews with 11 informants. Three informants are senior executives: the highest ranked officers including a lieutenant-general and two major-generals, holding final responsibility for the entire organization and acting as either sponsor or principal of (one of) the projects. Five other informants were high ranking officers, from major-general to major, who served in one of the project teams. The three remaining informants, project team members, are civilian employees acting as specialist internal consultants responsible for the development and execution of the project. All informants have substantial power-over based on their position in the organization and their assignment to increase the power-to of others. Through participatory observation, we were able to identify different and sometimes opposing voices within each team regarding key decisions and challenges.

Focus group meetings and attendance in periodical meetings.

The insider-researcher frequently attended meetings of a network of (team) coaches and change professionals in the organization. Additionally, two focus group meetings were organized to validate the themes, dynamics and patterns emerging from our initial analysis, from the perspective of practitioners that were (or had been) involved in a large number of other projects in the same organization.

Data analysis

The data analysis consists of several steps, drawing on coding procedures developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). First, we analyzed the field notes, thick descriptions and interview transcripts, using (first-level) open coding to explore power practices and dynamics in the two projects. Second, we used second-level codes to label power-over and transformative power acts and practices. The resulting patterns suggest that organizational actors typically have an individual power stance, representing their inclination (i.e. relative position) toward power-over or transformative power, as displayed in how they typically act or how they talk about what type of power they deem appropriate. Further analysis revealed that specific tensions emerge from the coexistence of, or shifting between, both power practices. Such tensions manifest themselves between and within actors, and were coded accordingly. The two focus group meetings served to further refine the coding scheme. Table 2.2 provides the final coding scheme, including definitions and representative quotes.

Appendix II provides a more comprehensive explanation of the methods we used in this study. Additionally, Appendix III offers more background information on the two projects we studied.

2.4 FINDINGS

This section describes the key findings. First, we portray the initial setting of the case organization, by describing the traditional use of power in this military organization and exploring what the empowerment initiative entails for this organization. Second, we show how each actor has an individual preference for a certain type of power practice, reflected by his/her power stance. Third, we identify two types of power tensions arising from the empowerment initiative. In particular, our data shows that tensions *between* actors emerge when both power-over and transformative power practices coexist. Subsequently, we demonstrate that the coexistence of, and shifting between, such power practices also leads to tensions *within* actors. Finally, we show how tensions within-actors fuel tensions between actors and ultimately undermine the empowerment initiative.

Traditional use of power and the empowerment ambition

Military organizations are traditionally characterized as authoritarian and control-oriented systems that leave little room for other organizational members to take decisions or provide input, as one of the generals in our study also observed:

Defense is not an organization that has a change culture that really tries to involve people. Changes are often more or less imposed from above or, at least, really tightly controlled from above. (General #2)

In this organizational setting, power is traditionally considered to be something that only few actors have. Power can therefore be characterized as mono-vocal: only the voice of management counts, implying a strong power-over orientation. With regard to the Connect and Newops projects, senior executives had long been aiming for a different approach, by considering and embracing other voices than those of the executives themselves and the project leaders. Senior executives thus sought to enrich the repertoire with transformative practices that would enable power-to. This implied a more dynamic use of power practices in the organization combining both power-over and transformative power practices, in order to engage other organizational members in accomplishing the intended outcomes of the projects:

I want to do the same as we've done in the past [embark in change efforts], but not in terms of power. Not in terms of structure. Not in terms of hierarchy. But in terms of work, because I think that we can be smarter in how we do it together. So, I think we should approach change differently in this organization. (General #1)

Table 2.2 Coding scheme: concepts and illustrative quotes

Concepts	Definition
Power-over	Expressions or actions that imply that one (small group of) actor(s) has more power than others. Often one or a few 'active' actors(s) describe(s) what more or less 'passive' others (i.e. recipients) should have done or should be doing. (Adapted from: Dahl, 1957)
Transformative power	Expressions or actions that enable others to participate, share ideas, or influence decision making (i.e. stimulate or seduce employees, other than management or just the few at the top, to participate). (Adapted from: Hosking & Pluut, 2010; Wartenberg, 1990)
Tensions within	<p>Inconsistencies between an actor's power cognition (expression) and action. Cognitions refer to the way actors describe their beliefs about what is 'real' to them. Actions refer to (i) how the actor X describes what his actions were in a specific situation or (ii) what another actor Y testifies regarding the actions of actor X.</p> <p>Inconsistencies also emerge (iii) inside individual cognition, for example when an actor expresses an interest in transformative power (enabling power-to), yet creates a passive/active binary between active agents and passive recipients (reflecting a power-over stance).</p>
Tensions between	Relational tensions that emerge between actors who represent different power stances.

Illustrative quote

"And that's what I find sad about the work, the endless facilitating that we don't gain anything from and we don't learn from. And truly, I'm wholeheartedly convinced that you need to educate that [group of actors]." (Officer #1)

"Look, you can nitpick all you want, but when a certain rank asks something of a lower rank, that's the same as a kind yet urgent request to do so." (Officer #2)

"And particularly things where you have to create moments in organizations from which you can indeed share a happening, an experience, take a next step and make choices." (General #3)

"If you all agree to discuss the work, what your joint responsibilities are and what you can contribute, this will result in a different kind of conversation." (General #1)

(i) An actor believes (cognition) he is approaching a project in a transformative manner:

"The method of change is to work in an organically incremental way and what that means is that you try things, discuss with others the lessons that you learn and also make sure there's enough room for reflection from the shop floor, from among the people affected, where you want to implement change. That they can reflect on what is happening to them or how they feel about it and that you then factor their views into your final view of what the organization should look like." (General #4)

Yet when he describes what he is doing (action), a power-over image emerges, resulting in a tension within:

"Just get that movement started and if you let your people dangle a little bit they will soon start to do all sorts themselves, all sorts of dodgy constructs will appear." (General #4)

(ii) An actor believes he is balancing between giving direction and leaving space for others (cognition):

"And, what I usually consider a normal way of changing things is to get people on board and involve them, and discuss things with them and as a result come to a suggestion together. Of course you direct this process but it is definitely something that for a large part comes from the people themselves." (General #2)

Yet, his actions are (perceived as) not giving direction at all:

"It was like a wheelbarrow filled with frogs all wanting to go in their own direction. And there was nobody at the helm. Everybody could do as they pleased." [General #2 was in charge of this team] (Officer #3)

(iii) *"And, what I usually consider a normal way of changing things is to get people on board and involve them ..."* (General #2)

"I didn't feel the need whatsoever to speak to anyone here or from management about this. There was no point, because they weren't even on the same page. Internally it was clear that we weren't on the same page either, and also that that was no longer achievable. Two individuals had taken a clear stance: 'I do what I want. End of discussion.' That's when I thought: that's it, I'm done. I chose the law of energy preservation, in the sense that I attempt to prevent myself from going crazy in this place and see how I can do at least something useful. Because we were supposed to write an evaluation at the end of the year, which left us with two, three months to get something down on paper. Or so it seemed at that moment in time." (Officer #3)

"[...] but that has led to countless clashes in which the directorate's policy advisor that had to take it on was like 'what the hell has now been dumped on my desk?' [...] yeah, while we actually brought them something they hadn't asked for. So they saw it as extra work that had been forced upon them all of a sudden." (Civil #1)

This is not to say that power-over practices would disappear; rather, they would get a different shape, implying that one proceeds:

...not in a forward march kind of way, but to discover the changes that others are going through. Discover the possibilities and lead people toward them.

(General #3)

As such, the changes intended in this military organization were not about senior executives withdrawing from efforts to control the organization, delegating all responsibility, or transforming completely toward self-steering units. The intended shift toward empowerment was more subtle, involving both leading and directing (acts of power-over) as well as discovery and giving voice to others (acts of transformative power). Similar patterns can be inferred from data collected by the participant-observer:

As long as I have been working here, more than ten years now, managers have asked me to act in ways to improve collaboration, develop processes so that people in other parts of the country can take part in the production of products and services that are normally only initiated by the senior executive office. Common phrases are 'we need to engage with the people in the rest of the country' or, when they refer to lack of collaboration within headquarters 'we need to work in integral teams'.

(Insider-researcher)

The intended transformation toward empowerment entails involving more people in key processes and policymaking. These ideas of empowerment had been discussed in the organization for quite some time, and were not limited to the two projects studied here. Senior executives strongly felt that with the prevailing power-over practices, and employees passively waiting for orders, the organization would no longer be able to face the complex challenges it was confronted with. This military organization is expected to respond adequately to, for example, terrorism, migration and natural disasters. As a result, it needs to be able to respond to continuous reprioritizing by the Dutch government and international (e.g. UN) bodies as well as collaborate in highly different and dynamic settings, both internally and externally. These challenges thus require different ways of engaging in decision-making and getting things done:

It requires an organization in which as many employees as possible can think for the organization as a whole, see and understand what is going on, what needs to be done, and jump into action. So, self-managing teams are really key. Team members need to take responsibility and proactively negotiate about obtaining the right resources to get the job done. To me, this is not some sort of trick, it is a key enabler, and essential for us to continue fulfilling our duties in the future. (General #1)

The intended transformation was also observed at higher policy levels; for example, an internal memo about the desired leadership style within the Dutch Armed Forces states:

*Leading is strengthening the capability of a community to shape their own future....
Increasingly we choose inspiring over supervising, listening over sending, and
connecting over convincing.*

Hence, senior executives' empowerment ambition implied a dynamic use of a broader set of power practices, including both power-to and transformative power. Yet, the data show considerable variation in terms of the type of power that senior executives deem right.

Actors' relative power stances

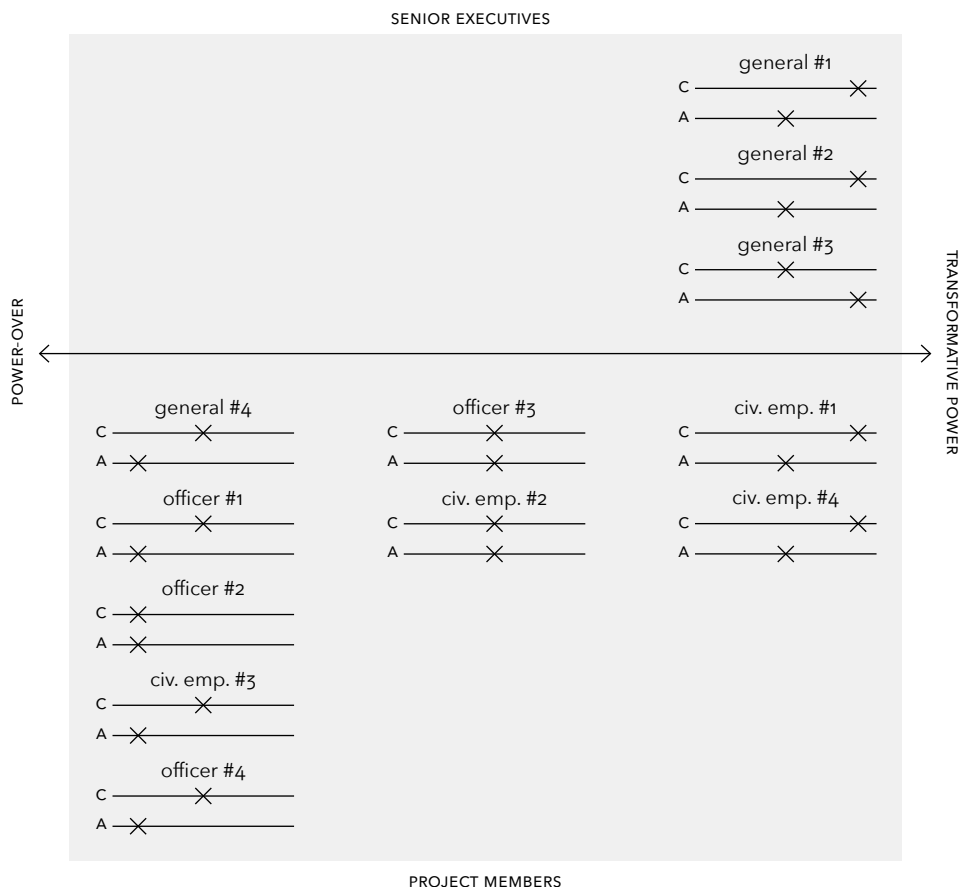
A first key finding centers around the observation that each of the senior executives and project members has an individual preference for certain power practices: their *power stance*. An actor's power stance may range from a strong preference for exercising power-over to a clear preference for enabling power-to (transformative power). It reflects how actors act (as observed by others) as well as how they think they act (as reflected by how they talk about their power actions). Figure 2.1 serves to map the relative power stances of actors along this power continuum. Interestingly, when mapping the power stances of individual actors, it became apparent that how someone acted was often different from what this person believed and said about his or her actions, implying we needed to differentiate between action and cognition. Moreover, Figure 2.1 also serves to depict the differences between the actors' power stances. In particular, potential tensions between (the power stance of) actors are likely to arise from the *distance between* the actors' power stances; a relatively large distance reflects major differences in perspective. Tensions within actors are made visible in Figure 2.1 by mapping two individual power stance dimensions for each participant, cognition (C) and action (A), each involving a distinct miniature power continuum. If the two × marks for C and A are not aligned, this signals tensions *within* the actor. Appendix IV provides additional data to support the positioning of the informants on the continuum displayed in Figure 2.1.

In the remainder of this section, we will elaborate the tensions between and within actors in more detail, including how they affect each other.

Tensions between actors

Here, we turn to how (relational) tensions between actors emerge at various levels in the organization. These tensions especially arise when some actors adopt a more transformative power approach toward the empowerment initiative, while others continue to draw on the power-over approach. One of the generals explained how Connect project

Figure 2.1 Positioning the informants' cognitions and actions on the continuum between power-over and transformative power



members tried to sabotage his effort to use a more transformative approach (i.e. open dialogue) with his staff members:

Well, I think the best example is when I wanted to go out and about to tell people where we are now, what's happening, and not like 'we're going to do it like this', but just where are we in the process and [ask others] 'what do you think about what's going on?', and 'have you got any questions?', and stuff like that. People [members of the Connect project] tried to cancel that a few times when I wasn't there, because I had a day off or something. Yeah, going out and about, that's pretty scary, and what was I going to say, it wasn't clear at all, and you could only tell people something once you knew exactly what was going to happen. (General #2)

An officer also recalled tensions in introducing more power-to practices, as these conflicted with the expectations of other organizational members acting on a power-over stance:

The Director of Plans and so on, the financial people. Of course, they're used to approaching a process like this differently....But even outside the organization it didn't match. I mean incremental growth, they are not familiar with that. No, you have reorganizations, you have a plan, you think about what the new formation will look like. Then you extrapolate that and recalculate, and it's case closed. Whereas here [with this project] there were all sorts of open ends....That drove them crazy, the fact that we were saying 'we'll have to see'. (Officer #4)

Whereas various project members found it hard to part with the power stance of command and control, they simultaneously felt the need to comply with senior executives striving for a more dynamic power stance in view of the empowerment initiative. During efforts to empower employees, who were used to taking orders, the more transformative power stance made some people feel rather uncomfortable:

And I've also noticed a strong 'wait-and-see' approach within the organization. That people are looking at the situation in the sense of 'ok, [senior executives and project members] tell me what we're going to do'. Whereas the idea is actually to stimulate people to make their own contributions, so that's interesting. Probably a bit of a culture thing too, though. (Civilian employee #2)

In addition, many actors appeared to struggle with a more dynamic power stance, when it comes to finding a good balance between power-over and transformative power practices. This also resulted in tensions between actors responsible for, or contributing to, the projects. The insider-researcher reflected on the first few months in the Connect project, characterized by a transformative power approach:

...at this time we were working with a group of people from different parts of the organization. Only the project manager was officially appointed to run this project, the rest of us just felt we could contribute from all of our different backgrounds. The energy was high and the group of people willing to collaborate appeared to be growing with each month. (Insider-researcher)

After a few months, the senior executives holding final responsibility for the project decided to change the project's approach. A new manager was appointed and the project was relabeled as 'highly critical' to the future of the organization. Within a few months, the new manager reinstated the traditional power-over approach. This change led to serious tensions between members of the team, ultimately undermining the empowerment initiative:

...within six months, the team that was working together spontaneously fell apart. The new project manager characterized the old way of working as 'letting a thousand flowers bloom', an approach he didn't appreciate at all. He knew what had to be done, he was calling the shots and it was 'love it or leave it'. Those who were not officially appointed to the program left, one by one. There was conflict and tension between the five formal project members and within six months only the project manager and an external consultant were working closely together. (Insider-researcher)

Tensions within actors: cognition versus action/expression

We now turn to the individual level of analysis. Our data shows that, at times, actors' power stances involved significant differences between their cognition and action, that is, what they think they do or believe to be important versus what they have actually done as well as what others saw them do. Nine out of the twelve actors showed a substantial misalignment between their conceived power stance and their actual power practice. For example, one general espoused his power stance (cognition) as one that empowers others:

The method of change is to work in an organically incremental way, and what that means is that you try things, discuss the lessons that you've learned with others and also make sure there's enough room for reflection from the shop floor, from the people affected, where you want to implement change. That they can reflect on what is happening to them or how they feel about it and that you then factor their views into your final view of what the organization should look like. (General #4)

Yet, the same general addressed 400 people in the organization, from a power-over stance (action), as follows:

We'll explain it, then we'll help you, give you the tools, and if it still doesn't work... if you fight it, if I get any resistance in the form of sabotage, then I promise you as sure as I'm standing here, I'll grab you by the scruff of your neck and sling you over the fence. (General #4)

Our data thus show that many actors cognitively struggle with adopting a more dynamic power stance, involving a balance between power-over and transformative power. Balancing the use of coercive and transformative power appears to be highly challenging, which in turn may trigger major tensions within actors. This balancing act might require the actor to engage in ongoing reflection, or internal dialogue, about the nature of his or her involvement. For example, one of the generals wondered about whether he should step forward to actively engage in the conversation, or should merely be listening:

Whenever we are working together, they turn to me or others in charge: [asking for] 'come on, tell me what to do'. I then wonder: 'is this an old reflex – the need to be guided by a commanding officer, both commanders and subordinates have been trained this way – or is this a natural moment in the conversation where I need to engage in the conversation in order to give some direction about the way ahead, in order to facilitate this group in their development?' (General #1)

When we asked this general what would happen to his power and authority when he takes a step back, he reflected:

I do not feel that I lose power at all, it is just that I enjoy our work so much that I want to engage in the conversation. I need to learn that I do not just speak as any other team member, I am speaking as the commander as well and that has serious impact. I sometimes feel that my rank gets in the way of me engaging in conversations about work and how we could do better. So, I really do not feel stepping back as having less power, yet this can be different for others. I am, of course, in a position not to worry about my power because it is so heavily confirmed over and over again. (General #1)

Moreover, while actors themselves may think they are balancing power-over and transformative power, others are likely to judge these actors' actions in a more 'black or white' manner. That is, others tend to experience the actions of a powerful actor that is trying to balance between power-over and transformation in terms of either 'leaving too much room' or 'acting too dominantly'. For example:

If you have blind faith in the fact that people will do everything of their own accord, then you won't really want to hear that, as a leader, you also now have to tell somebody to just do something now and then. (Officer #4)

Newops only sees us as an extra pair of hands, switch on switch off, 'Do as I say now, I'll have a job for you.' (Insider-researcher)

The insider-researcher was clearly also part of an organizational system in which power-over, for a very long time, had been the dominant power stance. Even though his espoused stance was more transformative in nature, at times he showed a power-over stance without being aware of it; for example, in discussing difficulties in the collaboration with one of the project members:

...almost two years later I realized that even though our styles, background and the content of our messages were completely different, in terms of power we did exactly the same. I was, just as he was, absolutely convinced that it had to go more or less on my terms, or not at all. (Insider-researcher)

More elusive tensions within actors become apparent when their cognition differs from their actions in terms of the language used to communicate with others. These subtle inconsistencies appeared to be part of the prevailing discourse in the organization. For example, one of the generals expressed his concern about the involvement of lower ranked brigade commanders in the Newops project:

I'm concerned about whether the brigade commanders have been sufficiently engaged.... To what extent did we get the Brigade Commanders and team leaders on board, for we have examples that they aren't fully committed.... So if we don't get the Brigades on board, we will not accomplish what we all intend. (General #2)

The quote demonstrates how this general creates a power-over relation between himself and the brigade commanders and team leaders, because he expects them to join a project initiated at the top level. This contrasts with the general's main power stance, which is in line with a more intersubjective transformative perspective. As such, this example reflects a subtle, yet fundamental tension. These tensions appeared frequently, for example in expressions like 'create a support base', 'manage resistance or change' or 'we need to enthuse personnel and take them on board in this development', which implicitly assume that one (group of) actor(s) has more power-over than others. Such expressions display how power-over practices have become deeply ingrained in the organization, which in turn inhibits a more transformative approach. Several actors thus expected that the traditional power-over mentality would be very difficult to transform, for example:

That's not just General #2, it's actually all of them. But, the interesting thing is that the people who have been put in a certain position [in the project], most of them have been brought up in this organization, so they're used to working within a hierarchy. That's how they've been trained, so it's just second nature. (Civil employee #2)

This inertia of the traditional power-over mentality was further substantiated by focus group members:

...to change an organization that has always been top-down and to expect to transform in just a few years to 'no, now it may be bottom-up as well'. That is so much the opposite of how people have been conditioned for years on end. You expect people that have hardly reached M1 phase to move straight to M4 [addition by authors: M1, M4 refers to team development phases] and address them like 'come on, take part, fulfil your role and contribute'. There is something between those phases, that's called a transition. We seem to miss that completely. (Focus group #1)

Tensions within actors trigger tensions between actors

Our findings also suggest that within-actor tensions can, in turn, give rise to between-actor tensions. This effect occurs when actors try to comply with the espoused approach of transformative power, even if it collides with their own main power stance. One of the officers, whose main stance can be characterized as power-over, reflected on his efforts to comply with senior executives' aims:

The setup was splendid, the result was pathetic. Our idea was, we wanted more involvement from the organization in the whole philosophy....I think each group was made up of at least 10 people. There were also points of contact who talked to their own people, so things were discussed within the organization and that was the idea. Only nothing came of it, because people had their own hobby horses and everything was mixed up....I'm thinking: what are you supposed to do with all those opinions?...In the end, I just let it wash over me. And I'm thinking: this is hopelessly lost. (Officer #1)

This demonstrates that the tension within officer #1 gave rise to relational tensions between himself and other organizational members who were invited to co-create a solution for a particular problem. The solutions created did not appear to fit his ideas and preferences, so he ignored them; the ability to do this reflects some discretion in terms of the power-over exercised by officer #1. Focus group members confirmed that actors are inclined to fall back to power-over, when they do not see any value in transformative power practices:

I acknowledge that there are, and have been, individuals that are very fond of these ideas.... You use the term power, but what I have experienced with these dynamics, is a great deal of powerlessness. So I have seen that there is a wish to establish something bottom-up, to have people participating, but just nothing seems to come from it. And then I see just powerlessness. For example, I have seen and heard people participating as intended, but at the end of the day, they [senior executives/project members] say 'but not that!' (Focus group #1)

Power-related tensions undermine empowerment

In sum, the powerful actors in this organization deliberately intended to move beyond command and control and increase the power-to-act throughout the organization. Our findings demonstrate that their attempts to switch between power-over and transformative power, depending on the situation at hand, gave rise to a broad spectrum of tensions that tend to reinforce each other. In turn, these tensions fueled unintended outcomes of the empowerment initiative, such as sabotage, disbelief and cynical responses:

There now is this inclination and ambition toward participation, but still power is 'up there' so to say. That is exactly what I mean, so people may speak up, there is talking along, and ideas being put forward, but there is judgement if the outcome is not what is expected, and people are not being coached. As far as I am concerned, the power about whether or not something will be done, is still 'up there'....I seriously question whether these people are willing to share power. (Focus group #1)

The insider-researcher reflected as follows:

You see and hear many cynical responses to this empowerment ambition. When meeting a colleague in the parking lot who just returned from an away-day on team strategy: 'I lost count on the number of flip-overs I have filled the last couple of years, I don't bother anymore, nothing ever comes from it.' Or, when a manager, with a track record in organizational development, and huge potential to contribute to the empowerment ambition of the generals tells me: 'there's a few of them, happy clueless followers of these empowerment ideas, the rest keep their mouths wisely shut. It really makes me not want to participate, I just focus on my own team, at least that's where I feel I can make a bit of a difference.' Let me give you one more example. At one point, there was this story going around. A powerful actor was moving elsewhere, and he had been pushing through an empowerment initiative involving many employees. There was a lot of gossip around that her successor would kill this initiative, it was completely against his style, or power stance if you will. When this gossip reached the upper echelon, the successor apparently felt or was pressured to make public statements about that he was a huge sponsor of the initiative, and that it would definitely go through. These tensions between powerful actors with different power preferences, the gossip, formal responses to gossip, I can imagine this would feed one's inner cynic. (Insider-researcher)

Both senior executives and focus group participants acknowledged that a lot of work needs to be done to make the empowerment initiative succeed. When powerful actors themselves reflected on the change trajectory of the past four years, they observed that – despite their intentions to do otherwise – the power-over approach still prevailed and thus undermined the empowerment efforts:

We need to go back to the ideas behind this new structure and Newops, and develop a storyline that people can engage with. (General #1)

Ironically, one participant in a focus group disagreed with senior executives, by claiming that one of the two projects failed to achieve any empowerment because of too little power-over, highlighting the complexity of any empowerment initiative in this organization:

[to empower others] first and foremost, you need a common goal. And, if that is lacking, perhaps at least a supervisor. Yet, both of these conditions were not there, so that project [Connect] went everywhere, except for where it was supposed to be heading. (Focus group #1)

2.5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to explore the unintended tensions arising from empowerment initiatives (e.g. Cheong et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015), by drawing on the notions of power-over, power-to and transformative power developed in the power literature (see Boje & Rosile, 2001; Hardy & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1998). An in-depth case study of an empowerment initiative within a military organization served to identify and understand power tensions resulting from such initiatives, where actors with power-over seek to enhance the power-to of others. Our findings shed light on the complex challenges that powerful actors face when initiating empowerment throughout the organization. More specifically, our findings show how empowerment initiatives may give rise to tensions *within* actors and tensions *between* actors. These two types of tensions manifest themselves simultaneously and tend to reinforce each other – ultimately undermining the empowerment effort. These findings have important implications for both the empowerment and power literature, and demonstrate that cross-fertilization between these two discourses can advance both. In the remainder of this section, we will detail the main theoretical implications by drawing on both bodies of literature.

The overarching contribution of this study arises from the opportunity to develop a detailed and differentiated understanding of power-related tensions, which provides a new perspective on why organizational empowerment initiatives produce unintended outcomes and may even completely fail (Barker, 1993; Humborstad & Kuvaas, 2013; Labianca et al., 2000; Lorinkova et al., 2013). As such, our study responds to recent calls to develop deep knowledge of the processes and complexities generating these outcomes (Cheong et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2017; Maynard et al., 2012; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Several related arguments serve to further substantiate this primary contribution; the following five arguments illustrate the complexity and richness of power-related tensions, as well as how these tensions jointly shape the outcomes of empowerment initiatives.

First, our findings illustrate the existence of within-actor tensions and how they can undermine empowerment initiatives. Within-actor tensions emerge from differences between an actor's cognitive disposition and public actions (e.g. in meetings and speeches). These within-actor tensions between cognition and action have not yet been theorized and studied in the empowerment and organizational power literatures. However, the observed differences between cognition and action resonate well with

pioneering work by Argyris and Schön (1974) and Argyris (2004), who differentiate between the values and meanings that individuals espouse (their ‘espoused theory’) and the values and meanings expressed in their actual behavior (their ‘theory-in-use’). In our study, ‘cognitions’ reflect what Argyris (2004) called espoused meanings. Similar to previous work in this stream of literature regarding how the misalignment between the theories espoused and those in use can negatively impact organizational change (Obloj & Davis, 1991) or employee productivity (Cording, Harrison, Hoskisson, & Jonsen, 2014), our results demonstrate how within-actor tensions may undercut empowerment efforts.

Second, our findings illustrate how within-actor tensions fuel between-actor tensions to further undermine the empowerment initiative. While some actors adopt a transformative approach regarding empowerment, others continue to draw on power-over practices, resulting in tensions between the key actors involved in the empowerment initiative. Moreover, previous work suggests that managerial actions in the context of organizational transformation tend to be closely monitored and scrutinized by subordinates, and any major inconsistencies between managerial actions and espoused values fuel skepticism and resistance (Brown & Cregan, 2008). When powerful actors embrace empowerment, yet simultaneously portray other actors as rather passive recipients (‘we need to engage you in this process’), the within-actor tensions may invoke widespread skepticism among employees (see Labianca et al., 2000). As a consequence, the deeper power structures are likely to remain untouched, and power-over practices may even be reinforced (see Barker, 1993; Mulder, 1971). As such, our findings suggest that powerful actors engaging in empowerment initiatives need to address the multiple and unpredictable power acts and responses (see Fleming & Spicer, 2008) that give rise to individual-level tensions as well as tensions between actors. Evidently, this is a major challenge for top managers, also because (conditions for) cynicism and ambivalence toward empowerment are easily created but rather difficult to change.

Third, our findings suggest that powerful actors can be highly different in terms of their individual *power stance* (e.g. a preference for ‘power over’). This helps to explain why some senior executives are more interested (in investing) in empowerment initiatives than others (Leana, 1986; Yukl & Fu, 1999) and why some of these executives may be more capable of empowerment than others (Offermann & Hellmann, 1997). Our findings suggest that any major empowerment initiative requires powerful actors to *dynamically balance* between power-over and transformative power practices, instead of a structural choice between the two. In turn, this induces uncertainty for powerful actors about what type of behavior would empower other actors, or when power-over would be more effective. Consequently, powerful actors also experience major tensions when effectuating empowerment intentions, while previous research has predominantly focused on how empowerment initiatives increase tensions for less powerful actors, that is, the recipients of empowerment initiatives (Cheong et al., 2016). As such, our findings demonstrate how the power stance of top-level actors may impair their ability to act in empowering ways.

Fourth, this study contributes to the literature on power in and around organizations. Most studies of the relationship between power-over and power-to have remained conceptual in nature (Gergen, 1995; Haugaard, 2012; Pansardi, 2012). Moreover, Wartenberg's (1990) notion of transformative power has been widely used by social scientists (e.g. Allen, 1998; Morriss, 2002) but not yet in organizational theory. In this respect, this study is one of the first to shed light on the relation between power-over, transformative power and power-to in organizational life (see Clegg et al., 2006; Morriss, 2012). Most power-over practices identified in our case study appear to be 'identifiable acts' shaping the behavior of others (Fleming & Spicer, 2014, p. 240). However, the more elusive tensions within an actor – when cognition is inconsistent with the language used to describe relations with others – can be understood as systemic forms of power-over. Any intention toward transformative power may thus be problematic, because the prevailing organizational discourse (i.e. language and metaphors used by senior executives) is an integral part of established power-over practices (Fairclough, 1989). The within-actor tensions, identified in our study, point in that direction. This raises the question whether it is possible at all to shift between different power stances, from the point of view of the senior executives in the type of organization we have studied, and whether one can realistically expect that the power-to-act of subordinates can be substantially increased. Foucault (1984a) discussed the example of the soldier to illustrate the implicit power relations this type of subject is embedded in: systematic surveillance, classification, hierarchy, and military drill are all aimed at the formation of a trained docile body. Interestingly, Foucault (1984b) explicitly argued that these power relations always remain mobile, that is, actors can free themselves from the overarching power regime and realize their own preferences and objectives in a self-disciplinary framework of their own making (see also Starkey & McKinlay, 1998). Within the discursive bounds imposed by their membership of the armed forces, soldiers remain individuals who can construct their own self (see Thornborrow & Brown, 2009), that is, even highly constraining power-over practices will provide some space for power-to at the individual level.

Finally, by conceptualizing empowerment as the transformation toward power-to enabled by power-over, this study has opened up new ways for scholars to integrate the empowerment and power literatures. The discourse on empowerment has developed rather separately from the discourse on power. Various literature reviews of power (Clegg & Haugaard, 2009; Fleming & Spicer, 2014) and empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012; Spreitzer, 2008) reflect this separation. Consequently, Boje and Rosile's (2001, p. 90) question 'Where's the power in empowerment?' has remained largely unanswered. And it is precisely the latter question that we have addressed in this chapter, which combines and integrates the power and empowerment literatures to advance both fields.

Directions for future research

Our study draws on an in-depth case study of one military organization, which may limit the generalizability of the main findings. Our findings can be readily generalized to other military organizations, but perhaps less so to non-military organizations. Future work will have to explore to what extent these findings also apply to companies and other (non-military) organizations, involving both mature organizations with an established power-over practice and young organizations without such a history.

Scholarly interest in power-related tensions between actors (e.g. Courpasson, 2000; Pfeffer & Salanick, 1974) may have come at the cost of understanding power tensions within actors. Therefore, future research might want to deepen the understanding of these within-actor tensions. In this respect, cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) can be an important starting point. Cognitive dissonance is likely to occur when (individual) actors hold contradictory beliefs (e.g. their preferred power stance versus what others expect of them in a particular situation), typically experienced as psychological stress or discomfort. According to this theory, actors are likely to engage in strategies to make their actions and beliefs consistent with each other (Festinger, 1962; Weick, 1995). An interesting avenue for future research would be to explore whether and how participants in empowerment settings experience stress due to the dissonance between their actions and cognitions. And, additionally, future work in this area might explore how does this dissonance affects power relations with others and/or explains unintended consequences in empowerment initiatives?

The cognitive and action dimensions of (em)power(ment) practices might well vary situationally (Mills, 1940). In this respect, systematically observing informants in different situations may help to better understand the tensions identified in our study. Future research should also shed light on how the initial organizational setting, for example in terms of support for changing the ways in which power is practiced, affects the tensions and dynamics of power. Some previous work in this area suggests that implementing power-to practices may have a counterintuitive effect, by reinforcing rather than decreasing power-over practices (Barker, 1993; Mulder, 1971). Therefore, future studies need to further explore the organizational conditions in which attempts to transform toward power-to reinforces, weakens or sustains the power-over regime.

Our study unveils some of the most fundamental challenges arising from empowerment, in terms of the dynamic balance between exercising power-over and enabling power-to (i.e. transformative power). Several scholars have argued that these organizational practices coexist and complement each other (Gergen, 1995; Romme, 1999). However, most work pursuing this idea has remained conceptual (Hosking, 2011; Pansardi, 2012) or descriptive in nature (Courpasson, 2000). Here, future research can serve to develop more knowledge on how managers and other powerful actors can actually switch between power-over and transformative modes of organizing, especially by acknowledging the systemic nature of the implicit power structures at play (see Lawrence, 2008).

Concluding remarks

Our findings show how power tensions between and within actors may undermine an established organization to move beyond command and control. To effectively introduce empowerment in an organizational context that has long thrived on command and control, one has to develop a deep sense of awareness and knowledge of power-related tensions. Whereas tensions between people can be traced rather easily, a misalignment between cognition and action is likely to remain hidden. Nevertheless, both kinds of tensions need to be addressed in any effort to accomplish a substantial level of empowerment in organizational settings that have long relied on power-over practices.

Our study contributes to the literature on organizational power and empowerment by exploring the interactions and tensions between power-over and transformative power. The extant literature does acknowledge various power tensions, but there is hardly any understanding of the ways in which power-over and transformative power practices can coexist, and how these practices can be shaped and developed in ways that reinforce the power to act throughout the organization. As such, our study sheds new light on the various tensions arising from empowerment initiatives in organizational settings.

3

CHAPTER 3

Conceptualizing positive power: a mechanism-based perspective

ABSTRACT

This review chapter synthesizes various literatures to develop a perspective on power as a positive force. A positive perspective on power is important for both management theory and practice, because it draws attention to the latent power of actors with a pivotal role in fostering empowerment and emancipation. In this respect, the critical conceptualizations prevailing in the literature may go at the expense of both understanding and appreciating more positive ones. Our literature review identifies four social mechanisms driving positive power: formal authority, language shaping action, community formation, and the dynamics of safety and trust. Furthermore, we identify key actions and interventions that trigger these mechanisms, which in turn may foster desirable organizational outcomes such as empowerment and emancipation. As an antidote to the mainstream discourse on power, this review chapter contributes to the literature by developing an integrated framework of power as a positive force. By integrating various separate discourses in this area, this framework serves to extend prior literature reviews that focused on ‘power over others’ and thereby create novel avenues for research on power. Additionally, it may open up new opportunities for developing interventions that empower actors in actively improving their work lives.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In organizational settings, power is typically conceptualized and studied as ‘power over another’ (Clegg et al., 2006) and thereby often used as a synonym for domination (Göhler, 2009; Pansardi, 2012). Many studies thus describe power as a restrictive force—a commodity that may be seized, possessed and manipulated (Mechanic, 1962; Pfeffer & Salanick, 1974). A key assumption in these studies is that a dominant position inhibits empowerment and emancipation in organizational settings, because it restricts the ‘power to act’ of others. In this respect, much of the power literature focuses exclusively on questioning power relations established and sustained by management (e.g. Barker, 1993; Mulder, 1971; Willmott, 1993), which may go at the expense of understanding and appreciating more positive perspectives on power (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014; Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009).

Yet, some authors have argued power can also be conceived as a necessary and positive force in any organization (Carlsen et al., 2020; Foucault, 1977; Wartenberg, 1992), resembling what ‘oxygen is to breathing’ (Clegg et al., 2006, p.3). Here, a positive perspective on power (hereafter: *positive power*) refers to the ability of an actor to bring about outcomes rather autonomously (Morriss, 2002; Hosking, 2011; Pansardi, 2012), which implies that all actors, not just those residing at the top, have (some) ‘power to act’. By arguing that “genuine power is not coercive control but coactive control”, Follet (1924/1951, p. xii-xiii) already emphasized that power is a positive phenomenon which is co-developed among actors, rather than being some ‘thing’ held by a few people who can then impose their will on others (Follett 1924/1951, p. xii-xiii). From this point of view, by developing latent powers into actual powers, positive power functions as a force that helps transform relations within an organization by fostering (instead of inhibiting) desirable organizational outcomes, such as empowerment and emancipation (Huault, Perret, & Spicer, 2014; King & Land, 2018).

The prevailing focus on power as a restrictive force (Clegg et al., 2006; Fleming & Spicer, 2014), however, is reflected in the fact that few studies have explored the organizational potential of (latent) positive power (e.g. Morriss, 2002). As a result, we lack an integrated conceptualization and understanding of positive power in organizations and how it may foster desirable organizational outcomes. More specifically, the question informing the literature review in this chapter is:

What are the main characteristics of positive power and how can positive power foster desirable organizational outcomes?

Guided by these two questions, we will review the fragmented bodies of knowledge, including the literature on political power, power in organizations, and organizational change.

We first conceptualize positive power by identifying several key properties. Subsequently, we set out to identify actions and interventions that foster positive power. Drawing on mechanism-based explanations (e.g. Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010; Pajunen, 2008), our synthesis of the various literatures then serves to identify four social mechanisms, which provide an “intermediary level of analysis between pure description and storytelling on the one hand, and universal social laws on the other” (Coleman, 1964, p. 516; see also Davis & Marquis, 2005; Hedström & Swedberg, 1998). Adopting a mechanism-based approach serves to better understand *how* certain outcomes of positive power are achieved. More specifically, this literature synthesis approach results in a framework of outcome patterns, social mechanisms, and actions (Tanskanen et al., 2017; Van Burg & Romme, 2014) for developing and using power in a positive manner.

This review contributes to the literature by developing a novel avenue for research in the form of an integrated framework of positive power, as an antidote to the mainstream discourse on power as a rather restrictive force. By integrating the dispersed discourses in this area, the framework synthesized from our literature review extends prior reviews that focused on ‘power over others’ (e.g. Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Hardy & Clegg, 2006). As such, this integrated framework serves to create a foundation for future work on redesigning managerial action and policy-making (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012a; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Wickert & Schaefer, 2015). Additionally, it may create new opportunities for developing organizational interventions and practices which empower actors to actively improve their working lives (Abildgaard et al., 2020; Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017).

3.2 REVIEW SCOPE AND APPROACH

This section explains in more depth how we searched and selected the literature. Building on prior work, we adopted an integrative review approach that serves to assess and synthesize a set of publications in an integrated manner, in order to create new perspectives and frameworks (Dudovskiy, 2018; Romme & Dimov, 2021). The literature search was performed during two stages.

During the first stage, the question driving our literature review and synthesis was: What can we learn from the literature that enables us to better understand practices that involve both power over other people and power to act? The first step was to set the boundaries of our literature review, by defining the key terms of the search query. We used the Web of Science database and searched for articles in which “*power*” in combination with synonyms for either power over others or power to act. Appendix I describes the full search query used and the journals selected. The search, executed in February 2017, yielded 793 records. Subsequently, two researchers independently reviewed the abstracts resulting from this query by assessing their relevance and fit. Any disagreements were resolved and only empirical studies were retained. This

systematic approach resulted in a sample of 125 relevant articles. Next, two researchers independently coded 40 of these 125 articles for themes, contextual conditions, social mechanisms and outcomes, starting with first-order constructs and resulting in higher order themes. Any disagreements were discussed, leading to a fixed coding scheme that served as a basis for categorizing the remaining papers. The findings of this first stage informed the design of the intervention (study), Chapter 4 in this dissertation.

During the second stage, to make the chapter publishable as a stand-alone article, we reframed this initial review toward positive power. We complemented the protocol-driven method of the first stage with snowballing techniques leading to 62 additional articles, books, and book chapters. We revised the initial framing, and set out to explore the main characteristics of positive power and how positive power can foster desirable organizational outcomes. From the total of 187 sources, based on the title and abstract, we selected 81 initial sources that could advance our understanding conceptually or by providing insight into interventions or actions, social mechanisms, or outcomes. In several cases, the selected source appeared to be part of a larger stream of literature, implying we reviewed several related publications connected to the initial source. This resulted in an additional 134 sources reviewed in Chapter 3.

3.3 MAPPING THE TERRITORY OF POSITIVE POWER IN ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

In this section, we first review influential (mostly conceptual) studies of power to identify important properties of positive power. Subsequently, we discuss the actions, social mechanisms, and outcomes of a positive perspective on power.

Conceptualizing positive power: key properties of power as a positive force

Whereas power is predominantly conceptualized as a restrictive force, it can also be conceptualized as a generative force. In the latter case, power is conceived as a productive, positive force that does not (overly) restrict others. These two main conceptualizations of power have remained rather separate in the literature (Clegg et al., 2006). In the remainder of this chapter, we are merely using the connotations ‘restrictive’ and ‘positive’ to distinguish two analytically distinct faces of power, which are further detailed below.

When power is conceptualized as a *restrictive* force, it frequently equals domination (Clegg et al., 2006; Clegg & Haugaard, 2009; Pansardi, 2012). In this tradition, Dahl’s (1957, p. 80) definition has been very influential: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.” This conceptualization introduces the interplay between an active powerful actor and a less powerful one (Göhler, 2009; Hosking, 2011). Consequently, power is often framed as a fairly restrictive and static force—that is, power as an artifact that needs to be conquered,

exploited, and used to coerce others and overcome their resistance (Lawrence, 2008; Mechanic, 1962; Pfeffer & Salanick, 1974). Given the prevailing scholarly focus on power as a restrictive force (Clegg et al., 2006; Fleming & Spicer, 2014) and the organizational potential of (latent) positive power (e.g. Morriss 2002), an integrated understanding of positive power in organizations is lacking in the literature. Our review in the remainder of this section serves to depict the distinctive properties of a positive power perspective.

Generative

Morriss has defined power as a generative force, emphasizing that it is “always a concept referring to an ability, capacity or dispositional property” (Morriss, 2002, p. 13). Accordingly, the first distinctive property is an actor’s *generative ability* to bring about outcomes rather autonomously. In other words, the generativity of power highlights that it does not necessarily involve a causality between a powerful and less powerful actor, that is, someone to impose one’s will on. Follet’s view on power (see previous section) raises the question *how* positive power is developed between actors. Broadly speaking, there appear to be two streams of literature. In the first stream, actors engage in activities (e.g. learning or becoming powerful communities) by drawing on their autonomous ability to act (e.g. Courpasson, 2000; Gherardi et al., 1998; Wenger 1999). The actors’ spontaneity and playfulness appear to be an important element in these activities; here, play is an organizational or cultural activity involving activities that move beyond means-end rationalizations and constitute processes of self-organization, loosening of reason, and non-linearity (Anderson, 1999; Bakken et al., 2013; March, 2006). Following Otterspeer (2008) in his interpretation of Huizinga’s (1955) classic study of the role of play in culture, playfulness demonstrates the power-to-act—in which the main distinction is between playing and being played, rather than the difference between playing and not playing. In this respect, ‘play’ can be distinguished from ‘game’; gaming implies working within the dominant power relations, whereas playing involves changes in the way power is distributed within the organization (Homan, 2006).

Transformative

In the second stream of literature, several scholars highlight the key role of powerful actors in enabling power as a generative force. A key assumption here is that asymmetrical power relations do not necessarily equal domination (Arendt, 1958; Haugaard, 2012; Wartenberg, 1990). In this respect, Wartenberg (1990) argued that actors can use their powerful position in an empowering and *transformative* manner (see also: Allen, 1998; Morriss, 2002). For example, when a manager believes a particular employee does not yet have the skills to speak up about her own interests, the manager may attempt “to exercise his power in such a way that the subordinate agent learns certain skills that undercut the power differential between her and the dominant agent” (Wartenberg, 1990, p. 184).

Processual

Other scholars highlight that power is not a static position or asset—that is, something an actor can ‘have’, ‘hold’, ‘seize’ or ‘share’ (Foucault, 1998; Lawrence, 2008). Rather, these scholars draw attention to the *processual* properties of positive power (e.g. Clegg, 1989; Foucault, 1998; Harding, Ford, & Lee, 2017; Hosking, 2011; Thomas, Sargent, & Hardy, 2011). In particular, Foucault’s work has been influential (see McKinlay & Starkey (1998) and Raffnsøe, Mennicken, & Miller (2019) for reviews). Central to Foucault’s conceptualization is that power “is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian relations” (Foucault, 1998, p. 94); empirical examples are provided by Fleming and Spicer (2008) and Jørgensen and Boje (2009). Scholars thus tend to adhere to an ‘organizational becoming’ perspective on organizations as “unfolding processes involving actors making choices interactively” (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p. 577). This perspective highlights the relational and processual properties of positive power, not as a fixed position, but as an emergent or transient position that is “constituted by and shaped from microinteractions as actors perform their everyday work” (Thomas et al., 2011). For example, Follet’s (1924/1951) view on the generative nature of power is as follows:

But our task is not to learn where to place power; it is how to develop power. (...) Genuine power can only be grown, it will slip from every arbitrary hand that grasps it; for genuine power is not coercive control but coactive control. Coercive power is the curse of the universe; coactive power, the enrichment and advancement of every human soul. (Follett 1924/1951, p. xii-xiii)

In sum, the processual dimension draws attention to the emergent or transient nature of positive power.

Non-zero-sum

Several scholars support the view that power is not a scarce or limited resource, suggesting it can be created by or between actors (e.g. Bourgoin, Bencherki, & Faraj, 2020; Hosking 2011; Kellogg, 2009). Accordingly, there may not be a limited amount of power ‘out there’; and when one actor gains power, this may not necessarily be a loss for others. This line of thinking thus assumes the *non-zero-sum* nature of power as a positive force (e.g. Haugaard, 2002; Parsons, 1963). If one translates this idea to managerial settings, then empowerment initiatives and other participative ways of organizing (e.g. self-steering teams) do not necessarily imply that powerful actors lose power. Interestingly, a strong belief in the zero-sum nature of power may cause numerous tensions, ultimately causing empowerment initiatives to fail (Yukl & Fu, 1999; Van Baarle et al., 2021).

Intertwined

The power-to-act and power-over-others are often hard to disentangle, because power simultaneously has constraining *and* emancipating properties (Haugaard, 2012). Most scholars adopting this approach argue that power is not a single entity (e.g. Göhler, 2009; Pansardi 2012) but covers an array of conceptualizations and manifestations, including ‘power to’ and ‘power over’ (Haugaard, 2012). While various attempts have been made to conceptually reconcile restrictive and enabling power (e.g. Clegg, 1989; Giddens, 1984), there is still considerable debate about the distinction between the two (e.g. Haugaard, 2012; Morriss, 2012; Pansardi, 2012). Yet, the common ground here appears to be the idea that the power-over and power-to notions are *intertwined*: both phenomena coexist and power in organizational settings is therefore best conceived

Table 3.1 Properties that characterize positive power

Recurring property of productive power	Assumption	Theoretical roots
Generative	Positive power refers to an actor’s (autonomous) ability, capacity or dispositional property to bring about outcomes (i.e. referring to an actor’s power-to-act). It involves processes of loosened rationality, non-linearity and self-organization. It may also refer to actors’ capabilities to play instead of being played (i.e. their playful skills to escape managerial control).	Giddens (1984) Morriss (2002) Huizinga (1955) Crozier & Friedberg (1977)
Transformative	The unequal relationship between a powerful actor and a less powerful subordinate does not have to be (mainly) ‘power over’; instead, this unequal relationship can be used deliberately to increase the ‘power to’ of the less powerful.	Wartenberg (1990)
Processual	Power is not an established position or fixed entity. Instead, it is ongoing, exercised from many points, and embedded in a process of becoming which involves actors making choices interactively.	Foucault (1998)
Non-zero-sum	There is no limited amount of power ‘out there’. Instead, it can be (deliberately) created and, therefore an increase in the power of some actors does not necessarily imply a loss of power for others.	Follet (1924/1951) Parsons (1963)
Intertwined	The power-to-act and power-over-others are intertwined. In other words, power simultaneously has constraining and emancipating properties.	Foucault (1998) Giddens (1984)

as multi-dimensional, that is, the positive and restrictive dimensions are likely to be distinctive aspects of a unified concept of power (Clegg, 1989; Foucault, 1998; Giddens, 1984; Göhler, 2009; Pansardi, 2012).

In sum, the literature points to five key properties of positive power (see Table 3.1). A positive perspective may refer to the *generative ability* to bring about outcomes rather autonomously. Additionally, powerful actors can act in *transformative* ways to emancipate or empower others. Third, positive power is generally described as *processual* instead of being an established position. Fourth, positive perspectives often conceptualize power as being *non-zero-sum*. Lastly, we also identified the *intertwined* property, that is, the positive and restrictive dimensions are likely to be distinctive aspects of a unified concept of power.

Exemplary work	
Courpasson (2000)	Actors creatively develop strategies to escape managerial domination, defend their interests as professionals and the 'power to' their community.
Bakken et al. (2013)	By moving beyond a means-ends rationalization and approaching the concept of time differently, managerial practices may be associated with experiment and play, which allows an organization to move beyond exploitation; that is, positive power serves as a mechanism to develop novelty.
Lorinkova et al. (2013)	A transformative power stance leads to higher performance improvement over time, because of higher levels of learning, coordination, empowerment, and mental model development.
Van Baarle et al. (2021)	Switching between transformative power and 'power over' may cause power-related tensions that inhibit empowerment.
Thomas et al. (2011)	Ongoing meaning negotiations between actors (within which resistance plays a facilitative role) show how particular communicative practices can increase their 'power to'.
Davenport & Leich (2005)	Authority is delegated by introducing strategic ambiguity in the discourse, which increases the 'power to' of others as it results in a variety of creative responses. Simultaneously, powerful actors get the desired outcomes, and their 'power to' increases as well.
Romme (2019)	Organizational hierarchy can both be interpreted as 'power over' (i.e. a restrictive chain of command) and 'power to' (i.e. employees taking charge of higher-level responsibilities).
Fleming & Spicer (2008)	'Power over' and 'power to' (i.e. resistance) should be considered as a singular dynamic, or struggle between the two.
Pansardi (2012)	'Power over' and 'power to' should be thought of as representing two analytically distinguishable aspects of a single and unified concept of social power.

3.4 EXPLORING ACTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH POSITIVE POWER

To understand *how* positive power may foster desirable organizational outcomes, we now turn to exploring the type of actions and interventions in organizational settings which can generate such outcomes. More specifically, studies of organizational change are reviewed to uncover what type of actions give rise to desirable organizational outcomes such as employee empowerment, voice and emancipation (i.e. increasing ‘power to’). To distill relevant actions or interventions from the literature, we draw on the key properties of positive power outlined in Table 3.1. This review exercise served to identify five clusters of interventions described in the literature: participatory change interventions, participatory research approaches, empowering organizational designs, autonomous action, and transformative power practices. These practices all share most of the properties laid out in Table 3.1 (i.e. generative, processual, non-zero sum, and intertwined). Transformative, the second property in Table 3.1, is not used as a separate condition because it can be subsumed in the generative property by introducing the interplay between two actors. That is, the use of one’s own generative ability to enhance or create a similar ability for others.

Each of the five clusters reviewed in this section involves actions and interventions that actors (e.g. managers, consultants) have at their disposal to alter organizational practices, for instance to facilitate empowerment or emancipation.

Participatory change interventions

Increasing ‘power to’ may be accomplished through a certain type of organizational change initiative that can either be planned or emerge from ongoing interactions between actors (By, 2005; Weick & Quinn, 1999). The literature on planned organizational change suggests that the active engagement of actors in dialogue is instrumental in tapping into the generative (power-to) potential of these actors (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Isaacs, 1996).

Central to many traditional change approaches is the idea that there is a single, objective problem that can be ‘diagnosed’ and then resolved by using behavioral knowledge from the social sciences (cf. Bushe & Marshak, 2009): examples are interventions such as team-building, survey feedback, SWAT analysis, and process consultation (e.g. French & Bell, 1999). The underlying assumption here is that the ‘knowing subjects’ (e.g. top managers, process experts, consultants) hold a ‘power over’ position from which they can prescribe a solution to the problem (Marshak & Grant, 2008) which in turn restricts the ‘power to’ of others. This category of interventions is obviously beyond the scope of this review.

Interestingly, a distinct set of change interventions—referred to as Large Scale Interventions (Bartunek et al., 2011) or dialogic Organizational Development (Marshak & Grant, 2008)—do not restrict other actors’ power to act. These interventions seek

to empower actors by engaging them in (large scale) change processes. Many of these approaches are *future* oriented, based on the assumption that focusing on future possibilities generates more energy than focusing on solving problems (Bunker & Alban, 2006; Lippitt, 1980). Future-oriented large-scale interventions include Future Search (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010) and Appreciative Inquiry Summits (Powley, Fry, Barrett, & Bright, 2004; Whitney & Cooperrider, 2000). However, participatory change interventions are not restricted to imagining the best possible future, and can also be used to solve immediate issues and problems (Bartunek et al. 2011). Examples of the latter interventions involve Open Space (Owen, 2008) and World Café (Brown & Isaacs, 2005).

Participatory research approaches

Although change interventions are more likely to be initiated by management and consultants, researchers can facilitate empowerment as well. In this respect, *participatory research approaches* appear to be particularly relevant. Our review reveals three types of participatory research approaches. First, *action research* is generally viewed as a democratic and participative approach that aims at creating knowledge with, rather than about, actors (Bradbury, 2015; Johansson & Lindhult, 2008). This approach focuses on developing change capability within the organization, by providing a framework with which organizational actors can be engaged in developing their future organization (Coghlan & Shani, 2015). Action research aims to empower a broad set of actors by collaborating on an issue that is of general concern to *them*, as opposed to managerial agenda-setting (Eden & Huxham, 1996). Examples of action research are Lüscher and Lewis (2008), who set out to both enable and study actors' sensemaking, and Pradies, Tunarosa, Lewis and Courtois (2020) who engaged in an action research cycle to empower actors to deal with the competing demands they experienced.

A second form of participatory research is *intervention research*, which draws on the assumption that in-depth knowledge of human systems can only be advanced by trying to change these systems (Schein, 1987; Starbuck, 2003). This type of research implies experiments and interventions in real-life organizations (Starbuck, 2003) and aims to empower actors to overcome the complexities they face and simultaneously develop knowledge on these complexities. In these studies, an intervention research strategy (e.g. Lee, Mazmanian, & Perlow, 2020; Oliva, 2019) appears to produce knowledge in the service of action (Simon, 1969/1996). Intervention research facilitates people in learning skills that enable them to improve their working conditions (Abdilgaard et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2020; Mikkelsen, Saksvik, & Landsbergis, 2000). Whereas this approach primarily appears to involve intangible knowledge creation, it may also include efforts co-create and evaluate artifacts such as software (Sein et al., 2011).

Third, *responsive evaluation* is a participatory approach to evaluate organizational policies, programs, or practices (Abma, 2006; Greene, 1997). Accordingly, various actors with different and/or competing interests at stake are invited to participate in all phases of the evaluation process. This implies they are involved in formulating questions,

selecting participants, and interpreting the findings (Abma, 2006; Greene, 1997). A key element of the responsive evaluation approach is the deliberate attempt to equalize power differences between actors and empower them to speak up or prevent them from being marginalized (Lincoln, 1993).

Empowering organizational designs

Another way to increase the ‘power to’ in organizations is adopting empowering organizational designs. These designs may incorporate a formal decentralization of power, such that decisional power is systemically granted to employees (Lawler, 1986; Mills & Ungson, 2003). In this respect, circular organization designs—also known as sociocracy and holacracy—have gained popularity (Ackoff, 1989; Carney & Getz, 2016; Robertson, 2015; Romme, 1999). Case studies of organizations adopting this type of organizational design suggest that major forms of empowerment can be achieved (e.g. Romme & Endenburg, 2006). For example, these designs appear to enable employees in voicing their concerns and ideas directly to the CEO and non-executive directors, but only when top management together with the company’s shareholders adopts a power structure in which (representatives of) employees and managers together, in so-called circles, decide on the boundaries within which managers lead operational activities (Romme & Endenburg 2006). Here, circularity refers to the process of continually switching between the (power-over) practice of managing operations and the (power-to) practice of team decision-making (Romme, 1999).

Transformative power acts

The behavior of powerful actors has been identified as a critical factor in empowerment and emancipation. For instance, whether employees and other less powerful actors speak up or remain silent depends on, among others, the voice climate (Frazier & Bowler, 2015; Morrison, 2014) and employees’ expectations of whether speaking up is likely to bring about change (e.g. Ashford et al., 1998). The previous section referred to Wartenberg’s notion of transformative power (1990) as an example of how powerful actors can use their power to increase the ‘power to act’ of others. This notion is hardly or not (explicitly) used in organization and management studies (an exception is Van Baarle et al., 2021), although certain types of leadership can be associated with increasing ‘power to’. Examples include relational and reflexive leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Eriksen, 2012), shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2002), empowering leadership (Cheong et al., 2019), and servant leadership (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Influencing others is widely believed to be a core activity of powerful actors and to contribute to their effectiveness as leaders (Pfeffer, Cialdini, Hanna, & Knopoff, 1998). The traditional definition of (managerial) influence activity involves the “agents’ attempts to get things done their way” (Lueger, Sandner, Meyer, & Hammerschmid, 2005, p. 1145). However, one can also influence others by means of *nudging*, that is, altering “people’s behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or

significantly changing their economic incentives” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008, p. 6). In behavioral economics, nudges are typically used to facilitate actors’ communication with governmental agencies (Sunstein, 2014), reflecting some form of empowerment. But the nudging mechanism can also be observed in managerial and organizational settings, in the form of participatory change interventions, research approaches or other organizational arrangements that facilitate actors’ (voluntary) participation. Participation in this type of intervention is not formally rewarded or monitored (Boiral & Paillé, 2011; Daily, Bishop, & Govindarajulu, 2009). Yet, several studies suggest that one can deliberately create climates nudging (at least some) actors to participate and speak their minds (Detert & Treviño, 2010; Frazier & Bowler, 2015; Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, & Kamdar, 2011).

Autonomous action

Restrictive ‘power over’ can never be completely secured, because of the agency dimension (Clegg, 1989). In this respect, the agency-structure debate is a key theme in social theory, focusing on agents creating and reproducing institutions (Reed, 2006), whilst their actions are also determined and constrained by institutions. Self-determination theory posits that some types of behavior might be driven primarily by ‘controlled’ motivation, activated by contingencies external to the individual, while others are stimulated by ‘autonomous’ motivation. The latter implies a sense of choice and volition (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Consequently, controlled motivation is mainly associated with ‘power over’, while autonomous motivation is instrumental to empowerment and emancipation. Many studies draw on the idea that organizational actors driven by autonomous motivation contribute to positive organizational outcomes, such as mutual learning and help among employees (Ashford et al., 1998; Edmondson, 2003a, 2003b), organizational development efforts (Bushe & Marshak, 2009), and speaking up about issues that matter to them (Morrison, 2014).

Other work emphasizes the ability of actors to act and decide rather autonomously—also without being invited to so—regardless any change initiatives or other forms of external motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). For example, autonomous action can draw on the ability to *improvise*, that is, engage in “action as it unfolds, by an organization and/or its members, drawing on available material, cognitive, affective and social resources” (Cunha, Cunha, & Kamoche, 1999, p. 302). But autonomous activities can also involve resistance, that is, to refuse ‘power over’ (Fleming & Spicer, 2003). This also involves actors’ struggles to maximize or safeguard their ‘power to’ (Courpasson, 2000), protect their identity (Costas & Grey, 2014; Harding et al. 2017), and/or escape from other forms of managerial control (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

Participatory change and research interventions and autonomous action all qualify as generative power practices as these interventions increase the generative abilities of the actors involved, though this cannot be attributed to a deliberate action of a more powerful actor. The other two interventions, empowering organization design and trans-

formative power acts differ in this regard, as they are the consequence of the purposively act of the more powerful to increase the power to act of others, and therefore can be labelled as transformative. Following the generative abilities these interventions bring about, they also take a processual view on power. Thereby acknowledging they generate changes that do not lead to a new status-quo but rather set in motion a continuous process of dialogue (participatory change interventions and research approaches) and/or action and reaction (empowering organizational designs, transformative power acts, autonomous action) that shapes the power balance in the organization. In this regard, they approach power as a non-zero sum game, seeking opportunities to enlarge all actors' generative ability rather than to redistribute power.

3.5 SOCIAL MECHANISMS OF POSITIVE POWER: FORMAL AUTHORITY, LANGUAGE SHAPING ACTION, COMMUNITY FORMATION, DYNAMICS OF SAFETY AND TRUST

Our review of the literature in the previous section suggests that the various actions and interventions which reflect (elements of) positive power draw on a limited number of related social mechanisms. In this respect, a social mechanism is the wheelwork by which agents produce an effect, that is “a set of interacting parts—an assembly of elements producing an effect not inherent in any one of them” (Hernes, 1998, p. 74 cited in Davis & Marquis, 2005). More specifically, our review suggests that formal authority, language shaping action, community formation, and the dynamics of safety and trust

Table 3.2 Actions/interventions and their social mechanisms

Action/Intervention	Mechanism	Exemplary Work
Participatory change intervention	Language shaping action Dynamics of safety and trust	Austin (1975); Searle (1969); Ford (1999); Powley et al. (2004); Shmulyian et al. (2010)
Participatory research approach	Language shaping action Formal authority Dynamics of safety and trust	Mikkelsen et al. (2000); Abma (2006); Lüscher & Lewis (2008); Abdilgaard et al. (2019); Pradies et al. (2020); Lee et al. (2020)
Empowering organizational designs	Formal authority Dynamics of safety and trust	Adler & Borys (1996); Romme (1999); Mills & Ungson (2003); Adler et al. (2008)
Transformative power acts	Formal authority Dynamics of safety and trust	Pearce & Sims (2002); Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011); Martin et al. (2013); Cheong et al. (2016)
Autonomous action	Community formation Dynamics of safety and trust	Orr (1990); Courpasson (2000); Adler et al. (2008); Courpasson et al. (2016); Pyrko et al. (2017)

operate as the key mechanisms in a positive perspective on power. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the mechanisms underlying each of the five action and intervention approaches reviewed previously. In the remainder of this section, we will explore each of these four mechanisms more extensively.

Formal authority

Formal authority, predominantly conceptualized as legitimate ‘power over’, operates as a social mechanism within organizational hierarchies (Bourgoin et al., 2020; Clegg, 1989). Interestingly, the mechanism of formal authority has restrictive as well as emancipatory effects (Haugaard, 2012). A chain of formal authority levels serves to create and coordinate a horizontal as well as vertical division of activities (Adler, 2001; Simon, 1969/1996). As such, each agent in this chain is restricted to act and decide within the boundaries set, and agents with higher-level authority can impose sanctions on subordinate agents that act outside the domain of authority delegated to them (Bencherki et al., 2019; Simon 1969/1996). The work of Arendt, Follet and Wartenberg (discussed earlier) suggests that differences in formal authority do not necessarily imply domination or restrictive ‘power over’. Several empirical examples demonstrate that the mechanism of formal authority can also reflect a positive perspective on power. First, several studies show how formal authority can be delegated and cascaded through the organizational hierarchy, to empower lower-level employees in making decisions and solving problems (Dobrajska et al., 2015; Levinthal & Workiewicz, 2018; Mills & Ungson, 2003; Simon, 1991). Accordingly, organizational chains of formal authority are not necessarily coercive or restrictive with regard to the behavior of subordinates, but can be enabling as well (Adler & Borys, 1996; Romme, 2019). Davenport and Leitch (2005) made a similar observation in their study of a large public sector organization, by showing that the deliberate use of ambiguity in strategic communication helped this public organization create “a space in which multiple interpretations by stakeholders are enabled and to which multiple stakeholder responses are possible” (Davenport and Leitch 2005, p. 1604). In sum, formal authority as a social mechanism can operate in restrictive as well as enabling ways.

Language shaping action

Broadly defined, ‘language shaping action’ refers to the generative potential of interaction via spoken and/or written words (Gergen et al., 2004; Taylor & Van Every, 2000). That is, words can actually *do* things—that is, they constitute organizational realities (Cooren, 2004; Ford & Ford, 1995; Tsoukas, 2009). In this respect, Weick et al. (2005, p. 409) even argue that organizations are literally “talked into existence.” For instance, actors engage in ongoing interactive processes to make sense of novel, unexpected or confusing events in organizational settings (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995). Planned organizational change initiatives also trigger this type of interaction (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Bartunek et al., 2006; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). For instance, Lüscher and Lewis

(2008) demonstrated that their participatory research approach enables sensemaking (see also Pradies et al., 2020). A commonality between participatory change interventions and research approaches is that they create organizational settings—sometimes referred to as holding spaces (Corrigan, 2015)—to foster different perspectives, and increase (generative) ambiguity (Maitlis, 2005; Weick, 1995). In this respect, Ford and Ford (1995) argued that conversation and speech acts are the mechanisms driving intentional change, whereas others suggest that the performative power of sensemaking “comes both from a process of *textualization* by which organizations are stabilized as recognizable actors, and a process of *conversation* by which organizations are accomplished *in situ*” (Gond & Cabantous, 2015, p. 512; see also Cooren, 2004; Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Vásquez et al., 2018).

Community formation

As opposed to the formal hierarchy, a community reflects informal ties between organizational actors (Adler, 2001), involving spontaneous processes of actors getting together, based on a mutual interest about organizational challenges or hot topics (Gherardi et al., 1998; Pyrko et al., 2017; Wenger, 1999). Community formation especially gives rise to positive outcomes when the voices are sufficiently diverse. Accordingly, the differences between actors’ voices and sources of knowledge appear to be a key driver of new action patterns, creativity, and actionable knowledge (Anderson, 1999; Bakhtin, 1981; Ripamonti et al., 2016). Consequently, when the diversity of voices and/or sources of knowledge is too low, or there is not enough interaction among them, new patterns of action are not likely to emerge (Anderson, 1999; Weick, 1995).

Interpersonal dynamics of safety and trust

Interestingly, our review points at an overarching mechanism underlying all action and intervention approaches (see Table 3.2): the interpersonal dynamics of safety and trust. As such, this social mechanism appears to enhance the generativity of the three other mechanisms. The literature on this mechanism assumes that organizations contain spaces with properties facilitating new behavior and/or emergence of ideas (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Isaacs, 1993; Schein & Bennis, 1965). These spaces can be deliberately created (Corrigan, 2015; Smith et al., 2003) or emerge as a result of, for example, adjoining value systems (e.g. Courpasson et al., 2016). In this respect, spaces characterized by high levels of interpersonal trust (e.g. Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; McEvily et al., 2003) and psychological safety (e.g. Detert & Burris 2007; Edmondson, 1999) positively affect organizational performance and other organizational outcomes (Kramer, 1999). While psychological safety and trust are conceptually distinct constructs, as social mechanisms they both refer to actors’ “psychological states involving perceptions of risk or vulnerability, as well as making choices to minimize negative consequences” (Edmondson, 2003a, p. 246). The intention to accept vulnerability can be based on more general positive expectations in dyadic relationships between actors

(Rousseau et al., 1998) or more specific group-level expectations that it is safe to make mistakes or hold a deviant opinion in a particular organizational setting (Edmondson, 1999). The interpersonal dynamics of safety and trust do not imply that these organizational spaces are free from tensions, pressures or problems. Rather, discussions in these spaces enable “early prevention of problems and accomplishment of shared goals, because people are less likely to focus on self-protection” (Edmondson, 2003a, p. 244). Virtuous dynamics of trust and safety can make the difference between actors feeling empowered to speak up (Frazier & Bowler, 2015) or silenced as a manifestation of disempowerment (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

3.6 EXPLORING DESIRABLE OUTCOMES POSITIVE POWER: EMPOWERMENT AND EMANCIPATION

The actions and interventions associated with positive power may lead to many different outcomes (see Table 3.3). To fully understand how positive power may foster desirable outcomes, we now discuss some of the outcomes relevant to the current discourse on empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015) and emancipation (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012a; Spicer et al., 2016). Notably, the limited set of social mechanisms outlined earlier may also lead to many other outcomes, which go beyond the scope of this review; for example, positive power very likely also impacts innovation (Christensen, 2013), creativity (Carlsen et al., 2020) and resilience (King et al., 2016).

Table 3.3 Social mechanisms and key desirable outcomes of positive power

Social mechanism	Key outcome	Exemplary work
Formal authority	Empowerment	Davenport & Leitch (2005); Morrison & Phelps (1999); Wrzesniewski & Dutton (2001); Frazier & Bowler (2015); Martin et al. (2013); Cheong et al. (2016)
	Emancipation	-
Language shaping action	Empowerment	Ashcraft (2001); Davenport & Leitch (2005); Thomas et al. (2011)
	Emancipation	Tsoukas & Chia (2002); Hultin & Mähring (2017)
Community formation	Empowerment	Harding et al. (2017); Håkonsen Coldevin et al. (2019); Edmondson (1999, 2003b)
	Emancipation	Courpasson (2000)
Safety and trust dynamics	Empowerment	Edmondson (1999, 2003a)
	Emancipation	Courpasson et al. (2016)

Empowerment

In various discourses in the literature, empowered actors have been observed to display increased levels of self-determination. Empowerment is frequently described as an umbrella concept that can refer to a motivational construct (Clegg et al., 2006; Spreitzer, 1995), the description of elements of personal growth or professional development (Goedhart et al., 2017), or driving authority down the administrative hierarchy (Maynard et al., 2012; Mills & Ungson, 2003). This review focuses on the latter interpretation, because the behavior of powerful actors is considered a key factor in any empowerment program (Milliken et al. 2003; Morrison 2014). In view of the idea that ‘power over’ does not necessarily equal domination (Arendt, 1958; Wartenberg, 1990; Haugaard, 2012), we explore various relevant outcomes of studies of powerful actors deliberately attempting to increase the ‘power to’ of others in the next paragraph.

As a social mechanism, formal authority can be used to create generative, positive outcomes for subordinate actors. For instance, participatory change may empower actors’ self-confidence about their ability to get things done (Latham, Winters, & Locke, 1994). Managerial support for shop floor initiatives increases employees’ power-to-act by fostering initiative taking and stimulating proactive behavior in improving their environment (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Other studies observed how the mechanisms of community formation and interpersonal dynamics of safety and trust increase a team’s power to act, team learning and team performance (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson, 1999; Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001). Actions and interventions that trigger the mechanism of ‘language shaping action’ appear to invite the less powerful to engage in conversations about change (Ford & Ford, 1995; Thomas et al., 2011). A common factor in participatory interventions, research and arrangements is that less powerful actors are deliberately engaged in collective sensemaking processes. By doing so, their ideas and experiences become part of the change narratives toward desirable organizational futures (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). As such, the organizational changes resulting from these sensemaking processes are ‘multi-authored’ (Buchanan & Dawson, 2007, p. 69) and hence are likely to differ from the initial intentions of those in charge (Weick, 1995). However, the robustness of the existing body of evidence on change interventions has been severely questioned (Barends et al., 2014; Bartunek et al., 2011), so we need to be very careful in making any definite claims here.

Emancipation

Scholars in critical management studies (CMS) tend to be skeptical about top-down change or empowerment altogether (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Barker, 1993; Willmott, 1993). Whereas many scholars mentioned in the previous subsection appear to be highly motivated to study empowerment because of its potential benefits for organizational performance (e.g. Goedhart et al., 2017; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Maynard et al., 2012), the CMS project appears to be more normative in orientation (e.g. Parker & Parker, 2017) in its deliberate aim to improve the human condition:

Emancipation describes the process through which individuals and groups become freed from repressive social and ideological conditions, in particular those that place socially unnecessary restrictions upon the development and articulation of human consciousness (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992, p. 432).

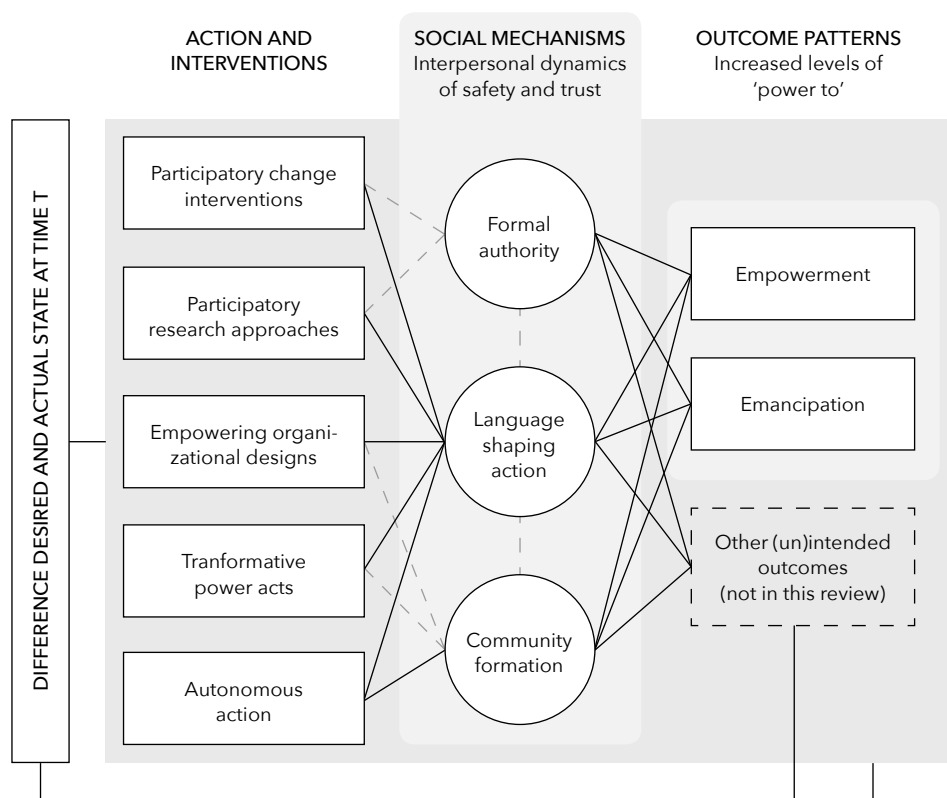
Accordingly, CMS scholars focus on explicit normative values and outcomes such as democracy, autonomy, participation, equality, and solidarity (Huault et al., 2014; King & Land, 2018). Moreover, the means to realize these values differ from work outside the CMS discourse as well. Whereas the studies in the previous subsection tend to focus on experimentation and learning by doing and strive for practical agreement, CMS scholars primarily focus on raising consciousness and reflexivity (Johansson & Lindhult, 2008).

A distinction between micro-emancipation and macro-emancipation has been made (e.g. Huault et al., 2014). In this respect, macro-emancipation seeks to radically transform not only the workplace, but also society in general. This approach has fallen out of flavor because of various reasons, one of them being that it is viewed as a too grand and intellectual endeavor (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Spicer et al., 2009; Wickert & Schaefer, 2015). Micro-emancipation involves a more selective and focused “search for ‘loopholes’ in managerial control that provide local and temporary emancipation” (Huault et al., 2014, p. 26). An example is studying how professionals form a community (as social mechanism) and develop strategies to remain autonomous from managerial control (Courpasson, 2000). Another example involves studies of resistance to change as a positive phenomenon facilitating organizational change (Courpasson et al., 2016; Ford et al., 2008; Thomas et al. 2011). Here, Ford et al. (2008) argue that resistance is, in fact, a resource in keeping a proposed change in existence, with ‘resisters’ actually being strongly engaged and stimulating a generative dialogue (see also: Thomas et al., 2011). In both examples of micro-emancipation studies, ‘language shaping action’ operates as a key social mechanism, in addition to community formation and interpersonal dynamics of safety and trust.

3.7 INTEGRATED OVERVIEW OF POSITIVE POWER: TOWARD RESEARCH AGENDA

This mechanism-based review is a first step to deepen understanding of how power as a positive force can be deployed to achieve outcomes such as empowerment and emancipation. Throughout this review, we combined insights from different discourses in the literature. Figure 3.1 summarizes the main findings arising from our review, in terms of the actions, interventions, social mechanisms and outcomes associated with positive power. In this respect, Figure 3.1 builds on the previous sections. The interplay between actions/interventions and the social mechanism is explained by Table 3.2, whereas Table 3.3 depicts the interplay between social mechanisms and possible outcomes of

Figure 3.1 Actions, interventions, social mechanisms and outcomes in a positive perspective



positive power. The four social mechanisms identified—formal authority, language shaping action, community formation, and dynamics of safety and trust—are at the heart of the visualization in Figure 3.1. These social mechanisms are the ‘cogs and wheels’ of the processes (Hernes, 1998) through which desirable outcomes of positive power can be brought about. The interpersonal dynamics of safety and trust operate as an overarching mechanism, as it appears to reinforce formal authority (e.g. Edmondson, 1999), language shaping action (e.g. Frazier & Bowler, 2015), and community formation (e.g. Courpasson et al., 2016). Interestingly, the literature is less conclusive on which combinations of social mechanisms would be necessary and/or sufficient conditions for producing empowerment or emancipation. Hence, this is a very promising avenue for future research.

Figure 3.1 also depicts the main relationships between actions/interventions, mechanisms and outcomes found in the extant literature. A solid arrow refers to a strong body of evidence regarding the interplay between actions/interventions, social mechanisms, and outcomes, whereas a dashed arrow involves relationships with a more

limited evidence base. For example, the relationship between participatory change interventions and research approaches and the language-shaping-action mechanism is well established in the literature (e.g. Bushe & Marhak, 2009; Gergen et al., 2004; Hosking, 2011; Whitney & Cooperrider, 2000), whereas the interplay between participatory change interventions/approaches and the formal authority mechanism are less well understood (Grant, Nelson, & Mitchell, 2008), as visualized by the dashed arrows in Figure 3.1. Similarly, the extant literature underpins the relationship between autonomous action and community formation (e.g. Adler et al., 2008; Courpasson et al., 2016), but little is yet known about what kind of transformative power acts and empowering organizational designs may activate the mechanism of community formation (Edmondson et al., 2001).

By synthesizing the literature using a mechanism-based approach, we sought to deeply understand positive power in this chapter. More specifically, our review can inform future research on positive power in three ways, each of which is discussed in the remainder of this section.

Refining extant conceptualizations of power

The distinctive properties of positive power identified in the literature make for a unified, integrated conceptualization of positive power enabling more systematic research in this field. Furthermore, these properties also serve to identify what positive power may look like in various organizational settings thereby serving as a guiding framework in evaluating how (through which interventions and actions) positive power may lead to desirable organizational outcomes. We did so by drawing on a rich body of literature including (political) power studies, change management, critical and more mainstream organizational scholarship. We obviously need to move beyond rather general metaphors such as 'positive power' and 'power to'. This chapter makes a first step in that direction, by dissecting and synthesizing the extant body of knowledge in terms of the mechanisms driving how actions/interventions may result in desirable outcomes. One key result of this exercise is the set of four social mechanisms we uncovered and defined. As also observed earlier in this chapter, most previous work on the dynamics between positive and restrictive power is conceptual in nature (e.g. Hosking, 2011; Pansardi, 2012; Parker & Parker, 2017; Spicer et al., 2009; Wickert & Schaefer, 2015). Consequently, the framework developed in this chapter calls for more longitudinal empirical studies of positive power. While this kind of empirical investigation is challenging because power dynamics are often subtle and implicit in nature (Foucault, 1977), longitudinal process studies serve to identify the different instantiations of positive power and uncover the dynamic nature of ongoing negotiations, dialogues and other power-related phenomena. Processual research designs are also well-suited to capture the non-linear nature of change interventions, for example arising from the potential feed-back and feed-forward loops displayed in Figure 3.1. Process studies will also be instrumental in exploring the inseparable nature of power-over and power-to. A particularly promising approach here

would be intervention-based research, as in-depth knowledge of human systems can often be better obtained by deliberately trying to change them (Grant & Wall, 2009; Schein, 1987; Starbuck, 2003).

Positive power and organizational change

The role of power in organizational change has been widely studied (Bradshaw & Boonstra, 2004), but many questions remain. For example, there is relatively little (explicit) engagement with the notion of power in studies of empowerment (Maynard et al., 2012), participative change (Brown & Isaacs, 2005), appreciative inquiry (Whitney & Cooperrider, 2000) or shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2002). This raises the question *what* exactly is the power that these empowering, participatory or power-sharing initiatives seek to produce (Morriss, 2002). Figure 3.1 shows how various change interventions may lead to empowerment and emancipation, by means of activating (up to four) social mechanisms. As such, this mechanism-based perspective underlines the complexity and non-linear nature of organizational change. This raises another question: when and how do empowerment and other change initiatives increase the power-to-act throughout the organization? Our synthesis of the extant literature (in Figure 3.1) provides a framework that may guide future research in this area, by dissecting this question into more specific questions (and their answers) regarding the nature of actions/interventions, the (combination of) mechanisms activated, and the desired versus realized outcomes.

To facilitate organizational change, one can add power-to-act practices (e.g. a participatory change intervention) to existing power-over practices in organizations (Gergen, 1995). However, the co-existence of these two practices may be rather complex: powerful actors may feel they are giving up power and control, and may not be willing to do so (Yukl & Fu, 1999) because they believe the actual power dynamics to be a zero-sum game. Here, more research is needed to understand how powerful actors can be motivated and convinced to conceive of power as a non-zero sum game. Moreover, actors willing to use their formal authority constructively, may experience difficulties in switching between different power stances (Van Baarle et al., 2021). Consequently, future work needs to create a deeper understanding of how (various ways to use) formal authority interacts with each of the other three mechanisms and the actions/interventions driving these mechanisms.

Positive power and pragmatism in CMS

Democracy, emancipation, participation, equivalence and other values informing CMS (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2012; Huault et al., 2014; King & Land, 2018) can only be applauded. But several authors have called for a revitalization of the CMS project by adopting a pragmatist mindset and approach (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012a; Spicer et al., 2009), which would also help to moderate the overly negative critique of management by CMS scholars (Parker & Parker, 2017) and enhance the impact on what managers

actually do (Wickert & Schaefer, 2015; Spicer et al., 2016). Evidently, the divide between CMS and what some refer to as ‘mainstream’ or ‘functionalist’ research (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Hardy & Clegg, 2006) is of little help in revitalizing CMS. In this chapter, we therefore seek to synthesize these separate bodies knowledge, to show that a ‘positive power’ lens provides a complementary perspective in accomplishing the ideals of the CMS community—one that adopts a pragmatist focus on actions, interventions and mechanisms, but avoids “a heroic conception of human agency” (Parker & Parker, 2017, p. 1369).

The destructive, or ‘dark,’ side of power has received abundant attention in CMS (Parker & Parker, 2017; Spicer et al., 2009). Each of the five types of actions and interventions identified in our review can have major unintended consequences (e.g. silenced employees, lack of psychological safety, destructive leadership), to be included in the ‘other (un)intended outcomes’ box in Figure 3.1. Yet, future studies on positive power should address these unwanted consequences, by scrutinizing under which circumstances managers and other change agents can effectively activate mechanisms in the area of for example community formation, safety and trust; but do so without simultaneously activating other mechanisms (e.g. centralizing formal authority) which would disempower people throughout the organization. The framework outlined in Figure 3.1 suggests that a single change effort can have multiple effects and thus be both empowering and disempowering, with virtuous as well as vicious effects arising over time. Future work in this area needs to draw on multiple longitudinal case studies to more deeply understand the dynamic complexity of such change efforts.

3.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

By synthesizing a fragmented and diverse body of knowledge, this chapter may help scholars engage in studies that aim at better understanding positive power as well as accomplishing empowerment, emancipation and other desirable outcomes. In this respect, the integrated framework arising from our review may serve as an antidote to the mainstream conceptualization of power in organizational settings. We hope this framework will foster both cross-disciplinary and academe-practice collaborations and thereby create new avenues for research on power.



An earlier version of this chapter was published in the Academy of Management annual meeting proceedings (August 2020) as: "Loosening Control without Losing It: Learning to Speak up in a Military Organization". It received the Best Doctoral Student Paper Award of the Organization Development and Change Division.

CHAPTER 4

Designing for voice: developing and testing a voice solicitation intervention

ABSTRACT

Speaking up is essential to employee empowerment and organizational performance. Extant research on voice solicitation in organizations focuses primarily on the antecedents and occurrence of either the voicer or the one receiving input. Few studies in this area have conceived of voice solicitation as a process unfolding over time, including the mechanisms that precede, enable or inhibit voice. Therefore, this chapter explores how voice solicitation processes and their outcomes evolve over time. For this purpose, we designed a voice solicitation intervention that combines the three activities of guiding, inviting and challenging both the powerful and less powerful participants in their team meetings. Subsequently, we implemented and tested the intervention in ten military teams. Our findings demonstrate how a voice solicitation intervention can trigger a virtuous process leading to enhanced psychological safety, voice capability development, and increasing voice. This was the case in half of the teams. Yet, in the other teams it resulted in a vicious process in which expectations of team members increasingly diverge, psychological safety is compromised, and tensions build up in ways that ultimately demotivate voice.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

When less powerful actors speak up and share their ideas with more powerful people, they use their *voice* with the intention to change or improve work-related issues (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2014; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). In this respect, employee voice appears to facilitate learning (Edmondson, 2003b; Huber, 1991) and effective decision-making (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Shaw, 1981), both of which can improve organizational performance (Edmondson, 2002; Vera & Crossan, 2004). By means of deliberate initiatives to empower employees in raising their voice, they may contribute proactively to improving organizational outcomes, thereby fostering organizational viability and adaptability (Frazier & Bowler, 2015). More specifically, in team settings, voice is the key mechanism to utilize members' knowledge (Sherf, Sinha, Tangirala, & Awasty, 2018) to improve team processes and outcomes (Frazier & Bowler, 2015; Lam & Mayer, 2014).

Given these potential benefits of voice, powerful actors may seek to foster voice by deliberately engaging in processes of *voice solicitation* (Sherf, Tangirala, & Venkataramani, 2019; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). Soliciting voice refers to manifestations of powerful actors' openness to ideas from less powerful actors, their requests for alternative opinions or explanations, and their encouragement of suggestions (Fast et al., 2014). In this respect, the literature has identified characteristics and behaviors of powerful actors that foster or demotivate both voice and efforts to solicit voice. When employees and other less powerful actors perceive managers as open, accessible, transformational and inclusive, they are more likely to feel safe and actively respond to voice solicitation (e.g. Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006; Detert & Burris, 2007). The behavior of powerful actors can also foster commitment and confidence that responding to voice solicitation will be valued (Keller & Dansereau, 1995; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Siegall & Gardner, 2000; Edwards & Collinson, 2002; Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011).

Yet, powerful actors may struggle to create beneficial conditions solicit and foster voice (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003; Ashford, Sutcliffe, & Christianson, 2009). For example, when those in power perceive limited personal control and have a short-term orientation they may be demotivated to solicit voice (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Sherf et al., 2019). When subordinates do speak up, voice tends to not equally distributed among team members (Sherf et al., 2018). Further, voice may be ignored or rejected (Fast et al., 2014; Morrison & Rothman 2009), or gives rise to power-related tensions between or within actors (Van Baarle et al., 2021). Thus, the voice solicitation process appears to be pivotal in fostering voice in teams. Yet, scholars typically attended either on the perspective of the voicing employee or that of the manager receiving input (Burris et al. 2013), whereas soliciting and fostering voice is a collective, interactional process that unfolds over time (Morrison, 2014; Satterstrom et al., 2020). Those focusing on voicer and recipient (e.g. Burris et al., 2013; Li & Tangirala, 2020), largely overlook the role of other team members that may affect voice solicitation and its outcomes

(Satterstrom et al., 2020), whereas the majority of work is being done in teams instead of dyads (Salas et al., 2018).

The lack of a refined theory and body of evidence regarding how powerful actors can solicit voice in teams is troubling for both scholars and practitioners (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012b). In this study, we therefore seek to explore *how* and *when* a voice solicitation intervention fosters voice in team settings characterized by major power tensions. Drawing on the idea that in-depth knowledge of human systems can be best obtained by deliberately trying to change them (Grant & Wall, 2009; Schein, 1987; Starbuck, 2003), we adopt an intervention research strategy (e.g. Lee et al., 2020; Oliva, 2019). This intervention draws on various speech acts in voice solicitation to facilitate and challenge participants in meetings to speak up, and thereby foster collaboration and co-ownership of team decisions. We tested this intervention in ten teams (with 133 team members) in a large military organization in the Netherlands. Drawing on 120 hours of recorded meetings as well as observational, interview and survey data, we find that in five teams the intervention triggers virtuous feedback loops in which voice, psychological safety, and team learning were increased. By contrast, vicious feedback loops prevailed over time in the other five teams, causing less favorable and unintended outcomes regarding voice and other constructs.

This study contributes to the literature by conceptualizing voice solicitation as a collective, interactional process rather than a one-time dyadic event—one that can be both virtuous and vicious in nature. Our findings thus extend earlier work on voice solicitation, which focuses on supervisor-employee dyads (Li & Tangirala, 2020), the role of other team members in cultivating the outcomes of voice solicitation (Satterstrom et al., 2020), and the motivational origins of (not) soliciting voice (Fast et al., 2014; Sherf et al., 2019; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012).

4.2 VOICE

Hirschman's (1970) work is an important reference point for voice researchers. He defines voice as being *directed to a more powerful actor* and intended to *change or improve an existing, objectionable state* (see also: Bashshur & Oc, 2015). This definition implies that voice can include anything, ranging from relatively trivial (but objectionable) issues to strategic issues affecting organizational viability and performance. Moreover, Hirschman's definition does not specify a context, which can range from informally probing ideas around the coffee machine, raising issues in formal meetings, to 'whistleblowing' in the media, or anything in between (Hirschman, 1970; Cunha et al., 2018). In this chapter, we focus on less powerful actors speaking up in the context of team meetings, in which both reflection and decision-making takes place.

As voice is about challenging the status-quo, it inherently involves major tensions (Cunha et al., 2018; Van Baarle et al., 2021). Therefore, those speaking up often perceive

voice behavior as risky. In this respect, individuals often work in settings where they do not feel safe to speak up (e.g. Detert & Edmondson, 2011) and superiors may perceive subordinates voicing ideas about an objectionable situation (e.g. work) as rebuffing authority, complaining, or wasting time (Detert et al., 2013; Milliken et al., 2003).

Despite these complexities and barriers, employee voice can have great potential for powerful actors. Employee voice allows them to become aware of problems at an early stage and benefit from the collective knowledge available to help resolve these problems (Detert et al., 2013) and may even help managers gain or sustain a competitive advantage (Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison 2011). Barry et al. (2018) argue that employee voice may be a remedy against harmful organizational practices such as a lack of reflexivity in decision-making and poor vertical communication processes (see also: Alvesson & Spicer, 2012b). Furthermore, voice can facilitate organizational change (Morrison & Milliken, 2000) and effective decision-making (Shaw, 1981), both of which can improve performance at the unit or organizational level (Detert et al., 2013). More specifically, voice appears to (partially) mediate team effectiveness, particularly in teams with a considerable degree of autonomy (Erez et al., 2002).

4.3 VOICE SOLICITATION PROCESS

Given these potential benefits of employees speaking up in an organizational setting, powerful actors can engage in deliberate attempts to encourage voice (Cunha et al., 2018; Van Baarle et al. 2021). The idea that powerful actors are critical in fostering voice is widely disseminated in the literature (Detert & Edmondson, 2007; Frazier & Bowler, 2015; Morrison, 2014) and is also recognized by authority holders themselves (e.g. Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). Powerful actors and the quality of their relationships with the less powerful may create climates that inspire self-confidence and feelings of commitment which, in turn, foster speaking up (Edwards & Collinson, 2002; Keller & Dansereau, 1995; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Seibert et al., 2011; Siegall & Gardner, 2000). Key to encouraging voice in organizational settings is the process of *voice solicitation*, in which powerful actors display openness to ideas from less powerful actors, request alternative opinions or explanations, and encourage suggestions (Fast et al., 2014; Sherf et al., 2019). Voice solicitation is likely to increase the motivation to speak up and contribute to (team-related) issues of mutual concern (Nemphard & Edmondson, 2006; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018).

However, the willingness of powerful actors to actively solicit and incorporate voice often falls short of expectations (Detert & Treviño, 2010; Milliken et al., 2003). Some studies suggest that when powerful actors perceive a low level of personal control—that is, lacking discretion and influence to impact their work environment and affect changes in their team—they are less likely to solicit voice (Greenberger & Strasser, 1986). A similar perception is also important for the less powerful, as they are more

likely to act on voice solicitation when they feel their voice is of influence (Ashford et al., 1998; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012). In addition to perceptions of low personal control, a long-term orientation appears to be beneficial as soliciting voice may very well be disruptive in the short term (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Sherf et al., 2019).

Another challenge related to voice solicitation in teams is the tendency that voice is frequently centralized, that is, emanates from a limited number of team members, rather than equally distributed across them. When voice “occurs around members who are more socially dominant or are less reflective”, it is likely to harm the utilization of members’ expertise and, consequently, team performance (Sherf et al., 2018, p. 813). A last challenge involves the power-related tensions that are likely to arise from voice solicitation. Deliberate attempts to solicit voice can give rise to major power-related tensions and other unintended outcomes, as employee voice often is about challenging the status quo (Cunha et al., 2018; Van Baarle et al., 2021). Authority holders may feel they are losing power (Yukl & Fu, 1999). Furthermore, if employees speak up, their ideas are more likely to be ignored as opposed to those in charge (e.g. Berdahl & Martorana, 2006; Fast et al., 2014; Magee & Galinsky, 2008).

The literature suggests that some of these challenges can be mediated by appointing a meeting facilitator, who ideally attends both the structural aspects of the process (e.g. creating equal voice opportunity, clarifying goals) and the group dynamics (e.g. developing psychological safety and shared responsibility of team process, resolving conflict) (e.g. Schwartz, 2017; Schwartzman, 1989). A facilitator supports and guides the processes through which different voices of team members are articulated and interact with each other (Cooren, Thompson, Canestraro, & Bodor, 2006), enabling team members to “objectify what they are supposed to think and wish for” (Cooren et al., 2006: 535; see also Hogan, 2003). Additionally, when facilitators hold explicit ideological frames (i.e. striving to empower participants to speak up) as well as have professional skills in using various speech acts conducive in promoting voice (Schwarz, 2017), they are more likely to make in-the-moment choices that promote voice (Smolović Jones & Cammock, 2015).

In sum, the voice solicitation process appears to be pivotal in fostering voice in teams, yet it is very challenging. This implies that a voice solicitation (intervention) effort, ideally, involves:

- establishing whether the team leader perceives personal control, has a long-term orientation, and is open to ideas from less powerful actors (including alternative opinions, explanations or suggestions);
- inviting the support of an external facilitator that helps the team to acquire skills in voice solicitation (i.e. the speech acts of guiding, inviting and challenging);
- developing an explicit ideological frame that includes distributing voice equally across team members; and
- ensuring that, when less powerful participants voice, their voice is not ignored (i.e. providing them with actual influence).

As our review thus far shows, the behavior of powerful actors is a critical factor in whether one speaks up or remains silent. Moreover, research has impressively advanced our knowledge by uncovering antecedents and consequences of voice (solicitation), as well as the consequences for the actors involved and team performance. However, there are some under researched areas (Morrison, 2011; Morrison, 2014; Bashshur & Oc, 2015). Earlier studies have typically attended either perspective of the voicing employee or that of the manager receiving input (Burriss et al. 2013). This is problematic because soliciting and fostering voice is a collective, interactional process that unfolds over time (Morrison, 2014; Satterstrom et al., 2020). When scholars focus on both the voicer and the recipient, they tend to focus on the voicer—manager dyad (e.g. Burriss et al 2013, Li & Tangirala, 2020). In this respect, the existing literature has largely overlooked the role of others outside this dyad affect—team members for instance—that may affect voice solicitation and its outcomes (cf. Satterstrom et al., 2020). This is particularly an omission since the majority of work, and therefore voice solicitation, is being done in teams (e.g. Salas et al., 2018). Further, the ‘snapshot-like’ approach scholars frequently draw on result in rather static images of voice (Li & Tangirala, 2020; Morrison, 2014;). Thus, in order to fully grasp the voice solicitation process and its outcomes, the widely used cross-sectional designs need to be supplemented with longitudinal empirical investigations (Dyck & Starke, 1999; Satterstrom et al., 2020). Additionally, based on a review of the literature, Barry et al. (2018) conclude that many studies do not take contextual aspects into account, which resonates with earlier observations that the structural and systemic aspects of organizational settings promoting a climate of silence/voice are underexplored (Morrison & Milliken, 2000). This raises the question whether and how team leaders can effectively encourage and increase employee voice. In the remainder of this study, we focus on voice solicitation in formal team meetings. More specifically, we explore when and how voice solicitation efforts (fail to) foster voice in teams involving substantial differences in formal power.

4.4 METHOD

Several scholars have argued that management research can best be advanced by conducting intervention studies, based on the assumption that in-depth knowledge of human systems can only be gained by trying to change these systems (Schein, 1987; Starbuck, 2003). This type of intervention research involves experiments and interventions in real-life organizations (Starbuck, 2003) and responds to recent calls for deepening knowledge on the unintended outcomes of empowerment processes such as fostering voice (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015; Cheong et al., 2016; Lee et al. 2017). In this chapter, we develop a voice solicitation intervention that incorporates the key conditions and insights outlined in the previous section.

An intervention research strategy serves to produce knowledge in the service of action (e.g. Oliva, 2019; Lee et al., 2020). This research strategy draws on creative as

well as validation activities and thus involves a combination of deductive, inductive, and abductive reasoning (Meulman, Reymen, Podoyntsyna, & Romme, 2018; Warfield, 1990). As such, it draws on deductive reasoning, by starting from key constructs and principles inferred from voice, empowerment and power theories. It draws on inductive reasoning by, for example, testing the prototype of the intervention among pilot users and expert facilitators, and adapting the intervention accordingly. Moreover, designing any intervention inevitably also involves abductive elements, because crafting the intervention involves a number of (largely practical) choices regarding how it will be embedded in a specific organizational context (e.g. framing the intervention toward participants, available meeting times, meeting frequency), which cannot be logically deduced from empowerment and voice theory.

Informed by earlier intervention studies (e.g. Andriessen, 2007; Pascal, Thomas, & Romme, 2013; Meulman et al., 2018), we followed a four-step approach. This approach starts with identifying the problem. Subsequently, we developed a prototype of the intervention, based on insights arising from the literature. We then pilot-tested the intervention in an academic setting. Finally, we tested the intervention in ten teams in a large military organization in the Netherlands. In the remainder of this section, we describe each step in more detail.

As highlighted in the previous section, this chapter starts from a well-documented organizational problem, that is, the need to increase employee voice to unlock various potential benefits (e.g. Edmondson, 2003b; Detert et al., 2013; Morrison, 2011). The literature also suggests that initiatives to solicit voice tend to raise substantial power tensions (Cunha et al., 2018; Van Baarle et al., 2021).

The second step was to develop a prototype of the voice solicitation intervention, based on a review of the literature (reported in the previous section). The theoretical insights arising from this review informed the development of a first prototype of the intervention. The intended *outcome* of this intervention is to solicit voice, and thereby foster team performance, collaboration, and co-ownership of team decisions. Table 4.1 lists and explains the various speech acts used to solicit and foster voice in the intervention, categorized in three types of 'facilitative behaviors' (Hogan, 2003): guiding, inviting, and challenging (Heron, 1999; Schwarz, 2017).

In the third step, we deliberately pilot-tested the intervention protocol and modified it, based on the experiences and feedback arising from these pilots. This phase also functioned as a training period for the two facilitators (i.e. the interim chairpersons who executed the intervention protocol), in which they developed a standardized routine for facilitating meetings. These facilitators pilot-tested the intervention prototype in two teams at a Dutch university. One of the two facilitators is the lead author of this chapter.

Finally, we extensively tested the intervention in 10 teams in a large military organization in the Netherlands and collected a broad set of qualitative and quantitative data about these interventions.

Table 4.1 Voice solicitation acts in the intervention

Practices	Description
Guiding	<p>Structuring: speech acts that provide structure to the meeting process</p> <p>Clarifying: speech acts that increase the transparency of what is being said, or what a participant is trying to achieve with a certain agenda item</p> <p>Steering: speech acts that explain (any of the) participants what is expected from them</p>
Inviting	<p>Speech acts that encourage individual participants to speak up in all phases of the meeting process, for example, by inviting participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · (in opening round) express their feelings toward the meeting, and what is important to them, both in terms of content and process · (in brainstorming) postpone their opinion, and raise questions to be able to develop an informed assessment of a problem or proposal · (in opinion forming) express their opinion about a problem or proposal, including argumentation for this opinion · (in decision-making) express if he/she can consent to the proposed decision, or alternatively, explain how the proposal could be adjusted · (in closing round) express their reflections on the meeting process and outcomes
Challenging	<p>Speech acts that enhance reflection, interaction and shared decision-making, for example those that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · counteract any over-powering acts, to safeguard equivalence of all participants in the meeting · serve to control and restrict efforts to manipulate the agenda-setting process by a team member · provoke deeper thought and reflection by the participants in the meeting

Case setting

The setting for this study is a large military organization, part of the Armed Forces in The Netherlands, employing over 5,000 people. We call this organization “MIL” in the remainder of this chapter. Since 2011, the highest ranked officers of MIL have been advocating the need for empowering military personnel, in order to face the complex challenges MIL is confronted with. In this respect, MIL needs to respond adequately to uncertain events, continuous reprioritizing by the Dutch government and international bodies, and international military missions in highly different and dynamic settings. The highest ranked generals within MIL believe that these challenges require changes in MIL’s established practices of decision-making and getting things done. Traditionally, decisions are made in the top of the hierarchy – both within the organization as a whole and its subunits. Also, many people within MIL consider the various collaborative activities across MIL’s boundaries as highly complex and challenging. Yet, previous attempts to empower employees caused substantial tensions among staff members, who are increasingly expected to shift between highly different power practices.

Team selection

We obtained access to MIL for testing our intervention in the regular meetings of a substantial number of military teams. For the voice solicitation intervention, we selected MIL teams that incorporated at least two hierarchical levels (i.e. the team leader has a higher formal rank than the other members of the team), to ensure that the intervention setting is consistent with the prevailing definition of voice (Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Detert & Burris, 2007). In order to obtain access to teams, the lead author of this study conducted exploratory interviews with 18 team leaders, who all had expressed an initial interest in the intervention. In each interview, the lead author first explained the background of the study, and then together with the team leader explored whether and why it would make sense to test the intervention protocol in the team (s)he supervised.

Two criteria informed our decision about whether or not to proceed with the intervention in a particular team. First, we assessed the team leader's willingness and commitment toward participation in the intervention. Here, we deliberately avoided a strategy in which the Commander-in-Chief of MIL would order team leaders to take part, giving them hardly any discretion to say no. Moreover, we also sought to identify any misalignments between the team leader's verbal and nonverbal expressions regarding their level of enthusiasm to try out the intervention. Second, we selected teams that were already experiencing various tensions in the area of voice and power, based on the narrative of the team leader.

The ten teams selected were in highly different units of MIL. Three teams had operational duties, such as border control or securing military objects. Two other teams had a key role in governing or supporting military operations. Four teams engaged in long-term policy making at MIL's central headquarters. And one team was part of MIL's national education and training center.

Data collection

We conducted the interventions in the period from November 2018 to November 2019. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the data sources and analysis. Our primary data consists of 44 verbatim transcribed meetings in which the intervention was implemented and tested. Each of these meetings lasted between one and four hours; we recorded approximately 120 hours of meetings. All meetings were authentic ones, in the sense that they were real meetings that would also have been conducted without (the authors inviting the team to participate in the) intervention: thus, each meeting addressed an authentic (team-specific) agenda and took place in the team's usual meeting location. In other words, only the voice solicitation intervention process was new to the team, and as such, implemented in an otherwise completely familiar setting for the team members.

Table 4.2 Overview of data sources and their use in data analysis

Data types and dates	Amount and location	Use in analysis
Interventions in meetings 44 meetings lasting between 1 and 5 hours chaired based on the intervention protocol (January 2019 - October 2019)	Ten military teams in different contexts, three to five sessions per team. One team rejected the intervention after one session. In total 133 participants, and approximately 120 hours recorded meetings, transcribed verbatim. Two meetings could not be recorded, facilitators took notes.	Identification of first and second order codes, contextual conditions, actions, social mechanisms, and outcomes of the intervention
Semi-structured interviews 26 interviews lasting between 30 and 90 minutes (November 2018 - November 2019)	28 hours of recordings, transcribed verbatim	Identification of first and second order codes, contextual conditions, actions, social mechanisms, and outcomes of the intervention. Triangulation of observations and transcriptions.
Informal interviews 22 interviews	15 hours of recordings, partly transcribed verbatim	Same as above
Thick descriptions Detailed descriptions of observations or phenomena which could not be captured with recordings alone.	16 pages	Same as above
Pre-intervention/post-intervention survey 133 respondents (January 2019 - October 2019)	102 pretest surveys, 84 posttest surveys, and 74 respondents filled out both pre-intervention and post-intervention.	Establishing the pre-intervention/post-intervention differences on commonly used constructs in empowerment research.

Ten teams, involving a total of 133 people, participated. One team abandoned the intervention after one session. In this particular case, the team leader observed that a prominent team member in his team protested fiercely against the intervention. As the team leader felt he was quite dependent on this individual, he decided to withdraw from the intervention. In the other nine teams, the intervention took between four to six meetings per team. We stopped with the intervention after (up to) six meetings, because we reached data saturation regarding our intervention protocol by the fourth, fifth or sixth meeting. Moreover, we also sought to avoid generating cases with substantially different lead times.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the team leaders before and after the interventions took place. An additional set of interviews was conducted with participants who stood out in one way or another. Also, numerous informal interviews took place with participants, recorded and verbatim transcribed when possible, or else notes

were taken. The first author and a second facilitator functioned as the interventionists. This intervention team of two served to combine the role of meeting facilitator (fulfilled by one person) with the role of participant-observer (fulfilled by the other person) mainly engaged in observing group dynamics and taking extensive notes on phenomena not captured by the recording alone. By having these two persons switch between the two roles, the risk that the data (regarding intervention processes and outcomes) would become biased due to the personality and skill set of a single facilitator was also significantly reduced. The participant-observer role resulted in additional data in the form of 16 pages of thick descriptions (cf. Ponteretto, 2006).

In addition, we used a one-group pre/post-test approach (Campbell et al., 1963; Van Aken et al., 2012) to determine whether the intervention had any impact, that is, whether it implied a difference between (pre-intervention) observation 1 regarding various constructs related to voice and (post-intervention) observation 2 of the results obtained after completing the intervention. These additional quantitative data especially served to triangulate and validate the initial findings arising from the qualitative data analysis (see next subsection). We collected 102 pre-intervention surveys, 86 post-intervention surveys, with 74 respondents filling out both surveys. Appendix v provides a detailed description of the survey and the results.

Data analysis

After completing the interventions in ten teams, the initial analysis of the qualitative data suggested that some teams appeared to respond different to the intervention than others – providing an important first step toward better understanding the process of how to foster voice. To further validate these initial insights, we proceeded with comparing the pre-intervention and post-intervention survey data aggregated per team. Based on this additional analysis, we were able to differentiate between two clusters of teams: one cluster responded to the intervention by way of increased levels of team empowerment, learning and reflection, psychological safety and performance; and the other cluster was characterized by a more ambiguous impact of the intervention, often involving decreases in the various measures. This distinction informed the first phase of our data analysis.

Next, we examined the transcripts and thick descriptions of the more responsive teams. Subsequently, we turned to the less responsive cluster of teams, to uncover why these teams responded differently. Further, we developed a coding scheme depicting the contexts, conditions, processes and outcomes. Table 4.3 reports this coding scheme. Finally, we synthesized our main findings in a causal loop diagram (Sterman, 2000). This diagram also serves to structure and frame the findings reported in the next section.

Table 4.3 Coding scheme contexts, triggering conditions, processes, outcomes

Variable in causal loop diagram	Description
Voice opportunity	Statements that indicate participants are able to voice (more easily)
Team leader support	Statements that indicate that a team leader uses his power-over to actively support others speaking up (via the intervention or otherwise)
Committing	Statements or instances that indicate a team leader commits to the intervention, despite any resistance from others
Encouraging	Statements that indicate that a powerful actor uses his/her authority to empower others to speak up (i.e. to support the practices within the intervention)
Psychological safety	Statements that indicate that the intervention triggers a social mechanism that make less powerful actors more comfortable speaking up about their thoughts and feelings
Space for emotion	Interactions that indicate that actors can share their feelings about a work-related issue that is important, without (the fear of) being criticized for it
Speaking up more easily	Statements that indicate that less powerful actors more comfortable speaking up about thoughts and feelings
Voice capability	Statements or interactions that indicate individual participants are learning to speak up over a period of several meetings
Personal voice outcomes	Statement that indicate individual, both powerful and less powerful, participants are experiencing benefits of voicing, increased voice (their own or hearing others voice), or of the changes in the meeting climate that make speaking up easier
Voice commitment	Statements that indicate a commitment to speak up (and/or keep investing in the intervention)
Team voice outcomes	Statements that illustrate team level outcomes of voicing, increased voice (their own or hearing others voice), or of the changes in the meeting climate that make speaking up easier
Raising new agenda items	Statements that indicate new agenda-items are being brought forward by less powerful actors
Inclusive decisions	Interactions resulting in decisions that differ from the team leaders preferred course of action or interactions resulting in policy change
Shared ownership	Statements that indicate that (less powerful) actors feel an increased responsibility for the meeting process/voice climate, and move beyond passively waiting for the powerful actor to take charge of the meeting
Voice credibility	Statements that indicate the credibility or relevance of voicing
Convergence expectations team members	Statements that indicate that the team leader and the other team members perceive engaging in voice (via the intervention or otherwise) is an appropriate response to what is happening within the team or in de context of the team; please note that any divergence of expectations can involve discrepancies between expectations of team leader and other team members, but also between the other team members
Tensions in or around team	Statements that indicate that the context of the team is packed with (power-related) tensions

4.5 FINDINGS

In this section, we first explore the effects of the intervention by drawing on the qualitative data, triangulated with the quantitative data. These data show that the intervention was successful in fostering voice and more inclusive decision-making in five teams, whereas it had a negative impact on the other four teams. Subsequently, we explore how and why these effects emerged, by developing a causal loop diagram (grounded in the qualitative data) that details the underlying mechanisms that are activated by the intervention.¹

Effects of the intervention on voice in teams

After completing the interventions in ten teams, the initial analysis of the qualitative data suggested that some teams appeared to respond differently to the voice solicitation intervention than others – providing an important first step to better understand soliciting and fostering voice in team settings. To further validate these initial insights, we explored the quantitative data by comparing the pre-intervention and post-intervention survey data aggregated per team (see Appendix vi for more details).

Next, the effects of the intervention at the team level were analyzed. Tables 4.4 and 4.5 capture qualitative and quantitative differences in respectively the (seemingly) responsive and less responsive teams. These tables combine a description of team and its development, as perceived by the facilitators, with a visualization of the differences between the pre- and post-intervention scores per team (i.e. the individual differences are aggregated at the team level). These tables thus serve to dissect the general trend of slightly higher scores for empowerment, team learning, psychological safety and team performance in two separate patterns. On the one hand, five teams appeared to be responsive to the intervention with increases in all measured constructs (i.e. team 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7). On the other hand, the four less-responsive teams mainly exhibit decreases in empowerment, team learning, psychological safety and team performance (i.e. team 3, 5, 8 and 9).

Virtuous and vicious voice processes

In this section, we develop a CLD-based model of the virtuous and vicious voice processes, grounded in the data. We start by briefly elaborating on MIL's ambition to promote voice and more inclusive decision making. Next, we explore the virtuous nature of learning processes fostering voice and more inclusive decision-making. Finally, we describe the vicious processes that undermine voice and team decision-making.

¹ Appendix vii further substantiates the model in the causal loop diagram. In this appendix, the data for two teams are described in more detail: one team that represents the responsive cluster and another team representing the less responsive cluster. These data show how voice solicitation processes unfold over a series of meetings.

Aiming to increase voice and more inclusive decision-making

The difference between the *desired* and *current* occurrence of voice and inclusive decision-making, as visualized in Figure 4.1 (p. 107), serves as the starting condition to foster voice in team meetings. Team leaders perceived ample *room for improvement*, as they shared their power- and voice-related struggles. For example, in the meetings with their teams, the team leaders feel a need to strike a complex balance between team members who express little voice and those who attempt to dominate the discourse:

Charley is much more quiet than the rest. He appears to comply with many, yet, you don't really know how he really thinks about something. I also have more of a thinker [in my team], John, you may know him. He tries to wheel and deal outside our meetings, and then attempts to arrive at a decision in the meeting itself. Three others, Luanne, Jim, and Kevin are really opinionated and talk an awful lot. And yeah...Mike, yeah, he has his own way, at times he may talk a lot, but is a really good listener as well. He's really keen on identifying people's behavior.

(Intake team leader 1)

Voice, or lack thereof, appears to be clearly linked to power. In this respect, team leaders struggled to combine their formal authority with empowering behavior. One team leader explained how he struggles to empower his team members to speak up:

... they are just really obedient. When I say 'this is what I want', they immediately start acting upon it. Whereas, I try to explain to them, this may be different than what you're accustomed to – less following orders and more deliberating – as I'm keen to learn about your ideas or needs. (Intake team leader 2)

The goal of fostering voice in team meetings appears to move beyond increasing voice, and is directed toward discovering how different voices can be integrated, and, ultimately, lead to more inclusive decision-making:

... and all these different voices lead to serious discussions. I tend to like that, it reflects positive energy, interest, and commitment. Rather, they come from very different backgrounds, which is okay, but I feel we need to bring it more together ... discovering solutions together, we have yet to arrive at that.

(Intake team leader 3)

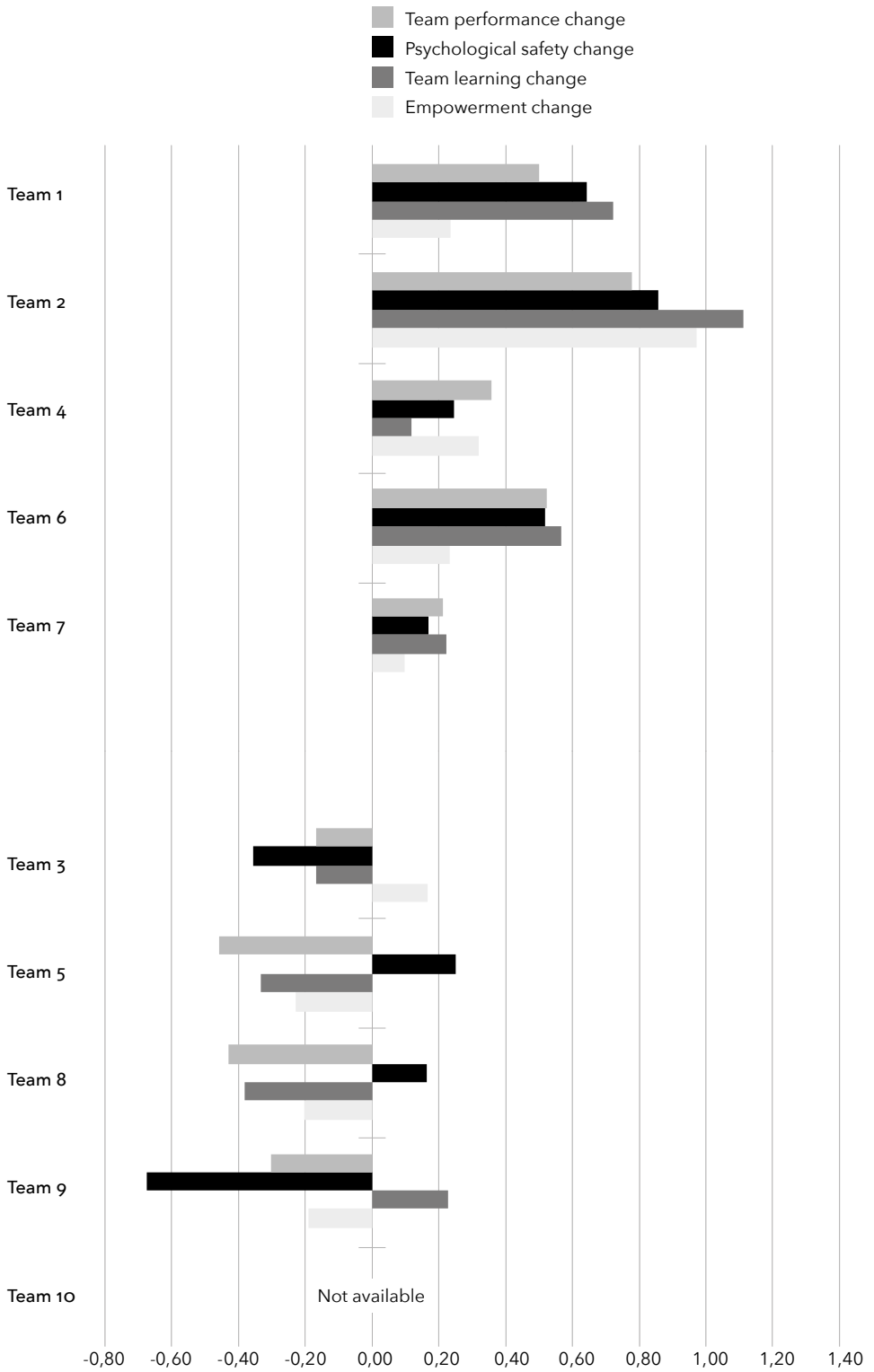
In sum, the starting conditions to fostering voice in team meetings included the team leader's struggle with power-related tensions within his team (e.g. few team members dominating the discourse or lack of voice), or his/her own struggle to empower team members to speak up. If these conditions were in place, we proceeded with introducing the intervention in the team.

Table 4.4 Descriptions of responsive teams, changes in post/pre-intervention results

Team	Description responsive teams (team composition, aim team leader, assessment, and team development as perceived by facilitators)
1	Team of 6 experienced officers, tasked to guide and reprioritize nationwide military operations. Aim: improve decision-making, negotiate a team policy to enforce a standardized way of working. Positive meeting evaluations from the start. The intervention particularly served to create a space to disagree and deescalate tensions, increase voice, and adjust the decision-making process.
2	Team of 6: 1 officer and 5 non-commissioned officers, each of whom is responsible for an operational unit (>50 people). Aim: increase voice; team leader felt most members were too compliant. Practically oriented, 'just do it' stance toward the intervention. Increased voice occurrence from 1st meeting: resulting in nuanced perspectives on delicate issues, with pragmatic follow-up decisions.
4	Team of 26 (predominantly) officers, majority are recent graduates of the military academy, responsible for operational unit (>500). Aim: professionalizing meetings and increasing voice of silent members. Enthusiasm grew every meeting, disciplined in structure, voiced very controversial topics in third meeting.
6	Team of 14, both military & civilian personnel, tasked with providing specialist operational support. Aim: facilitate the integration of different perspectives & professionalize meetings. Moderate progression in every session, intervention was effective in addressing power-related tensions within team (incl. team lead).
7	Team of 18, predominantly military personnel, responsible for governing military education. Aim: facilitate participation, in a team divided in a more assertive younger group and a group of older less-assertive colleagues. Increased voice led to substantial policy changes in area of military education.

Table 4.5 Descriptions of less responsive teams, changes in post/pre-intervention results

3	Team of 8, predominantly civilian personnel, tasked to assess the impact of digitalizing MIL's operations and develop policies in this area. Aim: to stimulate voice and integrate the different voices. Team experienced difficulties in finding a balance between strictness-looseness in voice practice. Perceptions about the appropriate level appeared to diverge.
5	Team of 22, both military and civilian personnel, tasked to engage in interdisciplinary policy development for MIL. Aim: professionalize meetings and make use of different perspectives on relevant issues. Positive first evaluations; team then struggled to find a meaningful meeting agenda with sufficient relevance and depth for most participants.
8	Team of 7, both military and civilian personnel, responsible for implementing an organizational change initiative. Aim: develop a shared responsibility/approach with regard to this initiative. Intervention made expectations of participants more explicit, and, in turn, they started to diverge. Role of meeting facilitator was positively evaluated, but the intervention protocol appeared to be too formal for most.
9	Team of 12, predominantly officers, responsible for an operational military unit (>100). Aim: professionalize meetings. In first meeting, moderate resistance arose. First three meetings appeared to be perfunctory steps that team members had to take. In fourth and fifth meeting participants started to engage more and were experiencing benefits from voice.
10	Team of 14, both military and civilian personnel, responsible to execute tasks with military branches other than MIL. Aim: structure meetings and increase voice of rather silent participants. Intervention was terminated just before the second meeting. Expectations of team members vs. leader diverged dramatically, in turn, reducing team leader support.



In the first step of our analysis (see previous subsection), we separated the more responsive teams from the teams that seemed to be less responsive. The next step is to identify which mechanisms and processes can explain these differences. In the remainder of this section, we describe and visualize the main virtuous and vicious processes in a so-called causal loop diagram (Sterman, 2000). We first describe how the intervention can trigger a virtuous process leading to enhanced psychological safety, voice capability development, increasing voice and more inclusive decision-making. Next, we demonstrate how our voice solicitation intervention can trigger a vicious process in which expectations of team members increasingly diverge, psychological safety is compromised, and tensions build up which ultimately undermine voice.

Virtuous voice loop (B1)

The Virtuous Voice loop (B1) in Figure 4.1 is triggered when the facilitator of the intervention dynamically combines the voice solicitation acts of guiding, inviting and challenging the participants in meetings. A subordinate team member explains how the chair's/facilitator's voice solicitation acts transformed their meeting routine, involving rather chaotic discussions between team members not letting each other finish a thought without interrupting, people being cut off mid-sentence, and people talking out of turn:

It was a pleasant experience, it used to be like a crazy chicken coop. At the end of those meetings I used to think 'I'm really not able to do anything else today'. Today, however, I thought 'it was even rather enjoyable' (participant team 4, 1st meeting)

Consequently, the intervention appears to create a structural *voice opportunity and practice* environment for all participants:

I'm pleased with today's meeting, and confident that we'll develop to a situation where everyone will be able to bring forward themes...and that we'll exclude no one. And yes, we're still practicing; we need to make it our own routine a bit more, but I'm confident that we'll get there. (participant team 4, 2nd meeting)

Especially team members who described themselves as more silent and introverted, said they feel it is less of a struggle to speak up, as they are explicitly invited to do so:

I consider myself to be an introvert, and it helps me a lot when I know for certain that that my moment to speak up will definitely arrive. Of course, I noticed that people experienced difficulty to remember what they wanted to say [as they had to wait for their turn]; also the different phases enable people to become better listeners. (informal interview participant team 5, between 2nd and 3rd meeting)

Interestingly, many rather dominant actors appeared to appreciate the upside from biting their tongue, when they were constrained by the chair to provide speaking time for other actors. For example:

For me, this was probably the biggest challenge of all. I've read your instructions and have bitten my tongue the entire meeting. In the end, I did not come off badly, as opposed to normally when I start bleating straight away. No, not at all, I've spoken my mind about the different topics. I leave this room without frustration, something which has not always been the case. I was very cynical when I heard that you would join our meeting and thought 'what the hell are they joining our meeting for?', but well done!
(participant team 4, 1st meeting)

Also, participants that were rather used to a few actors dominating the meeting's discourse, recognized the benefits of systemically creating voice opportunities for all:

We should definitely stick to these structured rounds [in which each team member is invited to speak up]. I'm from a different generation: those who are able to shout loudest, get their message across. Sometimes that's fine, but this works best.
(participant team 4, 6th meeting)

The first causal effect in B1 is between *voice opportunity and practice* and *psychological safety*. The latter construct refers to a shared belief that the team climate is “safe for interpersonal risk taking” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). In the context of this study, increasing psychological safety refers to team members increasingly feeling that speaking up is less risky. By *practicing*, participants learn that they have a structural opportunity to speak, safeguarded by the meeting facilitator. For instance, when a team leader or any other team member attempts to dominate the discourse, he/she is challenged by the facilitator-chair. In these instances, the facilitator uses a powerful position to stop a participant from speaking up on a certain topic too early:

- Facilitator: *As far as I'm concerned, we do not yet move to opinion-forming.*
- Participant: *I am rather recalcitrant at times.*
- Facilitator: *No problem. I'm happy to clarify some boundaries. Do you have additional questions instead?*
- Participant: *No.*
- Facilitator: *Thank you, then we'll return to you shortly to get your opinion.*
(team 1, 1st meeting)

A member of team 4 reflected on the intervention by comparing the new meeting context with team meetings conducted before the intervention; in the latter meetings,

team members apparently avoided discussing more sensitive issues, whereas the intervention helped them surface these issues:

... like a bolt from the blue. Suppressed frustrations and problems of an entire year which were previously never spoken out loud; (...) we always concluded 'all okay, nothing to worry about'. (Exit interview team 4)

In sum, the guiding, inviting and challenging activities by the chair-facilitator appear to increase *psychological safety*. The pre- and post-intervention survey results discussed earlier also substantiate this effect (for five teams).

The second causal effect in B1 is the relation between *psychological safety* and *voice capability*. A climate of increased psychological safety apparently creates favorable conditions for actors to express their voice on a regular basis, and, over time, they become better in using these conditions to raise issues that really matter to them and/or in learning to overcome their silence. This appears to be a learning and capability building process, for both people that are used to speaking and those that normally do not, hence the time delay in the B1 loop in Figure 4.1. One team member reflected as follows on this learning process:

Well, you have to think, when is it my turn to speak up? And you have to remember, what was it again that I wanted to bring up? Sometimes, you hear someone mentioning something, and then you think, 'oh yeah, I want to add that'. But then, before it's your turn to speak up, three others precede you. It does not feel natural to respond to someone who had his/her turn earlier on. (...) So I'm still struggling with how to work in this structured manner, with keeping track of all the points I want to raise. (participant team 8)

Building voice capability involves both individual and team learning processes, in which all actors are involved. The intervention, in which the team leader is not responsible for chairing and guiding the meeting process, appears to improve the team leader's capability to listen to others and thereby embrace voice. This, in turn, enables the team leader to improve his/her contributions:

And I notice, personally, this gives me a lot of space, which is a great advantage. This space enables me to lean back, both literally and metaphorically, allowing myself to just think along with agenda items. Because now, I do not have to be the cleverest person in the room, continually recapitulating what is being said. Or, being busy with the meeting process and address someone like 'I don't hear you say anything, what do you think?' (exit interview, team leader of team 9)

Building a voice capability not only involves individual learning over time, but also collective learning. One participant reflects about how her team developed its voice capability in three meetings:

Well, you notice people becoming more experienced, getting to know the game, and being able to play their designated roles. And, being more experienced, people become more flexible in playing different roles. (exit interview, participant team 9)

Growing the team's voice capability not only involves individual and collective learning, it also implies the need to create boundaries. The intervention protocol enables the facilitator-chair to let people speak in turns, to ensure adequate voice opportunities for each participant. Here, one of the key challenges was to find a workable balance between strictness and conversational flow. Notably, each of the five responsive teams in our study needed three to five meetings to create a *voice capability* that substantially increases voice opportunity and simultaneously fosters a natural conversational flow.

Well, this was agreeable because I remember from last time, when we spoke about the planning, we were fully bound by all these structures. Now, it becomes more natural. We used to, in a round, not respond at all. Whereas today, I kind of like the little responses every now and then. (participant team 1, 4th meeting)

The third causal effect in B1 is the relation between *voice capability* and *voice occurrence and inclusive decision-making*. Once a team's voice capability has started to grow, in turn, voice occurrence increases and sensitive issues can be raised more easily by any (incl. less powerful) team member. The excerpt below is taken from the third meeting from team 4. In this meeting, one participant sets off to voice several frustrations and problems. He begins in a low-pitched voice, struggling to find words, and later on others start adding to his argument:

- Participant X: *We have just one thing, but eh ... it is kind of an issue.* [and then explains how the exodus lowers morale and demands a new meeting on short notice]
- Team leader: *What is it you're asking from me, I wonder?* [other participants start contributing information, with many different perspectives, impressions etc.]
- Facilitator: *I would like to determine with you, what to discuss in this meeting, and, optionally, what to postpone to a later meeting. So, let's do a round of opinions, and then decide what we want to do. Is that a workable approach for you?*
[every participant is invited to contribute from his/her perspective]
- Participant Y: [expresses that she misses] *your involvement, I guess. Then, I feel like we're completely by ourselves on this matter. Sometimes I feel like, should I do this all by myself as [subordinate] or do I have your [team leader's] support?*

- Team leader: *Can I respond to that?*
- Facilitator: *Let's stick to the round, so everybody has the opportunity to voice. If something is unclear, or you have a question, then please go ahead.* [the facilitator here makes the team leader wait for his/her turn, and listen to various other voices first, and then gives the floor to the team leader]
- Facilitator: *Let's see where we are. (...) Perhaps I'll first go back to you [participant X], since you raised the issue. What does this bring you, and what are your thoughts now? Or perhaps a proposition on how to move this forward?*

This excerpt highlights voice occurrence and also serves to illustrate how voice occurrence and inclusive decision-making are connected. In short, the facilitator-chair fosters voice occurrence by continually creating opportunities to speak up, and thereby facilitates the team in (preparing) decision-making based on different voices.

To further illustrate inclusive decision-making, we describe the dynamics in team seven. The leader of this (high-level) team envisioned a radical organizational change; in several meetings, this intended change was discussed in rounds of picture-forming, opinion forming, and decision-making. Team members spoke up and actively engaged in these discussions, which resulted in more incremental changes as opposed to the 'big comprehensive change' envisioned by the team leader. In an exit interview, the team leader reflected on the voice outcomes in his team:

And I've witnessed people's attitudes toward the meeting change from cynical to 'shit, now I am really being heard'. At first, there was a subordinate who said 'well, I'll tell how I feel about it, but we'll end up doing what you want anyway'. (...) And that has really changed, now that people feel that their opinions are taken seriously. I've also noticed these changes in people. In the beginning, we spoke about a much larger [change] topic, now we have decided upon a hybrid, green team [cf. the incremental change]. This is caused by the presence of alternative voices. And (...) people are being heard, it's not just the commanding officer who decides what happens. That has really been a change trajectory. (exit interview, team leader of team 7)

The fourth causal effect in B1 is the negative relationship between *voice occurrence and inclusive decision-making* and the perceived *room for improvement*. That is, when team members increasingly voice their concerns and decision-making becomes more inclusive, the difference between the desired level and the current state of voice and inclusive decision-making decreases. Looking back on five meetings, one of the team leaders reflected on how he grew in his new role in the meeting routine, and over time learned to meet his demands with respect to voice and inclusive decision-making:

So yeah, my role has changed, which I'm increasingly at ease with, because I notice that it serves a purpose. So, in the end, I may be surprised every now and then, I may

have less influence at the table, but maybe that doesn't matter all that much. Maybe this is just like it should be, and we arrive at decisions ... and, it meets my preference to have everyone speak up. (exit interview, team leader of team 4)

The final causal effect in B₁, then, is the obvious relationship between *room for improvement* and *voice opportunity and practice*. That is, when the difference between the desired and actual practice of voice decreases, the perceived need for creating structural voice opportunity and practice decreases as well. Notably, this causal relationship is plausible, yet theoretical. The intervention was tested in four to six meetings. In the first couple of meetings, teams were predominantly practicing with a new routine, and thereby building voice capability. The last few meetings largely focused on performing the routine, typically fueling voice and inclusive decision-making. Given that the intervention spanned a limited number of meetings per team, we assume that the teams did not arrive at a stage where (deliberately) creating voice opportunities would be no longer necessary.

In sum, loop B₁ depicts the feedback loop between voice opportunity and practice, psychological safety, voice occurrence and inclusive decision-making, and perceived room for improvement in voice. In system dynamics terminology (Sterman, 2000), the Virtuous Voice loop is a so-called balancing loop. This type of feedback loop entails goal-directed behavior that seeks to close the gap between desired and actual practices.

Vicious transparency loop (R₁)

Our data suggest that more voice behavior may also have adversary effects. The first causal effect in the Vicious Transparency loop (R₁) in Figure 4.1 is the relationship between *voice opportunity and practice* and *transparency*. As such, the growing voice practice in a team tends to increase the transparency of the meeting structure and contents, making it easier for participants to understand what is expected from them, and how and when they can contribute (e.g. when to speak up, when to engage in a discussion):

The structure forces us to think things through, instead of just firing away based on sentiment; now you know, we are picture forming or decision-making ... yeah, picture forming, all right ... do you all have the same view, what's your opinion, and what's your vision on that issue? Okay, we've completed the picture forming phase, now turn to forming opinions. You just allow yourself, as a team, more time.
(exit interview, participant team 9)

Additionally, the growing opportunity for and practice of voice appears to:

...create more clarity, early on, with regard to important matters.
(e-mail, participant team 9)

Increased transparency may trigger two different feedback loops. First, it may trigger what we have called the Vicious Transparency loop (R1 in Figure 4.1). Here, increased transparency of the meeting structure may lead to team meetings being perceived as more formal:

Yeah, I can appreciate effective meetings, but I do enjoy just taking a left turn somewhere, and as a result, ending up completely somewhere else. I guess that's just a feeling, but it is also about messing around a bit, joking, and welcoming other stuff that pops-up out of the blue. Is that how it always should be? No, but it feels good anyway. (participant team 9, 1st meeting)

More transparency may also imply that the nature of the team meetings, and perhaps even the team itself, is unraveled. For example:

We're a management team that gets together on a monthly basis. We discuss the current state-of-affairs, just a little round to inform each other what everyone's at. That is basically what we do. Do you consider that to be a team? So, therefore I'm a bit skeptical. (participant team 7, 1st meeting)

The second causal effect in R1 is the relationship between *transparency* and *divergence of expectations*. That is, over the course of one or several meeting(s), increased transparency may spur the expectations of team members to diverge. The most prominent case was team ten that abandoned the intervention after one meeting. In the intake conversation, the team leader expressed his interest in the intervention, as he felt there was a need for a more structured approach in this team, especially to increase voice. Subsequently, in the first team meeting, several participants expressed major concerns about the intervention. This intervention apparently frustrated one particular team member who, as we came to learn later, was used to dominate the discussions and to speak without being interrupted. A couple of days before the second meeting, he approached the team leader and shared his frustrations about the intervention; the team leader, thus, learned from him that

the meeting process became dominant, and that he had not experienced anything new (exit interview, participant team 10)

Moreover, other participants informed the team leader, after the first team meeting, that they were not interested in more opportunities for voice. The team leader reflected as follows:

They just came to the meeting to absorb information, they're coming here to get a head's up. They just want to know if they need to do something, and do not want to be involved in decision-making. (exit interview, team leader, team 10)

The dynamic pattern in which expectations of team members increasingly start to diverge was also observed in other teams. In a team evaluation of the intervention process, the facilitator-chair challenged the members of team 8 to question the nature of their meeting. In response, most people in this team said they hardly took the time to prepare for meetings; only two participants were taking it seriously and felt the team had a collective task. One of the team members (who hardly prepared) said:

...you've hit the nail on the head too, this has always been a moment to have a coffee together. Share some thoughts, because we were all looking and deciding what to do [in our own projects]. (participant team 8, 5th meeting)

The third causal effect in R1 is the obvious relationship between *divergence of expectations* and *tensions in or around the team*. That is, when the expectations of team members start to diverge, the tensions within a team tend to increase:

Normally, when I leave here, I think 'great, useful meeting; quick, short, and to the point.' Now I feel I've been here a long time, and I walk away with nothing. (participant team 10, 1st meeting)

The leader of team 10 consulted his team members about their expectations regarding the intervention, and just before the second meeting, he learned the intervention appeared to give rise to major tensions within this team:

... yeah, when he speaks up about this, I asked other participants, and I also witnessed some sort of dissatisfaction among them (exit interview, team leader, team 10)

This team leader felt the intervention had increased the tensions within his team to such a level that he had to withdraw from the intervention. Initial tensions within several teams appeared to be further reinforced by the team's inability to deal with these tensions.² This process was observed in several less-responsive teams. In the period in which the intervention in these teams took place, tensions in or around the team were substantially increasing. Some teams were part of a broader organizational change initiative within MIL, giving rise to ample task ambiguity for these teams in relation to the tasks of other units within the organization. During the fifth meeting of team eight, a participant reflected on a recent experience, illustrating major tensions arising from the organizational setting of the team:

I'm thinking: what a fucking mess within this organization. Such a freak show, I'm completely fed up (...). So, now they are preparing this massive initiative, starting

² The second example in Appendix VII provides another illustration of these dynamics.

next week, and culminating in a wrap-up. In sum, all I have been doing for the past few months was a waste of time. Then, they [powerful actors outside the team] said: 'Yeah, you need to just keep on going', but that's just complete bullshit.
(participant team 8, 5th meeting)

The fourth, and final, causal effect in R1 is the negative relationship between *tensions in or around the team* and *voice occurrence and inclusive decision-making*. That is, when major tensions arise, voice occurrence decreases and decision-making becomes less inclusive. Over time, these tensions and the team's inability to deal with them as a team, are likely to lower the credibility of voicing behavior. As tensions increased over the course of several meetings, and participants felt the intervention did not help them in meeting these challenges, the occurrence of voice and inclusive decision-making decreased. Over the course of several meetings, the goal of the team meeting developed in the direction of blowing of steam in a 'free format' – in response to the increasing tensions – rather than deciding as a collective entity how to address the contextual tensions experienced:

Yeah, I think the purpose of this meeting makes it a less credible intervention, for you just want 'popcorn' ... you want a more free format. So, I feel the main difference is the purpose of this meeting, we're all equal, we make each other stronger by exchanging experiences. Then, it's questionable whether the setting is appropriate for this intervention. (participant team 8, 3rd meeting)

In sum, loop R1 depicts a feedback loop between voice opportunity and practice, transparency, divergence of expectations, tensions in/around the team, and voice occurrence and inclusive decision-making. In system dynamics terminology (Sterman, 2000), this loop is a so-called reinforcing loop that can be virtuous or vicious in nature. In the context of the less responsive teams, we have described this feedback loop as vicious one (i.e. increasing transparency, increased divergence of expectations, increased tensions, decreased voice occurrence).

Ambiguous support loop (R2).

The final feedback loop centers around the role of team leader support for other team participants' voice. Since team leaders voluntarily took part in the intervention, all teams in this study had a substantial amount of initial support by the team leader support. However, in the less responsive teams, the so-called Ambiguous Support loop (R2) is triggered when the expectations of team members start to diverge. The first causal effect in R2 is the relation between *divergence of expectations* between team members (including the team leader) and *team leader support*. Team 10 that abandoned the intervention after one meeting illustrates this causality. Rather than explaining why fostering voice in the team would be important to him/her, the team leader chose to withdraw

from the intervention (i.e. his/her support diminished rapidly) when he/she learned that his/her expectations diverged with those of the other members of this team. The next causal effect in R2 is the relation between team leader support and *psychological safety*. Our data regarding the less responsive cluster of teams suggest that support can be or become rather ambiguous, as our field notes reveal:

Just before the meeting, I asked team leader Brian to introduce us at the start of the meeting and invited him to explain to his team why this intervention is important to him. He responded, his eyebrows raised and apparently a little startled: “well ... important, important ... I would say interesting is more accurate”. Later, Brian introduced us to his team. He explained how he met me, and that he decided to invite us (the interventionists) to his team because “he perceived all forms of innovation as ‘a present’ something he happily embraced”. When I introduced the intervention to the team, I immediately faced questions: why were they not consulted beforehand? They would like to have had a say in this ... Could they trust these researchers? How would they benefit? Was there something wrong with their traditional behavior? And so forth. I looked at Brian, he looked rather amused, smiling a little, and appeared to wait until the storm blew over, or he was just waiting to see how we as interventionists would deal with this situation. (thick description by interventionist, 1st meeting 9)

This rather ambiguous support of this team leader continued to exist in the next three meetings. In two meetings, he only attended part of the meeting, while he was entirely absent from the third meeting. When he was present, he did not show any support for either those speaking up or those struggling to do so. The two interventionists observed this to be remarkably different from the speech acts of team leaders in the responsive cluster of teams. The decreasing support of the leader of team nine may also have decreased psychological safety in this team, evident from the survey results.

In sum, loop R2 depicts the causal relations between divergent expectations, team leader support, and psychological safety. This loop is also reinforcing in nature, that is, it can be virtuous or vicious in nature (cf. Sterman, 2000). The combination of the balancing B1 loop and the two reinforcing loops R1 and R2 reflects the ‘fixes that fail’ archetype in system dynamics (Senge, 1990). The ‘fixes that fail’ archetype suggests that a lack of voice can be fixed via the B1 loop, while this ‘fix’ (i.e. the intervention) can give rise to unintended consequences via loops R1 and/or R2, which make the fix fail.

Combinations of virtuous and vicious loops

The process of team 10 was completely governed by the Vicious Transparency (R1) and Ambiguous Support (R2) loops, resulting in an early exit from the intervention. The other nine teams, however, followed more complex paths. For example, several team leaders of the five responsive teams explained that meetings have different goals: for example, sharing information, deciding collectively, educating less experienced partic-

ipants, or combinations thereof. Some team leaders also explicitly referred to the team meeting as a setting in which the performance of subordinates is (informally) assessed. A team leader explained:

I have 140 subordinates, 14 of which I have a direct relation with. This [their meeting behavior] is one of the few things I can use to assess their performance. Charles is also interested in that senior position. He asked me how I feel about that. I told him, well, there's stuff you need to work on. For instance, I do not feel that your input and behavior in the meeting will suffice, would you want to obtain that position. So, today [name participant X] was taking all sorts of initiatives. Now, you know where that's coming from ... (exit interview leader team 7)

The implicit goal of team leaders to assess their staff in team meetings may make the (perceived) team leader's support a rather ambiguous variable, which in turn tends to decrease psychological safety in these teams (the second causal relationship in R2 in Figure 4.1). In an intake interview, a team leader expressed his concerns about the psychological safety in his team, thereby also illustrating the causality between performance assessment and psychological safety:

So, do they dare to speak up to me, whereas there is a large gap between my rank and experience, compared to theirs? I also assess their performance, and I'm responsible for making sure they make the next step in their career. Dare they share criticism or are they afraid of their own careers? They joke about that sometimes, yet I'm quite sure they take this into account, so they'll not have too much critique in this meeting. (intake interview, team leader, team 4)

The complete causal feedback structure in Figure 4.1, involving three main feedback loops, depicts the dynamics that may arise when powerful actors aim to foster voice in their teams, especially in settings that have long thrived on command and control. More specifically, Figure 4.1 demonstrates how the intervention can trigger a virtuous process leading to enhanced psychological safety, voice capability development, and more voice and inclusive decision-making. Yet, our data also served to uncover a vicious process in which expectations of team members increasingly diverge, psychological safety is compromised, and major tensions emerge which ultimately undermine voice and inclusive decision-making.

them – have of the intervention, need to increasingly converge. Second, any team operating in a rather turbulent context has to be able to handle the major tensions arising in and around the team. When these conditions are not met, psychological safety as well as the credibility of and commitment to voice are likely to decrease. Overall, this study generates knowledge about *how* powerful actors can use their authority to empower the less powerful to speak up, what to expect when they embark on such empowerment efforts, and when they may want to focus on other ways of developing their teams. In the remainder of this section, we discuss the various contributions to the literature.

Theoretical contributions

Our findings have several theoretical implications. In this study, we sought to more fully grasp voice solicitation, as an interactional process. As such, this study responds to recent calls to supplement widely used cross-sectional research designs with longitudinal empirical investigations (Dyck & Starke, 1999; Morrison, 2014; Satterstrom et al., 2020). Several related arguments serve to further substantiate this primary contribution.

First, most studies focus on the motivational origins of (not) soliciting voice (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Fast et al., 2014; Sherf et al. 2019) or not speaking up (LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Milliken, 2003). These types of studies have uncovered important antecedents and consequences of voice (solicitation). Yet, they are critiqued for approaching the voice phenomenon in a ‘snapshot-like’ fashion, resulting in rather static images of voice solicitation in an actual organizational setting (Morrison, 2014, Li & Tangirala, 2020). This study both complements and extends prior work, by demonstrating that the interplay between team and contextual *dynamics* explains whether or not voice develops in a virtuous or vicious pattern. In this respect, motivational origins appear not to be as static as suggested in prior work (e.g. Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012; Fast et al., 2014; Sherf et al., 2019; LePine & Van Dyne, 2001; Milliken, 2003). Whereas all team leaders were initially motivated to solicit voice, the team as well as contextual dynamics in several teams evolved in ways that increasingly demotivated them. In the other teams in our intervention study, the voice motivation of most less powerful actors increased when they became more and more confident that their voicing behavior was received positively and/or they felt more psychologically safe.

Second, this study extends the emerging literature on voice solicitation by conceptualizing voice as a collective, interactional process rather than a one-time dyadic event—one that can be both virtuous and vicious in nature. Our findings thus extend the few earlier process studies of voice solicitation (Li & Tangirala, 2020; Salas et al., 2018), by focusing on a different aspect of voice as a processual phenomenon. Li and Tangirala (2020) focused on how personality traits influence changes in voice behavior over time, in newly formed dyads between powerful and less powerful actors. Our study explores how a broader set of variables affect voice solicitation in (facilitator-led) interventions conducted in larger teams (cf. Salas et al., 2018), thus going beyond a dyadic setting. This study also extends prior work in team settings (Salas et al., 2018) by developing

a theoretical framework that explains how and when voice solicitation gives rise to virtuous feedback cycle or a vicious one.

Other scholars tracking voice longitudinally by focusing on the role of team members, have explained how other actors can keep a voiced idea alive (i.e. voice cultivation) to finally reach implementation (Satterstrom et al., 2020). This is a particularly crucial step, as voicing is essentially about changing an objectionable state of affairs (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Our findings complement this prior work on voice cultivation by dissecting the preceding process of voice solicitation and its related outcomes, that is, voice initiation.

Third, our study is the first attempt to pull together and synthesize the various research findings on voice solicitation in an intervention design that is subsequently tested in a real-life organization. In this respect, several management scholars have advocated interventions in authentic organizational settings, arguing that management research can best be advanced by conducting this type of intervention study (Schein, 1987; Starbuck, 2003). Moreover, our study also responds to recent calls for deepening knowledge on voice distribution in teams (Sherf et al., 2018) and the unintended outcomes of voice solicitation and other empowerment processes (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015; Cheong et al., 2016; Lee et al. 2017). In doing so, the intervention methodology adopted in this chapter goes beyond the prevailing descriptive-explanatory approach to studying voice and related phenomena (e.g. Burris et al., 2013; Courpasson et al., 2016; Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Sherf et al., 2019). The latter body of knowledge provides fine-grained descriptive accounts and robust theoretical models of voice-related phenomena, to highlight various dimensions of how voice emerges or occurs in organizations. Our findings extend these insights by designing and testing a (practical) intervention that synthesizes and connects the results arising from previous work in this area.

Limitations and directions for future work

Our findings can be readily generalized to teams in similar (i.e. hierarchy-driven) organizations, but perhaps less so to other organizational settings. A related limitation is that the study was conducted in the Netherlands, a country with a rather low power distance between supervisors and subordinates (Hofstede, 2001). Our findings therefore need to be scrutinized in replication studies in organizational settings in countries characterized by high power distance.

Another limitation arises from the fact that we had to make choices in terms of the trade-off between an intervention conducted over a longer period (in a smaller number of teams) and a shorter intervention applied in a larger number of teams. As such, it would be highly interesting to do a much longer intervention in a small number of teams as well as study the long-term impact in these teams after the intervention.

Managerial implications

Earlier studies pointed at the importance of voice solicitation processes, which serve to display openness to ideas from employees and invite them to raise suggestions and share contrary opinions (e.g. Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012, Sherf et al., 2019). Our findings underscore the pivotal role of voice solicitation and the role of managers supporting it. However, our findings do challenge the idea that managers (i.e. team leaders) should be ones that primarily solicit voice in the context of team meetings. In order to effectively foster voice, managers themselves may have to be repeatedly challenged, to avoid that they suppress emerging voice behavior by other team members. Interestingly, our intervention study involved several team leaders who, when exposed to the experience of not having to chair the meeting, perceived this as highly empowering – although they might have been rather anxious about losing control before the intervention.

In this respect, this study suggests that team leaders and other managers may be better off when they do *not* take charge of chairing the meeting process (cf. Schwarz, 2017). That is, they may not be able to effectively use their formal power in guiding the meeting, inviting others to participate, and challenging team members to change their roles. However, the manager's behavior and speech acts remain critical. Here, our findings suggest the team leader needs to deliberately support the chairperson that guides, invites and challenges participants in the meeting. This form of support is likely to increase psychological safety, a key condition for speaking up. Moreover, deliberate managerial attention motivates team members to express their expectations and opinions about what is going on in the team, what would help to move the team forward, and so forth. When expectations between team members (including their manager) start to diverge, the team's psychological safety is likely to decline and major tensions may emerge (Van Baarle et al., 2021).

4.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Managers play a critical role in fostering voice in their teams, thereby enhancing reflection and learning and inclusive decision-making. Yet, managers often fail to effectively support employee voice, and team sessions and other meetings then often become events perceived as chaotic, energy-consuming, or simply a waste of time. By developing and testing an intervention-based approach toward voice solicitation, this study underlines the complexity of deliberate attempts to solicit voice. Our findings demonstrate how a voice solicitation intervention can trigger a virtuous process involving enhanced psychological safety, voice capability development, and team members increasingly speaking up. Yet, it can also result in a vicious process when expectations of team members increasingly diverge, psychological safety is compromised, and tensions build up in ways that ultimately demotivate voice.

5

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

5.1 SYNOPSIS

The overarching research question addressed in this dissertation is: what hinders and helps organizations that have long thrived on ‘command and control’ to become better at combining power-over and power-to practices? I addressed this question by conducting three studies that equally correspond with the first three steps—problem formulation, selection of evidence, and design/intervention/evaluation—in my design science approach. First, drawing on an in-depth case study of powerful actors attempting to increase ‘power to’ throughout their organization, I show that especially power-related tensions hinder organizations from becoming better at combining ‘power over’ and ‘power to’. Second, a fragmented body of knowledge on power, empowerment, and change informs the design of an intervention that combines both practices. Third, designing and extensively testing an intervention that connects power-over and power-to. The intervention aimed to solicit and encourage voice, thereby fostering its potential benefits for team performance, collaboration, and co-ownership of team decisions. The findings indicate that the intervention can trigger a virtuous process, where teams learn to combine power-over and power-to, leading to enhanced psychological safety, voice capability development, and increasing voice. Yet, the intervention can also result in a vicious process, where team members’ expectations increasingly diverge, psychological safety is compromised, and tensions build up in ways that ultimately demotivate voice.

In sum, the power-related tensions that arise from empowerment initiatives tend to undermine efforts to combine power-over and power-to. Against this background, we sought to identify actions and interventions that can be introduced in organizational settings to shift the balance between power-over and power-to in organizational settings. The intervention developed in this dissertation demonstrates that introducing these types of practices helps organizations to become better at combining power-over and power-to. However, alongside virtuous patterns, these practices are also likely to trigger vicious patterns. The latter case calls for awareness, as other interventions are evidently required to prevent actors from invoking these vicious processes. To answer the main question raised in this doctoral dissertation, Table 5.1 lists the barriers and enablers for organizations that have long thrived at ‘command and control’ to become better at combining power-over and power-to.

The remainder of this chapter is structured as follows. I start by answering the sub-questions and outlining the key insights from the individual studies. I then elaborate on the overarching theoretical and practical implications of these studies and discuss the limitations and recommendations for future research.

Table 5.1 What hinders and helps organizations that have long thrived on ‘command and control’ to become better at combining power-over and power-to practices: an overview

Barriers	<p>Power-related tensions between actors: relational tensions between actors that emerge when some adopt a more transformative power approach, while others (continue to) draw on power-over.</p> <p>Power-related tensions within an actor: significant differences/gaps between his/her cognition and action (based on Chapter 2).</p>	<p>Any type of intervention that aims to solicit and encourage voice (by guiding, inviting, and challenging both powerful and less powerful actors) can connect power-over and power-to. The study in Chapter 4, however, demonstrates the <i>complexity</i> of such interventions, in a setting in which one seeks to overcome the barriers outlined above by activating (some of) the enablers outlined above—for example, the dynamics of safety and trust. More specifically, a <i>virtuous</i> pattern can arise, in which the team learns to combine power-over and power-to, leading to enhanced psychological safety, voice capability development, and increasing voice. Yet, it can also result in <i>vicious</i> dynamics and less favorable outcomes, when expectations increasingly diverge, psychological safety is compromised, and tensions build up in ways that ultimately demotivate voice (based on Chapter 4).</p>
Enablers	<p>Deliberately introducing ‘positive power’ interventions and actions that trigger (at least one of the following) mechanisms: <i>formal authority, language shaping action, community formation, and dynamics of safety and trust</i> (based on Chapter 3).</p>	

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Sub-question one

What kind of power-related tensions arise from empowerment initiatives by powerful actors, and how do these tensions affect the empowerment efforts?

The study reported in Chapter 2 focuses on what happens when powerful actors attempt to increase participation, dialogue, and other forms of interaction in an organization that has long relied on ‘command and control’. That is, a vertical and top-down form of organizing and governance, with relatively little involvement of less powerful actors in for example decision-making, strategizing, or organizational change. This study specifically investigates the power-related tensions triggered by these attempts. As such, this study is at the intersection of the research on empowerment (Lee et al., 2017; Sharma & Kirkman 2015) and power (Boje & Rosile, 2001; Fleming & Spicer, 2014) in organization settings. The study contributes to the literature by developing a detailed understanding of interrelated power tensions that arise from empowerment initiatives. These power-related tensions result in the initiatives producing unintended outcomes and may even cause some initiatives to fail completely (Barker, 1993; Humborstad & Kuvaas, 2013; Labianca et al., 2000; Lorinkova et al., 2013). Three related arguments substantiate this overall contribution. First, the findings suggest that a major empowerment initiative requires powerful actors to switch between different power practices. This switching, however, causes within-actor tensions that undermine empowerment initiatives.

Second, these within-actor tensions fuel between-actor tensions that further damage the empowerment initiative. In this case, actors' power stances are likely to vary considerably. While some actors adopt a transformative approach regarding empowerment, others continue to draw on power-over practices, resulting in tensions between the key actors involved in the empowerment initiative. This helps to explain why some senior executives are more interested (in investing) in empowerment initiatives than others (Leana, 1986; Yukl & Fu, 1999), and why some of these executives are more capable of empowerment than others (Offermann & Hellmann, 1997). The findings suggest that any major empowerment initiative requires powerful actors to *dynamically balance* between power-over and transformative power practices, instead of making a structural choice between the two. In turn, this induces uncertainty for powerful actors about what type of behavior would empower other actors, or when power-over would be more effective. Consequently, powerful actors also experience major tensions when effectuating empowerment intentions, and previous research has predominantly focused on how empowerment initiatives increase tensions for less powerful actors, that is to say the recipients of empowerment initiatives (Cheong et al., 2016). Thus, the findings demonstrate that top-level actors' power stance may impair their ability to act in empowering ways.

Third, the study in Chapter 2 contributes to the research on empowerment *and* power by demonstrating how the cross-fertilization between these two (largely separate) fields can be mutually beneficial. This study is therefore one of the first to shed light on the relationship between power-over, transformative power, and power-to in organizational life (see Clegg et al., 2006; Morriss, 2012). By conceptualizing empowerment as the transformation into power-to enabled by power-over, this study opens up new ways for scholars to integrate the empowerment and power literature.

Sub-question two

What are the main characteristics of positive power and how can positive power foster desirable organizational outcomes?

The study in Chapter 3 perceives power as a positive force, as opposed to the restrictive conceptualization that prevails in the literature. A literature review helps to develop an integrated framework of positive power, and the review in this study contributes to the literature in three ways: first, by integrating separate discourses in this area—organizational change, power, empowerment, political power—the framework extends previous literature reviews that focused on 'power over others' (e.g. Clegg et al., 2006; Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Geppert & Dörrenbächer, 2014).

Second, the mechanism-based review distinguishes the properties of positive power and makes for a unified, integrated conceptualization of that power, thereby creating novel avenues for research. The framework developed in this work calls for more process-oriented empirical studies of positive power. Such studies could identify the

different instantiations of positive power and uncover the dynamic nature of ongoing negotiations, dialogues, and other power-related phenomena. Another novel avenue for future research emerging from this review is to acquire a deeper understanding of how (various ways to use) formal authority interacts with each of the three other mechanisms and the actions/interventions driving these mechanisms. It is particularly relevant to better understand when and how to add power-to-act practices such as a participatory change intervention to existing power-over practices in organizations (Gergen, 1995; Hosking, 2011). This understanding is also important because these two practices coexisting may make things complicated (Barker, 1993; Yukl & Fu, 1999; Van Baarle et al., 2021).

Third, the understanding opens up new opportunities for developing interventions that empower actors to actively improve their work lives. The study in Chapter 3 addresses calls from within critical management studies to moderate CMS scholars' overly negative critique of management (Parker & Parker, 2017) and enhance the impact on what managers actually do (Wickert & Schaefer, 2015; Spicer et al., 2016). A 'positive power' lens adopts a pragmatist focus on actions, interventions, and mechanisms, but avoids "a heroic conception of human agency" (Parker & Parker, 2017, p. 1369).

Sub-question three

How and when does a voice solicitation intervention foster voice in settings characterized by major power tensions?

The study reported in Chapter 4 aims to develop and test an intervention in multiple teams within MIL, to find a solution for the problem of practice identified in Chapter 2. This study—drawing on the literature identified in Chapter 3—specifically developed an evidence-informed voice solicitation intervention that connects power-over and power-to in the context of a team meeting. Notably, voice or the act of speaking up is one of the key manifestations of empowerment (Parpart, 2013). This study's main contribution is to the literature on voice. By conceptualizing and theorizing voice solicitation as a collective, interactional process rather than a one-time dyadic event, this study revealed that voice solicitation processes can be both virtuous and vicious. Clearly, the increased transparency emerging from voice solicitation works as a double-edged sword. It can either enhance psychological safety, leading to more inclusive decision making, or it can magnify divergent expectations and power related tensions within teams, ultimately undermining the voice solicitation process. Our findings extend earlier work on voice solicitation that focused on supervisor-employee dyads (Li & Tangirala, 2020), the role of other team members in cultivating voice solicitation outcomes (Satterstrom et al., 2020), and the motivational origins of (not) soliciting voice (Fast et al., 2014; Sherf et al., 2019; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012).

The study in Chapter 4 adds to the empowerment literature by responding to recent calls for deepening the knowledge on voice distribution in teams (Sherf et al., 2018),

unintended outcomes of voice solicitation, and other empowerment processes (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015; Cheong et al., 2016; Lee et al. 2017). The intervention methodology adopted here goes beyond the current descriptive-explanatory approach to studying voice and related phenomena (e.g. Burris et al., 2013; Courpasson et al., 2016; Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Sherf et al., 2019).

The three studies in Chapters 2 to 4 generated valuable insights on the overarching research question. Yet, by developing each chapter into separate manuscripts for conference and journal submission, the initial manuscripts were increasingly decoupled, to make them publishable as stand-alone articles (as explained, for example, in section 3.2.). The next sections explore and elaborate on the integral theoretical and practical implications across the three studies.

5.3 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS ACROSS STUDIES

In addition to the individual study contributions, this work provides four overarching theoretical contributions.

Design research to accumulate ‘small wins’ for large scale change

Research on organizational change has not sufficiently examined design research’s potential to facilitate large scale change by accumulating ‘small wins.’ One of the challenges of planned change in large organizations is how to decide between the ‘depth’ and ‘breadth’ of change initiatives. The literature describes various typologies to define the depth of desired changes (for in-depth conceptualizations of intervention depth see: Argyris & Schön, 1996; Bartunek & Moch, 1987). Most of these typologies distinguish two or three levels. First-order change aims to optimize an established framework or working method. Second order changes have more intervention depth as they aim to modify the actual framework (Bartunek & Moch, 1987). The breadth of change initiatives refers to the physical spread of the change process (e.g. Balogun & Hailey, 2008). For instance, change initiatives can be limited to a small unit of the organization or a particular group of people. Alternatively, change initiative frequently aims to impact the entire organization. If the aim is to address complex issues, considerable ‘intervention depth’ is required.

The studies in Chapters 2 and 4 demonstrate that combining power-over and power-to challenges the existing organizational values, rituals, and dominant rationalities (the existing framework), and thus calls for at least a second-order change. The military commanders aimed to increase participation in the entire organization, as described in Chapter 2. In other words, this planned change (i.e. empowerment) initiative aimed to achieve considerable intervention breadth and depth. Interestingly, some scholars argue that “deep change and large scale change are not possible simultaneously” (Termeer et al., 2017; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Large scale change and addressing

complex social problems can, however, be facilitated by accumulating ‘small wins’ (Termeer et al., 2019; Vermaak, 2013; Weick, 1984). Adopting a strategy of small wins to address complex social issues entails recasting “larger problems into smaller, less arousing problems, [so] people can identify a series of controllable opportunities of modest size that produce visible results and that can be gathered into synoptic solutions” (Weick, 1984, p. 40). Furthermore, the ‘small wins’ strategy takes advantage of the contagiousness of successful small-scale change (Strang & Soule, 1998).

In sum, the study described in Chapter 4 adopts a ‘small wins’ strategy and depicts a transferable method—the design science approach outlined in Chapter 1. This study therefore operationalizes a ‘small wins’ strategy to achieve second order change in an actual organizational setting. Although my approach is academic, I expect non-academic practitioners can apply this model less formally and still facilitate organizational change by systematically organizing (potential) small wins for change.

Design science approach: ‘trading zone’ between change theory and practice

Another contribution of this work comes from adopting a design approach that creates a ‘trading zone’ between change theory and practice. I demonstrate that planned organizational change practices can be theory informed and yet equally advance change theory. Many organizational change interventions that are well known to practitioners are frequently unfamiliar to change researchers. On the other hand, many interventions do not appear to be informed by contemporary organizational theory (e.g., Argyris, 2005; Van de Ven & Sun, 2011). This disconnect is regarded as problematic because a “dialogue between them could be beneficial to both sides” (Bartunek et al., 2011, p. 4; see also Romme, 2016). The design research approach in our study addresses this problem in several ways. The problem(s) of practice and the theoretical gaps are interwoven throughout. Furthermore, I combine and synthesize various research findings on circular organizing and voice solicitation in an intervention design that is subsequently tested in a real-life organization. In turn, the outcomes of the intervention in authentic organizational settings advance the theory on voice solicitation and the (un)intended outcomes of empowerment initiatives. Our approach responds to frequent calls for better ‘trading zones’ between change theory and practice (e.g. Bartunek, Balogun, & Do, 2011; Romme et al., 2015).

Designing dialogic organizational change interventions

Third, this dissertation contributes to the theory *and* practice of dialogic organizational change. It does so by adding a dialogic change intervention to the literature, thereby drawing attention to the complexity of aiming for dialogic change. The assumption behind dialogic change is that organizations are “meaning-making” systems (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, p. 353; Gergen, 1978). Dialogic approaches to change base their change processes on developing “narratives, stories, or conversations that aid in the establishment of more effective or just patterns of organizing” (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, p. 353). In other words,

dialogic change involves intervening in meaning-making (Ford & Ford, 1995; Marshak & Grant, 2008). This dissertation contributes to the theoretical understanding of dialogic change by drawing attention to the complexity and power related tensions that stand in the way of developing alternative narratives, stories or conversations. Interestingly, there appears to be a lot of “talk about talk and change” (Mirvis, 2014, p. 384), and a lot of ‘doing’ dialogic change in organizations (Bartunek et al., 2011); however, there is surprisingly little academic reflection on ‘doing’ dialogic change (Bartunek et al., 2011; Mirvis, 2014).

This work, however, develops a dialogic change intervention grounded in the literature on voice and circular organizing. I shed light on the key processes, and *how* to create ‘containers’ (see Corrigan, 2015) within which “new conversations can take place, new relationships forged, and ideas for change emerge” (Bushe & Marshak, 2016, p. 411). Through academic reflection, I also detail *when* this dialogic effort is likely to be effective. As such, I contribute to theorizing on and practicing dialogic change by developing an intervention and exploring the (un)intended outcomes from this change approach.

Participatory ‘action design research’ to respect emancipatory values

This work demonstrates that combining design and action research can foster change in organizational settings without harming the emancipatory aspirations of action research.

Action research appears to assume that the knowledge to solve a particular problem of practice resides in the group (Geurts, Geluk, & Altena, 2006). All participants act as co-researchers, yet the academic researcher frequently acts as the one facilitating the collaborative research process. This collaboration aims to unlock the knowledge that resides in the group. However, drawing from my own practice experience in MIL, this knowledge may not necessarily reside there. Interestingly, by increasing differences/variety between actors’ voices and their existing routines, theorizing and developing a theory-informed intervention design may drive new action patterns, creativity, and actionable knowledge in organizational settings (Anderson, 1999; Bakhtin, 1981; Ripamonti et al., 2016).

The knowledge produced in academia (i.e. the theory informed intervention) can also collate information on (less) powerful actors’ activities and work life, and further reinforce other power-over exercises (e.g. Rabinow, 1991). If knowledge is utilized in this way, it would be a manifestation of power-over, and therefore at odds with the emancipatory values of action research.

However, I argue that the design approach in the current study is an example of what Wartenberg (1990) called transformative power. Researchers may have a more powerful position than in traditional action research, as they do more than facilitate the collaborative inquiry. Through the intervention in Chapter 4, I introduce theory-based actions aiming to “improve employee health and wellbeing through changing the way work is designed, organized and managed” (Nielsen, 2013, p. 1030). Furthermore, the intervention is *participatory*, in the sense that: (i) it makes use of the participants’ expertise in what needs to change; (ii) participants shape the intervention in such a way that it

facilitates a learning process for powerful and less powerful actors alike, and increases their power-to dealing with problems in their own organizational setting (Abildgaard et al., 2019). Therefore, I argue that action design research—as applied here—is not at odds with the emancipatory values behind action research (Bradbury, 2015; Johansson & Lindhult, 2008). This work thus extends prior (commentaries on) action design research (Collato et al., 2018; Jarvinen, 2007; Mikkelsen, Venable, & Aaltonen, 2021; Sein et al., 2011). It could be an important contribution to action research with a specific focus on designing participatory interventions. Evidently, introducing design elements into action research projects can fuel the development of innovative solutions without harming the emancipatory aspirations of action research.

5.4 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The overall research approach here is design science, which aims to generate actionable knowledge, that is to say relevant to both practitioners and academics (Coghlan, 2007). Having outlined the theoretical contributions in the previous section, I will proceed by explaining the implications for practice.

Chapter 2 points to the power-related tensions that arise when powerful actors in military organizations attempt to move beyond command and control to increase the participation of less powerful actors. This chapter has three managerial implications. It identifies challenges for powerful actors at the individual level. Assuming they feel the need to empower others, they still ought to learn *how* to move beyond or adapt their power-over practices. Reflecting on their own behavior about situations they experienced as difficult, for instance via coaching, may help.

Second, because Chapter 2 also demonstrates the interactions between individual level tensions and tensions between actors, a more powerful approach could be to improve the reflexivity in group/team sessions. For example, over the past five years I have spoken to many military commanders—at all hierarchical levels—experiencing similar struggles in empowering their teams, for instance, to take co-ownership of the team process. The pattern they describe is similar. In order to make room for others, these commanders step back, but team members do not step forward as initially hoped. The commander thus gets frustrated and reverts to what they are used to (power-over behavior) and may even be expected of them. To overcome this vicious dynamic, improving the reflexivity in group settings—reflecting-in-action with those concerned as opposed to reflecting afterwards—is no doubt beneficial.

Third, Chapter 2 demonstrates a clear difference in actors' power stance. Namely, in this study, power-over and transformative power are placed on a continuum, and actors appear to have a preference for one pole. In turn, their power stance causes individual level tensions and tensions between actors. Dualities and tensions play an important role in organizing and change (Stohl & Cheney, 2001; Quinn & Cameron, 1988). Dual-

ities refer to opposites that often work against each other, representing oppositional pulls (Seo et al., 2004). A common way to manage or respond to tensions is by denying the relevance of the opposite pole (Seo et al., 2004), as was the case in this chapter. Yet, understanding both ends and their interrelationship is key to research and practice (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). The practice or managerial implication here, is that those attempting to increase others' power-to (i.e. initiate or execute empowerment initiatives) might want to be more aware of actors' different power preferences. In the case study, actors appeared to only collaborate with actors who had a similar power stance. In one case, a powerful actor with a more transformative power stance was replaced with an actor on the opposite end of the pole, as his superiors felt that more action/direction was needed. I suggest that teams working on these programs should include people with different power stances, and that they learn to make their differences productive. A facilitator and/or decision-making rules could support this process. Additionally, superiors may not want to allow coalitions of only like-minded actors.

From Chapter 3, the main message to those in charge of designing strategies for planned change is as follows: many organizations seek to foster (social) innovation (Christensen, 2013; Van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016), learning (Garvin, Edmondson, & Gino, 2008), inclusivity (Shore, Cleveland, & Sanchez, 2018), and/or adaptivity and resilience (Schein & Schein, 2021). Organizations aiming to achieve such outcomes face the challenge of how authority holders can use their power to increase other actors' capability to achieve outcomes autonomously. Accordingly, Chapter 2 provides guidance to change agents when developing change trajectories. It explains how choosing between or combining specific actions and interventions may foster desirable outcomes such as increased empowerment, emancipation, and voice. These outcomes can be seen as intermediary ones on the road to more innovative, adaptive, or inclusive organizational environments.

Chapter 4 also presents important recommendations for practice. The main contribution is the tested intervention that can be used to solicit and foster voice and more inclusive decision-making in teams. This chapter also points to the contextual conditions in which the intervention is likely to cause vicious patterns calling for other interventions. The intervention protocol and related documents (see Appendix VIII) allow practitioners—think of (team)coaches or others with basic facilitation skills—to introduce and facilitate the intervention in different team settings. Interestingly, most participants who filled out the additional survey questions felt that the intervention improved their meetings in several ways (see appendix IX). This appears to be somewhat at odds with the more nuanced findings from the academic analysis in Chapter 4. Given the ubiquity of meetings in organizational settings, transferring key elements from the intervention to those meetings will give actors ample opportunity to become more skilled in combining practices of power-over with power-to. Planned change initiatives frequently involve obligations for employees *in addition* to their regular work. Interestingly, this intervention is designed to be conducted in *existing* team meetings.

As such, the change effort required us to develop a different form of interaction in team meetings. The costs of change are therefore relatively limited compared to many planned change initiatives, especially as most large (military) organizations have access to internal resources that can facilitate these meetings, and a team member can take over the facilitation tasks at a later stage.

5.5 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In addition to the limitations and future research areas described for the individual studies, the following limitations and opportunities apply to this work as a whole. These correspond with the five stages of the design approach described in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1.2).

Stage 1: Problem formulation

With regard to problem formulation, I set out to discover the power-related tensions that arise when powerful actors attempt to increase others' power-to. In Chapter 2, I collected three main types of data on two empowerment initiatives: participatory observation, the detailed narratives of key actors in this empowerment project aiming to empower others. Archival documents such as project papers, speeches and presentations triangulated the other data. The practices of power-over, transformative power, and power-to are linked (e.g. Göhler, 2009; Pansardi, 2012). In this chapter, the key focus was the relationship between power-over and transformative power. Opportunities for future research thus lie in extending this analysis of power related tensions in the context of empowerment initiatives by including more narratives from 'recipients' of empowerment initiatives. This would extend the findings in Chapter 2, by providing a more detailed analysis of the power related dynamics between transformative power and power-to. Chapter 4 starts to shed light on this complex relationship and thus adds to the problem formulation stage. Here, I zoom in on voice as the act of speaking up, and one of the key manifestations of power-to (Parpart, 2013). In this chapter, the relationship between transformative power and power-to is narrowed down to the dynamics between voice solicitation (as manifestation of transformative power) and voice. Thus, an opportunity for future research arises as the dynamics between transformative power and power-to are likely to encompass more than voice solicitation and voice.

Whereas this dissertation sheds light on empowerment and voice in organizational settings, it could be argued that the ideas of voice and empowerment—particularly given the military setting—are discussed in a fairly unproblematic manner. Critical management theory, for instance, may provide alternative lenses to explore whether interventions with democratic aspirations, drawing on Circular Organizing, are sufficient to redress power imbalances (Griffin, Learmonth, & Elliott, 2015). Could one also argue that a facilitator does not empower actors to speak up, but rather coerces or

nudges them to act against their own interests? Could it also be the case that speaking up may ultimately make actors more vulnerable to managerial critique or surveillance? That is, not speaking your mind in a meeting may be a sensible and effective strategy to preserve autonomy (i.e. safeguard an actor's power-to act) (Courpasson, 2000). Given the military setting of the studies reported in this dissertation, engaging with the literature on authority, dissent and obedience (e.g. Bourgoin et al., 2020; Courpasson & Dany, 2003; Milgram, 1965) can therefore be instrumental in problematizing the notion of voice in this setting. Thus, opportunities for future research arise from applying critical management or social theory to the complex patterns observed in Chapters 2 and 4.

Stage II: Selection of evidence

In stage two, the selection of evidence, I focused on reviewing actions and interventions associated with power as a positive rather than a restrictive force. Although the review provides a fresh perspective on a concept with a long history in organization studies, there are limitations. For instance, the identified actions and interventions are likely to be informative for practitioners in charge of designing change trajectories. However, change trajectories in large organizations such as MIL involve many different types of interventions; some of these will probably involve power as a restrictive force (e.g. organizational restructuring, layoffs or cutbacks). Whether or not the actions achieve desirable outcomes, depends on factors or contextual conditions beyond the scope of this review. The intervention study in Chapter 4 highlights the impact of an empowerment initiative's contextual conditions on (un)desirable outcomes. This study demonstrates how the contextual conditions surrounding some of the teams become part of a vicious pattern that demotivates voice (i.e. power-to). An opportunity for future research is thus to include the necessary contextual conditions for the interventions and actions to achieve the desirable outcomes in reviews.

Another limitation of the selection of evidence stage is that I have predominantly drawn on studies available in the Web of Science data-base (see Appendix I). However, as mentioned earlier, change researchers are not always familiar with the organizational change interventions that are well known to practitioners (Bartunek et al., 2011). Practitioners are likely to rely on intervention repertoires that perhaps informed the intervention design. Thus, an opportunity for future research is to include 'gray literature' when selecting evidence. Gray literature refers to a "diverse and heterogeneous body of material that is made public outside, and not subject to, traditional academic peer review processes" (Adams, Smart, & Huff, 2017, p. 432).

Stage III: Design, intervention, evaluation

At stage three—design, intervention, evaluation—a key limitation during the design phase was to design an intervention to change the (power) dynamics in regular, already scheduled, team meetings. This was a particularly important design criteria as, at the

time of conducting this research, teams were already asked to participate in all sorts of extra (change) programs. In other words, I chose to design something that would not mean extra work for the participants. Of course, one could argue that doing something differently in a scheduled meeting is also intrusive, but at least it did not imply additional time pressure on already busy professionals. Related to this line of reasoning, one could argue that other intervention designs might be just as interesting: for instance, a team intervention inspired by appreciative inquiry (Zandee & Cooperrider, 2008). This points at two limitations. The first limitation concerns the initial search query (Appendix 1) for selecting the literature, which was meant to inform our intervention design. This query, in combination with our selection criteria, simply did not point us in the direction of the Appreciative Inquiry literature. A second, more practical condition is that both the MIL work environment and the TU/e research team (I was part of) did not contain any expertise in appreciative dialogue interventions.

A different limitation during the intervention phase concerns the practical decision to select ten teams and test the intervention about five times per team. The reason for this choice was to test the intervention in different contexts as well as create the opportunity for a contagiousness effect from successful small-scale changes in multiple teams (Strang & Soule, 1998). Although I conducted a longitudinal study, the limitation here is that I did not follow one or two teams for a longer period of time. An opportunity for future research is to establish whether the vicious patterns observed in several teams is part of a long-term learning process. Some studies show that empowerment initiatives in teams produce lower early performance than directive leadership styles. However, over time, these teams may very well outperform teams governed by power-over (Lorinkova et al., 2013).

A limitation in the evaluation phase pertains to the question about how sure we can be that the virtuous/vicious patterns observed are the result of the specific intervention design and/or its application, rather than the result of skilled facilitation of meeting processes (regardless of the chosen design)? Of course, one cannot know for sure what the correct answer to this question is. In chapter 4, we deliberately generalized the facilitator's (transformative power) speech acts in the intervention: inviting, guiding, and challenging. One might argue that these speech acts are used by every skilled facilitator. Also, the outcomes of the intervention were deliberately generalized, using terms like voice opportunity, voice capability, and voice occurrence. We deliberately chose to generalize our findings beyond the specifics of the Voice Solicitation intervention, as the transformative power speech acts and their outcomes may be applicable to a broader category of interventions. Thus, an important avenue for future work is to establish whether other team interventions—for example, those drawing on Appreciative Inquiry, Open Space or Future Search—generate similar virtuous/vicious patterns and outcomes.

Stage IV: Learning

At stage four, Learning, the major limitation is that reflection, in order to develop lessons learned, was only done within the individual teams. The lessons learned were transferred to other teams by the meeting facilitators. Practice may have best been served if the meeting facilitators had hosted an overarching team seminar. Such a seminar is a good opportunity to discuss the impacts of the intervention on the various teams, explore potential implementation ideas, and develop ways to support the teams. As an external academic, however, I felt these activities clashed with other professional obligations. An avenue for future research is how to facilitate learning across different units (of analysis).

Another limitation pertains to developing the intervention design. After pilot-testing the intervention in an academic setting, I made some changes to the intervention protocol. I extensively tested the adjusted prototype intervention in MIL. An opportunity for future research is the potential to further develop the intervention in such a way that it minimizes the occurrence of vicious patterns. For instance, how could a future design better adapt to team members' diverse expectations, or be power related in the team context.

Stage V: Formalization of knowledge

At the formalization of knowledge stage, I identify two limitations. First, the developed actionable knowledge did not achieve implementation. This study's design approach produced actionable knowledge. It involved many practical decisions. Doing what was right or desirable to meet a certain academic standard; at times, this may have been at odds with what is best for other audiences. A more personal example is the fact that analyzing the abundant data in the intervention study, then using this to prepare a manuscript (Chapter 4), was at odds with spending more time facilitating learning and reflection between the teams or including more teams in this study. The limitation related to the need to make these practical choices is the implementation of the actionable knowledge developed during this study. Implementing evidence-based knowledge in organizations is part of a diffusion-dissemination-implementation continuum (Nilsen, 2020). The diffusion part of the continuum involves passive, untargeted, and unplanned dissemination of the new practices. The concept of dissemination means actively spreading new practices to a target audience via planned strategies. Implementation means integrating the new practices in existing organizational settings (Casey, O'Leary, & Coghlan, 2018). The actionable knowledge produced during this study has not achieved implementation beyond the teams that took part. On several occasions, I have shared information about the intervention and its impact, but there was no planned underlying strategy. Opportunities for future research thus arise by developing strategies to implement the intervention and studying the actual implementation process in practice.

Second, the data collected during stage III was used to make a theoretical contribution to the voice literature, more specifically by unpacking the voice solicitation

process. Given the vast amount of data, a promising avenue for future work involves applying different lenses. It would, for instance, make sense to apply a practice-based lens. This lens could serve to unpack more precisely how the implemented practices were designed (as summarized in Appendix VIII), implemented with what type of (power) practices (e.g. Ashcraft, 2001), and whether or not these practices have opened up new ways of being (Hosking, 2011; King & Land, 2018; Spicer et al., 2009).

5.6 PERSONAL REFLECTION

As I started this dissertation with a personal reflection on my research motivation and stance, I want to complete this Chapter with a personal reflection on the research process of the past years. As an insider-researcher, I am very happy to have been able to help teams in their development as well as work on developing theory. I seriously doubt that I would have been able to do this as an outsider-researcher. Yet, there are also various dark sides of working as insider-researcher. For one, to keep on doing this type of work, I had to maintain or renegotiate support for this knowledge development project on an almost continual basis. In other words, being an insider-researcher, I had to frequently engage in the same type of power practices that I was studying.

Moreover, this doctoral dissertation may also be a specific form of speaking up and therefore constitutes risky behavior. Critical in-depth reflections of this kind go against the grain of MIL. The mere act of problematizing—for instance, of the feasibility of the ‘MIL Change Method’ in Chapter 2—is appreciated less than ‘can do’ acts in a military setting. The latter implies that when I paint, in my humble opinion, a nuanced picture of the feasibility of a change approach, several colleagues are likely to say ‘I can make it happen anyway’. My main point here is that, while being an insider-researcher has important beneficial sides, it has been quite challenging as well.

As I am sympathetic to the emancipatory and participatory values of the organizational development field, I sincerely hope to have used my power as a facilitator of team meetings in a transformative manner. Looking back, there have been many instances of ‘protecting’ minority voices or viewpoints, when I made sure they were not swept off the table by powerful others. However, by inviting people to speak up, have I also unintentionally made their position more precarious? Future work will have to provide more clarity on these questions.

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Appendices

**APPENDIX I
INITIAL FULL SEARCH QUERY RETRIEVED IN FEBRUARY 2017
(CHAPTER 3)**

793 records.

TOPIC: (((*power* AND (authority OR domination OR control OR resistance OR network* OR self-determination* OR self-organization OR self-organisation OR autonomy OR agency OR "organization* change" OR "organisation* change" OR "organization* development" OR "organisation* development" OR "facilitat* change" OR "change facilitat*" OR "change management" OR "manag* change" OR "change-management"))))

AND TOPIC: (manage*)

AND TOPIC: (organization* OR organisation*)

Analysis:

WEB OF SCIENCE CATEGORIES: (MANAGEMENT OR BUSINESS OR SOCIOLOGY) AND DOCUMENT TYPES: (ARTICLE) AND SOURCE TITLES: (ORGANIZATION STUDIES OR JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT OR SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW OR HUMAN RELATIONS OR PERSONNEL PSYCHOLOGY OR ORGANIZATION OR LEADERSHIP OR JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES OR JOURNAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR OR JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS OR JOURNAL OF MANAGERIAL PSYCHOLOGY OR JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION OR HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW OR JOURNAL OF APPLIED BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE OR ORGANIZATION SCIENCE OR ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT REVIEW OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OR PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REVIEW OR ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVE OR ADMINISTRATIVE SCIENCE QUARTERLY OR ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT JOURNAL OR RESEARCH POLICY OR STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT JOURNAL OR MANAGEMENT SCIENCE OR JOURNAL OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY OR BRITISH JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT OR GROUP ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT OR MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING RESEARCH OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP THEORY AND PRACTICE OR EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT JOURNAL OR ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT OR SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT OR MIS QUARTERLY OR SYSTEMS RESEARCH AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE OR JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT OR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT OR MIT SLOAN MANAGEMENT REVIEW OR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OR LEADERSHIP ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT JOURNAL OR ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT ANNALS OR EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF WORK AND ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY OR CULTURE AND ORGANIZATION OR CHINESE MANAGEMENT STUDIES OR CALIFORNIA MANAGEMENT REVIEW OR ADVANCES IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT A RESEARCH ANNUAL)

APPENDIX II

COMPREHENSIVE EXPLANATION OF METHODS USED (CHAPTER 2)

To answer the research question previously introduced, we draw on an in-depth case study in a large military organization. A case study approach serves to refine or develop theory on complex social phenomena such as power (Locke, 2001; Yin, 2013). Moreover, the research design employs both insider and outsider roles (Bartunek & Louis, 1996; Evered & Louis, 1981), allowing us to move beyond conceptual representations to explore how power practices co-exist, and how their dynamics give rise to tensions within organizations. A military setting is particularly appropriate for studying organizational power, as we argued in the Introduction. The insider-researcher has been employed in the organization for a long time and, in the context of this study, was thus able to work closely together with the informants, which resulted in many open interviews, talks and discussions.

The case organization

The empirical setting of this study is a large military organization, part of the Dutch Armed Forces, employing over 5,000 people. Since 2011 the highest ranked actors in this organization have stressed the need for empowering military personnel in order to face the complex challenges the organization is facing. This military organization needs to respond adequately to uncertain events as well as to continually changing priorities of the Dutch government and international bodies, while collaborating with many different partners in highly different and dynamic settings. The highest ranked Generals believe that these challenges require changes in established practices of decision-making and getting things done. Traditionally, decisions are made in the top of the hierarchy, both within the organization as a whole and within subunits. Also, many people in this organization consider operating in different collaborative settings (e.g. networks) across the organization's boundaries as rather difficult and challenging. To better address these challenges, the Generals leading this military organization tasked the leaders of key projects to empower and engage many employees in their projects.

We selected two specific projects to collect narrative and other data. This focus on specific projects served to avoid that informants solely speak about what they *thought they did* in a rather abstract manner (cf. espoused theory), rather than what they *actually did* (cf. theory-in-use) (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Both projects took place in the same period. The first project, Newops, aims at developing and implementing a more advanced operational concept. The second project, Connect, aims at improving the agility of the organization, making better use of the potential of its personnel, and improving the connectivity between people in the organization as well as between the organization and its surroundings. Appendix III provides more detailed information about the two projects. In the next section, we will refer to three groups of employees: senior executives, project members, and other organizational members. The *senior exec-*

utives (Generals) are principals, sponsors or initiators of the two projects. The *project members* (mainly Officers) are responsible for running the projects; as such, they do not operate in isolation, because both projects aim to engage many *other members of the organization* (in total, involving about 5000 people). We will often use the term (key) ‘actor’ which either refers to an individual project member or senior executive or to a group.

Data sources and collection

We collected data regarding both projects in three stages, covering a four-year period. In this period, both projects raised a lot of discussion and dynamics. Deadlines were not met, collaboration between project members broke down, and personnel changes were frequent. We set out to develop an in-depth understanding of the power dynamics involved, by focusing on the interactions between senior executives and project members. The sources and uses of data are summarized in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 Description of the data

Data types and dates	Amount and location	Use in analysis
Participant observation Change case Newops (August 23, 2011 - June 4, 2013, 22 months) Change case Connect (July 17, 2013 -January 2015, 19 months)	33 pages of thick descriptions of critical incidents and reflections 12 notebooks with field notes	Exploring dynamics in projects, developing themes, codes and concepts
Semi-structured interviews 15 interviews lasting between 43 and 123 minutes	326 pages (transcriptions of digital recordings)	Exploring dynamics in projects, developing themes, codes and concepts
2 focus group meetings	47 pages (transcriptions of digital recordings)	Triangulation of interview data and testing the credibility and plausibility of the findings
Archival documents and reports A variety of reports, speeches, vision statements and other documents	12 documents	Coded for insight into perspective of various actors, arguments, and strategies utilized to promote their views
Focus groups and periodical meetings Participation in focus groups and other meetings of facilitators, change professionals, and senior executives in the organization (May, 2014 - Feb, 2018)	Approximately 55 meetings, captured in field notes, thick descriptions, and a reflective journal	Triangulation of interview data and testing the credibility and plausibility of the findings

A primary source of data involves an extensive period of participatory observation (41 months in total), which we used to gain insight into the dynamics and power practices within and around the two projects. In later stages, the participant-observational data was also used for triangulation. In addition, we employed semi-structured interviews to enrich and triangulate our primary data by means of reflections from informants. In particular, the interviews focused on power-over and transformative power as our main theme. We also attended meetings periodically, in which we consulted participants to discuss and validate preliminary findings. Finally, we utilized archival documents such as project papers, speeches and presentations for triangulation purposes; some of these documents were used to explore whether the patterns and dynamics observed extend beyond the period of data collection.

Participatory observation

One of the authors contributed to this study as an insider-researcher. He first participated for 22 months in the Newops project, and subsequently joined the Connect project for 19 months. This insider-researcher was employed as an internal advisor in the organization, where he was asked to participate in the team with an explicit focus on the organizational development aspects of the projects. As an insider-researcher, he participated in the day-to-day activities of projects, allowing him to keep notes, discover relevant themes and patterns, and to build relationships with senior executives, project members and other actors involved. This insider-perspective proved very helpful in obtaining rich interview data at a later stage of the study. The other authors contributed to this study in outsider roles. Following Bartunek and Louis (1996, p. 62), the insider and outsiders in this type of study “keep each other honest – or at least more conscious than a single party working alone may easily achieve.” The insider kept field notes (12 notebooks in total) and developed thick descriptions (33 pages) to describe and interpret critical incidents in and around both the projects (cf. Ponterotto, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews

We also draw on the detailed accounts of key actors, obtained from 15 in-depth interviews with 11 informants. Three informants are senior executives: the highest ranked officers including a Lieutenant-General and two Major-Generals, holding final responsibility for the entire organization. These informants were acting as either sponsor or principal of (one of) the two projects. Five other informants were high ranking officers, from Major-General to Major, who served in one of the two project teams. The three remaining informants, also project team members, are civilian employees acting as specialist internal consultants responsible for the development and execution of the project. All informants have substantial power-over based on their position in the organization and their assignment to increase the power-to of others. Table II.2 provides more background information on the informants.

Table 11.2 Background of informants in this study

Informant	Background
Senior executives Generals #1, #2, #3 (One Lieutenant-General, Two Major-Generals)	Generals are the highest ranked officers in the military. One of the generals in this study was the Commander-in-Chief of the entire military organization. His role can be compared with that of a CEO in a large corporation. He initiated and sponsored both projects. Two other Generals were, at the time of the interview, Second-in-Command of the military organization. Each of them acted as the principal for one of the two projects.
Project members General #4 Officers #1, #2, #3, #4 Civilian employee #1, #2, #3, #4	The project members operated in two teams, each consisting of military as well civilian personnel. In the Newops team, a project manager was appointed. The civilian employees are professionals with different backgrounds (e.g. law, policymaking, change management, management consultancy). The insider-researcher is also a civilian employee in the organization. He first worked as a member of the Newops project team for 22 months, and subsequently for the Connect project team for 19 months.

Through participatory observation, we were able to identify different and sometimes opposing voices within each team regarding key decisions and challenges. We included these different perspectives in the selection of the above informants. The majority of the interviews were conducted in 2015. During these semi-structured interviews, individual informants were first invited to tell their story regarding the project they were involved in. They were asked to tell their own version of the processes they were or had been part of (Rouleau, 2010). Where necessary, the interviewer would ask follow-up questions for clarification. Interviews were conducted until they did not provide us with any new insights compared to previous interviews and the information obtained from other data sources. The duration of the interviews varied between 43 and 123 minutes. Every interview was recorded and transcribed.

Focus group meetings and attendance in periodical meetings

In the second half of the participatory observation period, the insider-researcher frequently attended meetings of a network of (team) coaches and change professionals in the organization. We also conducted two focus group meetings with a similar group of professionals to validate and discuss our preliminary findings. These meetings provided additional opportunities to validate the themes, dynamics and patterns emerging from our initial analysis—from the perspective of practitioners that were (or had been) involved in a large number of other projects in the same organization.

Data analysis

The data analysis consists of several steps, drawing on coding procedures developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). First, we analyzed the field notes, thick descriptions and interview transcripts, using (first-level) open coding to explore power practices and dynamics in the two projects. Second, we used second-level codes to label power-over and transformative power acts and practices. The resulting patterns suggest that organizational actors typically have an individual power stance. This represents their inclination (i.e. relative position) toward power-over or transformative power, as displayed by how organizational actors typically act or how they talk about what type of power they deem appropriate. Further analysis revealed that specific tensions emerge from the co-existence of, or shifting between, both power practices. Such tensions manifest themselves between and within actors, and were coded accordingly. The two focus group meetings served to further refine the coding scheme. Table II.3 provides the final coding scheme, including definitions and representative quotes.

Table 11.3 Final coding scheme, definitions and representative quotes

Concepts	Definition
Power-over	Expressions or actions that imply that one (small group of) actor(s) has more power than others. Often one or a few 'active' actors(s) describe(s) what more or less 'passive' others (i.e. recipients) should have done or should be doing. (Adapted from: Dahl, 1957)
Transformative power	Expressions or actions that enable others to participate, share ideas, or influence decision making (i.e. stimulate or seduce employees, other than management or just the few at the top, to participate). (Adapted from: Hosking & Pluut, 2010; Wartenberg, 1990)
Tensions within	<p>Inconsistencies between an actor's power cognition (expression) and action. Cognitions refer to the way actors describe their beliefs about what is 'real' to them. Actions refer to (i) how the actor X describes what his actions were in a specific situation or (ii) what another actor Y testifies regarding the actions of actor X.</p> <p>Inconsistencies also emerge (iii) inside individual cognition, for example when an actor expresses an interest in transformative power (enabling power-to), yet creates a passive/active binary between active agents and passive recipients (reflecting a power-over stance).</p>
Tensions between	Relational tensions that emerge between actors who represent different power stances.

Illustrative quote

"And that's what I find sad about the work, the endless facilitating that we don't gain anything from and we don't learn from. And truly, I'm wholeheartedly convinced that you need to educate that [group of actors]." (Officer #1)

"Look, you can nitpick all you want, but when a certain rank asks something of a lower rank, that's the same as a kind yet urgent request to do so." (Officer #2)

"And particularly things where you have to create moments in organizations from which you can indeed share a happening, an experience, take a next step and make choices." (General #3)

"If you all agree to discuss the work, what your joint responsibilities are and what you can contribute, this will result in a different kind of conversation." (General #1)

- (i) An actor believes (cognition) he is approaching a project in a transformative manner:

"The method of change is to work in an organically incremental way and what that means is that you try things, discuss with others the lessons that you learn and also make sure there's enough room for reflection from the shop floor, from among the people affected, where you want to implement change. That they can reflect on what is happening to them or how they feel about it and that you then factor their views into your final view of what the organization should look like." (General #4)

Yet when he describes what he is doing (action), a power-over image emerges, resulting in a tension within:

"Just get that movement started and if you let your people dangle a little bit they will soon start to do all sorts themselves, all sorts of dodgy constructs will appear." (General #4)

- (ii) An actor believes he is balancing between giving direction and leaving space for others (cognition):

"And, what I usually consider a normal way of changing things is to get people on board and involve them, and discuss things with them and as a result come to a suggestion together. Of course you direct this process but it is definitely something that for a large part comes from the people themselves." (General #2)

Yet, his actions are (perceived as) not giving direction at all:

"It was like a wheelbarrow filled with frogs all wanting to go in their own direction. And there was nobody at the helm. Everybody could do as they pleased." [General #2 was in charge of this team] (Officer #3)

- (iii) *"And, what I usually consider a normal way of changing things is to get people on board and involve them ..."* (General #2)
-

"I didn't feel the need whatsoever to speak to anyone here or from management about this. There was no point, because they weren't even on the same page. Internally it was clear that we weren't on the same page either, and also that that was no longer achievable. Two individuals had taken a clear stance: 'I do what I want. End of discussion.' That's when I thought: that's it, I'm done. I chose the law of energy preservation, in the sense that I attempt to prevent myself from going crazy in this place and see how I can do at least something useful. Because we were supposed to write an evaluation at the end of the year, which left us with two, three months to get something down on paper. Or so it seemed at that moment in time." (Officer #3)

"[...] but that has led to countless clashes in which the directorate's policy advisor that had to take it on was like 'what the hell has now been dumped on my desk?' [...] yeah, while we actually brought them something they hadn't asked for. So they saw it as extra work that had been forced upon them all of a sudden." (Civil #1)

APPENDIX III BACKGROUND ON THE PROJECTS NEWOPS AND CONNECT (CHAPTER 2)

Project Newops

The Newops project aims at developing and implementing an advanced operational method. In this respect, MIL had to make a transformation from 'bound by territory to governed by intelligence led operations'. MIL was organized geographically consisting of five large units (each ranging between 600 and 1500 employees), a central support staff, and an education and training unit. Each of the commanders (colonels) of these units worked relatively autonomously. Each commander was believed to do what was right in his specific geographical region, yet prioritizing and doing what was right on a national level was perceived as rather complex, and collaboration beyond the borders of these units was thus an enormous struggle.

To resolve these issues, high ranking generals embarked on a large project, with a lot of management/executive attention, and with outcomes that targeted the whole of the organization. More specifically, the Newops project team had to coordinate activities that led to:

- develop better intelligence to improve the operational effectiveness of MIL; and
- restructure the organization, dissolve the large geographical units, and create a new national tactical command that can directly task smaller subunits and teams.

Besides these project goals targeting the structure of the organization, senior executives continuously stressed that this was (also) an organizational development initiative. Employee empowerment was considered to be key. Thus, guidelines were formulated (a leaflet named 'The MIL Change Method') about the way the content in these projects had to be delivered. Employee involvement, interaction and dialogue were seen as essential ways to transform the organization. This approach had to result in, or include, experimenting with novel practices and 'playfully' discovering new ways to get things done. These guidelines must be regarded as a 'visionary statement' about the way projects and other forms of organizing and change performed, and thus were applicable to both of the projects.

Project Connect

In contrast with the top-down oriented Newops project, Connect started as an initiative from employees who felt that the organization would benefit from other ways of working. They thought that the traditional way of working, within clear structures and decisions (only) being made by the highest ranked officer, inhibited making better use of the potential of large groups of employees. Furthermore, they believed that 'knowledge'

(in terms of practices, academic insights, societal developments) from outside MIL was not adequately picked up and transferred to improve the processes and practices within MIL. The Commander in Chief appreciated their initiative and endorsed their activities. Given that MIL needs to respond adequately to, for example, terrorism, migration, and natural disasters, it needs to be able to cope with continuous reprioritizing by the Dutch government and international (e.g. UN) bodies as well as collaborate in highly different and dynamic settings, both internally and externally. Because of these developments, the traditional way of organizing and changing is increasingly being questioned and challenged. The Commander in Chief felt that these challenges require different ways of engaging in decision-making and getting things done. In light of these developments and pressures, he believed that the Connect initiative would help developing organizational capabilities instrumental to dealing with the before mentioned challenges. The initiative of two employees became a project team with five employees. They were given full autonomy and only had to adhere to one guiding principle, their activities needed to be 'in line with the general development direction of the organization' (including 'The MIL Change Method' as described above).

APPENDIX IV

ACTOR'S RELATIVE POSITION ON THE POWER-OVER/TRANSFORMATIVE POWER CONTINUUM: CODES, CONCEPTS AND REPRESENTATIVE QUOTES PER ACTOR (CHAPTER 2)

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
1 General #3	Mainly transformative power	In contrast with his main power stance, this General does experience a dilemma between giving direction (by setting boundaries) and letting go.	This tension within this informant appears to give rise to tensions between him (as the one in command) and the project members.
Illustrative quotes	<p>What intrigues me is that he, that's what I think, has as one of his central themes that you don't change by writing fat books about it but by doing things together. And particularly things where you have to create moments in organizations from which you can indeed share a happening, an experience, take a next step and make choices.</p> <p>Of course this is incredibly postmodern, but the main point is that together you'll get further, by using that space and that trust and by being connected. And of course in an executive organization like ours, things have to be done together.</p> <p>And if you believe that from a distance I can define your task in such a way that you automatically do the right thing - I consider that to be a dangerous fiction.</p>	<p>Look, if I look at that change to which I just referred, from information-based, from area-based and information-driven, that story still stands. But what you see is that people sometimes take a turn to the right or to the left. And I had expected, perhaps a bit vainly, that that would occur less often than it actually did. At the same time I realize that this is also part of the process that you are in together, to discover what the right and left boundaries of this story are.</p> <p>No it's more about how many people can use that story so to speak, to lead, to be led. [...] you need a course, and over time a course can change, in the beginning it's okay for it not to be set in stone, and it should offer a wide range of openings, but it has to be clear in which direction it is heading. Slowly but surely it shouldn't become narrower as a course, but it does have to gain an increasingly concrete interpretation in order to tell people exactly what is expected of them. And this doesn't have to take place on day one, but it does at some point. And this does require direction.</p>	<p>He [General #3] is all about space, trust and connection. If that trinity is there, you will have roughly all the space you need because he has complete trust in you. But if you then look at an [General #4] for instance, who time and time again betrays this trust, he isn't the type of person that acts on this and in his view within this space things can go wrong and the person should be allowed to make these mistakes because he has been given the space. If the result then turns out not quite to be as he had expected, you just have to accept that. (Officer #1)</p>

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
2 General #4	Mainly power-over	In contrast with his main power stance, this General values different viewpoints (associated with transformative power). Furthermore, his cognitions show an appreciation for a variety of change interventions based on different power assumptions (blue based on power-over, white on transformative power, and the other colors somewhere in between), yet his actions (perceived by others) display one dominant style: power-over.	Others only describe his dominant power-over style and the resulting rise of relational tensions.
Illustrative quotes	<p>Acceptance of the formal power can only exist on the basis of the fact that it is also respected as the formal power, so you have to do something to achieve this. [...] but the best thing is when people themselves have the impressions that they are at the helm, and that you see them do things that we more or less had meant for them to do.</p> <p>Just get that movement started and if you let your people dangle a bit they will soon start to do all sorts themselves, all sorts of dodgy constructs will appear, with which you will have to rework later.</p>	<p>Within Defense we are inclined to use ourselves as examples, and to then, sort of, surround ourselves with clones. Self-awareness, well let's just say that's an area that needs some work. If you don't organize these reflective capabilities around you, then you get caught up in your own web of thoughts and you are always right. [...] Who am I going to win this battle with... how will I get things done? I'm often inclined to arrange a bit of opposition, because I know I need it, somebody to contradict me, that when this isn't the case I just bulldoze over everything.</p> <p>Look, some changes require blue interventions, others green, red, maybe even white. [...] So sometimes, all on my lonesome, I wonder how we get things moving, then I think in terms like that.</p> <p>Strikingly when I interviewed him he stated: "I could discover nothing new in this method of dialogue, interaction and participation - we have always worked like that." Yet, when he no longer was part of the project, and in the meantime had been promoted to deputy commander of the organization, we were with some people preparing him for to give to an outside party. He only about this uniqueness of the project he had been responsible for, and how everyone was so engaged because of the dialogue and the interaction. (insider-researcher)</p>	<p>And what I find interesting is that I think you can perfectly well shake people up a bit and wake them up [for example] we as this department just sat here listening to the vision and we hadn't even given this any thought ourselves. That's pretty embarrassing that you are a directive department [...] But there is also a group that was sort of like 'Who does this guy think he is?' and who actually pulled out at the idea of it. (Civil employee #2)</p> <p>On another occasion, at Schiphol, he also lost his temper. I said: 'General #4, fine if you have your own ideas about how you want to position a brigade commander, but you should know that before you arrived agreements had been reached and there is a plan in place for what the role of brigade commander should come to look like. If you want to go changing that, you'll have to go through the [First in command of the entire organization] He nearly exploded. (Officer #1)</p>

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
3 General #1	Mainly transformative power	In contrast with his main power stance, at times this General creates an active-passive binary between executives and lower ranked personnel who need to be engaged with executives ideas or need to participate (implying he has more power than others).	N/A
Illustrative quotes	<p>If you all agree to discuss the work, what your joint responsibilities are and what you can contribute, this will result in a different kind of conversation. (General #1)</p> <p>What I said just now, is something that is essentially top down. However, just as important is addressing the issues that are raised at the shop floor, which have consequences for the actions of the ones in top of the organization.</p>	<p>We need to step things up a to get people involved from within the brigades and the teams, particularly in this phase, now that it really matters.</p> <p>On the other hand, what we are trying to realize with the NEWOPS project is to have this concept find its way down to shop floor level.</p>	

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
4 General #2	Mainly transformative power	In contrast with his main power stance, at times this General creates a passive-active binary. Furthermore, he experiences tensions between giving direction and letting go. Others perceive his actions differently: as giving no direction at all.	The tension between cognition and action also gives rise to tensions between the one in command and the project members. Furthermore, relational tensions arise because the ones with a transformative power preference appreciate other types of behavior (e.g. listening instead of convincing).
Illustrative quotes	To just show that sometimes it can also be achieved by a different approach. There's a small group of people that do things and without you having to direct them or whatnot things still happen in the organization [...] You don't need a load of structures and things like that to get the job done. I'll get members of the NEWOPS project team stood at my desk: 'General #3 has said that... [...] so we have to do what General #3 says'. I said: 'but if all of us think it should be done differently, we could also approach (General #3) and say something like, yeah, you might have said so, but we don't think it is the best idea?' Talks like this happen now and again, and not with the lowest levels either. But it is taken as gospel because the commander has told us what to do and we should do it.	And, what I usually consider a normal way of changing things is to get people on board and involve them. When I would tell him (General #2) that if he didn't do something about the composition of the project team or speak to us as a group about what his expectations were [instead of speaking to me one on one about this], he would scrunch up his face, twist and turn in his chair and say something like I don't want to or I can't do that. (Civilian employee # 4) At the end of the day if you just look, like, well I think that it's like this in every organization, that hierarchy does just play an important role. [...] And what the commander says just goes.	And this was complicated further because the General #2 actually didn't give any direction whatsoever and didn't ask: 'What are you doing? Why are you doing that? And how do you plan to continue?' Or something like that. Or: 'Why are you choosing this topic?' Nothing whatsoever. (Officer #3) Well, listening [...] military personnel aren't very good at listening. In the [highest management team] everybody tells their own story and nobody poses any questions. [...] nobody asks me what do you mean exactly, or you say this, but how do you see that happening?

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
5 Officer #1	Mainly power-over	N/A	The power-over mentality leads to tensions between actors working in the same project, and undermines collaboration with others willing to contribute to the project, but not in terms of power-over.
Illustrative quotes	<p>He (officer 4#) would at times also talk about it: 'How flexible are you yourself?' or 'does this mean you are also open to other ideas or other approaches to get something done?'. I would reply: 'I know I am known to be steadfast, I won't deny that, but what matters at the end of the day is that if you have a different idea, that you'll have to be able to convince me and that that other idea leads to a result that fits in the picture as we have it planned and if that'll work, then it's fine by me, but if you come to me with some bullshit story and I'm expected to believe that, it's not gonna happen'. That's who I am, in a nutshell.</p>		<p>Yes. Officer #1 regularly used to shout "I am the boss, I am your master." I told him a dog has a master. I said at the most you can ask me to contribute to something. I told him I have one boss and in this case that is the General #1. I take my orders from him, not from you... this was an incredibly drawn-out battle. (Officer #2)</p> <p>I said: 'You have a role to fulfil, it's not your one-man show. You [not a participant in the study] are in this program and within it you have a role to fulfil, so get doing it straight away. He was going to but in the end he didn't do it. Knowledge of this made its way back to me and I had a man-to-man conversation with him about it. He was so pissed off that he refused to work under me any longer and then he left.</p>

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
6 Civilian employee #1	Mainly transformative power	The civilian employee reflects on his behavior and is aware that at times his power-over actions were not in line with his transformative power cognitions.	He also reflects on the difficulties of conducting a transformative power project in a context that has a strong tradition in power-over. Because of this contrast, they met a lot of negative judgements of the project when they were starting up. Furthermore, tensions become visible when others act from a power-over stance, and those actions involve him. For example, he feels that new members are added to the team in a power-over style, and start acting in a power-over style, which results in a struggle over who is in control.
Illustrative quotes	<p>We'll we initially felt like we should get to know the organization better. That's how we started out. Because of course we had been around a while, myself for years and my colleague a bit shorter, but we were in the staff. You rarely get on the shop floor. And if your assignment is then to strengthen the connection internally and with the outside world, well then let's start with getting to know our own organization a bit better. So we started working frequently on the shop floor, regular shifts. Joining the [operational taskforce], you know, [do something].</p> <p>Yeah, as I just mentioned, at one point it started to run its own course, people had heard of us and would approach us asking can you come and see us or how should we approach a certain matter.</p>	<p>Yes, [we gave] a presentation [there], saying well this is what we do, and we're here to help you. Most people had a sense of 'what for, I don't need help from you, what do you mean I don't have a connection with my people and my surroundings? My connection is just fine with my own people and the surroundings'. So that work just fell on deaf ears. And in hindsight perhaps I understand why, you know. Because it is a bit of a strange message, two civvies, telling a management team full of military personnel that they're completed detached from their own organization and the outside world and we can help them with this.</p>	<p>What I found tricky was that on the one hand you have all the space you need, but that on the other the support was very limited. General #3 did say to us 'don't speak about the basis of support; what it's about is your right to exist, yes or no?'. It was a very unpleasant conversation, in which he [not a participant in this study] also firmly positioned himself as our boss: it had been fun what we had done up to that point, but it was actually meaningless and we would now start for real. This was also the sense we got from Officer #3, that, hey, it's been fun all that messing around in the margins you've been doing up to now. While we had been doing our best that entire time, and had also endured massive amounts of crap being flung at us. [...] So yeah, that didn't get off to a good start. And it just never improved.</p> <p>Yes, [large organizational entity where they attempted to intervene] was the biggest disaster, but also [other location] and [yet another location]. I didn't leave there with very warm feelings. I thought, well, before everybody loathes us completely, let's just stop this. And let's just start doing things.</p>

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
7 Officer #2	Mainly power-over	N/A	Relational tensions arise as a result of the power-over style in which the NEWOPS was run.
Illustrative quotes	<p>What I think this organization is really lacking is discipline. Personnel are not capable of taking orders, unlike those in the field. When the General #1 gives an order to his [commanders next in line], and this order has to be communicated down the ranks, you'll have him that say, before they've even left the room, that's all well and good what he wants but that's not what we're going to do.</p> <p>See, just to come back to that own kingdom. What I thought was the most striking example, [...] I personally visited all the commanders. In order to, so to speak, spread the message of the [unit] at the time and the ideas we had.</p> <p>'And what would then happen when you're in one of those rooms saying your piece, introducing your plan and trying to discuss it, or discussing it?' (Civil employee #4)</p> <p>Well you'd receive very little response. You don't get any response until you call for a break and start talking to the people out in the hallway. And there you hear yeah, no this won't work that way. And you're bombarded with all sorts of sophisms about why it won't work, and when I explain and show them that it does work because I've done the same in the past, for a different employer, all you hear is yeah, no but that's there, that won't work for us.</p>	<p>And what you notice is that a number of members start to get very frustrated by the choices enforced by us, by the NEWOPS project, that are unworkable and that is now coming forward in that inquiry they are doing.</p> <p>Well, the problem in the intervening period is actually very easily summarized. There was a deadline for certain things to be done. Dates were communicated by the staff without any form of coordination. For instance; when does the inquiry capability, when does it have to be ready? Well, 2013 on 24 July. I was told a week beforehand. And to add to that it would be at least another year before all the devices and equipment we needed would arrive. And this results in mismatches in the expectations management from the higher strategic level. There's the operational people on the ground and then there's us in between, or me, us, I see it as a we thing, we are stuck in between. We're asked, from above, to deliver something, which you can't because you don't have the means and below you they have an expectation because the upper level has communicated this as such and that's when the cogs begin to spin. And that's where you get stuck, ground up between the two sides of expectations. Those intervening years were basically one struggle after the next: going from door to door to, as it were, find support.</p>	

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
<p>8 Officer #3</p>	<p>Between power-over and transformative power</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>This informant talked about how (extreme) positions of power-over lead to relational tensions, as well as how (extreme) positions of transformative power have a similar effect. Furthermore, the collaboration attempts between members of the two different projects applying two completely different power styles resulted in strong tensions between actors, and as a result collaboration broke down.</p>
<p>Illustrative quotes</p>	<p>This applied to me and to a certain extent to a colleague [not an informant in this study]: we made contact with the chain. We were somewhat service- or demand-oriented. And we had our own ideas within our field of expertise which we were willing and able to work with, for instance with those instruments. We wouldn't bother the entire organization with this.</p> <p>A different aspect that arose had to do with those who were with the NEWOPS project that had a program office at the time. The fear was that the program office would tie down everything so securely that we would simply not create any room for employees and managers to really use their knowledge of the context and the personnel to make decisions.</p> <p>So I had my doubts about it and on the other hand I was sort of intrigued that so much freedom was given to one group within the organization. And as a result I want in on these types of things.</p>		<p>The other three preferred to do mostly their own things. One of those things was a sort of growth diagram that I made based on what was being brought forward. I then emailed it to everyone and at a certain point put it into practice with a customer. After that I took the flak from almost everybody for doing that. Well that was the end of it as far as I was concerned. Because it had taken me a lot of effort to go ahead and get that group together anyway, knowing that it was near impossible: it was like a wheelbarrow filled with frogs all wanting to go in their own direction. And there was nobody at the helm. Everybody could do as they pleased.</p> <p>I remember that Officer #3 and I as members of the project attempted to make contact with the NEWOPS project, which the rest of CONNECT wanted to steer clear of; contact with them would be too risky. Officer #3 and I had various conversations with people from CONNECT. The mood only got darker. There came a point when I quit. Officer #3 was the POC and spoke with them regularly. Officer #3 became increasingly disillusioned. 'NEWOPS only sees us as an extra pair of hands, switch on switch off, do as I say now, I'll have a job for you.' (Civil employee #4)</p>

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
9 Civilian employee #2	Between power-over and transformative power (E.g. the informant first creates a passive/active binary (power-over), yet at the same time relativizing it)	N/A	This employee reflects on how the development of the organization in the direction of transformative power collides with existing organizational arrangements, resulting in relational tensions between actors. Another type of tension arises when a move into the direction transformative power results in actors wondering what the relational and individual consequences may be, if you were to really open up.
Illustrative quotes	<p>Because, see, a change, most people don't want to change. It's that sense of reservedness a bit, and letting go of things that are familiar. It's a hurdle people that people need to take. So at the beginning we thought, right, we're going to have to keep explaining why we're doing things and guiding people through the process. And it's only logical for there to be a bit of resistance and that's not a bad thing, because it's better to have a bit of resistance than that people just, well actually throw in the towel, because then you've lost them entirely.</p> <p>But you do in fact need a good manager who will talk to people if they are not performing well or who will coach them to help them progress, who does have a vision and can plot a course. This means leadership is still incredibly important, just not in the sense of 'I am some sort of control freak-type manager'. [The essence of that true ambition is] to break free from hierarchy some more. Let's just summarize it that way. Empowerment.</p>		<p>We want a more inventive organization, more space for the employee. And that conflicts a little with the current hierarchy.</p> <p>Well, I think that what we're arguing for is indeed a certain type of vulnerability in people. You just want people to... I think to empower yourself and to be able to achieve something as a team, you have to be able to do something to create a team. But to truly be a team, you have to be able to trust each other. And it's obvious that there's more to that; yeah, wait a minute, to what extent... how far does that reach? How safe am I really? And to what extent can this be used against me in the future? See that's already an interesting paradox if you ask me.</p>

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
10 Civilian employee #3	<p>Mainly power-over (e.g. the informant displays a strong need to close down variety by unifying and modeling in contrast with openness for different perspectives, implying power-over)</p>	<p>In contrast with his main power stance, he is struggling with the balance between giving direction and leaving room to others.</p>	<p>Yet, the way others perceive his actions support his main power stance, and show how this attitude results in tensions between the two projects, and hindering collaboration within the organization.</p>
Illustrative quotes	<p>While if you ask me, just make a simple model out of it. Just one group that has responsibility over all those HR points and that can initiate the actions. So you'd have one forum that you manage and they would forward the actions to the people who can actually work on them.</p> <p>How do you then make sure that even though you have these dreams of things being worked out better to the various levels and... you still have the question of, how do you transfer this?</p> <p>Well, it starts with convincing them that all three have to take a seat at the table. [...] From within the [unit] we'd like to see things dealt with integrally. This, however, does mean that we are often sort of the initiator of these kinds of things.</p> <p>Yes, I think it's a good thing that if you have that dream to then together try and figure out what that actually means on each level of the organization.</p> <p>[...] that dream and all the organizational proposals that result from it.</p>	<p>Is that the direction theme, and I mean direction not in the sense of Command & Control, but rather direction of what we are doing and what has always been a central theme and if you ask me remains one till this day. Claiming you want to give people space, while at the same time expecting some sort of scheduled change. Because that's just how it is: you have to stick to the schedule, whether it's about the timeline or money or any other framework you could possibly think of.</p> <p>There's a sense of tension. You see, if you let children play outside and there's no fence around the playing field they'll probably stay within a very small area. And if you were to indicate some rough boundaries, then they'll at least try to find their space and creativity a lot more within those boundaries then if you were to say 'there are no boundaries'. We'd then be left with a tiny piece. And they won't go out and network, they won't leave those boundaries. Because who knows what might be out there.</p>	<p>When we had that really strange session with Civilian Employee #3 who out of the blue started ranting about all the assignments she would be giving us. We would practically be working for her. It turns out she does this more often, so perhaps that has more to do with her as a person. It got me thinking, I'm not going to do anything for you. [...] I thought that NEWOPS project, we need to get rid of it as soon as possible. (Civilian employee #1)</p>

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
11 Officer #4	Mainly power-over	However, this officer experiences tensions in finding the right balance between giving direction and leaving room for others.	He perceives senior executives' intention to move beyond power-over to be in conflict with the directions (incl. time pressure) he has been given.
Illustrative quotes	<p>What I'd really wanted was something along the lines of our own communication specialist as part of the program [...] How are we going to change the emphases, how are we going to sell this or how are we going to get this through to the people?</p> <p>The program office's battle doesn't matter, I said no I don't get to decide anything but the..., but the ... was extremely divided on some points. We used the game for this purpose to get them back on track a bit, Yeah, he would say do this, do that. We were supposed to jump into action. We were nagging a bit about it and tried to convince him of other things that were perhaps also important. But he wasn't having any of it. So I suppose how it all went down was mainly interesting. (Officer #3)</p>	<p>It's ok for you to want something, as [managerial role] for instance you'd have ideas and ask yourself but is this the right way to go about it? Should I push on or take a step back?</p> <p>I don't see it as being wrong, it's just that if you say well from my role as [anonymized] I thought that it was actually complicated enough and that enough players were doing things already, it turned out to be very difficult to keep all those frogs in the wheelbarrow because at one point everybody thought that they could just do anything.</p>	<p>Yeah, of course when it comes to this, I've also spoken to General #3 and General #2 about this, you're asking the impossible of this organization because it is of course a 'do as you're told' organization. You say give me an assignment, I'll carry it out and all of a sudden you're asking people to be creative and to come up with solutions themselves. They're not used to that. The idea of giving them space to learn and work out their ideas wasn't in line with the time pressure that was on all this though. It all had to be done quick, quick, quick. If you want something fast you don't have time to allow people to make mistakes and to try things out. For trial and error. That had been the idea. People will discover the truth themselves.</p>

	A. Main power stance	B. Tensions within	C. Tensions between
12 Civilian employee #4 (insider- researcher)	Mainly transformative power	In contrast to his main power stance, this employee struggles with balancing between taking space (power-over) and giving space (transformative power). And, at times he engages in power-over types of behavior.	He has experienced struggles between actors representing different power styles in both projects (within the teams, between the teams, between the teams and other actors, and between the project members and the senior executives).
Illustrative quotes	<p>I'm pretty good at keeping my mouth shut. I like to observe, to listen and to consider my options before I act. What I notice next is that people will use this relative silence to generate all sorts of ideas.</p> <p>I'm not going to waste my time and energy on this, it just drains me. So I had this little personal rule in my head 'I'm willing to brainstorm and participate, but I'm not going to force myself into the process. I'll only work with people who want to work with me'. This mantra was a real game changer for me.</p>	<p>Keeping my mouth shut does have a flipside though. Sometimes I also need to just say something, take a stance. I struggle to find balance there, between arguing and researching, giving space and taking space, particularly in the military context.</p> <p>I do though find myself being very normative at times. It would seem to be something of a moral thing. If the way something is being handled doesn't sit well with me, I'm not getting involved. If you're not even capable of what I consider decent communication, then you can sort it out yourself. Then I don't even want to work together with you.</p>	<p>During my time being involved in both projects I witnessed great amounts of conflict. In the first project it was a conflict about how I as a change professional could contribute something with the knowledge I have of these types of projects in a team full of people who think in terms of blueprints, changing others, managing opposition etc. To add to that the project team was flailing: everybody who had been there voluntarily left over the course of a few months. The situation in which the head of the project entrusted his wishes to me but was not willing to intervene in the project himself didn't make things easier.</p> <p>I took the conflict in the second project less to heart. After a number of failed attempts to work together as a team I drew my conclusions. People were working in coalitions of sorts and everybody just did their own thing. My 'take it or leave it' stance towards the NEWops projects meant I wasn't hassled by the conflict going on between those two projects at the time.</p> <p>From tension within General #1, to tension between:</p> <p>In one of my periodical meetings with General #1 he told me that he felt it was time to place leadership back on the agenda. I called my colleague from the facilitation network, really into coaching and leadership development, to tell him there was an opportunity for us to connect our activities with the one in Command. I noticed cynism and holding back. My colleague gave some examples in which he felt that General #1 did not do what he claims to be standing for. This appeared to annoy him in such a way that he would rather not get engaged and find some way to connect our ideas with those in command and work from there.</p>

APPENDIX V

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEY METHOD AND RESULTS (CHAPTER 4)

The survey consisted of 30 items involving commonly used constructs in empowerment and voice studies, including psychological safety, team empowerment, learning and reflection, and performance. *Team empowerment*, as a potential outcome of voice solicitation, is defined as “increased task motivation that is due to team members’ collective, positive assessments of their organizational tasks” (Kirkman et al. 2004, p. 176). Team empowerment was measured on a seven-point scale from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, based on Kirkman et al. (2004).

Team learning and reflection is conceptualized as “an ongoing process of reflection and action, characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of actions” (Edmondson, 1999, p.353). *Team psychological safety* is defined as a “shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). *Team performance* involves a self-report measure of team performance (Edmondson, 1999). Drawing on Edmondson (1999), these three constructs were measured on a seven-point scale from “very inaccurate” to “very accurate”.

A total of 74 team members completed both the pre-test and post-test survey. In one of the teams, the intervention was abandoned after one meeting, because the team did not want to proceed. As a result, we collected pre-test and post-test results for nine teams only, with a sample of 74 team members filling in both surveys. Table v1 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics for the entire sample. This table demonstrates that the post-test scores on all four constructs are slightly higher compared to the pre-test ones. Only with regard to team learning, there is a significant difference between the pre-test ($M = 5.05, SD = .69$) and post-test score ($M = 5.24, SD = .68$); with $t(73) = -2.26, p = .0136$. The descriptive statistics in Table v.1 also suggest that many pre- and/or post-test variables are correlated with each other, pointing at the existence of more structural forces driving the results. Appendix v1 provides an overview of the survey questions.

Table v.1 Cronbach's alpha coefficients and correlations between variables in survey

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Empowerment pre-test	5.47	.61	.81							
2 Empowerment post-test	5.53	.71	.37*	.89						
3 Team learning pre-test	5.05	.69	.56*	.22	.66					
4 Team learning post-test	5.24	.68	.39*	.28*	.44*	.75				
5 Psychological safety pre-test	2.09	.81	.37*	.13	.42*	.15	.76			
6 Psychological safety post-test	2.18	.70	.31*	.40*	.33*	.28*	.48*	.71		
7 Team performance pre-test	4.77	1.02	.71*	.32*	.55*	.37*	.38*	.24*	.82	
8 Team performance post-test	4.79	.99	.56*	.49*	.22	.47*	.12	.27*	.61*	.84

Cronbach alpha coefficients are presented on the diagonal

* Correlations significant at $p < .05$

After splitting the sample in two, based on the observed differences, we again test for significant differences between the pre- and post-test. For the responsive cluster of teams, empowerment is significantly lower in the pre-test ($M = 5.45$, $SD = .61$) compared to the post-test ($M = 5.59$, $SD = .53$), with $t(44) = -1.64$, $p = .0533$. Similarly for team learning, the scores are significantly lower in the pre-test ($M = 4.95$, $SD = .65$) compared to the post-test ($M = 5.26$, $SD = .65$), with $t(44) = -3.28$, $p = .0010$. This is also the case for psychological safety in the pre-test ($M = 1.97$, $SD = .78$) versus the post-test ($M = 2.16$, $SD = .68$) in the post-test; $t(44) = -1.67$, $p = .0511$) and team performance ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.14$ in the pre-test vs $M = 4.82$, $SD = 1.02$ in the post-test); $t(44) = -1.4132$, $p = .0823$. There are no significant differences for the less responsive cluster of teams, except for team performance for which the score in the pre-test ($M = 5.00$, $SD = .77$) is significantly higher than in the post-test ($M = 4.74$, $SD = .97$), $t(28) = 1.82$, $p = .0400$. Table v.2 displays the paired t-test results for the responsive and less-responsive teams.

Table v.2 Paired t-test for responsive and less-responsive cluster

		Responsive Cluster (N = 45)			Less-responsive cluster (N= 29)		
		Mean	S.D.	H: pre < post	Mean	S.D.	H: pre < post
1	Empowerment pre-test	5.45	0.61	$t(44) = -1.64$ $p = 0.0533$	5.50	0.59	$t(28) = 0.49$ $p = 0.6848$
2	Empowerment post-test	5.59	0.53		5.41	0.91	
3	Team learning pre-test	4.95	0.65	$t(44) = -3.28$ $p = 0.0010$	5.19	0.74	$t(28) = -0.11$ $p = 0.4554$
4	Team learning post-test	5.26	0.65		5.21	0.71	
5	Psychological safety pre-test	1.97	0.78	$t(44) = -1.67$ $p = 0.0511$	2.29	0.82	$t(28) = 0.39$ $p = 0.6537$
6	Psychological safety post-test	2.16	0.68		2.23	0.74	
7	Team performance pre-test	4.63	1.14	$t(44) = -1.41$ $p = 0.0823$	5.00	0.77	$t(28) = 1.82$ $p = 0.96$
8	Team performance post-test	4.82	1.02		4.74	0.97	

APPENDIX VI PRE-TEST/POST-TEST SURVEY ITEMS (CHAPTER 4)

Team empowerment is defined as “increased task motivation that is due to team members’ collective, positive assessments of their organizational tasks” (Kirkman et al., 2004, p. 176). Measures adapted from the same source:

1. My team has confidence in itself
2. My team can get a lot done when it works hard
3. My team believes that it can be very productive
4. My team believes that its projects are significant.
5. My team feels that its tasks are worthwhile.
6. My team feels that its work is meaningful.
7. My team can select different ways to do the team’s work.
8. My team determines as a team how things are done in the team.
9. My team makes its own choices without being told by management.
10. My team performs tasks that matter to this organization.
11. My team makes a difference in this organization.

Team learning & reflection is conceptualized as “an ongoing process of reflection and action, characterized by asking questions, seeking feedback, experimenting, reflecting on results, and discussing errors or unexpected outcomes of actions (Edmondson, 1999, p.353). Measures:

12. We regularly take time to figure out ways to improve our team’s work processes.
13. This team tends to handle differences of opinion privately or off-line, rather than addressing them directly as a group. (R)
14. Team members go out and get all the information they possibly can from others—such as stakeholders, or other parts of the organization.
15. This team frequently seeks new information that leads us to make important changes.
16. In this team, someone always makes sure that we stop to reflect on the team’s work process.
17. People in this team often speak up to test assumptions about issues under discussion.
18. We invite people from outside the team to present information or have discussion with us.

Team psychological safety is defined as a “shared belief that the team is safe for interpersonal risk taking” (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). Measures:

19. If you make a mistake on this team, it is often held against you. (R)
20. Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.
21. People on this team sometimes reject others for being different. (R)
22. It is safe to take a risk on this team.
23. It is difficult to ask other members of this team for help. (R)
24. No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.
25. Working with members of this team, my unique skills and talents are valued and utilized.

Team performance measures (Edmondson, 1999):

26. This team meets or exceeds the expectations of others in the organization.
27. This team does superb work.
28. Critical quality errors occur frequently in this team’s work.
29. This team keeps getting better and better.

Additional post-test questions

Next to these validated scales, an additional set of questions was inserted in the post-intervention survey to verify the extent to which the team members experiences the different aspects of the intervention. These questions are self-developed and not validated in other studies and have the objective to quickly and unambiguously assess the effect of the interventions in various areas. They were measured on a three-point scale from “disagree” to “agree”. The questions were as follows:

1. The intervention (further) improves our meeting routine.
2. The intervention facilitates collaboration within this team.
3. This intervention creates a sense of joint responsibility of individual participants for the team process.
4. This intervention increases the transparency of what we should discuss, what the different opinions are, and what we decide on.
5. This intervention alters the power balance within the team.
6. Separating the role of team leader from the role of meeting facilitator improves the meeting quality.
7. Separating picture forming, opinion forming and decision-making improves the meeting quality.
8. Deliberately switching between ‘working in systematic rounds’ and ‘popcorn style conversation’ improves the meeting quality.
9. The opening round and closing round improve the meeting quality.

10. Equivalence in decision-making on team issues (whereas the team leader remains in charge of the day to day operations) improves the meeting quality.
11. Joint responsibility on the meeting agenda improves the meeting quality.
12. Separating matters of team functioning and/or mutual concern (we decide on this collectively) from day to day operations (which can be delegated) improves the meeting quality.

APPENDIX VII ADDITIONAL PRIMARY DATA (CHAPTER 4)

This appendix contains additional primary data (collected and analyzed) providing an example of both a responsive and a less responsive team.

Exemplary team in responsive cluster (Team one)

Team setting and background

Team one, composed of six experienced officers (ranks: one commander, five majors, both male and female), is responsible for guiding and reprioritizing nationwide military operations. Team members work in shifts and take turns as commander to cover the 24/7 operations of MIL. The meetings in which we tested this protocol are the team's only moments to work and decide collectively in order to guide the operations in a consistent manner and to discuss other team-related issues. Prior to our intervention, the team members discussed the effectiveness of their meetings and committed to changing the ways in which the team prepared meetings and engaged in decision-making.

General case description

Participants, both the team lead and team members, appeared to be very open to the intervention from the start, indicating alignment between team members' expectations. The alignment of expectations, and team leader support remained present over the course of the intervention. Team members showed considerable reflectivity in evaluating their meeting experience, something we did in a 'closing round' every meeting. In this closing round, team members regularly reflected on both the meeting itself and their meeting routine prior to the intervention. Their open reflections suggest there was a high level of psychological safety as well as a steep learning curve in building their voice capability. During the meetings guided by our intervention protocol, team members' dispositions and/or opinions collided on several occasions, resulting in emotional turbulence and power-related tensions. However, the chairman's practices of guiding, inviting and challenging appeared to create a meeting space in which these emotions and tensions could coexist without the more dominant actors capturing the discourse. As such, these (qualitative) findings demonstrate that the Virtuous Voice loop of the CLD prevailed. Power-related tensions did not disappear, yet the intervention shaped a voice climate in which contrasting opinions remained open for reflection and debate. Our findings suggest that a combination of increased psychological safety (also evident from our pre-test/post-test survey data for team one) and the convergence of expectations of team members, created a setting that fosters voice, in turn, increasing voice occurrence and more inclusive decision-making.

Table VII.1 Intake interview Team Leader dd. February 5, 2019

Exemplary quote	Variable CLD
<p>The team lead works with rather powerful people in his/her team. The interactions between these powerful people, the team lead included, cause several power related tensions: <i>All team members are commanding officers in crisis situations. They hold strong opinions...yeah they're true bosses. Well, they're all majors, they are selected based on their capacity to lead, so it is not always easy to have them face the same direction.</i></p>	(power related) tensions within team
<p>As these officers are responsible for guiding military operations, their inability to act and decide together may lead to unintended ambiguity for the ones on the receiving end of their guidance. This makes an intervention fostering voice and more inclusive decision-making a credible one. The team leader describes his concern: <i>The environment reflects that 'this commander has his way of working, the next commander has a different approach'. In the end, they are bounded by rules... yet they approach similar situations differently...</i></p>	tensions in team
<p>The team lead supports the intervention approach with ample room for other participants' voice, reflecting his/her willingness to use his/her power transformatively: <i>I am open to anything... for sure. I am really trying to figure out an approach that suits them. And try to discover how they want to participate. So, it is not necessarily my show... quite the opposite, I do not feel it should be my show...</i></p>	team leader support
<p>And the team lead appears to perceive speaking up, listening and engaging with each other's opinions (i.e. increasing voice) to be key to improving decision-making and acting collectively: <i>... I would prefer if they would just listen to each other a bit more often...these different sides, if they all would just listen more. Some of them already are, they are critically questioning others, while others are like 'it is my way or the highway'. Those different sides, it just does not add up. Eventually this leads to decisions with limited support of other team members.</i></p>	difference between current and desired voice & inclusive decision-making

Table VII.2 First meeting dd. March 12, 2019

Exemplary quote or field observations	Variable CLD
<p>Participants in team one appear to respond to the intervention in two ways. Some notice the more predictable meeting atmosphere, to experience an increased psychological safety that leads to an increased opportunity to voice: <i>I find it restful, as I know how the process will unfold, it's a familiar structure. Nothing new, only you have to stick to it, and that is restful. Then you know that your time to speak will come. I find it positive.</i></p>	<p>psychological safety & voice opportunity</p>
<p>Other participants' responses suggest the intervention shakes up their usual (individual) voice behavior. Those who voice easily, now struggle in making an extra effort to wait for their turn to speak up: <i>I notice that, that's my nature, I'm strongly inclined to respond very fast to what I hear. Now, that I'm in some sort of a straightjacket, and awaiting my turn is imposed on me, I notice that I've got to get used to that. I wonder, was I able to say what I wanted to say?</i></p>	<p>(time delay in building) voice capability</p>
<p>By contrast, participants that usually are relatively silent tend to stress the increased opportunity to voice, as a consequence of the interventions by the chairman, which reassures them they will be invited to speak up. Also, the team lead responds positively on the first meeting, supports the intervention, and particularly appreciates that the guiding, inviting, and challenging acts by the chair appear to increase the team's decision-making capability: <i>Sometimes it takes a fresh pair of eyes, they now walk in line, whereas otherwise ... No, I'm joking, you just notice that people are more aware of the structure. It is fruitful, we arrive at decisions.</i> (team leader)</p>	<p>voice occurrence & inclusive decision-making</p>
<p>Our findings suggest that whereas participants have different (e.g. dominant or rather silent) predispositions and (team lead or subordinate) roles, their expectancies about what actions (i.e. the VOICE intervention) would benefit the team are aligned.</p>	<p>(low)divergence expectancies</p>

Table VII.3 Second meeting dd. March 25, 2019

Exemplary quote or field observations	Variable CLD
<p>One key element in this meeting is learning to separate the step of picture forming from forming opinions about an agenda-item. When participants enter the phase of picture forming, they are invited to postpone their opinions, and merely raise questions in order to form a more informed overview. In the opinion forming phase, participants are actively invited to voice their individual informed opinion and possibly challenge the status-quo. The facilitator/chair explicitly invites each participant to voice: <i>Just checking the process, it was on our agenda to collect opinions, right? Is this where you want to collect opinions on, or does it involve other aspects? [...] All right, we'll make a round to collect opinions. Do you want to start?</i></p>	<p>intervention: guiding inviting</p> <p>voice opportunity</p>
<p>Our findings illustrate that the intervention increases voice in two ways. First, participants are invited to voice opinions on the content (i.e. the proposed decisions). Second, they are invited to voice their opinion on the meeting process (i.e. the process resulting in any decisions): <i>... perfect, as far as I'm concerned, I was able to deliver my input. I feel there was a calm atmosphere that allowed everyone to do so as well. And, yeah, sometimes we really dig in to an issue, but that's all right. I'm positive.</i> (participant A)</p> <p><i>Yeah, I find this is great. Up until now, it was chaos, discussions went everywhere. While I appreciate structure myself. Now, everyone can be themselves, speak up, and we arrive at decisions... which I greatly appreciate.</i> (participant B)</p>	<p>voice opportunity & voice occurrence & inclusive decision-making</p>

Table vii.4 Third meeting dd. April 9, 2019

Exemplary quote or field observations	Variable cLD
<p>While participants have thus far been experiencing rather positive outcomes of the intervention, the protocol is put to the test when major power-related tensions arise in the third meeting. The team lead has come to an agreement with external parties about a particular strategic issue and in this meeting wishes to inform the team and ratify this proposed agreement. After the team lead introduces the agreement between parties, the facilitator/chair invites the other team members to pose questions, and, later on, voice their opinions. One participant voices an informed argument, saying he/she is lacking the proper information to ratify the proposed agreement. The voice recipient, the team lead, leans forward and visibly annoyed. The team lead responds louder than usual, in an attempt to use his/her authority to steer the discourse: <i>Then you have a rather distorted image of the situation. You know, these are all opinions without any backing, this should not cloud our judgement!</i></p>	(power) tensions in team
<p>Subsequently, another participant that was involved in making the agreement with the external party, openly backs the team lead. The resisting participant shifts his chair somewhat, leans back, increasingly agitated. The meeting atmosphere becomes more and more tense. The voicer replies: <i>Then, I cannot respond to anything! If these are all just urban legends ... fine by me. However, then we put a stop to this meeting, as far as I'm concerned. I believe that the core element of a meeting is that you're allowed to have an opinion, that you can express concerns.</i></p>	(power) tensions within team
<p>In this particular situation, the chair/facilitator uses his position to refocus on the process, and retains a neutral stance to deescalate the situation: <i>...it looks as if we have found ourselves a topic of mutual interest. [...]</i> <i>Therefore, it is key to discover whether we want to decide on this issue now or do we have time to ponder on this a bit longer?</i></p>	intervention: challenging and guiding
<p>As the tensions built up, the facilitator becomes stricter in giving each participant the opportunity to voice opinions. The team subsequently finds a 'way out' of this tensed situation, by rescheduling this topic in the next meeting and agreeing on a better preparation of the discussion in that meeting. Here, the facilitator did not aim for an ideal solution, just one that all team members could agree on. This procedure appears to lower the tension level in the room, whereas both key actors still appear to be kind of prickly. In the closing round, in which each participant was invited to reflect on the meeting process, participants are able to blow of some more steam.</p>	
<p>The experiences with a topic raising major tensions within the same meeting and the team's subsequent struggle to find a workable middle ground appeared to increase voice credibility and commitment within the team.</p>	

Table VII.5 Fourth and fifth meeting dd. April 24 and May 7, 2019

Exemplary quote or field observations	Variable CLD
<p>In the following meetings, similar patterns are observed: positive voice-related outcomes lead to more inclusive decision-making and a decreasing gap between the desired and actual practice of voice. Moreover, this team also demonstrates an increasing voice capability at the team level. Here, our observations in this team suggest that reshaping and/or empowering participants to speak up is a learning process. That is, over the course of several meetings, participants learn to use the intervention protocol in such a way that it fosters voice in their meetings. That is, both <i>voice content expressions</i> (i.e. less powerful actors' statements about a policy issue) and <i>voice process expressions</i> (i.e. less powerful actors' statements about how voice is expressed, or how the voice climate is shaped and can be improved to increase voice) evolve over time. In other words, it sometimes takes several meetings before a particular team member raises a controversial topic (as explained in the Findings section). But it also takes several meetings for a participant to discover when it is helpful (for the chair/facilitator) to be rather strict in separating picture forming from opinion forming (i.e. by making disciplined rounds to ensure voice opportunity), and when not (i.e. allow a more natural conversational flow). Several members of the team thus reflect on the learning and improvement processes related to voice in their meetings, for example:</p>	<p>difference (decreases)</p> <p>time delay voice capability</p> <p>time delay voice capability</p>
<p><i>I feel they were not that far apart, last time around. The atmosphere got tense over a rather small example that triggered a fighting spirit ... then something can escalate. In the end, I believe their positions are rather similar, as far as the content is concerned. (participant A)</i></p>	
<p><i>Well, this was agreeable, because I remember from last time, when we spoke about the planning ... we were fully bound by all these structures. Now, it becomes more natural. We used to, in a round, to not respond at all. Whereas today, I kind of like the little responses every now and then. (participant B)</i></p>	<p>difference (decreases) time delay</p>

Table vii.6 Final meeting dd. July 2, 2019

Exemplary quote	Variable cLD
In the sixth and final meeting, we give team members some time to think back and reflect on the key elements of the intervention. <i>With this alternative meeting routine, we have improved the way we listen to each other. We do not keep repeating each other, something we used to do. We are more effective now. (participant A)</i>	voice capability voice occurrence
<i>Equivalence in decision-making, yeah, attuning to each other on several accounts, trying again and finally reaching consensus, we've seen that a lot, that is definitely a process we've developed together. (participant B)</i>	inclusive decision-making
<i>We looked into our team process on several occasions: how we felt about it, whether we were comfortable. It has been uncomfortable on occasion. That's all part of the game, we're human, things can get tense. (participant C)</i>	inclusive decision-making voice capability
<i>Popcorn style, we used to do that a lot. We've restricted that by regularly working in rounds, that helps in structuring things. Of course, on occasion, you let go a little, and some are easier to control than others. Yet, sticking to these rounds provides so much more structure. And these separate phases, that's really good as well. (participant D)</i>	difference (decreases)
<i>The team lead not being the facilitator, that's an added value as well. Then the leader can really be part of the meeting. (participant E)</i>	difference (decreases)

Exemplary team in less responsive cluster (Team eight)

Team setting and background

Team eight, composed of seven (both male and female) experienced officers and civilian staff members, is positioned within the headquarter of MIL. This headquarter employs approximately 250 people, both civilian and military personnel, and is divided in several directories. MIL's management team has identified several key challenges relevant to the future of MIL and assembled the incumbent team to create a vision and policy on one of these challenges: 'theme-centered working'. Each member of the team comes from the one of the directories and departments within MIL, where s(he) supervises their own staff.

General case description

The leader of team eight felt a strong responsibility toward 'theme-centered working', the main assignment of this team. When the Voice Solicitation Intervention served to increase the transparency of argumentation of team members in the first few meetings, the expectations of the different team members started to diverge. While some participants preferred to discuss work-in-progress and decide collectively, others felt their meetings should have a rather informal character. The latter participants thus became

increasingly cynical toward (what they believed were) attempts to formalize the meeting process. A second persistent dynamic in this team was that, while the intervention proceeded, the ambiguity and tensions around theme-centered working (i.e. the content matter assigned to the team) grew. Whereas the team's narrative initially also includes elements of the virtuous loop in Figure 4.1 (Chapter 4), the vicious Transparency loop became increasingly dominant over time.

Table vii.7 Intake team leader, dd. December 18, 2018

Exemplary quote	Variable CLD
<p>The two interventionists already met the entire team (that expressed a strong interest in testing the intervention), before doing the intake interview with the team leader. In the intake interview, we asked the team leader how (s) he assesses the openness of the members of the team to participate in the intervention:</p> <p><i>Well, we already told you twice, as a team, 'we want to work with this intervention'; so it would be rather strange if we said 'no' the third time around.</i></p>	<p>expectations (converge)</p>
<p>The team leader feels that (s)he is doing much of the work alone or is taking all the initiative, a situation he/she hopes to change. He/she explains:</p> <p><i>Take, for example, agenda-setting. The last two meetings there was no agenda. When you ask 'why is that?' it remains silent. However, I know the answer, it is because I did not propose any agenda items.</i></p>	<p>difference (i.e. room for improvement)</p>
<p>As some of the elements of the intervention deal involve creating an explicit meeting agenda and shared ownership for team decisions, the team leader expresses his/her enthusiasm to take part:</p> <p><i>I just think this is something you should want to be doing with your team. And of course, there has to be someone taking the initiative and propose 'I think this intervention would be beneficial to us'.</i></p>	<p>team leader support/ desired voice & inclusive decision-making</p>

Table vii.8 First meeting, dd. January 7, 2019

Exemplary quote & field observations	Variable cLD
<p>Participants respond moderately positive to the first meeting conducted. They notice strong differences with their established meeting routines and voice behaviors: <i>Well, I notice that the meeting is becoming somewhat more formal. I believe it is useful to structure, to regularly summarize, reflect on what we are doing and where to go from here. Yeah, that's pretty useful.</i> (participant A)</p>	<p>difference (decreases)</p>
<p>As the intervention shakes up the existing voice climate, it triggers a learning process (requiring time) toward building voice capability: <i>What I find challenging is to stick to the structure. You notice the conversation spins out of control easily, so I see benefits there. Yet, it appears difficult to stick to the structure without you [the facilitator] for instance separating pictures, opinions and decisions. But, I do see the benefits of such an endeavor.</i> (participant B)</p>	<p>time delay, voice capability</p>
<p>Personal differences and preferences come to light, for example, when a team member with no difficulty whatsoever to voice him/herself says: <i>I agree that structure facilitates meetings moving forward, especially when decisions and defining actions are concerned. But, yeah, my behavior is not so structured; that's just who I am, so I wonder, would this suit everyone? [...] The meeting is structured by the BOB procedure [Dutch abbreviation referring to structuring a discussion into Picture forming, Opinion forming and Decision-making], yet I am more of a WOP person myself, just go for it!</i> (participant C)</p>	<p>divergence expectations</p>
<p>Interestingly, the team leader openly questions how the changes in the voice climate relate to their previous meetings with a less formal character: <i>I wondered, maybe because of the dynamics, our previous meetings have been extremely unstructured, yet we've had discussions where everyone could freely raise ideas and voice opinions. So, how does this method or intervention relate to that?</i> (team lead)</p>	<p>team leader support (ambiguous)</p>
<p>Even though the team leader is, here, not explicitly questioning the decision to participate in the VOICE intervention per se, this quote signifies a somewhat decreasing commitment to change the voice climate.</p>	

Table VII.9 Second meeting, dd. January 14, 2019

Exemplary quote & field observations	Variable CLD
<p>By systematically inviting every participant to reflect on what is important to her/him and what is on her/his mind, the intervention creates the opportunity to voice oneself which, in turn, creates team voice outcomes. In this team, it also triggers reflection, both rationally and emotionally: <i>I'm sitting here rather disappointed because I expected to discuss something of substance, yet the people I need are not here. So I'm thinking to myself, what on earth am I going to do the rest of the meeting? I think I have to overcome my disappointment.</i></p>	<p>intervention: voice opportunity voice occurrence</p>
<p>This second meeting shows moderately positive outcomes at individual and team level, yet also individual struggles with building voice capability surmise: <i>I believed it to be rather useful. I notice our discovery process, it makes you think: am I going to pose a question or share my opinion? Consequently, you deepen your thinking, and make sure that everyone gets the opportunity to speak up. Thus, I feel everyone is involved. I find this positive.</i> (participant A)</p>	<p>voice capability, voice occurrence & inclusive decision-making, difference</p>
<p><i>Positive, for sure. I think it is rather difficult that, when I have something to add to what's being said, I have to wait for my turn to speak. That's more of a personal issue. I always appreciate the presence of a facilitator, most definitely when there is a lot of talk, and nothing comes of it. Now, the chair makes sure that progress is being made. That's very nice, an excellent way to do it.</i> (participant B)</p>	<p>time delay voice capability, difference (decreases)</p>
<p><i>I'm someone who needs structure, and this fulfils that need. On the other hand, you notice that it takes more time, which is not necessarily bad. It may foster quality, but one notices that we are discovering what works best. It is like what [name] said: Can I share my opinion now? I have to get used to that. I'm happy with this structure.</i> (participant C)</p>	<p>difference (decreases), time delay voice capability</p>

Table VII.10 Third meeting, dd. January 28, 2019

Exemplary quote & field observations	Variable CLD
<p>In this meeting the team's struggles with its role within the central staff of MIL becoming more prominent. Several participants voice different kinds of worries. For example, one participant worries about: <i>... the positioning and potential of my team. This team has been active for half a year now, and I become increasingly aware that the central staff is not the right location to shape the theme that my team is responsible for.</i></p>	tensions around team
<p>Another participant is convinced that: <i>...our organization is not into letting people figure it out for themselves. And this is understandable, at least partly as far as our struggle for the availability of team members is concerned, since the department heads want to decide for themselves what work to prioritize [i.e. do not wish to lend their personnel to theme-centered project teams].</i></p>	tensions around team
<p>Another recurring concern is whether or not the top managers of MIL are truly supportive of the theme centered work initiative: <i>...we've discussed this before, what is our role as a team, and are we really supported or is this support merely espoused? You say [referring to another participant] 'well, top executives do not support us', so there is no true commitment for our assignment. Yet, I would like to question it even more, is this organization one that welcomes teams developing long range visions? Wouldn't this organization rather give orders and have a team execute them? [...] This really undermines our ability to rather autonomously decide and act which we used to have.</i></p>	tensions around team
<p>This meeting appears to be a turning point, as in the evaluation round participants express substantial discontent with the intervention. It appears that there is a mismatch between the struggle they are engaged in, their apparent need to blow off some steam collectively, and the relative strictness of the intervention protocol. In turn, this appears to increase the difference between the desired and current state of voice even further. In the closing round, participants reflect on today's meeting, pointing at the increasing misalignment between the team leader's reasons to join the intervention and the expectations of other team members:</p>	divergence expectations difference desired state (increases)
<p><i>I feel this is too formal for us. I'm regularly restricted in my speaking time, which I do not appreciate. To me, meetings in 'popcorn style' [everyone speaks when he or she feels like it, popping like hot popcorn, red.] are the way to go. (participant A)</i></p>	divergence expectations
<p><i>We're continually busy with the process, how we speak with each other, I find this disturbing. Who can speak up now, what should we talk about precisely? Yeah, this drains my energy drain. (participant B)</i></p>	divergence expectations
<p>Lastly, a participant who experienced this intervention in a different team reflects as follows: <i>Yeah, I think the purpose of this meeting makes it a less credible intervention, for you just want 'popcorn'... you want a more free format. So, I feel the main difference is the purpose of this meeting, we're all equal, we make each other stronger by exchanging experiences. Then, it is questionable whether the setting is appropriate for this intervention. (participant C)</i></p>	divergence expectations

Table VII.11 Fourth meeting, dd. February 4, 2019

Exemplary quote & field observations	Variable CLD
<p>The aims, activities and implementation of the intervention are, within the boundaries of the intervention protocol, determined by the participants of the intervention (e.g. Abildgaard et al 2019; Nielsen & Miraglia, 2017). Accordingly, the facilitator-chair in the fourth meeting aimed to decrease the divergence in expectations, also in response to the evaluation of the previous meeting: <i>I want to try to structure the meeting less tight. This implies that I will separate picture forming from opinion forming, yet I will not work in strict rounds.</i> (facilitator-chair of this meeting)</p>	<p>divergence expectations (decrease)</p>
<p>This adaption implies that participants are, within each phase, able to voice as they preferred: 'popcorn style'. Given the relatively small group, the facilitator-chair can rather easily invite a participant who did not yet speak up in the 'popcorn' approach. Whereas the tensions surrounding the team are more or less the same as in the previous meeting, participants appreciate the adjustments to the format. In particular, they appreciate the role of a facilitator, and the increased freedom to respond to each other: <i>Conversations tend to be more energizing when you can speak 'popcorn' style. Normally, when you hear something, you respond, and someone else adds to it. Consequently, you have a more lively conversation as opposed to strictly following the circle. I believe that in these lively conversations, more new ideas pop up, things that will not surface when following a strict procedure. To me, loose would be better. However, I appreciate the role of a facilitator: somebody to focus the conversation, keep on repeating what questions we are trying to answer, and to structure the steps of picture forming, opinion forming and decision-making.</i> (participant A)</p>	<p>voice occurrence & inclusive decision-making transparency/ focus difference (decreases)</p>
<p><i>Yeah, for me it is pretty much the same. I appreciate that conversations are to the point. Indeed, a facilitator is useful, and this would be the case in many meetings. In fact, when you reserve a meeting room, you should be able to automatically request a facilitator with it. This would improve meetings considerably.</i> (participant B)</p>	

Table VII.12 Final meeting, dd. March 5, 2019

Exemplary quote & field observations	Variable CLD
<p>In this final meeting, tensions both within and surrounding the team play a prominent role. Right at the beginning of the meeting, one participant shares that a higher authority has decided that the 'priority theme' he/she is responsible for, has turned out to be less of a priority for senior management than expected. Without consultation, he was informed that he would be assigned elsewhere: <i>I'm tasked to do something else. Starting today, I'll be doing little to nothing on theme-centered working.</i></p>	tensions around team
<p>This unpleasantly surprises the team leader: <i>...I was seriously motivated to take on the challenge of implementing theme-centered working. We all stepped forward by saying: we'll fix this. Now I'm thinking: 'fuck this'. You [senior management] are not taking this seriously at all.</i></p>	tensions in team
<p>In the remainder of the meeting, participants try to make sense of what is going on, and how to move forward. Participants' diverging expectations become visible again, as the facilitator challenges the informal character of the meeting and the lack of preparation by participants; one participant responds as follows to the facilitator-chair: <i>...you've hit the nail on the head too, this has always been a moment to have a coffee together. Share some thoughts because we're all looking for what to do.</i> (participant A)</p>	
<p><i>Well we're not unanimous regarding that idea, [participant B] shared with us that he cares less about getting together with [other team members]</i> (participant C)</p>	divergence expectations
<p>The facilitator replies and challenges further: <i>... this is still rather ambiguous, I do not hear a fundamental choice: what is your purpose, catching up and sharing concerns? Or: take a stand collectively, act together, and engage in this tombola of power relations and tensions?</i></p>	

APPENDIX VIII

DESIGNING AND TESTING THE VOICE SOLICITATION INTERVENTION (CHAPTER 4)

This appendix explains how we designed and tested the *Voice Solicitation Intervention* in an actual organizational setting. It also shows how the design process builds on earlier studies within this dissertation (see Chapter 1 for details).

Stage I: Problem formulation

The research question guiding the design process was: what hinders and enables organizations that have long thrived on ‘command and control’ to become better at combining power-over with power-to practices. Accordingly, the intervention had to meet three design requirements. Many organizational change initiatives implicitly appear to abandon one practice (e.g. directive leadership) and substitute it with another (e.g. self-steering teams)—implying either/or. The first key design requirement therefore was to *combine* the two types of practices—implying a both/and approach. The second requirement was to test the intervention in an actual organizational setting in ongoing organizational activities. This implies that, for instance, designing a large-scale planned change initiative (e.g. an Appreciative Inquiry Summit), as a separate event, is not an option. The final key design requirement is that the intervention should facilitate negotiations about power-related tensions (as detailed in Chapter 2).

Stage II: Selection of evidence

The literature suggests that voice, or the act of speaking up, is one of the key manifestations of power-to (cf. empowered actors) (Parpart, 2013). The behavior of powerful actors is critical in explaining whether employees speak up or remain silent (e.g. Morrison, 2014). The review of the literature in Chapter 3 suggested a variety of ways to increase the power-to by soliciting employee voice in participatory change approaches, empowering organizational designs, or participatory research (see Chapter 3 for more details). However, these various practices do not meet the three design requirements. Most of them are disruptive/intrusive for the ongoing activities in the organization. Furthermore, the literature on these approaches is silent on the power-related consequences of these initiatives; for example, the relation to formal authority is unclear. Thus, the literature as a whole provided limited guidance in *how* to design an intervention that combines power-over with power-to.

Stage III: Design, intervention, evaluation

Design

Even though the whole review provided little *practical* guidance in developing a prototype, it pointed at the literature about circular organization designs (Ackoff, 1989), also known

as sociocracy and holacracy (Rau & Koch-Gonzalez, 2018; Robertson, 2015). Case studies of this type of organizational design suggest that major forms of employee voice – such as employees voicing their concerns and ideas directly to the CEO and non-executive directors – can only be structurally sustained when top management together with the company’s shareholders adopts a power structure in which (representatives of) employees and managers together, in so-called circles, decide on the boundaries within which managers lead operational activities (Romme, 1999; Romme & Endenburg, 2006). Here, circularity refers to the process of continually switching between the power-over practice of managing operations and the power-to practice of team decision-making (Romme, 1999). Because circular organizational designs appeared to meet our first key design requirement, we identified them as a key source for designing an intervention. In order to meet the second design requirement, as little disturbance of ongoing organizational activities, we decided to intervene in existing meetings of teams within MIL. This implied we could draw on some of the procedures developed in the circular organizing domain, without actually seeking to implement a circular organizational design beyond the team level.

By drawing on circular organizing procedures, we were able to meet the first two design requirements. In order to meet the third requirement, the mediation of power-related tensions, we consulted the literature on group facilitation. This literature suggests that some of these challenges can be mediated by appointing a meeting facilitator, who ideally attends both the structural aspects of the process (e.g. creating equal opportunities for voice; clarifying goals) and the group dynamics (e.g. developing psychological safety and shared responsibility of the team process; resolving conflicts and tensions) (e.g. Schwartz, 2017; Schwartzman, 1989). A facilitator supports and guides the processes through which different voices of team members are articulated and interact with each other (Cooren, Thompson, Canestraro, & Bodor, 2006), enabling team members to “objectify what they are supposed to think and wish for” (Cooren et al., 2006, p. 535; see also Hogan, 2003). Additionally, when facilitators hold explicit ideological frames (i.e. striving to empower participants to speak up) as well as have professional skills in using various speech acts conducive in promoting voice (Schwarz, 2017), they are more likely to make in-the-moment choices that promote voice (Smolović Jones & Cammock, 2015). Thus, drawing on this literature we decided that our intervention involved appointing an external meeting facilitator to mediate the power-related tensions.

The literature described thus far appeared to inform the development of the intervention, but it did not sufficiently explain what the facilitator could *do* to change the power dynamics in these teams. Therefore, the doctoral student participated in a course providing an introduction to the Sociocratic Circular Organizing Method. Based on a synthesis of the literature with the practical guidance provided in the course, the intervention was developed. The key elements of the Voice Solicitation Intervention are:

- The intended *Outcome* (O) of this intervention is to solicit voice, and thereby foster the potential benefits of voice such as team performance, collaboration, and co-ownership of team decisions.
- Teams that are being invited to participate are comprised of a manager or principal and several subordinates. This allows us to meet the first design requirement. The key *Mechanism* (M) here thus is: joint/team reflection, in particular by utilizing the expertise and experiences of all participants in team decision-making.
- A key element of the intervention is learning to separate ‘team decision-making’ from ‘team operations’. This implies that a manager and the other team members decide collectively on matters of team functioning and/or mutual concern (i.e. setting boundaries), whereas the manager remains in charge of the team operations (i.e. the chain of command remains the same in operational circumstances). Collective decision-making on team functioning thus involves setting broad boundaries (cf. team policy). Within these boundaries, a manager has sufficient autonomy to anticipate on unforeseen events and make operational decisions. (M: separating team decision-making—team operations; O: power-over and power-to reinforce each other, as opposed to undermining each other.)
- In team meetings the manager has the same role as the other team members. In other words, the manager’s voice is just one of team member’s voices. The role of *meeting facilitator* – within MIL the team manager predominantly facilitates the meeting– is being executed by an external facilitator. Table 4.1 in Chapter 4 lists and explains the various speech acts used to solicit and foster voice in the intervention, categorized in three types of ‘facilitative behaviors’ (Hogan, 2003): guiding, inviting, and challenging (Heron, 1999; Schwarz, 2017). After at least three meetings, a team member with facilitation skills can take over this role. (M: separating the management of operations from facilitating a team meeting; creating voice opportunity. O: optimizing two complex leadership tasks; shared ownership for team decisions; increasing support for the team leader’s operational (power-over) decision-making.)
- Every team meeting starts with an opening round and finishes with a closing round. (M: attention and reflection; creating conditions for warming up and cooling down. (O: individual team members feel being valued and their voices are acknowledged.)
- The meeting agenda is being formulated and affirmed by the team. The team leader may want to propose an agenda, yet the team leader’s voice is not decisive in this regard. (M: transparency in agenda setting, equivalence in decision-making.)

- Informed consent rules team decision-making. In other words, decisions are being made based upon open argumentation, and when no one objects. (M: shared decision-making on team issues of mutual concern (i.e. boundary setting); collective/joint reflection; utilizing all available expertise and experience.)
- The decision-making process consists of three subsequent phases: picture forming, opinion forming, and decision-making. Every phase offers a setting to solicit voice from every individual team member. (M: structural voice opportunity; shared decision-making; structured process; reflection.)
- Training and coaching the team member that will take over as a facilitator/ chairperson is part of the intervention. (M: fostering craftsmanship concerning facilitation as a complex task. O: creating conditions for sustained outcomes in team performance.)

In sum, in designing the Voice Solicitation Intervention, we drew considerably on Sociocratic and Holocratic interventions or procedures. Yet, many elements of this intervention (e.g. opening and closing rounds; separating picture forming, opinion forming and decision-making) can also be found in facilitation handbooks (e.g. Heron, 1999; Schwarz, 2017) and/or are familiar to facilitators. Please note that the approach adopted in the intervention study differs dramatically from a top-down organization-wide sociocratic implementation process, as described in the literature (e.g. Romme & Endenburg, 2006). By contrast, the Voice Solicitation Intervention focuses at teams, aiming to increase team-level understanding of these dynamics. Accordingly, we did not seek commitment from top-management, but only sought commitment from the team leader prior to the intervention.

Intervention

Once the prototype of the Voice Solicitation Intervention was developed, the doctoral student continued with the following three steps to test it in MIL.

As a first step, he invited an experienced meeting facilitator to help him obtain the necessary facilitation skills. Together, they deliberately pilot-tested the intervention protocol and modified it, based on the experiences and feedback arising from these pilots. This phase also functioned as a training period for the two facilitators (i.e. the interim chairpersons who executed the intervention protocol in MIL), in which they developed a standardized routine for facilitating meetings. Subsequently, they pilot-tested the intervention prototype in two teams at a Dutch university.

Second, as an insider to the organization, the doctoral student utilized his network to get in touch with team managers who might be interested in participating in this intervention study. In formal intake interviews, he first introduced his research in about three minutes, and then explored the (power-related) team dynamics in the team led by this

manager. Some of these intake interviews were conducted with multiple team members. At the end of each interview, they decided whether the team dynamics (as experienced by the manager / team members) matched with the objectives of the intervention.

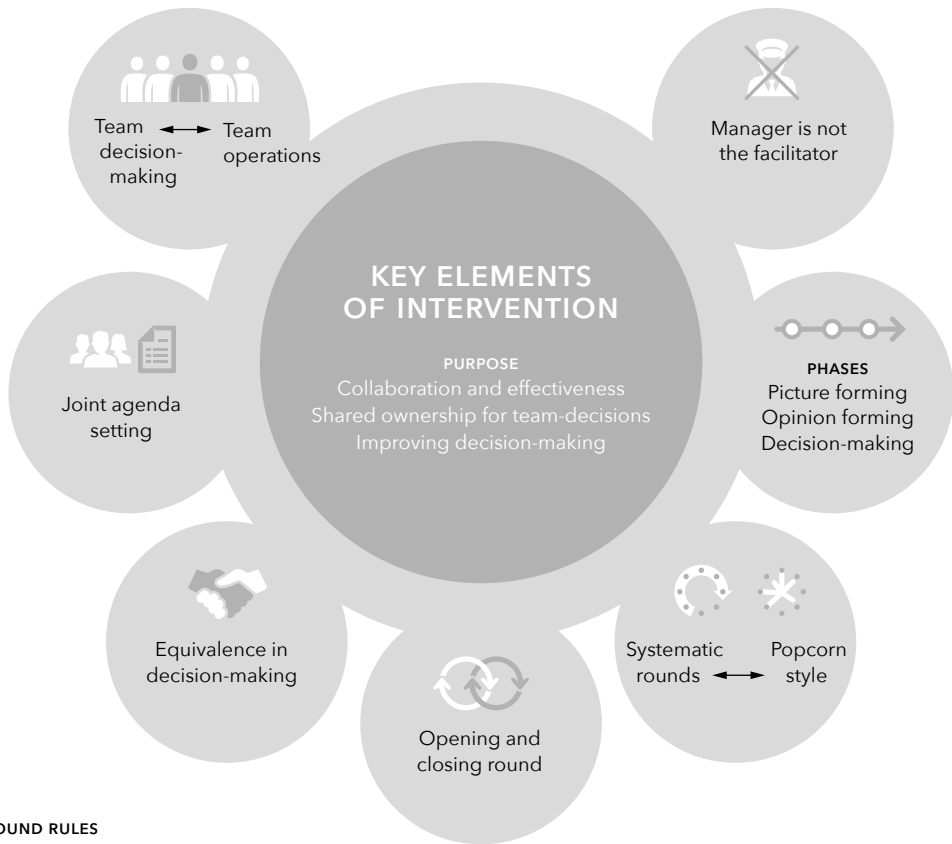
In the third step, the prototyped Voice Solicitation Intervention was executed in ten teams in their regular team meetings. In other words, the meetings that were used in this research project, were already scheduled ones for each team, with their given agendas, and did not ask for any additional sessions to elaborate on the research project. In this step, we also asked the team manager to introduce us, and explain why (s)he had decided to take part in this study. Next, the doctoral student pitched the background of this research project in no more than two minutes—making sure to use layman terms instead of academic constructs—and invited team members to ask some questions. Please note that the team members did not receive additional training to take part in the intervention, the approach thus was geared toward ‘learning by doing’. In each meeting, the relevance and procedure of a specific element of the intervention (as described above: e.g. “opening round”, “picture forming”, or “joint agenda setting”) was briefly clarified. To facilitate each team in this learning by doing process and create awareness for the different elements of the intervention, we designed the infographic visualized in Figure A4-1. It took team members three to five meetings to engage the team in sufficient practicing with each of the key elements of the intervention.

Evaluation

The intervention was evaluated both qualitatively and quantitatively. For the qualitative evaluation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the team leaders before and after the interventions took place. An additional set of interviews was conducted with participants who stood out, in one way or another. Also, numerous informal interviews took place with participants, recorded and verbatim transcribed when possible, or else notes were taken. All meetings were recorded and verbatim transcribed. The doctoral student and a second facilitator functioned as the interventionists. This intervention team of two served to combine the role of meeting facilitator (fulfilled by one person) with the role of participant-observer (fulfilled by the other) mainly engaged in observing group dynamics and taking extensive notes on phenomena not (entirely) captured by the recording. Furthermore, each individual meeting was evaluated with all meeting participants in the closing round. In each last team meeting attended by the two facilitators, the entire meeting series was evaluated with all meeting participants as well.

In addition, we used a one-group pre/post-test approach (Campbell et al., 1963; Van Aken et al., 2012) to determine whether the intervention had any impact, that is, whether it implied a difference between the (pre-intervention) observation 1 regarding various constructs related to voice and the (post-intervention) observation 2 of the results obtained after completing the intervention. These additional quantitative data especially served to triangulate and validate the initial findings arising from the qualitative data analysis

Figure VIII.1 Key elements of the intervention



GROUND RULES

Stick to the procedure: (rounds/phases)
 - bite your tongue for mutual benefit

Utilize opportunities for co-steering:
 agenda setting, opening and closing rounds,
 and decision-making

Picture forming? Boundary setting and
 information sharing. Only questions and
 answers; delay giving your opinion

Opinion forming? What are our views on
 this issue? Share your ideas and why you
 think or feel that way. Ask others to explain
 their views

Decision-making? What do we decide? Is
 the proposed decision 'good enough' -
 don't expect the perfect solution

Experiment with a different balance
 between listening and speaking

APPENDIX IX ADDITIONAL SURVEY RESULTS MEASURING ELEMENTS OF THE INTERVENTION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE (CHAPTER 4)

Next to the validated scales, an additional set of questions was inserted in the post-intervention survey to verify the extent to which the team members experience the different aspects of the intervention. These questions are self-developed and not validated in other studies and have the objective to quickly and assess the effect of the intervention in various areas.

Figure IX.1 Improved meeting routine

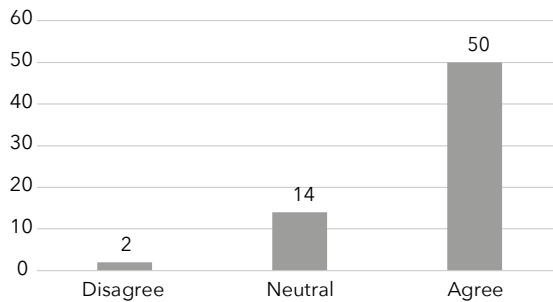
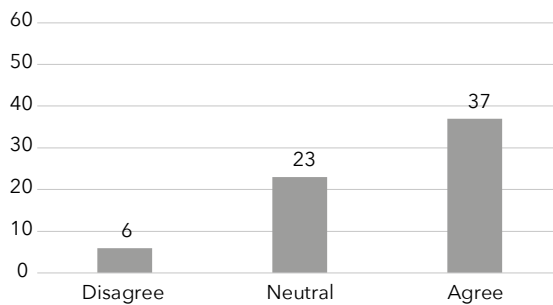


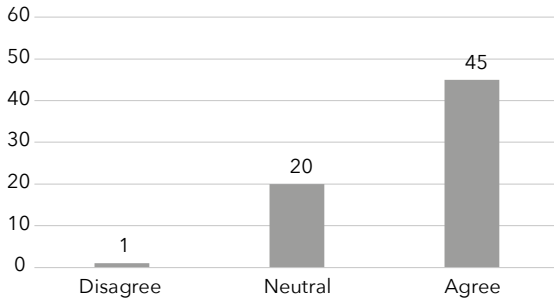
Figure IX.1 shows to what extent team members indicated that the intervention contributed to an improved meeting experience. The graph showed that 50 out of 66 respondents experienced increased levels of satisfaction.

Figure IX.2 Improved collaboration



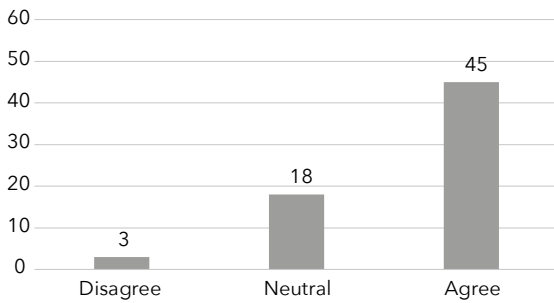
The second graph displays how the team members experienced team collaboration throughout the study. The numbers indicate that 37 members experienced increased collaboration, while only 6 members disagreed.

Figure IX.3 Improved co-responsibility



The following graph shows if team member agree that that intervention led to an increased feeling of co-responsibility for the team process. The numbers show that 45 out of 66 members agree with this statement.

Figure IX.4 Improved transparency



The fourth graph indicates that the intervention has improved the transparency of what teams should collectively discuss, what the different opinions are on the topic, and what is decided on.

Figure IX.5 Improved balance

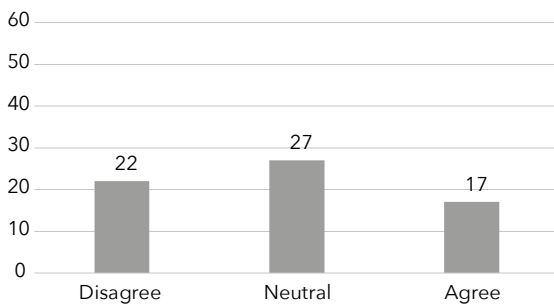


Figure IX.5 shows that regarding the redistribution of power resulting from the intervention, opinions are more dispersed as 17 member agree it led to a better power balance, while 22 members indicated to not experience an improved power balance.

Figure IX.6 Improved meeting due to the strict separation of team leader and meeting facilitator

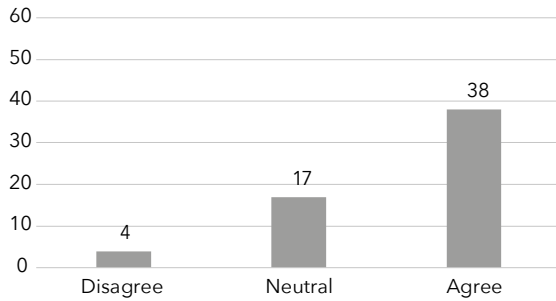
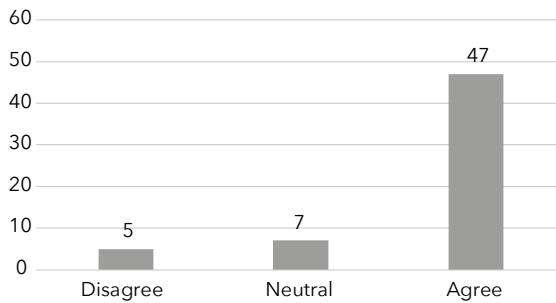


Figure IX.6 clearly indicates that the majority of the team members agree that the strict separation of roles (between team leader and discussion leader) contributes to improved consultation.

Figure IX.7 Improved meeting due to strict separation of opinion forming and decision-making



Evident from Figure IX.7, also the separation of opinion forming and decision-making is experienced as adding to improved consultation as 47 team members indicate to agree with this statement, while only 5 members disagree.

Figure IX.8 Popcorn effect

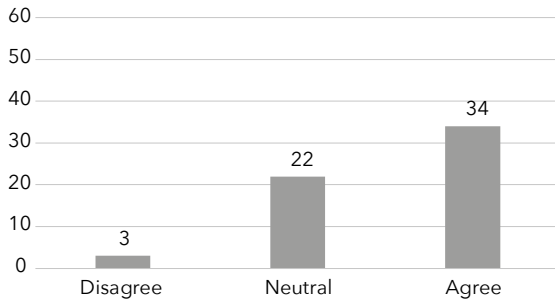


Figure IX.8 shows that also the switching between consultation and popcorn rounds is appreciated by a majority of the team members (34 team members agree with this statement).

Figure IX.9 Opening and closing round

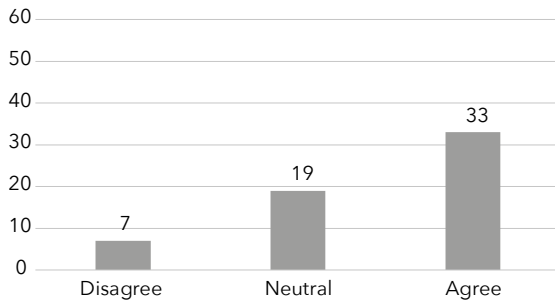


Figure IX.9 shows that similar numbers are found regarding the appreciation of including an opening and closing round for improving consultations.

Figure IX.10 Equality among team members

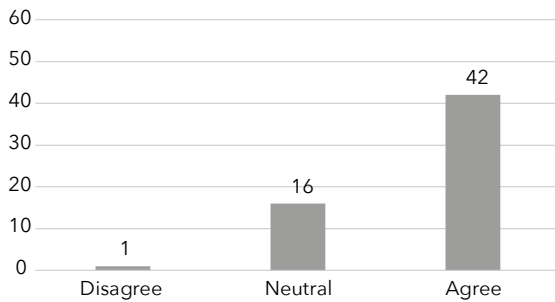


Figure IX.10 displays to what extent the participating team members agreed with the fact that increased equality among the team members contributes to improved consultation. A large majority agreed with this affect with 42 members confirming this statement.

Figure IX.11 Shared responsibility for agenda setting

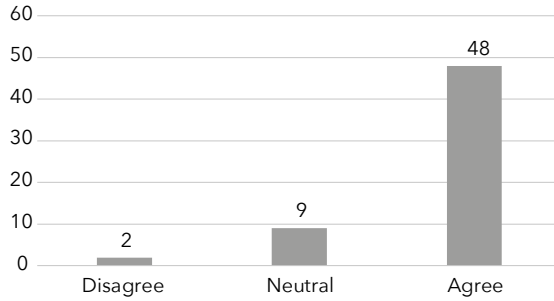
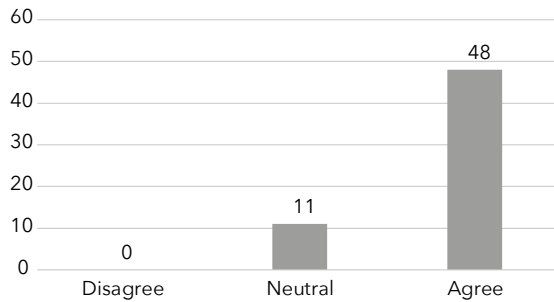


Figure IX.11 provides an overview of the extent to which team member agree that the shared responsibility for agenda setting and time allocation improves the meeting experience. It shows that a large majority of the team members agree with this statement, while only 2 members disagree.

Figure IX.12 Separation of team policy and execution



Lastly, figure IX.12 indicates that separating matters of team functioning and/or mutual concern from day to day operations improved the meeting quality as experienced by most of the participants.



Summary

SUMMARY

Many organizations adopt some form of empowerment, for example in employee participation programs, dialogic approaches to organizational change, and in organizational designs that promote less hierarchy and more self-management. These initiatives are adopted for various reasons. Sometimes, organizational actors seek to improve organizational effectiveness, for instance by becoming more resilient or innovative. Other actors may have moral reasons, for example being more inclusive as an organization or contributing to the emancipation of minority voices. All these forms of empowerment are essentially about increasing the *power to* act throughout the organization. That is to say, powerful actors attempt to use their power, through empowerment initiatives, to increase other employees' ability to act or make decisions autonomously. Power-to practices are frequently contrasted with *power over* ones. Power-over refers to practices like speech acts, that demonstrate the power of actor A over another actor B. However, empowerment and the relationship between power-over and power-to are far from straightforward, and many questions remain unanswered. Against such a background, this dissertation investigates how to combine 'vertical' power-over with 'horizontal' power-to practices. The central question is: what helps and hinders organizations that have long thrived on 'command and control' to become better at combining power-over with power-to practices? This dissertation tackles the issue by developing knowledge that is relevant to practitioners and academics alike. We adopt design science as the overarching research strategy, linking the three individual studies that together help answer the central research question. The three studies address three stages in the design science cycle: problem formulation; selection of evidence; and the design, intervention, and evaluation of a solution to the problem.

Study one builds on an in-depth case study covering 41 months. We formulate a problem in practice that arises when powerful actors attempt to increase others' power-to act in a setting that has long relied on 'command and control' (i.e. power-over). More specifically, this study identifies power-related tensions within and between actors that arise from empowerment initiatives, and how these tensions affect empowerment efforts. As such, it provides a new perspective on why organizational empowerment initiatives often produce unintended outcomes and sometimes even fail completely. These findings respond to recent calls for deeper knowledge on the processes and complexities that generate such outcomes.

In study two, we conduct a mechanism-based review of the literature, also as input for developing the evidence-informed solution in the third study. As an antidote to the mainstream discourse on power, this review contributes to the literature by developing an integrated framework of power as a positive force. By integrating various separate discourses, this framework extends prior literature reviews focusing on 'power over others' and thereby creates novel avenues for research on power.

Building on the previous two steps/studies, we develop, test and evaluate a solution to the problem in study three—in the form of voice solicitation intervention. Drawing

on 44 meetings, 48 interviews and additional data, we demonstrate how this intervention can trigger a virtuous process increasing power-to. Yet, this can also result in a vicious process if team members' expectations increasingly diverge, or psychological safety is compromised, and tensions build up in ways that ultimately demotivate voice (i.e. power-to). This study contributes to the literature by conceptualizing voice solicitation as a collective, interactional process rather than a one-time dyadic event—that can be both virtuous and vicious in nature. Our findings thus extend earlier work on voice solicitation, by focusing on supervisor-employee dyads, the role of other team members in cultivating voice solicitation outcomes, and the motivational origins of (not) soliciting voice.

Overall, this doctoral dissertation makes three main contributions. First, it contributes to research on organizational change, demonstrating the design science potential to facilitate large-scale change by accumulating 'small wins.' Second, by adopting a design science approach, this dissertation demonstrates that planned organizational change initiatives can be informed by theory and simultaneously advance extant theory. Third, by adding a tested dialogic change intervention to the literature and drawing attention to its complexities, this dissertation contributes to the theory *and* practice of dialogic organizational change.



Dankwoord

DANKWOORD

Dit proefschrift was er niet geweest zonder het meedenken, meedoen of meeleven van velen. Een aantal mensen noem ik specifiek. Om te beginnen mijn promotor en copromotoren. Sjoerd, ik realiseer me dat ik het ongelofelijk heb getroffen met jouw begeleiding. Je professionaliteit, snelheid, scherpheid, gevoel voor humor en relativering de afgelopen jaren maken dat ik de totstandkoming van deze dissertatie heb ervaren als een soepel proces. Het grote vertrouwen dat je in mij hebt, heeft de kwaliteit van mijn werk en mijn persoonlijke ontwikkeling een stevige impuls gegeven. Ik kan je daar niet genoeg voor bedanken. Ook mijn copromotoren Annelies en Sharon ben ik veel dank verschuldigd. Het was een mooie mix van collegialiteit, inspiratie, kritiek en plezier. Dit proefschrift is af, maar gelukkig hebben we nog ruim voldoende materiaal om de komende jaren te blijven samenwerken, daar kijk ik naar uit.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the other members of my doctoral committee: Daniëlle Zandee, Pascale Le Blanc, and Daniel King. Thank you very much for finding the time to rigorously review this thesis. Your thoughtful comments allowed me to further improve my work, and encouraged me to make my personal future research agenda more concrete.

De luxe en complexiteit van een rol als buitenpromovendus is dat je werkt in twee werelden. In de praktijkwereld ben ik bijzondere dank verschuldigd aan de betrokkenheid, inzet en openheid van de meer dan 140 collega's die een rol hebben gespeeld in dit onderzoek. Zonder hen was dit proefschrift niet mogelijk geweest. Harry van den Brink, als wij zes jaar geleden niet zo open naar elkaar waren geweest over wat we meemaakten in verandertrajecten bij Defensie, dan was dit onderzoek er niet geweest. Heel veel dank voor je interesse, je steun en de ruimte die je mij gaf. Ook Hans Leijten ben ik erkentelijk voor het vertrouwen dat hij mij heeft gegeven. De gesprekken met Arnoud van den Bout en Aad van de Vreugde waren een waardevolle ondersteuning de afgelopen jaren. Ook bijzonder vond ik de gesprekken met collega's in verandertrajecten waar ik mee samenwerkte in complexe projecten. In die gesprekken reconstrueerden we hun versie van de geschiedenis, het eerste project in deze dissertatie. Heel hartelijk dank voor jullie openheid. Daarnaast ben ik de teams en teamleiders die meededen met het testen van de interventie in hun teambijeenkomsten bijzonder dankbaar. Jullie enthousiasme en kritiek zijn bijzonder waardevol geweest en ik vond het mooi om samen met jullie te werken aan het verbeteren van jullie teamoverleg. Niet in de laatste plaats, Rob van der Eyden, je hulp en begeleiding als ervaren gespreksleider waren buitengewoon belangrijk in dit project. Daarbij was het ook nog eens erg leuk met je samen te werken.

Door de jaren heen heb ik veel steun ervaren van mijn collega's van het 'begeleidingsnetwerk', een netwerk van (team)coaches en veranderaars: Carine Tromp-Meesters, Daniël Opsteegh, John de Bruijn, Frank van Veldhuizen en Jan Wassink. Jullie weten als geen ander dat werken aan organisatieontwikkeling niet altijd vanzelf gaat. Ik vind

het heel plezierig dat we daarin samen op kunnen trekken. Bij de Nederlandse Defensie Academie, Paul van Fenema, we hebben de afgelopen jaren regelmatig gesproken over onderzoek, je bent zelfs de eerste die mijn onderzoeksopzet op papier heeft gezien. Heel hartelijk dank voor je betrokkenheid. Laten we onze koffiemomenten voortzetten en zoeken naar mogelijkheden om samen onderzoek te gaan doen.

Naast academische en praktijkcollega's zijn er ook nog mensen die op indirecte wijze hebben bijgedragen aan dit proefschrift. Freek Hermkens, (voormalig) collega buitenpromovendus, wat was het plezierig met je op te trekken de afgelopen jaren. Dat zat gelijk goed vanaf de eerste gezamenlijke kop koffie op Schiphol. Mijn werkdagen in Eindhoven heb ik altijd als erg prettig ervaren. Niet in de laatste plaats dankzij de gesprekken en het gevoel voor humor van Kati, Stela, Ntorina, Nathalie, Madis, Wouter en diverse andere fijne collega's. Bianca, Freke en Astrid stonden altijd klaar om mij te helpen met tal van praktische aangelegenheden: ontzettend fijn. Jan Andreae, voor de eerlijke en waardevolle gesprekken de afgelopen jaren. Anne Spies, voor je professionaliteit, menselijkheid en genereuze bemoediging.

Lieve vrienden en familie, al vind ik onderzoek doen prachtig, het is ook heel fijn en broodnodig over wat anders te praten. Door regelmatig samen te eten, drinken, wandelen, telefoneren of verblijven zijn jullie me daarin de afgelopen jaren bijzonder behulpzaam geweest. Lieve Jaap-Willem, wat fijn dat we al zo lang bevriend zijn, daarnaast, als je mij in 2000 niet 'aan boord' had gehouden, was dit proefschrift er ook niet geweest. Liduina, lieve 'Stief', erg plezierig dat je zo jezelf bent en dat wel elkaar nog regelmatig zien om bijvoorbeeld herinneringen op te halen over Ben/papa. Marlies, lieve zus, ik ben erg blij dat we zulk goed contact hebben. Het hielp me bijvoorbeeld enorm dat het afgelopen jaar zo meedacht met het opvoeden en trainen van onze kleine jachthond, een intensief project naast het afronden van dit proefschrift. Lieve mam, heel veel dank voor je betrokkenheid bij wat mij bezighoudt. Ik hoop van harte dat we nog vaak met 'het hele spul' naar Gees kunnen.

Lieve Eva, ook zonder jou had ik dit proefschrift niet kunnen schrijven. Ik ben heel erg blij met jou en hoe we het samen hebben. Ook voor wat betreft onderzoek zijn we goed op elkaar ingespeeld en onze onderzoeksinteressen overlappen sterk. Je betrokkenheid en flexibiliteit rondom mijn proefschrift waren erg behulpzaam. Die flexibiliteit stelde ik regelmatig op de proef, op momenten waarop ik dat het meest nodig had, liet je mij in alle rust studeren. Lieve Sofie, Bahati en Mwanzo, of jullie gaan studeren of niet, dat vind ik niet zo belangrijk. Wat ik ieder van jullie vooral gun is dat je op professioneel gebied iets zoekt en vindt dat je ligt. Ik hoop dat jullie daar dan net zoveel plezier aan beleven als ik de afgelopen jaren heb gehad in het schrijven van dit boek. Onthoud goed, dat zoeken naar wat je ligt duurt soms wel twintig jaar, misschien zelfs langer. Niet opgeven, blijven (onder)zoeken!



About the author

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steven van Baarle was born in Hilversum, the Netherlands in 1977. After attending the Royal Netherlands Naval College, he became a management consultant for various Ministry of Defense departments from 2002 onwards. His fascination for professionalization drove him to study Strategy and Organization at the Open University. As his consulting practice evolved in the direction of advising on and facilitating change, he subsequently obtained an executive master in Change Management at the inter-university center s100. The quest for a better understanding of the change trajectories in his working environment motivated Steven to start a research project as an external PhD candidate.

As a scholar-practitioner, Steven focuses on developing actionable knowledge, aiming to simultaneously solve problems in practice and contribute to organization theory. His main research interests are the dynamics of stability and change in organizations. Steven's research aims to enhance our understanding of these dynamics as well as their key (practical) challenges, by drawing on insights from the power, empowerment, and change literature. He has presented his work at several international conferences and produced his first publication in *Organization Studies*. In 2020, Steven received the Best Doctoral Student Paper award from the Academy of Management's Organizational Development and Change Division.

