Perpetuating Entrepreneurship through Dialogue
- A Social Constructionist View -

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Chapter six

Guideline. In chapter six, we draw theoretical, practical, and epistemological implications from this research project on high tech firms, and from the way we conceived this study on the organizing of perpetuated entrepreneurship.

In fragment 24, theoretical implications are presented in three ways. Firstly, we confront the research conclusions on the organizing process of perpetuated entrepreneurship, as documented empirically in chapter four, with the insights on the social nature of entrepreneurship as developed throughout chapter five. This confrontation is summarized in the formulation of three propositions. Secondly, comment is made on the role of creativity as an essential part in the entrepreneurial process. Thirdly, the consequences of an entrepreneurial study for organizational theory and of our social constructionist persuasions for entrepreneurship research are described.

In fragment 25, we explore the practical possibilities of this study for intervention situations. It is suggested how the social constructionist persuasions and the interpretive research methodology can be used in enacting the 'intervention circle'. A 'Bakhtinian' trajectory in the praxis of organizing entrepreneurship is proposed. A research follow-up of an intervention in a high tech firm gives a first indication of how an intervention into a multivoiced organizing process can be framed and supported through the research conceptions and methods of this project.

In fragment 26, the idea of 'writing in fragments' is situated within a contextualist view of knowledge production. Arguments are drawn from the literary stream of 'metafiction' as well as from conceptions in organization theory. It is argued that the fragment idea is the only form 'to be trusted' when describing entrepreneurial reality in its perpetuated succession of events and conversations.
Fragment Twenty-four
Between Research and Theory: Theoretical Implications

In this fragment, a number of theoretical implications of the study in chapter five will be outlined concerning the social process inherent in the perpetuation of innovative entrepreneurship. These implications have a bearing on theory formation in the domains of both entrepreneurship and the organization. Firstly, an attempt will be made to take the insights into the social process developed in chapter five and integrate them with our line of thinking concerning organizing as a dilemmatic process, and with the theoretical notion of 'texture' and 'potential space', as developed in chapter four. Secondly, we shall comment on the role of creativity as an essential part in the entrepreneurial process and as a necessary quality of every organizing process. Thirdly, I shall indicate the consequences of this study of the organizing process of continuous entrepreneurship for the organizing of organizations in general.

Connecting Dilemmas, Texture, and Potential Space with Meaning Configurations

It now becomes possible to set up a confrontation between our conclusions over the organizing process of perpetuated entrepreneurship through the notions of dilemma, texture, and potential space (respectively, fragments 16, 17, and 18 from chapter four), and the insights into the social nature of entrepreneurship as these have been developed throughout chapter five. By implication, three propositions can be formulated: (1) the creation and perpetuated development of the high tech firm emerges on the relationally enacted boundary between creating and integrating; (2) the concepts of 'texture' and 'potential space' can guide entrepreneurial actors in organizing such a boundary; (3) organizing perpetuated entrepreneurship through 'texture' and 'potential space' is a dialogic process in which different meaning configurations are interwoven.

Creation and development on the boundary of two or more realities

The view that creation and perpetuating creativeness requires a form of intermediary or triadic organizing (chapter four), can now be connected to the developmental ideas of Winnicott (fragment 18) and Vygotsky (fragment 20), and the language perspective of Bakhtin
Dealing with dilemmas: organizing a texture and a potential space

I suggested two notions that would further elaborate the claim that dealing with the dilemma of creating and integrating requires a focus on the intermediate developmental zone: these are two organizing forms - texture and potential space - which can help us to make this zone more concrete and which make this thickness accessible as an organizational task for practitioners.

A similar suggestion has been put forward by Shotton (1993b, p. 59): "This means that between people and their surroundings are 'gaps' or 'zones' of an uncertain kind. It is in these 'gaps' or 'zones' between people (organisms), within these diffuse, only partially structured boundaries, or, to coin a term, 'thick interfaces', that I suggest [...] form is created." 'Texture' and 'potential space' are such zones or thick interfaces, the not-yet-there part so necessary for further development. Van Dongen and colleagues (cited in Maas, 1988, p. 107), who have documented the role of 'thirdness' in their theory of social integration (fragment 8), also 'define' it in relational terms: "It is the third of infinity, undefined, undifferentiated, never to enclose, but essentially present in the face. It is exactly there where the limits of the cognitive defining possibilities are. The third cannot be defined nor differentiated, nor preceded. It is the third in front of a we." Like Van Dongen, who calls the third indefinable, Shotton is quite pessimistic as well, calling these ways of interrelating and these forms 'unsystematizable'. I agree with this pessimism in that we need to stress that these intermediary forms are open and providential. Importing a 'system' as an explanatory device hides from us "the reality of growth, the irreversibility of time, and the possibility of genuine creativity; we fail to realize the still incomplete nature of what it is we seek" (Shotton, 1993b, p. 59). However, as far as the intermediate zone can be made scientifically intelligible, the notions of 'texture' and 'potential space' are appropriate to make this zone a bit 'thicker'.

A dialogic view of dilemmas: a generative effect

Dealing with dilemmas becomes then an ongoing dialogic activity between two poles which is neither perspective-less nor context-less, but dependent on and enacted through a developmental zone or third partner. Perpetuating entrepreneurship is then dependent on whether and how the dialogue between both poles can be performed. I would like to draw a distinction between a dialogic and a dialectical approach to dilemmas, in which the former focuses on the interrelationships, the context, and their generative possibilities. Again I cite Bakhtin: "Dialogue and dialectics. Take a dialogue and remove the voices... remove the intonations... carve out abstract concepts and judgments from living words and responses, name everything into one abstract consciousness - and that's how you get dialectics". The way we have been analyzing the cases using dilemmas (fragment 16) resembles in many respects the operation Bakhtin describes:

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carving out interpretive grounded concepts from their story context, without giving the reader a chance to hear the voices who have spoken, their intonations and their whole liveliness, call it the 'breath and steam' of an interview. Or, to put it constructively, the case narratives, as recounted in fragment 22, are actually an attempt to re-live the stories of the interviews in a new story, which 're-'installs' the different voices, their differences and resemblances.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, a study of dilemmas as such cannot be sufficient. Poles of a dilemma are to be linked to persons and parties, and to their discursive practices. The logic of creating and of integrating, are often to be found in the roles and discourse of different parties, departments, managers... We would like to see them as 'interpretive repertoires' which belong to different language games and forms of life. The distinction we made between dilemmas and meaning configurations is one of abstraction, which can hide the fact that the logic of creating is a specific discourse which is used in the conversations of the firm. As such, they are not unilaterally linked to one person or group, but can be heard to a greater or lesser degree in the discursive practices of several partners. The development of a high tech is then less a conflictual struggle between irreconcilable poles of a dilemma than it is a multivoiced dialogue among several interpretive repertoires, which are dependent on each other for their own development. The art of continuous collective creativity is then to have no voice left out of the dialogue. For instance, in Coat, it was remarked that the conversations about time were connected to short-term issues and to long-term issues, but that they did not talk about time issues in middle-term terms, which could be 'a third way out' in their problems of dealing with time, and the so-called time dilemma. The question in this firm became then who would be able to voice the middle-term when and where.

The dialogue is then the generator in the creative development of the high tech which is poised on the boundary between creating and integrating. A surprising conclusion? In fact, the role of dialogue in creating 'thirdness' is something known for a long time in the organizational context, in particular in that situation where an organization (and a relationship) is put to the acid test, the conflict. I would surmise that one of the first, not to say the oldest instances in which the notion of thirdness, in the form of the 'third party', can be found, is in theory of conflict handling (Cummings & Huse, 1989; Lewicki & Sheppard, 1985; Prein, 1994; Salipante & Bouwen, 1990; Walton, 1987). Whenever two people, two firms, two lands, or two parties as blocs stand opposite one another and neither is ready or willing to budge, the only way to create some room for maneuvering is to bring in a third party. This can allow both hot-headed parties, the protagonist and antagonist, to begin to let go of their entrenched positions. The impasse shows the way to an opening. The 'third party', also called a 'process consultant', thus takes a dialogic line. He or she will not in the first place have a (substantive) solution to the conflict in view, but rather, the context, and an interpersonal way of doing business. Feelings are allowed flow freely, the emotional temperature is taken, there is above all room for listening, before questions begin to be asked, before getting mixed up in the other's message. Feelings are given(). It is here revealed how one standpoint evokes the other. Fixed meanings are pried loose and put in context. A point of view is never absolute, but gains its particular qualities in relation to other points of view. In order to establish the totality of the process and to situate the various standpoints, the process consultant has recourse to different 'techniques', such as active listening, role reversal, role negotiating, and procedure-of-one-text, when the emotional element flares up (Prein, 1994). A process consultant always keeps the dialogue in view in such interventions. By entering into dialogue, the parties allow room for the unknown and for the other's peculiar qualities, and thus for their own standpoints.

A third-party intervention essentially implies a process whereby the initial dyad is developed into a triadic interaction. In a sense, every interaction can be called 'triadic', where the third element is the space that the two persons generate between them. The relationship lies between A and B. However, when the difference widens, the space between needs to be interpreted by a third person, who through suggestions and reactions, and often by simply being there, reveals the relationship and its malleability. The strict control by which the parties become so obstructive, jealously surveying their territories, is gradually relaxed and for the time being handed over to the third party, who has been able to create an atmosphere of trust. Conflicts, in fact, do not need to be judged in purely negative terms, and do not even need to be solved in all cases; rather, they can be merely kept manageable in the form of constructive difference. Again we find ourselves in the realm of Bakhtin's 'difference', source of creative development.

Towards a Relational View of Creativity

Play and identity development

The notions of texture and potential space point at play as an important form of dialogic relationship through which we described the organizing process of perpetuated entrepreneurship. It consists of writing an open text on the identity of the young firm. Identity development is a cultural practice where one's culture does not 'determine' a person's action but creates (new) possibilities for action. This openness requires variability, as we can learn from Winnicott (1971, p. 125) who characterizes the potential space by its variability. He writes: "I suggest that the area available for maneuver in terms of the third way of living (where there is a
cultural experience or creative playing) is very variable, as it is between individuals." It is here that 'difference' between entrepreneurial firms, their organizing strength, and finally their identity is construed. In this way, we arrive at considering the role of 'organizational culture' and identity formation in the emerging innovative firm. According to Winnicott, play and playing and the transitional phenomena form the basis for cultural experience in general. So culture itself can be depicted as a transitional phenomenon. The culture concept, and also the concept of organizational culture, is not something inherited (such as a national culture), nor a label. In organizational theory too, it is stated that organizations 'have' a culture which has to be changed through interventions, such as quality programs. But culture can also be seen as a process of the present, which links past and future. Organizations accumulate cultural experience, which is expanded through daily social interactions. The cultural experience of an organization can remain within the fixed boundaries of a firm, but some firms succeed in integrating the outside cultural experience of their employees with the process of organizing. Winnicott's main statement is that "the place where cultural experience is located is in the potential space between the individual and the environment. The same can be said of playing. Cultural experience begins with creative living first manifested in play" (Winnicott, 1971, p. 118). This has far-reaching implications for 'managing' an organizational culture. Here the potential space not only seems important for establishing an innovative culture, but for culture tout court. If organizations want to develop culturally, it requires firms to become 'playful' in some way. From this perspective, we arrive at a very different, and more dynamic conception of organizational culture, in contrast to the 'static' representations which characterized the organizational culture-boom of the 80's (Schultz, 1992; Steyaert & Janssens, under revision). Culture is not a burden for development and innovation but is rather the door which leads to performing creative actions. It means that creativity does not come out of the blue, or that it starts from a tabula rasa; on the contrary, the 'richer' a firm's history, and thus its cultural experiences, the more possibilities it acquires for newness, as long as the writing process of its identity remains variable, i.e. dialogic.

A new look at creativity

This dissertation develops the thesis that a full understanding of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship can only be gained when its creative essence has been made manifest. In order to accomplish this, our relational vision of creativity has, in progressive steps, been brought into clearer focus. In the first place the organization process was characterized as a tension between creating and integrating (fragment 16). This taught us that the further development of the creative pole takes place through interaction with the integrative pole: 'creating' is thus not the

main 'pole' of creativity, innovation, and a paradise-like energy, at the same time that integrating does not necessarily spell sudden death for this creative logic. Perpetuating entrepreneurship entails recognizing and learning how to maintain the tension between the two sorts of logic. Secondly, the 'texture' model (fragment 17), which sets writing as an organizing scenario for the developmental process of an entrepreneurial initiative, is dependent on the degree to which different perspectives can be combined with one another. Thirdly, the notion of 'potential space' (fragment 18) shows us that maintaining creative potential comes down to developing a zone in which new ideas can grow through forms of playing. Finally, we have documented how the Bakhtinian dialogue has a generative effect by which the creative development of the organization does not stagnate but is perpetuated. Such a dialogue demands that different interpretive repertoires or voices be woven together and that the differences between these voices are to be seen not as conflictual but as necessary, since the dialogue falls silent when the difference disappears (or becomes too great).

The above vision of creativity may be called 'relational', since it appears in the middle ground between perspectives and it bears upon the relationships and the quality of the relationships between actors. I hope in this connection that I have been able to make two contributions. Firstly, we can see a contribution to the entrepreneurship domain, where creativity has received little attention. I would include creativity as one of the essential characteristics of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is thus a generative phenomenon. Entrepreneurship deals with phenomena which generate themselves, that are auto-poietic. The story of a team of entrepreneurs is the story of people who believe in their own powers of production and creation. Their question is not so much how to organize production, for this is in any case limited or farmed out in the initial years, as it is how to produce, to make, the organization. If we should ever forget that, as Berger & Luckmann claim (fragment 21), the world is made by its inhabitants and that world and inhabitants engender one another, then entrepreneurship reminds us of this, by showing how people are the authors of their own existence, with one of its most important products, organizations. Enterprising is a human activity and entrepreneurship is the natural enemy of reticulation. Enterprising is, like life, a creative act whereby people generate their own world, in step with time and history, and sometimes out of step.

Secondly, this conception of creativity differs substantially from the approach to creativity in organization theory. Creativity is in no way unknown in the organization field, where it has its familiar place in models connected with innovation (West & Farr, 1990; Buiks, 1986). Nevertheless, Woodman, Sawyer and Griffin (1993, p. 293) point out that "the concept of organizational creativity identifies a relatively unexplored area in organizational change and innovation." They for-

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3 In The State of the Art of Entrepreneurship (Sexton & Kisarida, 1992), I found only one reference to the creative aspect of entrepreneurship.
mulate an interactionist model of organizational creativity that integrates variables (several dozen of them) on individual, group, and organization levels on the basis of a review of the literature. Their conclusion in this review is that “when that research is critically evaluated, however, one thing becomes clear - after decades of theory development and empirical research, researchers still know surprisingly little about how the creative process works, especially within the context of complex social systems such as formal organizations” (p. 316). With their interactionist model, they attempt to meet head on one of the most important problems characterizing the domain of creativity; that is, “the fragmented approach that many scholars have taken regarding the study of creativity” (p. 316). The insights that we have here gained into the creative organization process point just as clearly in the other direction from the one they take in connection with the interactionist model. In their model, creativity is a construct, a reification of something that is assumed to be determined by the interaction of many other constructs on different levels. After years of being taken apart, analyzed, and dissected according to a thousand and one variables, creativity has now been put back together again into a synthetic ‘model’ on the basis of an unnatural form of bricolage. In the process, I am afraid, the most basic human quality has been placed outside the world of humans and human relationships. The effect of this ‘kidnapping’ is that creativity has been stuffed full of content, while we have here suggested through the notion of the ‘third’ that the creative process is ‘empty’: the concept of creativity can best be imagined as something that needs to be filled in ever anew, an empty space of possibilities, a nameless zone, an organization without characteristics - in short, a way of becoming. Creativity is apparently no child’s play for the experienced researcher, even though a little playfulness in the study of creativity might not be such a bad thing, in my view. The idea of a playing or creating organization (compared, for example, to a learning organization) is perhaps a bit extreme for some - work and play have traditionally been kept separate - but it does simplify our task in one go: creative organizing is closely related to playing and child’s play. This is an insight also found in Huizinga’s book, Homo Ludens: “Culture comes into existence in play form, culture is in the first place played. [...] That does not mean that the play changes into culture or dwells in it, but rather, that culture in its formative phase has the character of a play and is formed by play-like forms and attitudes.” If we said above that the coming into existence of a young organization comes down to the development of its own identity and culture, then ‘key’ to all of this is the play, and the continuing creation of a context for playing. Woodman and others also opt for ‘cross-level research’ and thinking in terms of micro and macro models in organization theory as a means of tackling the problem of the different levels involved (individual - group - organization). I believe that the suggestion of a meso-theory of organizing is a second way of solving this problem, whereby creativity is above all a social process in which people invite each other or resolve to ‘write new texts’ and ‘make discoveries’.  

Between entrepreneuring and organizing (theory)

The entrepreneurial ‘lesson’

When I began this study, I was strongly convinced of the important contribution that organization theory could make for answering my research question and for understanding of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship in general. Although I am still of this opinion, my convictions have weakened somewhat in the meantime and I have begun to see things differently. In fragment 1, I point out that the entrepreneurship/organization relationship is going through a change, as the two fields move towards one another. Entrepreneurship as a scholarly field is on the rise, although its advance has been neither hurried nor popularized. The image of this domain has faded slightly as it has become overshadowed by a much bigger ‘revolution’ which has begun to dismantle (large) firms and place them in an inter-organizational network of (small) organizations, relations, and ideas. Although entrepreneurship has for some time been approached as a network (Johannisson, Monsted), in the nineties the organizational landscape is gradually being reshaped into a variant on networks in which the (innovative) entrepreneurial organization is just one of the many types of organizations that develop as a result of contact with other organizations - commercial, professional, financial, technological, cultural, and research-oriented institutions - in partially overlapping networks. The study of entrepreneurship has been able to maintain its identity within this context, which is evolving towards ‘networks and networking’. This field deals with those organizations that are being started up or that attempt to lengthen their own life through innovative actions, the result of which is the addition of myriad forms of ‘new’ organizations to our economic and social system. At a time when more organizations go bankrupt than are set up, when they die rather than see the light of day, any domain that is intent on the creation of places where people work, and ways of cooperation that develop complex realities (e.g. technology-in-a-new-market, medical and social aid organizations for new diseases, long sea-bridges or a channel...) is by no means an unnecessary frill. Entrepreneurship is a domain which goes beyond the idea that firms are (only) in need of a theory of management, while directing every firm to look into the mirror to ask what its creative potential is.

If at the beginning of this study I took organization theory in the direction of entrepreneurship, then at its (provisional) end I would like to make a plea for the need for a study of entrepreneurship geared for the development of the organization domain and its theories. The entrepreneurial lesson concerns both how organizations can become created and how they can develop a creative side so that their existence can be perpetuated, their identity further developed.
On the question of how this creative side can become perpetuated, we have suggested the notions of ‘texture’ and ‘potential space’ as developmental zones where new actions and activities can be nurtured. This idea can be connected to recent developments in organization theory (Daft & Lewin, 1993). For instance, Shorter refers to Prigogine’s vision of ‘dynamic stabilities’ (Prigogine & Stengers, 1990) for conceiving this zone whose nature is characterized as having an ‘already-specified further-specified’. Dynamic stabilities, occurring in the flow process, “are created and maintained (by being antunively reproduced) within the continuous but turbulent, structuring processes at the boundaries between two kinds of flowing activity.” Closer to the field of organization studies, both notions can be connected to the phenomenon of ephemeral organization, as described by Lanza (1983) and integrated into organization theory by Weick (1993b, 1995). Weick (1995) comments that describing the entrepreneurial process through this notion is a good way to start to address the ways in which entrepreneurs create useful nitches for themselves and others. Ephemeral organisations are oriented to the present, and likely to disappear after a great deal of activity. Lanza speaks of ‘inventing’ an environment by constructing a whole new set of relationships through which the meanings of activities are enriched. They are an in-between solution, between no organization at all and a routine-heavy organization. A texture is also such an in-between form which ‘combines’ direction with openness while through a potential space a new set of relationships can become established which can be taken over in the integrative function of the organization.

More generally, a study of entrepreneurship can outline the contours and challenges for organization psychology. I see the following orientations emerging from the way in which we have approached the innovative entrepreneurial organization. In the first place, the unit of organization becomes ‘the network’ rather than ‘the organization’; it will perhaps eventually become more useful to speak of ‘network psychology’ rather than organization psychology. Secondly, a process-oriented approach to organizations demands a developmental perspective on organizations, which can consider the quality of ‘becoming’ in such static concepts as structure, culture, motivation, and leadership. Related to this, thirdly, the organizing process is seen as socio-culturally embedded, while there is a need for a cultural organization psychology that reveals how organizations are mediated through cultural practices (as opposed to dressing up organizations with static notions of organizational climate and culture). Fourthly, the ‘natural bond’ that exists between social and organization psychology will once again be emphasized, since we have characterized the social process as the ‘heart’ of organizing. Finally, we see a focus on creativity (and innovation) as a part of the organizing process.

Revisiting our social constructionist persuasions

Our exploration of a social constructionist framework was concluded by formulating four persuasions (fragment 9). We may now look back at these persuasions as they guided us in traveling along the research circle and visiting the entrepreneurial context. Have they been useful in studying entrepreneurship, and can they be useful for further entrepreneurial research?

A first direction concerned a relational conception of the person. Entrepreneurs and their actors are not regarded here as solo players, nor are they painted with individual qualities such as a high risk-taking propensity (Brookhaus, 1980), a high need for achievement (McClelland, 1961), an internal locus of control (Rotter, 1966), or a need for power (Winter, 1973). This leads to a very different approach to the entrepreneur in comparison with the traditional psychological contribution to male entrepreneurship and to female entrepreneurship, which conceives of entrepreneurship as an intrapersonal psychological attribute of the entrepreneur. Just as Berger and Luckmann reject a Prometheus vision of the solitary individual in stressing human authorship and self-production in the social construction of reality, so our relational view helps to transcend the idea that entrepreneurship is created by a visionary entrepreneur, a man of brilliance. Entrepreneurship is a creative process enacted by actors and their relationships.

The idea that entrepreneurship can be accounted for by naming the entrepreneur – either in traits or profiles – is increasingly being abandoned, and is being transcended by saying what he or she is doing (Bird, 1989; Gartner, 1988) or by representing his or her thinking – either through visions or cognitions (Levenhagen & Thomas, 1990; Cossette & Audet, 1992). Still, these behavioral and cognitivist approaches use an individualistic view of humankind, the one typically adherent to a Western conception of personhood, “a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe ... organized into a distinctive whole and set contrarily against other such wholes and against a social and natural background” (Geertz, 1984, p. 229).

Taking a relational view means trying to go beyond such as individualist conception of the entrepreneur, who gets more attention in studies which focus on the different relationships entrepreneurial actors develop through teams (e.g. Stewart, 1969) and networks (e.g. Monsted, 1994), in which the entrepreneur as other actors are seen as nodal points of multiple relationships with collaborators, subcontractors, clients, consultants, competitors... In this study, we have described relationships in terms of triadic and dialogic qualities. The triadic quality of relatedness suggests seeing how boundaries are conceived between roles, responsibilities, identities, and tasks, and more generally how 'significant others' are engaged in the development of activities.

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4 Comparable psychological features have been used to distinguish female entrepreneurs from male entrepreneurs or from female non-entrepreneurs. For an approach which uses more advanced psychological views than the traditional trait-approach, see Hill, Haworth & Bratley (1991). For an alternative view of female entrepreneurship based on language and power, see Vasta (1993).
the identity of the entrepreneurial organization. The dialogic quality of relatedness follows the
same track, as the generative effect of a dialogue is always dependent on how the other may or
may not be allowed to make a difference so that one can continue one's creating talk and
action. The idea of 'relatedness' can be seen as a possible future contribution of psychological
studies to entrepreneurship. However, as psychology has only recently been moving towards
relational realities (Gergen, 1994), conceiving of theories of self, identity, and emotion in
relational terms – not at all an easy endeavor1 – the question of what relatedness means remains
in many ways unanswered. A joint venture between the network literature in entrepreneurship
and the theorizing on relatedness in Psychology might be a constructive way to start to answer
this question.

A second direction guided us in focusing on language and discourse in the construction of
entrepreneurial realities. Language is given a full position in the epistemological conception of
reality, developed through a performative view of language (also Steyaert & Janssens, forthcoming).
Starting from a constructionist view of knowledge creation through language, entrepre-
nership can be conceived as authorship of texts and narrations about entrepreneurial events
and inventions. Entrepreneurial actors are engaged in multiple conversations with each other,
with clients, with venture capitalists and other financial institutions, with subcontractors, with
friends, in short with many significant others through which their context is enacted and
through which the firm is gradually and continuously created. We have tried to describe these
'conversations'2 and to indicate the different interpretive repertoires or voices which are speak-
ning and being written.

I see this description only as a first attempt to develop a more extensive discourse-oriented
view of entrepreneurship. I should remark that taking such a discursive approach involving
dilemmas and meaning configurations, and illustrating it in empirical terms, is more an issue
for further research: it cannot be claimed validated as a result of this research project. A similar
conclusion was drawn in discussing data analysis and interpretation (in fragment 9), where we
referred to its 'discursive future' and to specific forms of discourse analysis as a vehicle for
studying organizational realities. The way we conceived of entrepreneurship as the writing of
a multivoiced text through dialogue can guide such a study. The issue of such a study would
then be to identify which rhetorical devices the different conversations entrepreneurial actors
are engaged in become enacted. In Aristotle's Rhetoric, 'invention' is a rhetorical pheno-
menon. It is the heart of the discourse.4 The theme of entrepreneurship can play an original role
in understanding the narrative and rhetorical nature of organizational reality. Entrepreneurship
is then about the authorship of 'new' realities, and about writing narratives; it is a conversation
with technology, with other authors, with time and history, using the trope of inventio. Such a
rhetorical and textual analysis, as it mediates the entrepreneurial process, can mean also an
innovative and creative approach in the academic quarter of the entrepreneurship domain,
where this form of analysis so far has been absent.

A last direction3 instigated us to develop a social–dynamic view of entrepreneurial action.
This dissertation has attempted to understand, to concretize, and to summarize in different steps
the social essence of organizing. In Czarniawska-Joerges' estimation, there is a need for such a
project (1992, p. 188–189): "Contemporary organization theory, lashed with approaches and overflow-
ing with tolerance, still has inherent problems with grasping the idea of social. [...] Whenever organizations
are not mechanisms, organisms, or something of the sort, they are usually aggregates of persons (as in organi-
zational psychology) or else supra-persons, who decide, learn, and interpret (Daft & Weick, 1984). [...] Yet the social character of organizations is, in my opinion, the key for understanding them".5

The social process of entrepreneurship, as it has been developed in three movements (frag-
ments 8, 20 and 23) can be seen as a multivoiced authorship of an entrepreneurial text.
Organizing (perpetuated entrepreneurship) is concerned with the way multiple voices can
become connected and intertwined. The notion of 'texture' and the metaphor of 'polyphony'
were used to indicate how the conversation between different meaning configurations can
become organized, going beyond the more mechanistic 'solution' of Weick's theory of 1979
(in terms of grammar and interlocked systems).

'Texture' and 'polyphony' can join recent developments in organization theory which try
to develop a meso-theory of organizing in dynamic terms. I see multiple metaphors
which can give us a more concrete image of how multivoiced organizing can be conceived.
Many of these metaphors will originate in a cultural and artistic work: literature (labyrinth,
library, odyssey...), theater (improvisation, tragedy...), music (polyphony, jazz improvisation,
orchestration...). One of these attempts is from no one less than Weick, who uses the
metaphor of 'improvisation' (1993).

However, I think that more all-encompassing 'linking texts' (fragment 13) can be formu-
lated. In developing a meso-theory of organizing, I believe that further research and study is
needed to focus on how social interactions and group processes are 'linked' to larger institu-
tions and embedded in a large network of organizations, whether social, cultural, political and
language systems.6 By seeing meaning configurations as systems of discourse (namely socio
culturally embedded interpretive repertoires) it becomes possible to situate interaction in their

1 See Gergen (1994, p. 114): "At this juncture we find that constructionism itself offers no clear account of relational selves"; or
Shottter (1993b, p. 60) "The introduction of a vocabulary of relational terms is not an easy task."
2 This idea was formulated by Ellen O'Connor in commenting on fragment 7.

3 The contextualist direction will be dealt with in fragment 26.
5 This was actually one of our criticisms on Weick's theory (see fragment 8). See also Weick's own recent attempts to
approach the theory of Giddens through the notion of 'commitment' (Weick, 1992b).
larger cultural settings. Actors in an entrepreneurial context 'come from' different language games (e.g. the financing and venture capital discourse versus the discourse of research institutions), social backrounds, and cultural practices. The question this study cannot answer theoretically and empirically is how interactions and group processes enact and are enacted by institutions from a larger organizational and social environment. The development of an innovative entrepreneurial organization through the consecution of meaning configurations, enacted in daily conversations, can however become connected to larger 'societal conversations'. One possibility for developing a theory of social interaction and institution lies in Giddens' theory of structuration (1984; also Poole & McPhee, 1983; Poole, Seibold & McPhee, 1985; Wileman, 1993). The theory of structuration is actually an account of the mediation between individuals and systems, and between structural stability and emergence. It tries to explain how interaction and institutions influence and mediate each other, integrating a discursive view of the construction of organizational reality (cf. preceding direction). The application of such a theory to entrepreneurship would have the advantage of explaining how entrepreneurs create organizations while simultaneously already being 'present' in a multi-organizational field. Developing a structuralist theory of entrepreneurship would have the additional advantage of formulating a process-theory of networks in which entrepreneurial events emerge, and which the field is still lacking.

The Praxis of Organizing: a Bakhtinian Trajectory?

We may ask how the theoretical notions which have been generated by this study - notions often fleshed out and actualized thanks to material from the more shadowy corners of our library - can be generative for the practice of setting up high tech enterprises. I would like to follow one path in particular to accomplish this; namely, the implications of adopting Bakhtin's vision on the organizing of entrepreneurship.

The implications of Bakhtin's vision of the practical business of organizing are both many and provocative. A small example will serve to illustrate how, once a Bakhtinian path has been followed, new practices become possible. The example deals with communication training, an activity that the employees of many companies have to go through more than once in their careers. Here, the transmission model often rules the day; the utmost effort is made to communicate in clearly defined terms. Comprehensibility is the norm, the ideal. This is, to put it mildly, a misleading enterprise, since it is at no point admitted that meaning is equivocal and multivoiced. The point of departure of communication training should be to teach people how to deal with this equivocality of meanings and with this unending spiral of word and counter-word. Communication as the purification of messages between sender and receiver is a first step, but this tends to lead inexorably to a pernicious reductionism. A training session that starts from the fundamental impossibility of comprehension, as each person has his or her counter-word to any utterance, by-passes the worrisome 'keep-it-simple' practices of the commercial market. At first glance this seems an investment in an almost uncontrollable complexity, but a closer look reveals an engagement in creative dialogue, where every word awakens another new word, and where the creative development of the organization once again becomes a possibility. The focus is on the 'freeing up' of the communication process (rather than its clarification), so that counter-words can arise and be expressed, so that the flow does not sit up and become blocked because of an excess of damping and diking.

I am well aware that this approach is not the be all and end all, since it tends to derail companies from their habitual track, that of efficiency and effectiveness, and lead them along the path of creating and generating on the basis of multivoiced dialogues. Bakhtin (1984, p. 272) had a good sense of the heart of the matter: "We must renounce our monological habits so that we might come to feel at home in the new artistic sphere which Dostoievsky discovered, so that we might orient ourselves in that incomparably more complex artistic model of the world which he created." We must then ask if a multivoiced vision of organizing can be adopted for interventions of a social constructionist nature. In fragment 25, I examine the practical implications of our social constructionist approach and interpretive methodology, in particular exploring the possibilities offered by our Bakhtinian insights in connection with multivoicedness in the organizing process. The question is whether any conceptual and methodological support can be discovered in order to realize a form of 'multivoiced intervention'.

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10 See Klandermans (1990), who examined how social movements are embedded in a so-called 'multi-organizational field'; the way their 'process' is socially constituted is enacted in a network of groups and organizations.

11 For an application to organizational climate, see Poole & McPhee (1983), and to group processes, see Poole, Seibold & McPhee (1985).
Introduction

In this fragment I shall attempt to determine the degree to which the conceptual orientations and interpretive methods of generating data, interpretations, and reflections, as developed in this dissertation, are applicable to an intervention scenario. The approach will consist of deriving a few conceptual implications and suggesting methodological applications for the practice of organizing in situations marked by collective and creative activities. I shall also provide an illustration of the way I myself, together with a colleague, conducted a research-oriented follow-up to an organizing-intervention in a Flemish high tech firm comparable to the firms in our case studies (see chapter four); roughly speaking, the same 'problems' are present in this situation (see also fragment 16), in which a process of intervention was set in motion at a certain point.

Towards intervention: four reasons

I can cite four reasons for exploring the possibilities of relating our conceptual and methodological approaches to practical interventions. Firstly, it is necessary to return to the practical relevance which is given prominence in fragment 15 as an explic it criterion for evaluating scientific research. This discussion was postponed because I wished to accord to it more attention than is usual in the coda to a research report, in which a number of 'recommendations' are generally formulated. This postponement resulted from the experience that as researcher, one cannot not intervene in the context of organizations. This demands a further look at the role of 'research as intervention', and its clarification in relation to other more usual forms of intervention. It then becomes a question of the degree to which research can be a form of intervention, and whether particular research methods can also be useful for intervening.

A second reason is related to the first and is of an epistemological nature, as the inquiry into the 'production of knowledge' immediately poses a question for the user of this 'knowledge'. Here we have broached an old problem of the practical value of scientific research in general.

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1 First ideas were presented at the workshop on qualitative methods in SME and entrepreneurship research during the ICSB-Conference, Suszbourg, 27-29 June, 1994. The title of the paper was Is There a Qualitative Methodology That Is Both Useful for Research and Intervention in Entrepreneurship? A Relational Approach.
and of the often bemoaned cleft between theory and practice. I would here choose to represent this cleft as a field of tension ‘between research and intervention’. In describing a social constructionist approach (fragment 6), the demarcation between scientific knowledge and common-sense knowledge is relativized. A social-constructionist interventionist, like a researcher, adds to the conversation that is going on in the organization, and attempts to add a specific voice. The question here is how we can characterize the manner in which the conversation is added to.

A third reason, already mentioned in fragment 11, concerns the observation that in the entrepreneurship domain a direct link of research with practice is highly valued. A large part of the entrepreneurship research considers the question of how entrepreneurial competencies can be developed and supported in the so-called domain of entrepreneurship education (Vesper, 1986; Gibb, 1987; Hills, 1988; McMullan & Long, 1987; Block & Stumpf, 1992). Entrepreneurship education is seen as a domain important to the support of entrepreneurial endeavors and ventures, which cannot always find a niche in traditional business schools. These entrepreneurial education programs can be seen as an integral component in a community’s venture support system along with incubators, innovation centers, technology transfer offices, science parks, venture capitalists, university research centers, and regional learning centers (McMullan & Long, 1987). In this way, it is in the ‘tradition’ of this academic discipline to explore the direct implications of our research conceptions for organizing entrepreneurial practices. In developing such programs, organization development skills (Block & Stumpf, 1992) and insights concerning the relationship between creativity and the organizing process (Stevenson, 1986) have been stressed as valuable ‘ingredients’. In a recent survey of requisite areas of development, three out of the four areas nominated by 100 leading entrepreneurs of successful entrepreneurial firms as crucial, were referred to as areas of ‘creative knowledge’ (Hood & Young, 1993). Learning how new knowledge is brought into existence during the creation and subsequent continuation of growing business entities is seen as primordial. Creativity is considered to be one of the important areas to be included in entrepreneurship curricula and programs. Our relational view of creativity can help to clarify what Hood & Young call the ‘creativity factor’. Furthermore, in the course of this fragment, we shall explore how interventions can support the organizing process of creative entrepreneurship.

A final reason concerns our own experiences with education and training programs for entrepreneurs. Different experiences showed that a process approach to training education was highly valued. Such a process approach gives entrepreneurs the chance to bring in their own experiences and context, while at the same time being able to exchange them with experiences and stories of other entrepreneurs. While such programs can be seen to be useful and necessary, the programs usually reach only the entrepreneur or one his collaborators, instead of the entrepreneurial network. However, it remains reasonably difficult to conceive interventions at the organizational level, where the interventionist joins the ongoing conversation among the different actors in the firm. In this fragment, we will suggest some guidelines which might be used in such an intervention oriented at organizational development.

The gap between research and practice and how it can be approached:

a short statement

The elaboration of a social constructionist approach to intervention is an attempt to deal with the tension between theory and practice, research and intervention. In general, two main attitudes can be distinguished concerning the relationship between research and practice: a sequential and a parallel attitude. Both will be briefly described without discussing profoundly their different epistemological foundations and the status both approaches give to ‘knowledge’ (Liu, 1991; Reason, 1994).

The sequential attitude

The sequential attitude separates research and intervention activities and bridges them in a sequential way. Here, the world of research and intervention are conceived as two separate worlds and a sharp distinction is made between theory-oriented, fundamental research and practice-oriented, applied research. In general, the sequence goes from theory towards application while, in so-called problem-oriented research, the order is altered as the researcher starts from a concrete organizational problem, which is then examined for both theoretical and practical understanding. In this latter situation as well, the expertise remains in the ‘hands’ of the researcher, without starting any longer from theoretical problems. The assumption of a sequential approach is that knowledge becomes before action, research precedes application. The relation between research and practice is dually thought to conform to a Cartesian world view. A typical problem of the sequential attitude is then how knowledge can be transferred to everyday practice. The answer for the transfer problem is then framed in terms of transfer channels which need to be elaborated and refined (Froen & Skule, 1992). Thus, the search for solutions is mainly phrased in terms, and does not consider possible epistemological reframings and ethical issues.

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2 In this project, an intensive, modular, training cycle offered in the area of KMO management for small groups of entrepreneurs, the researcher was involved by being responsible for two modules, as teacher of a few sessions within this module, and as leader of the four groups. The second project referred to, concerned the approach to training taken by growth-oriented KMOs, as tested within the Plano groups of the Strategic Plan Kempen, the Trejo project, and the Europ project of the Strategic Plan Limburg, in which the researcher was involved with the superviser of the supervisor-doctor from the entrepreneur groups. For a research report on the Plano project, see N. Verhoeven (1993).
The parallel attitude

In the parallel attitude, research and intervention activities are no longer separated: intervention should generate (local) theoretical assumptions while theory development should have an impact on intervention as well. One does not accept the notion that theory development stops where application starts and vice versa. Knowledge and implementation are interdependent. Researchers are in the first place interested in generating useful research. Usefulness becomes an important criterion for evaluating the quality of their research activities. This parallel attitude has been expressed by Gummesson (1991, p. 103) as follows: “Action science always involves two goals: solve a problem for the client and contribute to science. That means that you must be both a management consultant and an academic researcher at the same time.” Elden and Levin (1991; p. 139) state this in a very similar way: “The goal is to solve practical problems and develop new or improved scientific findings and theory.”

Action science, action theory, or action research has long been present in the behavioral sciences (Argyris, 1973; Rapoport, 1970) and organizational development (Frohman, Sashkin & Kavanough, 1976), and goes back as far as the work of Lewin (1948, 1951). By relating ‘action’ and ‘research’ a shift is made from observation-oriented towards action-oriented studies. Lewin (1951) formulated this by suggesting: “The reality of that to which the concept refers is established by ‘doing something with’ rather than ‘looking at’.” Since Lewin, action research has taken several paths and has – besides the organizational context – been applied in educational sciences, community and health contexts, and social projects for underprivileged groups. As a consequence, different scenarios and options on how both theoretical and practical goals can be realized ‘at the same time’ have been proposed: action research and its different varieties (Chisholm & Elden, 1993), action science (Argyris et al., 1985), participatory action research (Whyte, 1991), collaborative inquiry (Torbert, 1983), cooperative inquiry (Reason, 1994), intervention research (Fryer & Feather, 1994), and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivatsa, 1987), to mention a few.

In spite of this broad range of attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice and to go beyond this ‘thinking in terms of gaps’, it seems to be difficult to balance and combine the two goals of research and action, and the two roles of researcher and consultant. In the early seventies, it became clear that the connection between theory and action remained problematic (Rapoport, 1970; Levinson, 1972). Action researchers seemed to prefer the action part more than theory building. In the early eighties, Bartunek (1983) saw no change in this habit, stating that action researchers tended to focus only secondarily on the possible theoretical contributions of their action research projects. The dilemma between scientific rigor and practical relevance remains difficult to by-pass.

The so-called appreciative inquiry approach (Cooperrider & Srivatsa, 1987; Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990), which can be seen as a special version of the action-theory approach, is one of the attempts, made during the eighties, to rebalance the relationship between action and theory by developing a conceptual refugiation of action research. In particular, the role of theory is revalued – in the concept of ‘generative theory’ – since as Cooperrider and Srivatsa have documented, action research has not reached its potential because of its romance with action at the expense of theory. Appreciative inquiry implies an epistemological shift from a logical-empiricist towards a socio-rationalist conception of social science. It also demands a different (paradigmatic) view of the conception of organizing, and entails a shift from a problemsolving approach to an appreciative perspective.

Besides these different forms of action research, I would like to explore the way in which a social constructionist approach tries to ‘bridge’ and combine ‘theory’ and ‘application’. This exploration will be based on the social constructionist conceptualizations and interpretive methodology we used in our research project. I shall subscribe to the idea of generative theory (see also fragment 5) but find it necessary to complement this with a ‘generative methodology’ and a relational context for ‘generating’ new possibilities for action. In the next paragraph, I shall formulate a way of conceiving of a social constructionist intervention oriented at stimulating the ongoing organizing process as a multivoiced dialogue which can perpetuate the creative potential of the enterprise. I shall also provide a concrete example of such a research intervention as a first indication of the direction of a social constructionist intervention trajectory. To conclude this section dealing with intervention, the question will be offered as a ‘primary’ tool in generative intervention, by referring to a theater context (see also the ‘theater metaphor’, fragment 19).

Intervention from a Social Constructionist Perspective:
Opening the Conversation towards a Multivoiced Interplay?

Introduction: relating the entrepreneurial firm and the interventionist

Reviews of the ways consultants approach their clients make a distinction between expert and process consultation (Schein, 1969). The differences between these models of advice come down to different relationships between client and consultant. In the expert model, the role of consultant and client are nearly distinguished. Their relationship is mainly one of dependence. In contrast, the process approach is characterized by interdependence and mutual involvement. The main goal of process consultation is to guide clients to (re)frame their own
situation, to stimulate self-reflection and to start up a process of ‘learning to learn’. This distinction equals in many ways the distinction between inquiry from the outside and inquiry from the inside (Evered & Louis, 1981). In the model of ‘inquiry from the outside’, the researcher is detached from the studied entrepreneurial setting, and is an expert observer with sophisticated methods, which can and must be separated from the study object. Inquiry from the inside is characterized by the researcher becoming part of the studied phenomenon. The researcher is interested in the total situation, acting within it, which involves information coming from different directions simultaneously.

In entrepreneurial settings, both relational ‘strategies’ of detachment and involvement have been applied in research and intervention. The choice of one of these strategies or of a mixture of more than one depends largely on the assumptions the researcher/interventionist holds about what an entrepreneur consists of. Since we think of entrepreneurial actors as both the owners and experts of their situation and as themselves experiential learners, focusing on how they learn seems more appropriate to me. This implies that researcher/interventionist and entrepreneur become co-researchers and co-learners in a common collaborative effort. Rowbottom (1977) used the term ‘collaborative exploration’3 in an attempt to develop a collaborative method of gaining usable scientific knowledge of social organizations. Collaborative exploration occupies a central place in his definition of social analysis as “an activity devoted to (1) gaining scientific understanding of, and (2) thereby facilitating enacted change in (3) social institutions, through (4) collaborative exploration by those actors immediately concerned in their working, and an independent analyst” (p. 21). Collaborative exploration is not formally defined, but indirectly suggested: “The researcher must abandon any pretense of ‘objective study’. He must take off his jacket so to speak, and join with those same actors in the difficult job of analysing, clarifying, identifying alternatives and predicting consequences. He must abandon the role of the independent observer and become to some degree a participant. He must be concerned not just with facts, but with values and choices. In short, he must join in what can best be described as collaborative exploration” (p. 50).

In this process of mutual interdependent cooperation and collaborative inquiry, the position of interventionist/researcher can be framed by the concept of the third party role (see fragment 18). In entrepreneurial settings, the researcher from the inside (as well as the process interventionist) enters as an interested or involved outsider whose mere presence or re-presentations can create space for change. The researcher/interventionist shapes space to recount experiences and tell stories, to make interpretations of what is going on, to become aware of differences in sensemaking between colleagues and between groups.

3 A related term to collaborative exploration, is collaborative inquiry, developed by Torbert (1987). Collaborative inquiry is not in the first place considered for research or scientific settings, but for developmental activities of transforming business firms. Close to the idea of co-inquiry, is the principle of ‘co-generative learning’ as it is used by Edén & Lindegren (1993) in their Scandinavian participatory action research.

A social constructionist approach to intervention

Intervention as a social construction

From a social constructionist standpoint, intervention can be seen as a social construction itself. The internal or external consultant joins the ongoing conversation and enters this process by bringing in another voice. In general, such a social construction will opt for a parallel attitude (instead of sequential one) and for a process approach (instead of an expert model), in which different voices simultaneously interact. For instance, the research/intervention project (see below) was enacted by several perspectives, as two directors of different high techs, the general R&D director of the mother firm, two internal consultants of the mother company, and finally, two researchers participated in an exploratory meeting. In such a meeting different expectations are raised and reformulated in a ‘project’ in which the different actors can feel involved.

However, there are many ways to join the organizational conversation, and to conceive of a process of social construction in which intervention can be embedded. We shall follow a social constructionist path, which leads towards developing a reflexivity about organizational and relational functioning (Bouwen, 1994). By developing a joint reflexive relationship, the consultant can help the entrepreneurial actors to interpret the ongoing sensemaking and to learn about their functioning in their social context. In the next two points we will further specify how such a social constructionist intervention can be conceived. Firstly, we will take our research project as a point of inspiration and explore a Bakhtinian way of intervening (fragment 23). Secondly, in connection with a social constructionist orientation to intervention, the use of interpretive methodology (chapter three) for intervention will be explored. The general idea is that this interpretive methodology can be valuable in the practice of interventionists. In particular, the intervention will be approached from the perspective of the research circle.

Intervention as a Bakhtinian dialogue

Looking at intervention from a Bakhtinian perspective (of the four characteristics of the Bakhtinian dialogue (fragment 23)) can help to clarify four principles for a social constructionist intervention in line with our research persuasions concerning the relational, contextual, discursive, and social construction of reality (see fragment 9). A first relational principle implies a sensitivity concerning the way the interventionist joins the conversation. Such a relational orientation concerns the question of whether the interventionist is following an authoritative or more internally persuasive discursive style. This distinction can be compared to the distinc-
tion between the expert and process consultant. A second, contextual principle implies that an interventionist draws on local knowledge, and embeds interventions in the socio-cultural context of the firm. This means that different local discursive and cultural repertoires are explored, and that habitual ways of interacting are recognized as well. For instance, in the Coat case, individual interviews were in the tradition of the firm: face-to-face informal meetings were the norm, rather than group meetings. A group interview would already have represented a serious intervention. Sometimes, it can be interesting to go against the habitual socio-cultural setting as well. A third, discursive-oriented principle concerns the creation of new possibilities. This principle refers to our discursive persuasion, which is concretized in Bakthin’s idea that literal meaning cannot be a point of departure for a theory of meaning. As meaning is addressed, a conversation always implies difference, surplus of meaning, diversity and further creation. The fourth social principle, referring to Bakthin’s dialogical conception of meaning creation, concerns the multivoicedness of the interaction process. Multivoiced intervention has a double scope. On the one hand, it can mean that interventions are conceived as a creative endeavor, stimulating the creative and generative potential of the organization. This implies that the organizing process becomes reoriented as a multivoiced dialogue. For instance, the research illustration we shall look at shows that the intervention is oriented towards rebalancing the different perspectives in the organizing process of the Coat-firm. On the other hand, and connected to this, it also means that the interventionist, in joining the conversation, is adding a voice, and as a consequence can open the conversation and stimulate the process towards multivoicedness. For instance, in the case illustration, it was the first time that ‘outsiders’ joined the conversation on how the firm should be developed, as the entrepreneur had so far taken directions in an autonomous way, backed up by some critical persons from the mother company. Also the internal consultants saw the coming of external researchers as an occasion to explore how (in the future) they could support ‘spin-offs’ in the mother firm’s network. We shall now focus more closely on this relationship between entrepreneurial actors and the interventionist.

Interpretive methodology for intervention and the intervention circle

I believe that qualitative research methods can be precisely the operational approach necessary to make concrete the relational and task reflexivity, and to support the dialogue among different perspectives. Qualitative methods can help the ‘interviewee’ or ‘consultee’ to ‘tell his or her own story’. They are a way of raising awareness through the creation of a co-inquiry or co-learning process. The emphasis in both approaches, research and intervention, is on the co-construction of relationships, including the co-construction of the intervention relationship. Relevant data can be revealed and shared and the entrepreneur can engage with the consultant in a joint learning-project and keep ‘the ownership’ of the data and the process. It is a process in which usable ‘local knowledge’ can be developed. The process of inquiry is steered by qualitative methods, which will be further illustrated in this text. The generated knowledge is ‘local’ or ‘tailor made’ against a background of general knowledge which is made operational in this concrete situation.

In my opinion, the research circle can be useful in conceiving intervention. As a consequence, parallel to the research circle which was presented both in metaphorical and operational terms in chapter three (fragment 10), we can speak of the circle of intervention. In figure 25.1, we present this intervention pendant to the research circle.

Figure 25.1 The circle of intervention
Taking the several existing stage models of intervention (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Neilsen, 1984; White & Wooten, 1983), as points of departure, the different steps from the intervention process can be framed within a circle as follows: initial problem formulation and diagnosis, data collection, interpretation and formulation of action proposals, and action implementation and evaluation.

I would replace the conceptual framework by an intervention framework/plan. While the researcher at the beginning of his or her research starts from some pre-understanding, or a conceptual framework based either on previous research or on a review of the specific literature, the interventionist starts from a potential intervention plan, based on previous work and past experiences. Furthermore, while the researcher's conceptual framework is reconstructed through the new research experiences, the intervention framework is more or less adapted or fundamentally changed in light of the new intervention situation. Crucial is the way this initial plan gets changed throughout the intervention process. While the conceptual framework of the researcher and the intervention framework of the interventionist will differ, the use of the two frameworks throughout the processes may be seen as similar. From both perspectives, it is important to stay in the circle, with the possibility of gradually developing the framework into a local framework, in which the different (local) voices are present. Sometimes, in the case of standard intervention, which opts for a quick-fix approach, the intervention is applied without the possibility for major changes. This means that fixed methodological instruments are applied, while the relationships follow prescribed patterns. As a consequence, the plurality of voices is sometimes only superficially present, if they are present at all. Using a process approach, the intervention circle is enacted by more dialogical relationships, and by methods which can enhance that dialogue. In that way, the focus is less on the results of the intervention than on the process of 'intervening'. This process of intervening, as enacted in a research follow-up of an entrepreneurial intervention, will now be illustrated. The story consists of a research intervention to 'support' an intervention into the organizing firm of a four-year old high tech firm as enacted by the entrepreneur himself.

**A Research Follow-up of an Intervention in the Organizing Process of a High Tech Firm**

After exploring the possibilities of our social constructionist persuasions and of an interpretive methodology for intervention, let us now consider a research/intervention story in which we used the intervention circle as our guide during the follow-up to an intervention, and in which some of these methods were applied. I consider this story to be a way to give a first indication of the implications of our social constructionist conceptions and interpretive research methods for the practice of 'multivoiced intervention'. The intervention consisted of an attempt to reorient the organizing process in a more multivoiced direction: each of the actors would be able to voice more directly and simultaneously different projects, which had until then been voiced by one person, the entrepreneur. I shall first describe the issue at stake in the organizing process (see also fragment 16 and 18). Secondly, I shall present the research intervention which went along with this organizational intervention. There it will be explained how the researchers joined the ongoing conversation using the intervention circle as a guide, and the research methods as intervention tools.

**An intervention in the organizing process: towards multivoiced organizing**

The organizing process of Cost has been described in terms of the dilemma of creating and integrating (fragment 16). In short, it was stated that Cost had focused the organizing process around one application of its technology, as a consequence of a relationship with a major customer. As a consequence, the other applications (a package of some twenty) were delayed. It was mainly the entrepreneur who had the responsibility to follow the time planning of most of these projects. This implied he and various other actors were spending a lot of time keeping track of the progress of each project and discussing how this could be accelerated. However, when priorities were then arrived at, the production process of the major application was sometimes compromised. The 'organizing problem' can thus adequately be framed in terms of the time-dilemma. Finding a 'solution' implies that the short, middle and long term can be voiced simultaneously. The question is then which social process can support this complex timing task. The hierarchical system, used to structure and manage the production process, is not appropriate for the developmental character of the other projects.

The plan the entrepreneur elaborated has been called 'time-to-market'. It consists of adding a kind of project structure, in which different projects are allocated to one of the actors of the firm, who becomes the main accountable figure, a so-called 'godfather'. Each of these 'godfathers' or 'godmothers' was required to develop his or her project such that the application would arrive on the market without delay. The proposal built further on the implicit network which already existed. Projects were allocated by the entrepreneur, using the criterion that a person who was already closely connected to the project had a priority.

The proposal implied thus a transition from an individual towards a more collective entrepreneurship, in which responsibilities were rebalanced. The aim of this intervention was that all projects would be 'voiced' simultaneously by each of the actors, who then enacted a proper social context to develop and implement his project. As not all projects were allocated, this
intervention also implied a selection: only certain projects were 'projected' to the future. The 'solution' was relational, as the involved actors would have a double inclusion, one in the already hierarchical system and one in this time project with multiple local and ephemeral (small) networks. This turned out to be very demanding on the relationships between the different actors, as they had to collaborate with others' projects, while asking for others' collaboration for their own projects. The question is indeed what conversations would be enacted and how the dialogue process would take place. The main organizing task in our perspective concerned the question of whether the relational network of Coat would be able to raise a multivoiced dialogue in realizing the different projects, and if different projects would develop simultaneously not by a conflictual or competitive model, but by a dialogical model (i.e. each project is developing through the other project). In the next part, we will describe how the researchers joined the conversation at Coat, and how a research follow-up of this intervention was enacted using the intervention circle and some of our research methods. We envisioned this research follow-up, too, as a multivoiced dialogue; that is, as researchers we brought in another voice in a play that had been started formally more than four years previously.

The follow-up of the intervention through the intervention circle

I shall present and structure the research follow-up of the intervention at Coat using the intervention circle. Firstly, I shall describe how the intervention circle was started up. Entering the firm and arriving at a (first) agreement about the outlook of such a research intervention consisted of going a first time through the research circle. Secondly, I shall describe how the entrepreneur's intervention plan was implemented, in parallel with the research follow-up. The process consisted of going for a second time through the research circle.

Starting up the intervention circle

The way the intervention circle was initiated can be seen as a process of going through this circle one time in advance in order to determine an initial problem formulation. Starting up the intervention circle at Coat consisted of four steps: establishing contact with the firm, holding an exploratory meeting, producing a reaction report, formulating conclusions and practical agreements. The researchers were contacted by a member of the HRM department, responsible for all connected activities of the mother firms. He saw that different partners could be interested in looking at how innovative activities at the firm could be supported by an organizing and HRM perspective of the management of R&D, and, more specifically, by research insights 'from the university'. This HRM representative acted as a broker to link different actors of his firm with the two university researchers.

In an exploratory meeting a context was enacted through which multiple voices were present from the start: those of the directors of the two high tech firms (both sub-enterprises of a company organized into divisions), that of the director for R & D of the parent company, those of the two internal 'consultants' of the mother company, and finally, those of the two external researchers. This 'multivoiced' situation had four advantages: (1) the presence of a second high tech firm made (internal) comparison possible; (2) the presence of the research director presented the possibility of seeing the situation of this case within its larger network and in relation to the general innovatory and strategic policy of the company; (3) the presence of two internal 'consultants' offered a concrete possibility for a follow-up and concrete implementation of research activities; and (4) the presence of 'external' researchers, who from a third-party perspective made a new dialogue possible concerning ways to stimulate technological innovation through processes of personal interaction between various of the internal players.

As a result of this meeting, a reaction report was written by one of the researchers, which documented their first reactions and interpretations on the stories of both high tech firms as documented by its directors and the R&D director. The report concluded with some suggestions for a research intervention.

The conclusion was that a research intervention could be started up with one of the high techs, the Coat firm. After making some practical arrangements with the HRM representative, a first meeting was scheduled with the director of Coat. At this transition to the second phase, one of the internal consultants was named as a coordinator who would organize the dialogue between the different parties.

The outcome of taking one preliminary turn through the intervention circle was that an initial problem formulation emerged as an agreed reality between the Coat director and the researchers. In the reaction report, our general interpretation of Coat was stated as follows: "Coat can be seen as a typical of a young, fast-growing high tech firm that after a few years of searching and developing has established its own structuration, and that the creative chances that are necessary for further innovation and development cannot in the longer term be realized by such structuration: the question is how to find a way of structuring which allows highly structured daily activities to be combined with the 'daily' work of furthering middle to long-term projects; and equally, how to learn how to combine long-term continuity with short-term productivity.'"

During the initial meeting, the entrepreneur of Coat explained in broad terms that he had been thinking of a 'solution', which aimed to review and reshape the structuring process at Coat. From the meeting, it became clear that the entrepreneur of Coat was looking for support to make a more grounded decision. This implied that the intervention of the researchers would consist of documenting through data the proposed solution or suggesting alternative
ways of structuring. According to the entrepreneur, the choice of a solution was very important, as this change would be decisive to the future of Coat. He predicted that if the proposal did not work, his collaborators would feel lost in their daily functioning. According to the entrepreneur during the first exploratory meeting, “it is a matter of everything or nothing.”

The intervention circle revisited

After the decision to collaborate, the intervention circle was re-walked in three steps: an intake interview with the entrepreneur of Coat, a series of intensive interviews with seven key actors of the firm, and an interim report, to be followed by some additional interviews and a final report. The chief difference with the previous research circle is that the borders were extended to include the players of the firm, who now took center-stage, while the other participants were shifted to the background.

An intake interview: reframing the relationship between firm and researcher

The first step consisted of an intake interview between the entrepreneur and the researcher. The researcher was phoned by the entrepreneur to talk over the outline of the intervention process and to focus on the research task. During the meeting it became clear that the initial agreement should be reviewed and reshaped. In the two months since the exploratory meeting, the entrepreneur said he had been thinking a lot about his own idea to reframe the organizing process: “I have been inking in my plan. I still have my doubts, and thought that I should test it out first. I wasn’t quite sure how to begin, but now I know what I’m going to do.” The entrepreneur had decided to implement his plan and make an organizational intervention himself. The follow-up to the interview was devoted to fleshing out this ‘plan’. Finally, it was agreed that the researcher would not appear on the scene as ‘consultant’, but would stay in the research role. The entrepreneur expressed his expectations as follows: “Now I’m interested to see how this is going to reverberate through the company, and I think that it will be important to observe and follow what happens, and to evaluate it all when the time is right.”

As a result, the intervention task took a somewhat different direction: from an evaluation and proposition of a structuration plan to the research follow-up of a structuration intervention. From the perspective of the researcher, this turn was positive: as it was the entrepreneur who was conducting an intervention in a situation comparable to the other cases studied, he remained a principal owner of the organizing process. This also created space for the researcher to use the research conceptions and methods in a research follow-up to the intervention. From the perspective of the entrepreneur as well, this turn was appreciated: the presence of an external figure was in itself an innovation for the firm, since it was the first time

that an ‘outsider’ had made his presence felt in the company. A researcher who ‘observed’ probably turned out to be more useful, since a ‘consultant’ might have given the impression that the players in the firm ‘couldn’t figure things out on their own’. After this intake, the entrepreneur was to make a double announcement at the weekly internal meeting. Firstly, he would announce his plan, as he had formulated it in avant-première with the researcher, and secondly, he would introduce the researcher, and clarify the aim of the research follow-up as agreed during the intake. The afternoon of this announcement, the researcher phoned the entrepreneur to see how things had gone. As both introductions had gone smoothly, the intervention was started, and a next step could be taken. For the researcher this meant interviews with all those involved in the structuration project.

Interviewing the actors in the time project

Interviews were spread over several months, as this gave the opportunity to follow the firm in vivo, and to see how the plan was enacted throughout the organizing process of Coat. Interviews had a double structure: first, the person was asked to tell his or her story with regard to working at Coat since they entered the firm (or even before, if this was relevant); second, there was a focus on the implications of the intervention from the perspective of the interviewee. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher asked if the aim of the interview was clear. All interviewees gave an account more or less similar to the one agreed upon by the entrepreneur and the researcher. Interviews followed the pattern of a phenomenological and storytelling interview (see fragment 12).

In my view, the phenomenological approach has a double value here. Firstly, it orients the researcher (interventionist) to a broader scope of ‘data’ than the usual, limited area of questioning. Personal experiences and emotional accounts can be more revealing than questionnaires or structured, thematic interviews. In our interviews with entrepreneurial actors, we have learned that a lot of their actions can only be understood by accessing their broader life world. For instance, one of the actors of Coat was moving to the United States as a consequence of the new branch of the firm there. A part of the interview concerned the meanings constructed by his family and personal network around this event. The time dilemma of the firm (see fragment 16) took a personal shape for him, as he needed to integrate his family’s time requirements (for instance with regard to school life). Especially in situations involving problems, conflicts or difficulties, where consultants are to be expected, the phenomenal reality cannot be disregarded. Secondly, it implies a different involvement on the part of the interventionist. Interventionists are often perceived as closed and unapproachable persons during their presence

5 About a year before the study, a two-day residential seminar was held, during which it was decided not to engage an external supervisor.
in firms. The way they experience the firm and the persons they consult for, is then not an explicit ingredient of the intervention activity. For instance, in the interviews at Coat, one of the actors asked the researcher at the beginning of the interview to tell his story, inquiring about his professional network and his future perspectives after receiving his doctorate. After a three-hour interview, another actor of the firm remarked that it was only fair that the researcher should tell a little about himself. This rejuvenated the interview for another three quarters of an hour, as the scope became more personal, dealing, for example, with a literary, feminine, and artistic view of working 'in the business'. Thirdly, the storytelling perspective was an appropriate way for the interventionist to get a multi-perspectivistic view of the firm, as every story was a different account from the local perspective of the different actors on the course of the 'same' organization. A main part of our research follow-up consisted of looking for the diversity of reactions and actions with regard to the entrepreneur's new plan.

From interpreting to preliminary reporting

During the period of interviewing, data analysis and interpretation was executed by the researcher, using 'interpretive grounding' (fragments 5 and 13), 'abduction' (fragment 5), and 'meaning configurations' (fragments 13 and 21).

We thought 'interpretive grounding' could stimulate the researcher (interventionist) to dialogue closely with the collected data. Interpretive grounding implies that the researcher opts systematically for a see-see movement between data and concept derivation, instead of between data and action proposals. As a consequence, it prevents a jump to conclusions. It requires making explicit in-between (theoretical) statements before formulating consequent conclusions which can then form the points of departure for actions and interventions. Grounded concepts can be a communication vehicle for entering into a dialogue within the firm setting. Entrepreneurs are themselves also working with grounded or sometimes ungrounded concepts, which can be made explicit or re-grounded by the work of the consultant. Finally, since interventionists work with their own theoretical models, grounding forces them to give up their model temporarily, and to develop a context-bounded theoretical model. While interpretive grounding forces the researcher (interventionist) to look in the direction of the stories instead of their models, abduction can be a way to connect both, in order to construe a hypothetical theoretical account, which can be a point of departure for a (new) dialogue with the organizational members. In this instance, grounding was necessary to come up with concepts linked to the Coat context, and prevented us from reaching too fast for our theories. For example, the time-dilemma was an obvious and immediate interpretation, but we found it appropriate to hold off drawing such a conclusion and first to complete the interviews and the interpretative work. However, when the time seemed ripe, we used the dilemmas and texture to structure the interpretation of the interview texts (see chapter four).

The concept of meaning configurations was seen to be useful for analysis and interpretation. Meaning configurations can be seen as local theories used by entrepreneurs and their collaborators. Several important questions can be raised which can guide intervention activities: Are meaning configurations personal or are they shared by other members of the organization? Are meaning configurations stable or are they transitory? Are they fixed or do they change in light of new events or experiences? For the Coat case, the idea was to change the meaning configuration as a consequence of the structural interventions and to reframe it so that the different actors had more direct responsibility in and access to the ongoing conversation.

Elden and Levin (1991) also refer to the usefulness of meaning configurations for participatory action research, in which they try to generate local theories: “A local theory then is the most direct, simple and elegant context-bound explanation of cause-and-effect relations in a given situation that makes sense to those with the most local experience. It could be described as a causally focused, group cognitive map using everyday language and meanings generated by ‘insiders’ in dialogue with outsiders.” The meaning configuration dealing with textual organizing at Coat was then able to become a communication instrument (Bouwen & Steyaert, 1990b), through which the different parties could discuss ‘where the organization is coming from’ and to negotiate ‘where the organization is going’.

Continuing the intervention circle

After the analysis, an interim report was drawn up, in which the dilemmas and the texture model were presented as first indications of the interpretations of the interviews. However, there was no specific feedback given with regard to the restructuration process, as it was found appropriate to continue the process of interviewing through follow-up interviews in which each member continued his or her story as it had unfolded since the previous interview, and to check the grounded concepts and meaning configurations with each person separately. After this second series of interviews, a more conclusive report was planned which then would be discussed in a team meeting. A first evaluation, one year after the start of the intervention project, was regarded as appropriate. In terms of the intervention circle, this meant an explicit return to the stage of interviewing instead of finalizing the research follow-up. This was necessary, as the implementation of the intervention took considerably more time than previewed.

Throughout this story, a first indication has been given as to how our social constructionist orientations can guide (research) interventions in entrepreneurial contexts. It has
also been suggested how intervention methods can be used: through the phenomenological and storytelling interview, the interventionist/researcher and the organizational actors come up with enlivened, contextualized, and authentic stories. Through grounding and abduction, events and ideas, experiences and concepts, stories and (theoretical) models become connected; this can be seen as a result of the interaction between the researcher and the different entrepreneurial actors. Through meaning configurations, the researcher/interventionist aims at the reduction and integration of ideas, concepts and models; they can offer guidance as communication instruments for the organizational members and the researcher. Finally, it is the sensemaking, as initiated by the researcher through interviews, interpretations and feedback, which can be used as a possible reflective frame for the actors involved in the conversation, and which can form a specific interpretive voice in the ongoing conversation of the firm.

Coda: Dialogue as 'Die Kunst des Fragens'?

"If the question disappears, my creative impulse goes with it."
Peter Handke, 1995

1. The old woman

"Old Woman: You have never asked such questions before.
- Have you still got questions at your age?

Old Man: Yes, questions and yet more questions. And what questions! And you?

Old Woman: Yes, me too. The older I get, the more questions I have and the more often I think in questions. [Silence. She adjusts his suspenders, he her hairpin.]

Actor: [Look at each other inquisitively.]

Young Actress: And?

Young Actor: No. Not yet.

Young Actor: You don’t know what your question is yet."

2. The aim of questions: questions as means or questions as ends?

Now I can still ask: Does the answer lie in the asking of questions, in 'Die Kunst des Fragens'?

The researcher who enters a company and travels along with it for a spell is thrown into the process of sensemaking. Like a child that is thrust into the world, he or she is going to ask some questions: Why this? Why that? Why? Asking questions is a way of getting connected, an attempt to get involved in reading the story, and even in writing it. The researcher is the master of asking questions and wrestling with them: the research question, operational questions, interview questions, questions of interpretation, questionnaires... The question is the typical form by which a researcher is able to enter into dialogue with a company. The question is the motor of the dialogue. The researcher quickly discovers that the company itself is no more or less than a landscape of questions and questioners, each with a particular role, interest, and involvement. The researcher is a new voice that is capable of asking other questions or encouraging questions to be asked anew. Together, company and researcher travel a little distance, with questions for each other and questions for themselves. The question is the traveler’s passport for the journey along the route of becoming. Questions pry loose what we insist on affirming and affixing. The question is the way to deification and variation. In fact, the researcher addresses the central question, the existential question which is continually asked in an enterprise; namely, What is going on here? and What does this mean?

The interventionist, too, is a questioner. She or he often enters at the moment when the question, sounding like a request for assistance, has been asked, demanding a speedy answer, the alleviation of a crisis, a hopeful answer. When the questions in an enterprise keep getting bigger, becoming Questions, when the vague feeling of 'something is fishy here' has grown into a big question mark, a mark of turmoil, a third voice is needed which can listen calmly to the questions, can take them in, reformulate them, and ultimately begin asking questions in return, expanding the situation into a dialogue in question form. The interventionist approaches the company with questions which can create a new opening or generate new material; the interventionist, more than the researcher, is out to teach the company how to ask questions, different questions, questions of itself, how to keep track of questions, to let go of them, or to let them simply be. To intervene is more to ask questions than to answer them: questions of clarification, questions that sound confronting, questions that touch the heart and the emotions, questions that take time, questions of structuring, unresolved questions. Thus the researcher and the interventionist learn the art of asking questions, acquire a capacity for process, which enterprises in turn make their own. For the question is the gate of creativity.
3. The watchman

"Watchman: We began with many questions, and without questions we can never get out again.

Spoilsport: And with questions we can?

Watchman: With questions now and then, yes. And with questions we can also stay in the play, and we have some control over its course. Literally: its free course. Always ready for the next question, headed somewhere completely new. And yet following an fixed rule, which we have yet to find - by playing. On the way to our keep-on-asking-further. So that, at least now and then, we can simply be there and repose in questionlessness."

4. Handke’s questions?

Who is Peter Handke? you might ask. Handke, born in Austria in 1942, is seen as a major current figure of German literature (Bertens & D’haen, 1988). The work Das Spiel vom Fragen oder die Reise zum sonoren Land, written in 1989, appeared again in 1994 with the new title Die Kunst des Fragen. Handke studies the role of the question in question form by asking questions and answering each question with another question. Content and form support one another. Seven characters ask each other questions as they undertake a question journey together. Handke, inspired by the pilgrims in Dante’s Vita Nova, takes Heraclitus’ flux metaphor to the limit, whereby the rhythm of the echoing questions indicates the strength of the life flow.

5. The detective

The detective is a symbol of the questioner, and increasingly, a symbol of this (postmodern) time. Eco’s The Name of the Rose is in the first place a detective story in which William of Baskerville’s main task is to solve a series of murders. However, this detective finds himself in a labyrinth of texts, signs, and utterances, where even the thread of his companion Adso’s habit seems not able to help him out of the mystery. The detective shows the individual in search of himself, making use of every little clue that life has to offer. And the image of the detective is probably a good metaphor for looking at the researcher and the interventionist. It is comparable to Mintzberg’s (1979) insight that the researcher constructs a model in two steps: in a first phase doing the work of the detective; in a second, that of a creator; or like Parret (1993), when he calls the abductively reasoning thecrticican an ‘abductive detective’ who seeks the suspect on the basis of trails and clues, and who attempts to bring these together into a config-

uration. The image of the researcher/interventionist who tries to make his or her own representation through signs, who attempts to make sense of the utterances taken down, and of the assembled texts and actions within an enterprise. But above all, he or the uses conjecture while researching, and hypotheses are formulated to form the nucleus of the thesis. Both researching and advising involve setting up structures of conjecture. Just as there are different kinds of detective, from Hercule Poirot to Sherlock Holmes, from the Singing Detective to Ellis Peters, from Brother Caedel to William of Baskerville, there are also many types of researchers and interventionists with various ways of working and asking questions. But is the way they proceed with and become engrossed in their questions nor a common one? Now that the Big Answers are out of the way, the little questions are more pertinent than ever.

6. Actor

"Actor: You begin then. Ask a question. You play the questioner first. I’m not ready for that yet. You do the questioning for me. Help me move ahead with your questions. But start simply, preferably with the both of us here. And try and take it easy to begin with. You’re not being tested. Your fellow players are not your teachers; they’re looking for answers as much as we are. There is no pre-marked-out way. It may turn out that we are retracing the quest for the Northwest Passage which eluded Captain Cook - for the simple reason that it doesn’t exist. Our predecessors must have known why asking questions was no stuff for a drama, for if it is such stuff, it stretches out in so many countless directions and diverging forms that that one decisive or purposeful form may perhaps be unfindable. On the other hand, our departure can’t be all that impossible and senseless, for otherwise I would not be undertaking it with such great desire. Questioning implies going: going out to ask, in the open air. My idea of our question-journey is of a footrace of the generations in the light air of a high plateau; so do we once again become the traveling players and our questioning becomes an even flow of water streaming by without any shallow parts. Light and air, be with us now. Role in the question-drama, since I did ask for you, take flesh now. Good spirit of questioning, allow us, Those Present, to join your quest-play, for we require it. And in contrast to former times, you need not answer our questions in your traditional place by the mouth of your oracle servants, but must only help us in our distress when we ask ourselves what questions still remain. You, woman, come now with your questions. And take your time: from here it goes uphill. And keep your questions shorter than they have been - this too is necessary while climbing. And begin without shame, like little children, drunkards, and madmen. And if you do not know how to proceed further, then jump, or follow the example of our hare there on the horizon.
Fragment Twenty-six
Twenty-five Fragments: Epistemological Implications

"To write in fragments:
the fragments are then so many stones
on the perimeter of the circle:
I spread myself around:
my whole little universe in crumbs;
at the center, what?"
Barthes, 1991

Fragment of fragments. A dissertation in fragments? How so? Does that not fly in the face of
the scientific principles of cohesion and coherence? Of progress and straightforward progression?
And yet... Must the scientifically-minded reader necessarily be confounded by fragmentation?
Can a justification offer any kind of consolation? Or is Donald Barthelme's significant
argument sufficiently convincing when it calls the fragment the only form which can be trusted,
thereby calling on that intangible human feeling of acceptance without justification, without
an answer?

Fragment?

Is framing. Bordering.
That which is put in the frame.
That which ends up beyond the border.
Framing long lists
Of experiences touched upon,
Of unnoted points of the world.
A hand full of separateness.

Fragment: total part of an absent whole,
Placed between brackets to catch the attention.
Fragmenting: releasing and securing the experience.
And at once calling this the experience.
Without steps or stages.
Cutting off without isolating.
Placing at the top without favoring.

The fragment is moment
And lasts only the wink of an eye,
Like a yawn before sleeping,
Like the buzz of a sidewalk café,
Like the arc of a rainbow,
Like the sigh of a human life.

The fragment is never complete.
Passing. Past but not over.
Truth becoming.
No one can tie down the truth, and with it, existence.
No one can circumscribe the world with knowledge.
Nor en-circle it with regularity,
For it is always given form.

Fragmentation.
Because the grand narratives are too grand.
Because the search for total unity leads to totalitarianism.
As with happiness, the truth lies in the between:
Fragmentation is truth (put) in its place.
Directed to a public,
That is never everyone.
The public is anonymous, unrecognizable, and as such not public.
Thus, the truth will become story, neither able nor willing to escape its own contours,
Or break free from its context,
The story makes no mistake of its public,
For it is directly attached to a public,
This group which unannounced is always present.
Still, the story is meant for all.
The fragment is for everyone, and for everyone different.

Fragmentation is not the dismantling of the world,
Only to be pottered back together again.
No anti-natural bricolage, no puzzle pieces.
But experience-directed bricolage, seductive pastiche.
Fragmentation embraces and battles both holism and disintegration.
Fragmentation is neither isolated nor integrated, but contextual.

Drawn from life.
A world of Great Moments
Of happiness and pain
(As in "Tanti affetti in quel momento", an aria from La Donna del Lago by Giacomo Rossini, based on Walter Scott's The Lady of the Lake, and sung by Elena in the finale when she at last finds peace and the moment becomes silence),
(Or as in "Chi mi frena in tal momento? Chi tronco dell'ira il corso? Il suo duolo, il suo spavento/Son la pross un Rimorso! Ma, qual rosa inaridita, Ella sta fra morte e vita!...Io son vinto...con commosso! T'amo ingiuta, t'amo ancor!"

A moment full of question marks and exclamation marks, lived and sung in Gaetano Donizetti's Lucia di Lammermoor by Edgardo, eye to eye with his fainted beloved, Lucia, who has just been married off to Arturo by her brother.)

Like little moments
(The pauses that refresh
And the break you deserve today)

Repeatedly. Repetition of the fragment.
Repetition of the unknown, as in the French 'recherche'.
It hitches a ride on the déjà-vu train, the echo, the reincarnation and the transference,
Connecting with everything that unexpected, unsuspected re-turns,
With everything that is lost and seems to be found again.
A story of eternal presence and of constant completion.
The past does not repeat itself lightly, but is actualized
- Recognizable or disguised -

1 Who holds me back at this moment? Who stirs the flow of my anger? Her pain, her fear, which seem to be an expression of sensibilities! Like a dried-up rose she lies there between life and death! I am overwhelmed, completely moved! I love you, unthankful woman, I love you still!
2 Original Dutch: "Zoals bij 'en dan is er koffie' / Of zoals bij 'het moment van het compliment'" (trans.).
Now,
Thus hurling itself into the future.
The fragment greets the 'too much at once' and secretly watches it.
A recognition of versatility,
Of whole-ness bound to a place.
An ode to multiplicity.
Fragment is temporary homecoming,
Momentary grace.\(^3\)

The doctoral research text is a phase which comprises many small stories and sometimes a bigger one, and which I chose to write in fragments brought together under umbrellas called chapters. Let me sketch out an ontological and epistemological framework for the idea of 'fragment'. Before I expand on the fragment: both as an organizational reality and as a form of organizational knowledge, I will go outside the domain of the organization, and situate the fragment as a postmodern reality, inscribed in the blurring between science and art, and as a form of writing, using Barthelme's work.

Fragmentation, an Overtone of the Postmodern Era\(^4\)

Between art and science
The idea of developing this epistemological framework by drawing on literature and fiction from outside the domain of organization (theory)\(^5\) can be understood clearly from the perspective of postmodernism, of which 'fragmentation' can be considered one of the main overtones. Postmodernists have set about blurring one of the many important boundaries typically drawn in the modernist conception: that between art and science. That this boundary has become blurred is not necessarily a foregone conclusion. Not so long ago, an 'ocean' of difference was assumed, which led Snow (1964) to speak of two cultures: "There have been plenty of days when I have spent the working hours with scientists and then gone off at night

with some literary colleagues. As a result of this experience, I got occupied with the problem of what, long before I put it on paper, I christened myself as the two cultures. For constantly I felt that I was moving among two groups - comparable in intelligence, identical in race, not grossly different in social origin, earning about the same incomes, who had almost ceased to communicate at all, who in intellectual, moral and psychological climate had so little in common that instead of going from Burlington House or South Kensington to Chelsea, one might have crossed an ocean." In general, we can say that the relationship between literature and science has involved a long attempt to stay out of each other's hair, paying homage to a comfortable mutual respect for each other's so-called singularity in order to accomplish this. Literature stands for the subjective and the fictitious while science strives for objectivity and is directed to 'true' reality - this was the argument. Prigogine and Stengers (1990) frame this situation clearly as they claim that one of the reasons for the opposition between the 'two cultures' may have been the belief that literature corresponds to a conceptualization of reality, to 'fiction', while science seems to express objective 'reality'. According to the Belgian Nobel laureate Prigogine, the reality that is studied within science is not a simple given: "Quantum mechanics teaches us that the situation is not so simple. On all levels reality implies an essential element of conceptualization." The strict division between literature and science can no longer be maintained quite so easily. Goodman (1984) argues that art and science are equally valid ways of 'making a world', which leads to a questioning of the rigorous separation between fictional and factual entities. Art is equal to science as a means of discovering, as a form of creativity and knowledge-generation. They can both be seen as a form of understanding: "The genuine and significant differences between art and science are compatible with their common cognitive function; and the philosophy of science and the philosophy of art are enmeshed within epistemology conceived as the philosophy of understanding... Since both science and art consist very largely in the processing of symbols, an analysis and classification of types of symbol system... provides an indispensable theoretical background" (Goodman, 1984, p. 146-147).

The implication of all this is that scientific knowledge becomes relative and that other forms of knowing move to the fore. The American pragmatist Rorty attempts to complement the often rusty vocabulary of a scientized culture with new creative/aesthetic-directed vocabularies which suggest a poetized culture (van Nierop, 1992). The French thinker Lyotard (1984) contrasts scientific knowledge that is logical and deontic, with narrative knowledge. Whenever scientific language games hold sway, knowledge is accepted on the basis of cognitive rules, criteria based on verification and falsification. The problem here is that the other language games are liable to be pushed aside. Narrative knowledge, 'stored' in the form of myths, legends, fairy tales, and popular stories, are found in abundance in traditional communities. They deal with what is possible, what is allowed, and what ought to be said and done.

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\(^3\) Later, I 'discovered' the following in De Dijks: "Moments, like philosophical thoughts, come into being through the alchemy of the word-filled moment."

\(^4\) For a more extensive description of this vision, see C. Seyssert (1994c). All That Is Solid Melts Into Air.

\(^5\) Notice that this has been the case also on other places of the text (e.g. see fragment 2, metaphor of the library or fragment 23, Balbelle's theory).
and they present positive or negative examples of ways to behave within a particular culture. Striking is that statements about truth, justice, and beauty are all woven together. The various language games are thus not uncoupled.

As a result of this change in orientation, a long series of attempts at exploring the boundary between art and science can be cited (Bruner, 1962, 1986; De Dijn, 1994; van Nierop, 1992; Van Kerkhoff, 1993), including specific attempts in the field of organization theory (Bergquist, 1993; Björkegren, 1993; Stråt, 1993; also fragment 2). The adoption of the ‘fragment form’ lands us too in the rich transitional zone between art and science, literature and organization.

Conceptions of fragmentation

‘Fragmentation’ seems to be one of the recurring characteristics which is used to describe Post-modernism both as manifestation and scholarly pursuit. Bergquist (1993) speaks of ‘fragmented and inconsistent images’, in which forms, moods, stances and cultural levels blur and become juxtaposed in a layering of fragments. Vanheeswijk (1993) refers to ‘living with fragmentation’, while Jameson (1991, p. 25) considers this description short of the mark: “The description of postmodernism [is] something for which the word fragmentation remains much too weak and primitive a term… particularly since it is now no longer a matter of the breakup of some pre-existing older organic totality, but rather the emergence of the multiple in new and unexpected ways, unrelated strings of events, types of discourse, modes of classification, and compartments of reality.” The end of Sarup’s introductory guide to Post-structuralism and Postmodernism (1993, p. 186) can here provide a conclusion: “Post-structuralists, I maintained, are antagonistic to the concept of totality and in its stead emphasize fragmentation. Everything consists of fragments; and as they do not recognize a unity against which the fragments can be measured they tend towards relativism. The post-structuralists also emphasize the local and the contingent and have a hatred of all overarching theories.” Lyotard has been the main opponent of what he calls ‘les grands récits’. These ‘grand narratives’, such as “the dialectics of the Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject or the creation of wealth” (Lyotard, 1984) are characteristic of the ‘modern’, where they are used as a legitimization of knowledge. According to Lyotard, it is no longer possible for an individual, or even for science, to conceive of everything that takes place in society in its totality. In his view of the ‘postmodern condition’, Lyotard emphasizes the fragmentation of language games, of time, of the individual, and of the whole society.

On the level of individuals it can be said with Jameson (1991) that the image of a person has changed from the alienation of the subject in modernism to the fragmentation of the subject in postmodernism. This fragmentation can be further described as ‘pastiche’ and as ‘schizophrenia’ (Jameson, 1991). Pastiche is a practice which replaces our search for stylistic innovation and questions the availability of unique and personal styles (Sarup, 1993), and which is, according to Jameson, in line with the ‘schizophrenia’ of consumer society. Deleuze and Guattari (1984) consider the state of schizophrenia as a privileging experience and exact it as “producibility to the imaginary, to fusions relationships and 5 flux. The self is all flux and fragmentation, collection of machiner parts” (Sarup, 1993, p. 96). Their description of a schizophrenic is directional for the condition of a postmodern person which “produces himself as a free man, irresponsible, solitary, and joyous, finally able to say and do something simple in his own name, without asking permission; a desire lacking nothing, a flux that overcomes borders and codes, a name that no longer designates any ego whatsoever. He has simply ceased being afraid of becoming mad” (cited in Sarup, 1993, p. 97). This fragmentation is not something which is characteristic of the schizophrenic in particular, but of the human condition in general. Such schizophrenia thus in no way gives the personal situation a clinical aura, but rather it can bring us happiness, as the Dutch writer and poet Komrij (1985) claims: “We cannot declare all certainties dead and then be invariably unhappy with the result. We should be able to include happiness. Happiness, as much as uncertainty, is a national state. Unconnected, changeable, fragmentary, and contradictory thinking does not need to awake great fear in us. The world is a festival of dance. (…) Long live the ecstasy and the rituals of ideal confusion, the opinionless labyrinth. (…) I do not feel alienated or torn apart. I accept the fragmentation of world views as a divine gift. I am the first happy schizophrenic.” With this, fragmentation loses its dunsce image, and paradoxically enough the possibilities for the orphaned human have expanded once we have laid aside for good the unfinished Grand Construction of the Tower of Babel.

What remains to us in this open space, this nameless zone, is a somewhat haphazard quest for labynrinthine forms. ‘Bricolage’ is another way of putting it, which gives fragments the freedom to be assembled and to drift along with the production of signifiers: “Reification penetrates the sign itself and disjoins the signifier from the signified. Now reference and reality disappear altogether, and even meaning— the signified— is problematized. We are left with that pure and random play of signifiers that we call postmodernism, which no longer produces monumental works of the modernist type but ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricolage” (Jameson, 1991, p. 96). There is an abundant choice of forms and new networks, like the allegory, the video clip, the parody, the play, the comedy... all of which are ‘bricolage sensitive’ and lack an aural pose (Lash, 1990; Sarup, 1993; Vanheeswijk, 1993). These are usually ambiguous, ephemeral, and self-referential forms. As an example, recall that in The Name of the Rose, the book, that ultimate book, which Baskerville has for so long sought in vain, and that he is forced to hand over just as he

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4 See in particular his consideration of Benjamin and Bataille’s philosophy.
finally gets the chance to glance at it, is the second part of Aristotle's *Poetics* which deals with The Comedy. Lyceard offers an alternate form, both highly interesting and also allowing for creativity and novelty: “The little narrative (which) remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention” (Sarup, 1993, p. 153). Here creativity, rather than being locked out, is localized: the foreign experience is temporarily brought home in ‘petites histoires’. These labyrinthine forms all point to the use of ‘fragments’, a form which we will more fully document in the literary work of the American writer Donald Barthelme.

The Fragment, Barthelme’s Literary Form

Barthelme and metafiction

Donald Barthelme has written a world of fiction into existence in his exceptionally extensive oeuvre, of which the titles alone speak volumes: *Come Back, Dr. Caligari; Unseizable Principles, Unnatural Acts; City Life; Snow White; Sadness; The Death Father; Amateurs; Great Days*. His preferred form is the fragment; short stories, denying fixed styles and closed genres, in a “turn toward fragmentation to truncated, discontinuous, often thoroughly impressionistic forms” (Hicks, 1981, p. 12-13); collage techniques, random disorder, sudden stylistic shifts, exaggerations, self-parody, pastiches, re-writes, multiple opening chapters or denouements. Barthelme blends different styles and forms which he simultaneously parodies as well, using acid ironies, black humor, and a resounding smirk in the face of nothingness (Bertens & D’aem, 1988, p. 164).

He has developed a grammatical style, dubbed ‘parataxis’, a peculiar style, reminiscent of Beckett, in which short, sparse sentences present futile facts, and banal utterances, linked by coordinating conjunctions and little else (Bertens & D’aem, 1988, p. 166). In his stories the minor details, the ballast, the marginia, receive the attention which is normally accorded to the main point. Bertens and D’aem (1988, p. 162) call Barthelme’s stories “masterpieces in the genre: fiction without plot, collages of fragmentary circumstance.” The narrator is disguised, the characters nameless. Puppeteers and impersonators. Barthelme writes what in literary theory is known as ‘schizo-texts’, presenting characters “suggested to be in facitious, while simultaneously suggested to possess referent traits and thus to be saying something about the individual in the real world. (...) These characters are in no way authentic; they are language that speaks. They are, in other words, less speakers than voices” (Bertens & D’aem, 1988, p. 153). Fragments. And why not? remarks Gilman (1969) in a commentary on Barthelme’s work: “We perceive in fragments, live in fragments, are in doubt dying by fragments; should we not then write in fragments, thereby emphasizing the juxtapositions, the stranger disjunctions, that are a part of everyday experience of modern life?”

Barthelme is considered to be one of the most important representatives of the metafiction movement. Metafiction is a term which originated with Gaston and Scholes, coming out of the avant garde movements of the sixties and seventies which were inspired by the American publication of *Labyrinths* by the Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges, a philosophe-literateur par excellence, and by the appearance in Europe of Alain Robbe-Grillet’s *Dans la labyrinthe*. In their wake followed a group of American writers including Barthelme himself, along with a long list of writers who have remained comparatively unknown up until now, with the exception of Ken Kesey (who became famous for his *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*), Barthes (reviled and idolized because of books such as *The Floating Opera* and *The Sex-Weed Factor* – cf. D‘haen, 1990), and Nabokov. Metafiction and postmodernism are closely bound up with one another in that they both deal with the problematic relationship between literature and reality. Like postmodernism, metafiction joins the battle of the almighty storyteller and the autobiography of the writer. Writers of metafiction emphasize the importance of language at the expense of the world and suggest that the world is partially or indeed wholly a fiction constructed by language (Bertens & D’aem, 1988, p. 106). Bertens and D’haem see this as a socially implicit insight of metafiction, citing specifically “that reality is always perceived from a perspective determined by language and that the various perspectives arising from discourse can preclude one another. Moreover, ‘true’ reality, always put into words by language, has no privileged status, and thus no appeal may be made to such a status when settling discrepancies between different worlds or perspectives” (p. 111). Hicks (1981) situates the authors of metafiction in the context of the transition of fiction from a literature of mimetic reflex and reflection – in the sense of consideration and mirroring – to literature as a linguistic construction of alternative worlds, fictitious cities – *Unvisible Cities*, as Calvino puts it – and lunar landscapes. Hicks’ formulation is nestled in a similar crook in the road, marked by visions of language, a crook known as the ‘linguistic turn’ (Steyaert & Janssen, forthcoming). The writer of metafiction does not describe and mirror social reality as he or she might have been accustomed to do, either directly (e.g. in a naturalistic period) or indirectly (e.g. in a fable). He or she represents an additional and alternative reality, negligible as representation of ‘the world’. At the same time, the writer in this way presents virtual realities, fields of possible experiences, where social reality is completed and transformed. The world becomes possible, open to change, remaining possible as a result. The writer constructs a reality. How can this be described? “In the most summary way this new reality can be described as being open-ended, provisional, characterized by suspended judgments, by disbelief in hierarchies, by mistrust of solutions, denouements and completions, by self-consciousness issuing in tremendous earnestness but also in far-ranging mockery, by emphasis on the flux to the anachronization of the spirit, by a wealth of possibility whose individual possibilities tend to cancel one another out, by unfreedom felt as
freedom and the reverse, by cults of youth, sex, change noise and chemically induced ‘truth’. It is also a reality harboring a radical mistrust of language, writing, fiction, the imagination” (Gilman, 1969, p. 43). Metaphiction with a double meaning: in the sense of metaphysical fiction, directed towards a world of ideas, philosophical speculations, and self-reflections; and in the sense of a kind of literature that tries to go further than the usual (mimetic) possibilities in terms of form, and aims to explore the imaginary limits of fiction and language.

From fiction as fragment to dissertations as fragments?

Metafiction texts and their attendant principles tend to line up nicely with many of the basic starting points of this dissertation, giving them further support. Firstly, metafiction accords with our conception of the world and the organization as flux. In their texts, most writers of metafiction set out to “locate a stabilization reality” (Hicks, 1981, p. 20). Hicks further uses the image of the labyrinth to represent reality-in-motion, as Borges and Robbe-Grillet have done in the titles of their aforementioned works. Barthelme describes how a person - a personage - is carried along with the overwhelming stream, sometimes drownings, and sometimes derives pleasure from the stream of life. The following quotation from Robert Kennedy Saving from Drowning appears in Unspakable Practices, Unnatural Acts and illustrates the relationship between ‘fragment’ and ‘Bow’; “Sometimes I can’t seem to do anything. The work is there, piled up, it seems to me an insurmountable obstacle, really out of reach… I am thinking of something else, I can’t seem to get the gist of it, it seems meaningless, devoid of interest, not having to do with human affairs, drained of life. Then, in an hour, or even a moment, everything changes suddenly: I realize I only have to do it, hurl myself in the midst of it, proceed mechanically, the first thing and then the second thing, that it is simply a matter of moving from one step to the next, plowing through it. I become interested, I become excited, I work very fast, things fall into place, I am exhilarated, amazed that these things could ever have seemed dead to me.”

Secondly, metafiction makes use of a social constructionist conception of reality: “Metaphiction does not accept the world ‘out there’ as a referent for its own existence but works instead from second-order literary and intellectual materials” (Hicks, 1981, p.21). Bertens and D’haen (1988, p. 119) refer explicitly to Berger and Luckmann (1967) and Bruner (1986) to argue that “the world does not exist; only a probably endless diversity and abundance of ‘possible’, that is, formulatable worlds”. The form of fragment is then in the line of social constructionism, for it has as bearer the meaning, this station of interpretation in the stream of life, that always demands a further interpretation, thus creating new fragments.

Thirdly, the fragment is an expression of the idea that there are no larger wholes, and that a going through meaning, no matter how useful, is ultimately an illusion, or at best a sort of going against the grain. To elucidate, Bertens and D’haen (1988, p.122) surprisingly enough evoke the Eliot-James-Barthelme triangle: “T.S. Eliot still intended […] to shore up ‘fragments against his ruins’ as bits of a splintered whole which he nostalgically desired to regain, albeit in vain. For Barthelme there are however no more ‘grand designs’. No ‘thread in the carpet’, as Henry James’ metaphor frames it, but rather the stark question (in Snow White) ‘is there a thread in the carpet, or is it …just carpet?’.”

Fragments suffice: Ariadne can get lost. The oppositions which this implies, the stubborn, almost schizophrenic contradictions, are still not to be taken as threatening, but allow greater possibility, the fecundity of many truths: “Schizophrenia is a capitalization on the many possibilities offered by fragmentation and discontinuity by making a creative use of them through their multiplicity and eclecticism” (Bertens & D’haen, 1988, p. 124). How then do we bring fragments together in a creative way? Once again I shall speak of collage, montage, assemblage, in short, bricolage, referring in the process to Levi-Strauss and Barthes, and thereby perceiving that “the pottering together of heterogeneous material is a key concept for today’s intellectual climate” (p.125).

Finally, the form of the fragment can be reconciled with the narrative perspective, elaborated as part of our conceptual persuasions (fragment 7). The story is a suitable epistemological category for social constructionist knowledge. For the most part, the narrative - not the grand stories, but the petites histoires - comes down to a fragment, as Erich Fried has noted: “The truth is that stories are in fact always fragments, even if their narrators and writers are not aware of it, and the listeners and readers even less so. The most complete stories are those that there, right where they leave off in the middle of a sentence, leave behind a fixture in the brain” (as cited by Eric de Kuyper, 1994, p.131). De Kuyper attempts to forget a love story, and as he writes, establishes that “we live only by the grace of stories. La vie est un roman… What has here taken place must remain an accident, and as a story, it remains a ‘fragment’.”
Fragmentation in Organizational Thought...

Fragmentation in the study of organizational culture

I first encountered fragmentation as an element of the organizational domain while researching organizational culture, in a pivotal text by Meyerson and Martin (1987). Together, the authors develop a framework in which three ‘disparate views of culture and cultural change’ are placed together. These views reflect differing paradigms. Paradigms act as theoretical blinders for researchers, as they direct their attention selectively towards a number of elements of culture and cultural change while neglecting other elements. The juxtaposition of these three visions shows up each one’s blind spots. The three paradigms are integration, differentiation, and fragmentation.

The integration paradigm predominates in cultural research, and is also used widely by consultants and managers. This is immediately evident from the definition given to culture which centers on its shared character (shared values, shared meanings). Culture is the integrating element that affords consensus between the members of an organization. Culture is a social glue. The members of an organization agree on what happens in general and what is happening at the moment. Culture creates clarity and distinctness: there is no room for ambiguity.

Peter Berger, the co-author of The Social Construction of Reality, has described culture as “an area of meaning cut out of a vast mass of meaningless, a small clearing of lucidity in a formless, dark, always ominous jungle.” The idea that an organization’s culture develops in its early years fits the integration paradigm. The most important input here comes from the company’s founder, through his or her personality and vision. The role of the founder in the creation of an organizational culture has been developed for the most part by Schein (1985, 1992). Using case studies, he illustrates how the actions and assumptions of entrepreneurs become the assumptions and values of their companies through a learning process: entrepreneurs’ words and actions give content to the meanings of their partners and employees.

The second paradigm, called differentiation, is characterized by diversity, the blind spot, from an integration perspective. Culture is not a neatly-rounded-off blueprint which makes uniform the interpretations of fellow workers. The perspective of differentiation highlights differences in interpretation, inconsistencies, lack of consensus, and the fact that there are sources other than entrepreneurial leadership which give meaning to a culture. Instead of a singular, monolithic, dominant culture, there is reference to subcultures. Organizations reflect broader social cultures and consist of all sorts of external and internal identifications with professions, different kinds of education and upbringing, social classes, races, ethnic groups, and gender. Various types of subculture arise from these sources of diversity. Consensus and clarity exist within the subcultures; between the subcultures there is ambiguity and difference in perspective. Subcultures are the islands of clarity in a sea of ambiguity. Within subcultures half a word gets the message across; between subcultures dialogue often hits snags. Often the differentiation perspective points up a conflict between a dominant culture and a marginalized subculture. Innovation may also be described as the calling into question of a dominant culture which comes under pressure from an up-and-coming innovative counter-culture, perhaps resulting in the transformation into a third culture (Bouwen, De Visch & Steyaert, 1992).

The third paradigm is the most recent. It was originally called ‘ambiguity’ (Meyerson & Martin, 1987), and later ‘fragmentation’ (Frost et alii, 1991; Martin, 1992). The central characteristic of a fragmentation perspective is in fact found in the manner which ambiguity is treated. Paradigms 1 and 2 minimize the experience of ambiguity. Within the integration paradigm this occurs by denying ambiguity and laying the emphasis on clarity, consistency, and shared qualities. The only form of ambiguity is in cultural change which takes on a revolutionary form. A temporary and traumatic acceptance of ambiguity is only a bridge to a new shared, distinct, and ideologically cleared-up sky. Ambiguity is thus a temporary but necessary transitional state of affairs. In the differentiation perspective ambiguity is kept at a manageable level. Ambiguity disappears within the subcultures, thereby avoiding the paralysis caused by an excess of ambiguity, and channeling it between clearly localized subcultures. The fragmentation perspective assumes a different attitude towards ambiguity by accepting it: ‘complexity and lack of clarity could be legitimated and even made the focus of attention; from a paradigm 3 perspective, irremovable interpretations are simultaneously entertained; paradoxes are embraced’ (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Ambiguity is the situation in which organizations find themselves, while consistency and consensus are abstract illusions created by management to suggest a semblance of control. One therefore does not find an integrated set of shared values, but rather a mosaic of meanings around which locally shared meaning is constructed and in turn demolished. Here, difference, confusion, obscurity, paradox, and even hypocrisy reign. In the fragmentation perspective, culture is like a web of detached meanings, a jungle of entwined values, a purposeless journey through a labyrinth. Culture is like a library where each borrowing of a series of

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10 Debra Meyerson wrote her doctoral thesis on the social construction of ambiguity and burnout among social workers in hospitals; Joanne Martin is co-editor of Refocusing Organizational Culture and author of Culture in Organizations. The framework was first laid out in the context of organizational change in Meyerson and Martin (1987), and subsequently in Martin and Meyerson (1988), in which the role of ambiguity is expanded upon in each of the three contexts. The framework was also used as the structure for Refocusing Organizational Culture, edited by Peter Frost, Larry Moore, Meryl Louis, Craig Lundberg, and Joanne Martin. In the meantime, Culture in Organizations has been published by Martin, providing a book-length development and illustration of the three paradigms using one case description. Joanne Martin describes her own career “as a journey from integration to differentiation to fragmentation in... feminism.” She cites inspiration for the future in feminism, deconstructionism (see Martin, 1993) and postmodernism.

11 They are distinguishable on the basis of department (e.g. commercial department versus production department, R&D versus planning), project (e.g. product-development project versus training project), hierarchy (e.g. management versus staff), gender (e.g. male versus female employees), work location (e.g. outside versus inside services; head office versus branch offices), and national culture (e.g. Walloons versus Flemings).
books creates ever-new patterns of meaning. The emphasis is on the changing and temporary. There are no general pronouncements on whether a culture is truly harmonious or truly in conflict. Individuals share some points of view, disagree over others, and are ignorant or indifferent to still others. Consensus, dissent, and confusion exist concurrently, making it difficult to draw cultural or subcultural boundaries. In Morgan's words (1986, p. 127): "In organizations there are many different and competing value systems that create a mosaic of organizational realities rather than a uniform corporate culture."

**Fragmentation and organizing forms of entrepreneurship**

Why is this framework so significant? In my opinion, it rises above the situation inherent in researching organizational culture, and can be coupled with tendencies concerning theories of organizing, structuring, and managing people in organizations as evoked in our description of the organizational library (fragment 2). The fragmentation perspective fits the new structural conception of organizations as 'organized marchy', 'loosely coupled system', and dynamic networks. A wide-ranging and pluri-form set of meanings supports the complex network of employees, subunits, and local entities. This perspective also suits the conceptions about people and personnel of the employee oriented towards multiple roles and taking part in varied work groups. In this sense the fragmentation paradigm produces a picture of the organization-in-becoming as it is conceptualized more and more in organization theory (fragment 2 and our theoretical implications in fragment 24).

The fragments of the organizing process can be called 'momentary appearances' and 'episodes'. They are the primary material in Weick's theory: "The raw materials from which processes are formed usually consist of the interests and activities of individuals that become meshed. The fact that these activities and interests undergo continuous change is the reason why process views typically comment on short-lived appearances that soon resolve into other appearances" (1979, p.44). For Weick, the organization is fragmented, a shifting whole made up of parts: "The image of organizations that we prefer is one which argues that organizations keep falling apart and that they require chronic rebuilding."

Moreover, the idea of fragmentation, of multiple simultaneous meanings, can be seen to be mediated by the organizing forms (like texture and multivoicedness) we have used to describe how entrepreneurial events can become connected. The authorship of an entrepreneurial firm is then writing a polyphonic fragment, connecting different fragments of diverse actors, partners and instances. Entrepreneurial action reminds us of the idea that we are authoring a whole world made of parts, making a local and temporal synthesis. In a true pragmatist and social constructionist spirit, Bruner (1962, p. 116) - and I am a bit embarrassed to date this quotation - says "For whatever the art, the science, the literature, and the geography of a culture, each man must be his own artist, his own scientist, his own historian, his own navigator. No person is master of the whole culture; indeed, this is almost a defining characteristic of that form of social memory that we speak of as culture. Each man lives a fragment of it. To be whole, he must create his own version of the world, using that part of his cultural heritage he has made his own through education." Studying entrepreneurship as the creation of organizations, is then trying to understand the creation of a such a holistic fragment, in which a world is created and lived collectively, through - and here we need to replace the idea of 'cultural heritage' - enacting a multivoiced context from the cultural, economic and political diversity.

...And Fragmented Organizational Thinking

**Fragmented organizational and entrepreneurial theorizing?**

Organizational thinking is fragmented, however, and accuses itself of being disconnected, despite the cohesion-directed intentions, despite the quest for unity, the belief that all the separate pieces of the puzzle will someday fit together. And organizational studies do not differ much from other disciplines, which do not fare much better and often do worse. One example is psychology, of which Bruner (who has spent no little time with this contentious but intriguing discipline) has written: "Psychology has become fragmented as never before in its history." 12

In short, science is fragmented. Even a young discipline like entrepreneurship already threatens to capsize under the lack of conceptual ties, and can only meagerly attempt what its big sister disciplines themselves have never been able to accomplish, and what has landed them in a jam for some years now. The drive towards unification and coherence is very great, as demonstrated in fragment 4, until finally someone suggests that there is possibly more than one all-encompassing science, and that there are in fact at least three: "a unitary, normal science view; a multiple paradigms view; and a totally pragmatic antipoietic view" (1992, p. 208). In fact, it is difficult to find many supporters of views two and three in the entrepreneurship field, and the whole suggestion comes from Aldrich, a sociologist brought in for the occasion of this handbook, who only superficially outlines here what he describes in detail elsewhere (Reed, 1992), in the context of organizational theory, nota bene. Nevertheless, entrepreneurship has within its grasp the ability to show other disciplines how the phenomenon-in-motion which does not allow itself to be held fast - 'a world on the move' - may be studied conceptually, methodically, paradigmatically, and pragmatically.

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A possible paradoxical consequence of our choice of a science arrived at through fragments is that it may well end up being more cohesive and whole than science which seeks integration and coherence and has led us only to disappointing fragmentation. The analytical perspective that tears everything apart - cognitions here, feelings there, motivation in front, intelligence behind, perception to the left, socii to the right, etc. etc. - has as its highest goal to hammer everything back together again, but most likely shudders at such a task. Thinking in fragments is a form of holism and synthesis that does not rigidify the whole, but sends it further: the moment is momentum itself. Making connections between fragments, between contexts, can then be an assay in which a unit of meaning comes into being and in which parts 'blur, merge - cohere is the word maybe'. Connections are made using moveable bridges, rich overlap-zones, in-between spaces, bricolage (a notion that has also found its way into organizational studies; cf. Weick (1993a) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994)), and Bakhin's dialogue, as I have shown in these pages (fragment 23).

Contextualism: the notion of 'texture'

A paradigmatic anchoring for fragmentation thinking may be found in contextualism, one of Pepper's 'World Hypotheses', and closely related to Burrell and Morgan's 'interpretivism'. The contextualistic approach picks up the thread using the flux metaphor, where change and novelty are endemic qualities of every social system, where the event is the central focus, and the story is the interpretative construction of this unique episode. "Contextualism is synthetic: it takes a pattern, a gestalt, as the object of study, rather than a set of discrete facts. (...) [i]t is dispersive: the multitudes of facts it seeks to register are assumed to be loosely structured, not systematically connected by virtue of a lawful relationship. There is no search for underlying structures, and the distinction between appearances and an underlying reality is not accepted. Its root metaphor is the historic event, continuously changing over time." Through the event, a researcher sets his or her sights on the present. This event, embedded in history is characterized by a certain quality and texture. Quality is the intuited wholeness while texture refers to the details and relations, the two being different sides of the same coin (Tsoukas, 1994). The event is oriented towards the present: "In an actual event the present is the whole texture which directly contributes to the quality of the event. The present therefore spreads over the whole texture of the quality, and for any given event, can only be determined by intuiting the quality of the event" (Pepper, 1942, p. 242; cited in Tsoukas (1994)).

With Pepper's contextualism as their starting point, Cooper and Fox (1990) suggest that texture signifies a 'connectedness in action': "It is doing, and enduring, and enjoying: making a boat, running a race, laughing at a joke...solving a problem...communicating with a friend. These acts or events are all intrinsically complex, composed of interconnected activities with continuously changing patterns. They are like incidents in the plot of a novel or drama. They are literally the incidents of life" (Pepper, 1942, p. 232-233). Texture is then an endless series of relationships which continually move into each other, supported by its context. On the relationship between texture and context, Pepper (p. 250) remarks: "As we analyze a texture, we move down into a structure of strands and at the same time sheer out into its context. A bottom is thus never reached. This support is as extensive as you wish, but you never reach the end of it." Texture is a kind of 'con-texture' in the same way that a text is always a con-text.

Texture, seen from an epistemological viewpoint, cannot be aligned with a traditional conception of theory that is closed around its operational definitions and in search of detached knowledge (Cooper & Fox, 1990). Cooper and Fox (1990) envisage instead the crossword puzzle with its multidimensional interlinkings, and Tsoukas (1994) the narrative with its loose flexible framework. Since texture is tacit, invisible and resistant to theorizing, it is linked by Cooper and Fox (1990) to Polanyi's account of 'tacit knowledge', to be distinguished from explicit knowledge. Polanyi introduces 'open textures' to speak of tacit areas which are a kind of inexpressible supplement and which cannot be grasped by theory (Cooper & Fox, 1990; Polanyi, 1964). Theory becomes then "a temporary, accommodative representation of the 'connectedness in action' which characterizes 'open textures'" (Cooper & Fox, 1990, p. 577).

Textural research in organizational studies has for the most part received little attention. Tsoukas (1994) refers to Payne (1975/1976) who advanced the introduction of Pepper's ideas in organizational psychology, and to Pettigrew (1987, 1990) and Mangham (1987) who approached organizational change from a contextualist view. According to Cooper and Fox (1990), Emery and Trist (1965) as well as Weick (1979) gave prominence to the concept of texture in organizational theory. They see texture as compatible with the flux metaphor as conceived by Morgan (1986), who has suggested the position that it is more important for organizational theory to study the implicit order of the organization than the explicit order alone: "The challenge for the organizational thinker who takes texture seriously is to recognize its priority in the organizing process and to reverse the habit of theory to express texture in terms of the explicit order and thereby lose it" (Cooper & Fox, 1990, p. 577).

Contextualism is less pronounced when seen in terms of integration, where it may be distinguished from the organicism which has as root metaphor the 'integrated whole' and which sees the world as coherent and well-integrated. Pepper (1942, p. 769; cited in Tsoukas (1994)) characterizes organicism by seven features: "(1) Fragments of experience which appear with (2) nexuses or connections or implications, which spontaneously lead as a result of the aggravation of (3) contradictions, gaps, opposition, or counteractions to resolution in (4) an organic whole, which is found to
have been (5) implicit in the fragments, and to (6) transcend the previous contradictions by means of a coherent totality, which (7) economizes, saves, preserves all the original fragments of experience without any loss.” In contextualism, fragments are generally loosely connected or freely interwoven. Fragments blend one into the next and, thus, while they cannot be retained in their entirety, they can be renewed and rewritten.

The perspectives of organization and of text, of organizing and writing, can be united in the concept of texture. Not only can organizing be described as linguistic, involving writing and reading and demanding the knitting together of different perspectives, but writing and reading themselves are processes of weaving together: “Text means Tissue; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this issue - this texture - the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web. Were we fond of neologisms, we might define the theory of the text as an hyphology (byphos is the tissue and the spider's web)” (Barthes, 1986, p.78). Not only speaking of linguistic theory, or with respect to writing, but also to translating - one of the most intriguing forms of writing - Deryckere (1986, p. 131) alludes to the texture metaphor (albeit in the form of a travelogue): “Translating is rather the act of handing over the text as fabric to a whole new interplay of signifiers in a foreign language. These signifiers are not supported by the presence of an ultimate all-inclusive signified: the ideal of a universal language or mythical ut-language is instantly seen to be out of the question. Once it has been laid bare to this surprising turn of events, that are like a mighty sea-wind, the text inevitably threatens to lose its grounding and its boundaries, to be torn to shreds; at the same time this fresh breeze entices us to discover a foreign continent, allowing new contexts to be explored and gradually made our own. This process does not take place without altering and unwinding. Since similar signifiers within differing language systems do not produce identical meanings, some tangles have to be cast aside and some stitches dropped altogether in order to win some space on the loom for new patterns. The whole area of translation is concerned with just this inadequate yet surprising interweaving, this zigzag, this to-and-fro of exchange.” Cooper and Fox (1990) also refer to the text metaphor in viewing social life, and suggest a weaving way of reading a text. Reading a text as weaving “recognizes the implicit tendency of texture to transgress socially contrived meanings; the woven text opens out in a centrifugal way and can only be experienced as an activity of creative production, in which the agent/reader is caught up as an active element in the ongoing, unfinished movement of the text” (1990, p. 578). Organization of text and organization as text, the moment of organizing and of writing: texture.

Fragment? - Reprise

Fragment. Movement.
This present which constantly reinvents itself.
Cloister with open courtyard, hacienda with patio
To be wandered through without a guide, there is no guidebook for the now.
No need for prediction, for true lies.
Ask a detective who understands the “Kunst des Fragens”.
Who possesses a golden notebook, finds a needle in a haystack.

Fragments know the law of mosaics,
A way of dealing with parts in the absence of wholes
Each fragment is a shattered soul,
A friendly particle accelerator.
Dividing without conquering.
Groping towards texture, not structure,
Yearning for possibility, not reality
Renouncing the stereotype, not the myth

Let the process tell the story.
No gazing at the substantial world, chase away substance
And grant the world to the en route, the Tao, the underworld.
Apostils, marginal notes, footnotes, appendices, postscripts in the middle.
No prologue, epilogue, metologue, only a weak apologue, an apology for fragments.
A travelogue of the wanderer, more strange than pilgrim
Strange story, lived from close by.

Stored stories
Repeated a hundred times, and never imitated,
Told in broken texts and tales
Step by step, tailored for silence.

The appearing disappears
[And yet, hold on a bit. Faced with the eulogy of the fragment, Bruno Latour, when
interrogated by Michel Serres, proffers the fragile synthesis. For the fragment, and the philoso-
The essence of leftovers, the purity of superfluity,
The cloaca of the mouth, the pleasure of the exception,
The fame of decorum
Ballast's no burden.

In the scriptorium,
Where the names in capital letters fade of themselves amidst the reek of their own immodesty. Where the gods and other heroes have shut themselves out.
Where prophecies melt, sermons and homilies fall silent, fortune-telling dries up, predictions are forbidden.
Only loose, ephemeral frameworks guiding human understanding
The suspense of suspension.
Temporary trance, the fire of each hour
More miniatures.

Poetic moment, autopoietic fragment.
A double pleonasm.
No externalities, only eternal norms, the now as eternity
Hic et nunc - tout est histoire, mais rien n'est historique -
Event in the present,
Quick now, here, now, always
On time between the trop stil and the trop tard,
Scenes, scenarios, stanzas, strophes, manifestos, letters, rhymes, recitatives, exams display the measure of the now, of the fragment, never finished, never formed, at best deformed.
Heaps of openings. Open.
Never finished.
Operae aperta.

Allow me for a moment to return to the Barthesian fragment, the epigraph to the table of contents, from antiquity the preferred form of offering the reader the narrative thread; a fragment I have transplanted from *See the Moon?* to this text, having also situated it within that author's work, but not in the context of the concrete fragment, where it was placed and then abducted. The fragment, "Fragments are the only form I trust", comes from *See the Moon?* in the collection, *Unspeakable Practices, Unnatural Acts* (1968), in which this sentence is repeated not once but twice. A story of a father, a sort of scholar, told to his yet unborn son, Gog (child of his second wife). He tells his life story through memories, these holy reminiscences, wishing his son by the end a happy life, but warning him of the moon who hates us, as if Caligula's curse had never left us. Here it seems that for Barthes the fragment is not a convenient solution, not an innocent timesaver, not a way to avoid the blade that the writer lays down before himself. On the contrary. His daily work, of which he says "I know you think I'm wasting my time," aspires to become a work of art. Or is the following utterance, appearing just before "Fragments are..." just a joke: "It's my hope that these...souvenirs...will someday merge, blur - where is the word, maybe - into something meaningful. A grand word, meaningful. What do I look for? A work of art, I'll not accept anything less?"
Looking Back
And now, I look back. And try to disentangle what I can from my writing and researching activities as they flutter in the wind. Just as I have looked back more than once before. But this time the glance back is different. Not a cramped review to be consistent and save time. Not a step back for a moment of brooding over new fragments. The full stop has been written. Now it's a look back in the acceptance that the writing and studying is over. The text, like a Euridice, freezes for a moment, until a reader tries to touch it.

Many of the intermediary questions have remained as terminal questions. Is there sense of overview for the reader to survey? Does this text have a power which captivates the chance reader, or convinces the scientific reader? Does this research text contain a scientific truth and a practical value? Does it have a meaning that lies outside the writing itself? Will I be judged according to my deeds or my words, as if words were not deeds, and language not performative? Is there a test which this text can stand? The test of scientificity? Of creativity? Of usefulness? Have I found a writing style in the course of writing?

I have kept an eye on the material context, the many empty spaces I have tackled with a 'whump! here goes nothing', because the sight of all that emptiness goaded me into filling in that void setting. I have noticed that under the text there lurks a travelogue and a major story of moving house: the house at the seaside, a kitchen table in a small Paris flat, my own back terrace in the summertime, my shared living room in the winter, the sweet enchantment of a flat just outside Brussels, a monster of a living room in a Paris apartment, improvised scriptoria in Pérgord, Perpignan, Siena, and Jerusalem. The odd time in a grand café in Louvain or in the shade of a Madrid terrace, many havens away from my office at the Department of Psychology, to which I subsequently returned that much more hungry to compile fragments and print them out. It was as if I needed the inspiration provided by every passage, every small or great journey, in order to 're-produce' something. No results without relocation.
I now behold the company that has been writing along with me and has peeped over my shoulder, as I have peeped over theirs. There was my advisor, Prof. René Bouwen, who taught me how to speak the social constructionist language. Without his integrity and patience in entering into a dialogue this dissertation would never have come to be. There have been scholars from lands far away, who during short encounters in workshops and colloquia and in their (electronic) correspondence have always remained close by and opened their libraries to me: Prof. Dave Cooperrider (Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland), Barbara Gray (Penn State University), Bengt Johansson (Vejø University), Mette Monsted (Copenhagen Business School), Ellen O’Connor (University of Notre Dame), Kejo Rasinen (Helsinki Business School) and Didier Vandenhove (University Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve). There have been doctoral colleagues from far, including Tomas Brytting and Valérie de La Ville, who each accompanied me at a particular stage of this dissertation; and from near, including Jan Dirkx, Ludo Keunen, Bart Van Looy, Koen Sips, and Johan Hovelynck with whom I shared the slogging and the pleasure. There has been my immediate work environment, where Profs. Gaston De Cock, Leo Lagrou, Karel De Witte, Paul Verhaegen, Bert Overlaet, and Maddy Jansens each in their own way have supported me. There have been the financial supports, in the form of project financing (the FAST program of the Dienst Programmatie van het Wetenschapsbeleid), and in the form of assistantships from the Department of Applied Economy and Psychology, with a special mention of the Psychodiagnostics unit, which came to my aid temporarily with an interim assistantship. There have been the interjections of the doctoral committee, with Profs. Herman Baert, Jozef Corveleyn, Karel De Witte, Bengt Johansson, Willy Lenaerts, and Didier Vandenhove, under the chair of Prof. E. Van Avermaet. Profs. Gaston De Cock and Joë Lambrecht provided me with a generous portion of confidence, not a common event at a university, and as such most gratefully felt. There was the (administrative) support of the secretarial staff of the Department of Work and Organization Psychology: Emmy Bergen, Chantal Mertens, and especially Miriam van Geijsten. There has been Stratton Bull, who with expertise and creativity has been able to combine both the pleasure and the time pressures of translation. There have also been the entrepreneurs and engineers, who remain anonymous, but whom I can never forget because personal encounters are always too powerful to forget. In the final stages of this dissertation I have been able to count on the expert help of Filip Vandeputte and Vincent Knecht (ontwerp), Anne Van Beneden (bibliografie), Marijke Van Campenhout (figures), Jennifer Nold (vertaling fragment 22) and Guy Steyaert (fotografie).

Er waren zij die bij het schrijven, hebben meegelezen en meegeleefd. Er was de Naamloze Vlakte, met wie ik nieuwe horizonen kon opzoeken, en eigen projecten opzetten, voor één keer met naam en toenaam te noemen: Bart Demuyt, Jo Huys, Dirk Lesire, Michel Perquy, Marijke Van Campenhout, Hilde Verplancke en Ann Werx. Een eigen stem
ontwikkelen veegt een responsieve lezer met een open geest en een open deur. Dit is de verdienste van Professor Maddy Jansens. Bart Van Looy heeft mij geleerd hoe grenzen verleggen tegelijk extreem en relatief is, Valérie de La Ville hoe grenzen eigenlijk relaties zijn, en Marcus Verbiest hoe kennis en wijsheid nood heeft aan een spirituele stem, de poort naar de ultieme grens. Met Frank Adam was het al die tijd plezierig en tegelijk spannend om, parallel, een kruisbestuiving tussen een wetenschappelijke en een theaterdialog tot stand te brengen. En er waren zij die op de rijke grens van werk en leven, dit project om uiteenlopende redenen vooruit hielden: Luc De Vos, Ilse Kustermans, Guy Steyaert, Yaron Ticochinsky, Josée Wijns, Jan Bouwen en Tod Alan Spoerl. Er was mijn levens- en liefdesgeschiedenis. Velen die ik heb gemist of die zich bekloegen over mijn 'onbereikbaarheid', en waarnaar ik altijd bleef uitkijken om hen weer te zien. Nu meer dan ooit. Mijn ouders, ondernemers tot het laatste uur die mij alle ruimte gunden die creatieve ontwikkeling behoefte. Et finalement mes amis, qui ont donné à ma vie ce tout petit peu de sens que je lui prête.

Deze lange lijst van personen (de bibliografie niet te na gesproken), aanzien ik als de duidelijkste indicatie voor de bescheidenheid waarmee ik dit werk in persoonlijke naam wil voorleggen; de lange tijdspanne reveleert iets over het ritme waarin ik dit verhaal heb geschreven, maar meer nog over hun geduld en aandacht voor mijn lof der traagheid.

Terugblikken naar plaatsen en personen maakt herinneringen los, en veronderstelt tegelijk een herinneringsproces, een postume vorm van betekenisgeving. Herinnering aan wat ik heb gezien en gehoord, wat me niet losliet en wat ik wel heb laten liggen, aan de strijd met de tijd, het wanhopig, speelspannend uit-vinden waar ik mee bezig was. Aan de vele, vele processen die ik had bij wat ik gedaan had, en bij wat ik nog moest doen. Hoe kon ik ooit de winter van vragen die bleven aanwassen, verlaten? Aan mijn innerlijke feest om elke gelukte pagina van de late uren die door mijn ontembare onzekerheid weer werd opgeborgen, de volgende morgen. Aan de zoektocht naar een roman, deze ‘grand narrative’, en het verboden geraken in een verhalen- en essaybundel, gevolgd gevend aan mijn opklommende wezer in integratie om de integratie. Aan mijn geworstel met het balanceren tussen focus houden en nieuwe dingen doen, tussen openheid en geslotenheid, tussen synthese en analyse, tussen overschatting en onderschatting, tussen vandaag en morgen, tussen gevonden en verloren, tussen vergezocht en diepgang... Aan mijn stilte geestdrift om het beloofde land terug te vinden, het vuur weg te kappen, aan mijn ontmoediging om mijn groeiende onmacht in het dorre en droge wetenschappelijke land, waar ik het niet ‘waar’ kon maken. Aan mijn eigen poging de weg van illusie naar desillusie om te buigen en een eigen manier te vinden om het verloren paradis terug te winnen. Via een nieuwe bestemming, en een nieuwe stem. Door hemel en aarde te verzetten, in gedachten.

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own projects, and who, for once, will not remain nameless: Bart Demuyts, Jo Huys, Dirk Leisire, Michel Perquy, Marijke Van Campenhout, Hilde Verplancke, and Ann Werkx. Developing one's own voice demands a responsive reader with an open spirit and an open door. Prof. Maddy Jansens may be credited with both these qualities. Bart Van Looy taught me how the task of shifting borders is both extreme and relative, Valérie de La Ville how boundaries are actually relationships, and Marcus Verbiest how knowledge and wisdom need a spiritual voice, the gate to the ultimate boundary. With Frank Adam it was always pleasurable and at the same time exciting to attempt, in parallel, to achieve a cross-pollination between a scholarly and a theatrical dialogue. And there have been those on the rich border between work and life, who for various reasons helped to advance this project: Luc De Vos, Ilse Kustermans, Guy Steyaert, Yaron Ticochinsky, Josée Wijns, Jan Bouwen and Tod Alan Spoerl. There has been companionship in life and love. Many whom I have not seen or complained of my ‘unavailability’, and whom I have always looked forward to seeing again. Now more than ever. My parents, entrepreneurs to the last, who have always granted me the space required by creative development. Et finalement, mes amis, qui ont donné ma vie ce tout petit peu de sens que je lui prête.

This long list of individuals (not even to mention those in the bibliography), I regard as the clearest indication of the humility with which I must present this work under my own name; the long time span reveals something about the rhythm in which I have written this work, but it reveals much more about their patience and interest in my homage to sluggishness.

Looking back at places and persons releases memories, and at the same time assumes a process of remembering, a posthumous form of sensemaking. Memories of what I have seen and heard, of what has grabbed hold of me and what I have left go of, of the battle against the clock, that hopeless, playful/nerve-racking attempt to dis-cover what it was I was trying to do. Memories of the many, many questions I asked about what was done and what was yet to be done. How could I ever leave behind this winter of questions which never ceases to blow? Memories of my inner jubilation over each and every successful page wrought in the wee small hours, only to be rejected again the following morning through my indomitable insecurity. Of my search for a novel, this ‘grand narrative’, subsequently veering off into a collection of stories and essays in accordance with my mounting dislike of integration for integration’s sake. Of my wrestling to keep the balance between keeping a focus and doing new things, between openness and closeness, between synthesis and analysis, between over-rating and underestimating, between today and tomorrow, between lost and found, between going deep and going too far. Of my silent spiritual urge to get back to the promised land, to recover the grail, to capture the fire; of my disappointment and growing loss of power in the barren and dry scholarly
landscape, where I could not prove the 'truth' of my point. Memories of my own attempt to reroute the path from illusion to disillusion and to find my own way to win back that paradise lost. Using a new destination, a new voice. By resisting heaven and earth, in thoughts.

Remembering is a conscious construction of what you wish to forget, said Harold Brodkey, the American writer of short stories. There is also much that I wish to forget, except for the people with whom I have worked, and except for the strange places where I have felt at home. They have shown me the humility that scholarship is in such great need of. This is not the end. I can always look them up again, the scent of these places, the color of their voices. In the same way that making a dissertation is re-search, -recherche- in the sense of 'going in search of', back to the same to find something different, for there is no finding other than seeking.

Onder ons, hebt U opgekeken?

Just between us, did you look up for a moment?
Library


Handke, P. (1995). *De Kunst van het Vragen of de Reis naar het Welwillende Land* [Das Spiel vom Fragen oder die Reise zum Sonoren Land] [The art of questioning, or, the voyage to the sonorous land]. Brussel: Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg.


Samenvatting

Een proefschrift is een ontmoeting tussen schrijver en lezer, een gesprek tussen schrijver en andere schrijvers, een conversatie tussen academische en literaire auteurs, een dialoog tussen onderzoekservaringen en ervaringen van alledag. In deze studie van hoogtechnologische bedrijven gaat het om een dialoog tussen ervaring en betekenis, die allebei zowel vanuit een wetenschappelijk standpunt als vanuit een *common sense* perspectief worden gegenereerd. Ruimte voor zo’n dialoog wordt gecreëerd bij het begin, in het midden, en op het einde van dit proefschrift.

In dit onderzoeksproject wordt het organisatieproces van hoogtechnologische bedrijven bestudeerd vanuit een sociaal constructionistisch perspectief. Met de opkomst van de nieuwe informatica-, telecom-, elektronica- en bioneurotechnologieën, en de derde industriële revolutie in het algemeen, werden tal van *high-techs* in een kleinschalige context in het begin van de jaren tachtig opgestart. Eén van de belangrijke vragen hierbij was hoe deze ondernemersbedrijven zich zouden organiseren om hun vernieuwingsprojecten op lange termijn vol te houden, beperkt als ze zijn qua financiële en menselijke middelen. Vooral zijn ze gestart als een individueel, vernieuwend initiatief van één of twee ondernemers, maar evolueerden ze naar een grotere omvang, waardoor de innovatieve actie werd gecollectiveerd. Hun centraal probleem om het snelle ritme van technologische veranderingen voor te blijven, leidt tot twee in elkaar verwerven organiseertaken: (1) een organiseervorm vinden die deze continue innovatie mogelijk maakt en ondersteunt, en (2) een overgang maken van een individueel initiatief naar een collectief zoekproces. Dit doctoraal project probeert dan ook een beschrijving te geven van de organisatieprocessen die de overgang van een individueel initiatief naar een organisatiedoel ondernemerschap mogelijk maken. De verankering van de probleemstelling in het ondernemersdomein en de organisatietheorie wordt in het *eerste fragment* uitgewerkt door het terrein van deze studie af te bakenen op basis van een revisie van gangbare definitiewijzen van het ondernemerschap/organisatie en door de onderzoeks literatuur betreffende de organisatiemoeilijkheden van ondernemerschap te kaderen als een studie waarbij een verwaarloosde, geprivilegieerde en noodzakelijke relatie zichtbaar wordt in de ontmonting tussen de literatuur van de organisatietheorie en het ondernemerschap domein. Vermits 'het organiseren van bestendig ondernemerschap' kan gezien worden als een *contradictio in terminis* wordt er voorgesteld om te zoeken naar een subtiële manier om de organisatiemoeilijkheden in te zien, waardoor het mogelijk kan worden te verstaan hoe organiseerprocessen een belangrijke rol spelen in het
verder zetten van de geïnitieerde creativiteit. In de daaropvolgende twee fragmenten wordt het organisatiedomein hiervoor uitgebreid verkend.

In fragment twee wordt het organisatiedomein benaderd vanuit de metafoor van de 'bibliotheek'. De organisatiebibliotheek wordt in vier opeenvolgende bezoeken verkend op zoek naar boeken die ons kunnen bijstaan om deze 'onnauwkeurige' relatie te begrijpen. De idee wordt verdedigd dat (organisatie)kennis intertekstueel ontstaat en slechts betekenis verwerft vanuit de context van de lezer. Tijdsns één van de bezoeken komen we in aanraking met de zogenoemde proces-school van organiseren, die wordt beschouwd als één van de meest beloofde tekst in de organisatiebibliotheek, en die een geschikte benadering lijkt voor de studie van onze problemestelling. Een procestudie, zoals uitgediept in fragment drie, legt de nadruk op het gebruik van een procestaal waarbij de aandacht uitsluitend naar dilemma's en gebeurtenissen. In fragment vier keren we terug naar het ondernemerschap domein, en concentreren we ons op een revisie van het ontstaan en de ontwikkeling van het ondernemerschap domein als een nieuwe academische discipline die van zichzelf beweert even innovatief en ondernemend te zijn als het 'object' van studie. Deze ontwikkeling van ondernemerschap lijkt gekenmerkt door een dilemma waarbij deze jonge discipline zwijgt in en de zoveelheid van dissencultuur profiel en een meer eigenzinnige academische identiteit. Om niet dit dilemma om te gaan, worden twee suggesties gemaakt die afkomstig zijn uit het bezoek aan de organisatiebibliotheek in fragment twee en drie. Deze suggesties gelden evenals concreet oriëntaties voor dit onderzoeksproject. Een eerste oriëntatie betreft de ontwikkeling van een procestudie van ondernemerschap. Een tweede oriëntatie stelt voor de bibliotheek van ondernemerschap te ontsluiten en open te stellen voor een sociaal constructivistische benadering van ondernemen. De algemene gedachte hierbij is ondernemerschap niet te benaderen vanuit het solo-spel van de ondernemer maar wel de sociale context van ondernemerschap te benadrukken.

In hoofdstuk twee wordt het sociaal constructisme voorgesteld als een conceptueel raamwerk om het organiseerproces van het ondernemerschap in het algemeen te bestuderen, en om onze probleemstelling betreffende het bestendigen van collectieve creativiteit meer in het bijzonder te benaderen. Sociaal constructisme is een opkomend theoretisch perspectief binnen de psychologie, organisatiestudies, en de sociale wetenschappen in het algemeen. Een antwoord zoeken op de vraag hoe dit perspectief kan worden aangewend en tegelijk verder ontvouwd binnen het domein van ondernemerschap, wordt gezien als een algemene uitdaging van deze studie.
lende momenten waarin de onderzoeker in gesprek trad met verscheidene publieken tijdens de openvolgende stappen van het onderzoekstraject. Tenslotte volgt een meer persoonlijke legitimering van het onderzoekstraject.


Ten tweede wordt dit dilemma in fragment zeventiende uitgewerkt via een descriptiviteit, theoretisch raamwerk, waarin het organisatieproces gekenmerkt wordt door twee belangrijke transities: (1) de ontwikkeling van een ondernemersmotivatie naar een sociaal netwerk, (2) de ontwikkeling van de kerncompetentie naar een taks domein. Beide processen worden in elkaar verweven via een dialoog. Een tweede theoretisch begrip, ‘textuur’, wordt voorzien in het subdilemma hoe met dilemma’s omgaan en kan worden als een manier om een organisatietextuur te creëren. Beide processen worden gedocumenteerd via de verhalen van Quartet en Vision. Het begrip textuur wordt gebruikt als een ‘quasi-structureel’ concept dat het ondernemerschap proces niet paraseert, maar in tegendeel het creatieve proces van ondernemen voedt en continueert. De theoretische proposition beschrijft de ontwikkeling van een jong bedrijf als het creëren van een textuur die spanningsvelden betreffende taken en mensen met elkaar verbindt tijdens de transitie van een begincontext die voor de start van het bedrijf werd opgebouwd, naar een geleidelijk ontwikkelde identiteit. Textuur is een metafoor die laat begrijpen hoe een identiteit open kan blijven wanneer creatieve en integrerende activiteiten subdilem met elkaar verweven worden in plaats van elkaar te bestrijden.

Ten derde, het begrip ‘potentiële ruimte’ – dat gebruikt wordt om de case stories te interpreteren en om het textuur-begrip verder te verfijnen in fragment achtsten – suggerereert dat de

De concepten ‘textuur’ en ‘potentiele ruimte’ wijzen ons in de richting van het begrip ‘thindness’. De betekenis van deze noties wordt duidelijk gemaakt door te verwijzen naar de onderzoeks- discussie en vormen werkzaam te dan men in de literatuur omtrent omgaan met dilemma’s waar wordt gedacht in termen van ‘het vinden van een strategie’. Twee soorten strategieën kunnen onderscheiden worden. Ten eerste, zijn er strategieën die binnen de polariteit denken. Ten tweede zijn er strategieën die voorbij een polaire denkvorm gaan, en een derde ‘element’ inroepen. Textuur en potentiele ruimte kunnen gezien worden als een ‘derde organisatievorm, die ons uitnodigt om het omgaan met dilemma’s op te vatten als een relationeel en sociaal fenomeen.

In hoofdstuk vijf wordt de evolutie van hoogtechnologische bedrijven voorgesteld als de ontwikkeling en verandering van betekenisconfiguraties. Er wordt gezocht naar een antwoord op de vraag hoe het sociaal proces kan worden begrepen dat de ontwikkeling en verandering van betekenisconfiguraties geschatte geef. In fragment negentien bekijken we opnieuw de onderzoeksvraag door het begrip ‘gedeelde betekenis’ te reageren in dit collectieve proces. In de plaats hiervan wordt collectieve creativiteit benaderd als ‘een dialoog’. De idee is dat het organiseerproces van collectieve creativiteit kan worden opgevat als een ‘opvoering’ van conversaties waarin actoren een waard aan verschillende betekenisconfiguraties uitwisselen en hiermee kunnen doorgaan op basis van de kwaliteit van de dialoog die men in staat is samen te schrijven.


Temlottet, wordt in fragment driëntwintig een theoretische interpretatie ontwikkeld van de verhalen van Vision en Quartet op basis van Bakhtin’s opvatting van dialógische betekeniscreatie. Dit is de centrale (hypothese) van deze studie; creativiteit collectief bestendigen vergt een Bakhtinianse dialoog tussen de verschillende interpretatieve repertoire, die hier stemmen genoemd worden. Deze theorie benadrukt het belang van ‘verschil’ in het organiseerproces, geeft een kritischer visie op het begrip ‘gedeelde betekenis’, en suggereert belangrijke tools om de sociale dimensie van organiseren als ‘gesprek’ uit te werken en te concretiseren. Deze opvatting van dialoog past binnen de teatermetafoor van organisatie en herwaardeert de dramatische versie van het sociaal constructieproces. De kunst van bestendigde collectieve creativiteit beoogt dus dat geen enkele stem wordt uitgesloten van de dialoog die zich afspeelt op de ondernemersscène.

In hoofdstuk zes worden theoretische, praktische en epistemologische implicaties geformuleerd op basis van onze conceptuele en methodologische onderzoeksbewerking. In fragment vierentwintig worden op drievoudige wijze theoretische implicaties geformuleerd. Ten eerste worden de onderzoeksconclusies betreffende het organiseerproces van gecentraliseerde ondernemerschap, zoals empirisch gedocumenteerd in hoofdstuk vier, geconfronteerd met de inzichten over de sociale kwaliteit van ondernemerschap, zoals ontwikkeld in hoofdstuk vijf. Deze confrontatie wordt samengevat in drie proposities: ten eerste, creatie en ontwikkeling vindt plaats op de grens tussen twee of meerdere realiteiten; ten tweede, omgaan met dilemma’s vergt het organiseren van een textuur en een potentiele ruimte; en ten derde, bestendig ondernemerschap organiseren via ‘textuur’ en ‘potentiele ruimte’ is een dialógisch proces waarbinnen verschillende betekenisconfiguraties met elkaar worden verweven. Ten tweede benadrukken we de rol van creativiteit als een essentieel onderdeel van het ondernemerschap. Ten derde beschrijven we de implicaties van deze studie van ondernemerschap voor de organisatie theorie en van onze sociaal constructionistische overtuiging voor het ondernemerschapsonderzoek.

In fragment vijfen-twintig worden de praktische mogelijkheden van dit onderzoek voor interventie verkend. Er wordt geëxperimenteerd met sociale constructionistische overtuigingen en de interpretatieve onderzoeks methodologie aangewend kunnen worden bij het doorlopen van de ‘interventiecrisis’. Een Bakhtinian traject wordt voorgesteld voor de praktische organisering. Aan de hand van een onderzoeken follow up van een interventie in een high tech bedrijf (Coat) wordt een eerste indicatie gegeven over hoe een interventie gericht op meer-
stemmig organiseren kan worden gekaderd binnen en ondersteund door de onderzoeksconcepties en -methodes van dit project.

In *fragment zestwintig*, wordt de idee van 'schrijven in fragmenten' gesitueerd binnen een contextualistische visie van kennisproductie. Argumenten hiervoor worden aangereikt vanuit een literaire stroming, de zogenaamde metafictie, en vanuit recente concepties uit de organisatietheorie. Er wordt betoogd dat het fragment een 'enige' vorm is om de realiteit van ondernemen te beschrijven als een bestendige opeenvolging van gebeurtenissen en conversaties.
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well.
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.

T.S. Eliot

Stat rosa pristina nomine, nomina nuda tenemus.
(The rose of old exists in name, we are left with naked names)

U. Eco

And you? And you? And you?

P. Handke