CHAPTER 3

Organizing Change Processes

Cornerstones, Methods, and Strategies

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There is no accepted general definition of organizational development (OD). OD as a concept sneaked its way into the vocabulary of organization behaviour and organization theory. Its precise origin is not very clear, but French et al. (1994) point to North American professionals in the early 1960s as the ones who coined the term. As a consequence of the multifaceted inheritance of OD, there is hardly any over-reaching and accepted definition. On the other hand, as the intention of this chapter is to reflect on methods and tools in OD, it is necessary to be as specific and precise in conceptualizing OD as possible.

What does it actually mean to design and organize a change process in an organization? The rhetoric we find in current textbooks is interesting. Two examples illustrate this:

> Organizational development consists of intervention techniques, theories, principles, and values that show how to take charge of planned change efforts and achieve success. (French et al., 1994: 1)

> A systemwide application of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of organizational strategies, structures, and processes for improving an organization's effectiveness. (Cummings & Worley, 1993: 2)

From these quotes two issues emerge as particularly interesting. First, OD implies the application of scientific knowledge to guide change processes. Second, the change efforts are expected to be planned. Both propositions are equally difficult if the intention is to use them as the major building blocks for a discussion on methods and tools in OD. The application of scientific knowledge is problematic because it creates supremacy for academic knowledge in a context where the challenge is to create, develop, and nurture practical problem-solving (creating the new organization). The whole idea of OD is, of course, to make practices in an organization work better and it is not self-evident that academic knowledge is what will make this happen. The interplay between local practical skills and research-based knowledge can be viewed as the cornerstone for organizational transformation (Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Second, 'planned change' smells dangerously much like a positivistic position. Is it so that the expert OD practitioner is the one who is in charge of the planning process, or is planning of the change process a joint responsibility for the involved stakeholders? The answer will determine two quite different approaches to OD and, accordingly, it will be quite important to make the point of departure clear in order to be able to deal with issues related to change processes in organizations. It is impossible to discuss methods and tools unless this is based on a clear view of what constitutes OD.

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FOUNDATIONS OF OD

The approach to OD taken in this chapter rests on two major foundations. The single most important feature of the change activity that is identified as OD is *participation* in the change process. This is basically a pragmatic argument identifying a set of social practices where the organizational members take an active part in shaping their own working situation. This is in contrast to a process whereby experts or power holders make decisions on what an organization should look like. This latter approach to organizational transformation is usually identified as organizational design. The other important feature of OD relates to the *type of learning processes* that will be supported. In expert-driven change processes, the learning will basically be in the hands and in the heads of the people in control of the transformation. The other option available is to create collective reflection processes involving everyone in the change process. That this learning system engages actors in collective reflection is the second prerequisite for identifying change activity as OD. Learning is conceptualized as the engine in the transformation process, where collective reflection processes create insights that feed back to new and improved organizational designs.

Participation and collective reflection can, on the surface, be interpreted as two closely interconnected factors. Participation is, on one hand, a premise for collective reflection, which again is the process by which situated knowledge relevant for the focal organization is generated. In this regard, the connection is obvious, but this is not the general condition. First, participation can take place without collective reflection. Employees in an organization can be given a say in the design of work, but this will be done on an individual basis. Levin et al. (1983) report on the major reconstruction of a chemical plant, where an external consulting firm was hired to interview all the employees in order to discover how they perceived current working conditions and identify what they expected from a future workplace. The workers participated in the process but all the learning options were reserved for the consulting firm. Collective reflection can also take place without creating a platform for involvement in the change process. A wildcat strike exemplifies this possibility. Employees will, through a shared understanding, develop an idea of what are perceived as unacceptable working conditions and join in a strike that is not in accord with accepted regulations (Lysgaard, 1961). Most often this does not lead to the process by which the workers will be involved in the change activity.

To further describe and analyse the OD process, three other factors are important. First, OD activity is expected to result in new practical solutions (a new working organization). Practical utilization (the creation of new patterns of work) is a factor that cannot be overlooked, if one intends to understand the OD process. Second, OD rests on an epistemological foundation where knowledge development is integrated into the construction process of the new organization. Third, an OD process cannot avoid raising fundamental value questions related to democracy at work. Participation and collective reflection are the two definitional cornerstones of OD, neither of which can be dealt with without paying attention to democracy at work. These relationships are illustrated in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1 Cornerstones of OD practice

	Democratic ideal/value	Epistemology	Practical utilization
Participation	Participatory democracy influence	Utilizing local knowledge	Implementation
Collective reflection	Give a voice to every participant	Generates new local insights	Shared understanding

Table 3.1 identifies six central issues in OD. The aim is to relate democracy, epistemology, and practical use to the current definition in order to identify key features of OD processes. The discussion of these aspects presents arguments for designing OD processes.

PARTICIPATION

Fundamentally, participation is understood as the core factor in OD. First, it is grounded in the ethical values of democracy of work (Pateman, 1970; Emery & Thorsrud, 1976). Participation is a right in itself, and in this respect it needs no further arguments to prove its relevance. The democratic ideal is nothing to vote on, it is the basis upon which our society is understood to rest. On the other hand, there is no absolute standard for what constitutes participation in organizational life. There is a wide range of operational models that grant participants different opportunities to influence the desired outcomes. Actors in different positions will have varied perceptions of what participation is, and how it should be implemented in their organization. These elements of insights will span from conceptualizing participation as an act of informing to a broad focus on the political aspects of participation (Greenberg, 1975; Levin, 1984). Participation is a democratic ideal and as such it signals a core value, but applying a participative approach in everyday organizational life is complex and multifaceted.

Participation by the involved organizational members creates an important epistemological position, as the knowledge construction process shifts to one where the members will have a voice. Knowledge generated in order to develop new organizational solutions will accordingly depend on how the members understand the current situation and what they see as desirable solutions for the future organization. This point is in stark contrast to OD strategies where external experts collect data in the organization, create an understanding of what the core problems are, and formulate recommendations how to change the organization (the OD activity). In this situation members of the organization are sidelined to passive actors delivering raw data for an expert (or experts) to construct meaning upon which further actions are based. This approach contrasts substantially with a participative take where members themselves are involved, together with OD personnel, in making sense of what has to be done to make the organization more efficient. In this latter situation, participation creates knowledge that builds on the involved actors' experiences and is distilled through a joint reflection process. This is fundamentally a constructivist epistemological situation, where participation in the OD process shapes the ground for learning, building on the sense-making activity of everyone involved (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Searle, 1995; Weick, 1995).

OD is expected to lead to a new way of working. The results of an OD process are only visible through identifiable new patterns of work, which, of course, is the *practical utilization* of the knowledge generated by the process. A distinction is conventionally made between the theoretical or conceptual construction of an organizational solution and its practical application. The transformation from conceptual ideas to practical operation is usually called implementation. The problems associated with this transformation are well documented in the literature. For example, the investment in information technology (hardware and software) is often argued to amount to only one-tenth of the total cost of the whole project. The biggest cost associated with the introduction of new technology is training the employees to use the new equipment. Any change process that minimizes the expenses associated with implementation is, of course, vital in order to create cost-effective organizational transformations. In participative approaches, implementation as a separate process is by definition made redundant. If employees participate in the design process, then the results do not need to be implemented, simply because implementation is integrated into the change process itself. Hence, it has no additional cost. Resources for organizational change efforts have been moved to the participation process, as implementation no longer needs attention.

Collective Reflection

The driving force in a participative change process is experimentation and learning. Organizational transformation results from participants' conscious experimentation and reflection in order to develop solutions that make the organization work better. This is the pragmatic philosophical argument for OD (Argyris et al., 1985; Greenwood & Levin, 1998). This process will be impossible unless sufficient space is created for collective reflection. Individual learning opportunities will always be available for any participant in any social context, but collective reflection identifies a situation where those involved can learn through interacting with each other. An organization is a collective enterprise where a mutual understanding of how to cooperate and of sense-making are what makes it operate. Nelson and Winter (1982) introduce routines as the shared mutual understanding of how members of an organization coordinate and cooperate in order to get the work done. These construction processes are what creates a working organization, and they emerge from people's active interaction. Any change process in an organization must take as its point of departure the collective construction of routines and meaning.

The democratic element of collective reflection is, of course, that it potentially gives a voice to every participant. This is not an automatic consequence of participation, as pseudo-participation often might be seen. 'Just let them state their meaning, but we will make the decisions' are practices that can often be seen. We do not here take into account fake or manipulative participation efforts where some power holders play games with involved actors. Even if the intention to participate is good, the results might not always lead to a process where participants have a say. Poor organization of the reflection process can, for example, give certain groups only the smallest possibility to express their opinions. Especially in situations where there are conflicting goals among the participants, the process might not lead to a mutual learning situation (Martin, 2000). One important issue in any collective reflection process is to ensure that it is based on *democratic values*.

Collective reflection creates what Schön (1983) and Argyris and Schön (1996) have identified as an 'organizational theory of action'. This 'theory of action' is shared among the members of the organization, and identifies and communicates the understanding of how the organization operates. It is both the 'organizational memory' and the conceptualizations that guide actions. The *epistemological argument* is that one way to identify an organization's theory of action is to construct collective reflection processes involving all members. Argyris and Schön (1996) envisage a process in which the outside consultant takes up an expert-dominated position to clarify the organizational theory of action. That is not what we argue for here. Our point is that only a truly collective reflection process can support the construction of the organizational theory of action. An outside consultant can, of course, play a role in this process, but this person will always have to be the facilitator and not the one who conceptualizes the organizational theory of action. On the other hand, the external adviser can play a significant role in creating space for the collective reflection process and create an appropriate learning structure. The outsiders will not only be the facilitators, but also participants in the same reflection process as the members of the organization, based on differences in roles. In this respect it constitutes a broad joint learning activity involving internal participants and external facilitators.

The practical outcome of collective reflection is obviously *shared understanding*. The meaning construction process that emerges from the social interaction in the collective learning process leads to sharing larger or smaller models of the local reality. It is a way to develop the local understanding (local theory) through the engagement in collective reflection processes. More narrowly, the collective reflection process leads to development of the organization's theory of action. The local theory of action could be interpreted as a subset of the broader shared understanding of the world. The point is that both belong to the same category of social meaning construction.

These fairly extensive initial considerations have shaped the ground for how to identify methods and tools in OD. The question would then be how to model the OD process in such a way that it builds on participation and collective reflection processes. In order to do this, the next step is to

present an organizational model of an OD process. This model is called the co-generative model for OD.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE OD PROCESS

Participation and collective reflection are the two cornerstones in OD as it has been presented in this chapter. One question still has to be resolved. In the literature and in the practice of OD, every so often the organizational specialist, the OD consultant, the process consultant, or other external person makes his or her way 'into' the change process. In the discussion in the previous sections the outsider has been introduced as an involved actor in the OD process. These outsiders in the change process will take on a role different from the local members or problem-owners (insiders). It is obvious that the problem-owners (insiders) are the actors facing the challenge of developing their own organization. Accordingly, they will clearly play a different role from the outside OD practitioners.

Could an OD process take place if no professional outsider is present? This is a rhetorical question, but answering it will be helpful in order to clarify the organizational structure of the OD process. A point of departure for this discussion is to make a distinction between organizational change and OD. Organizational change can be understood as a 'neutral' term identifying the simple fact that organizations do change over time. Following this line of argument, the changing organization represents the stable state while non-change is the unstable situation. Organizational transition is an integrated part of everyday activity (Levin & Klev, 2002). In much of the literature, this situation has often been identified as one of continual learning (see, for example, Senge, 1990; De Geus, 1997). In my view, this 'learning ability' is considered to be the cornerstone in organizational change. A self-sustained learning process would imply that organizational learning has become part of everyday learning. This is the highest goal for any OD process, as everyday participation in collective learning processes supports continual organizational change. In this respect, this is a 'true' participative process that clearly is in line with all the prerequisites for collective participation in OD. It reflects the highest goal of any OD process, and if an organization has this ability, OD is integrated into everyday organizational life.

Unfortunately, these self-sustained change processes are seldom identified. That is why there is a need for outside facilitators. It is apparent that this external person leading a participative change process must aim at making her- or himself redundant, as the goal is to create self-sustained learning processes. This does not imply that the outsiders should play a passive constrained role. Quite the contrary, it is important that the outsiders take on the responsibility for creating processes by which the organization's learning capability is enhanced. The vital point is that the outsider must integrate with the insiders in a joint reflection and learning process. This is the basis of the co-generative model for OD. The principal elements of this model are shown in Figure 3.1.

The main conceptualization envisaged through this model is built on a pragmatic philosophical view (Diggins, 1994). The co-generative model formulates the change process as a cycle of problem identification, experimentation, reflection, and learning. This parallels an experiential learning cycle. The concrete problem situation is what motivates experimentation aimed at finding new and better solutions that, through reflection processes, create collective and shared learning that again enhances further experimentation and learning. This experimental and experiential cycle is what shapes the ground for continual learning. The process involves outsiders as facilitators who have the skills to direct learning opportunities, and the outsiders will become partners in the local learning system. In this respect, the OD process is characterized by dual learning circles (the insiders' and the outsiders' cycles) that both interact and are separate. The outsiders experiment and learn together with the insiders, as the insiders and the outsiders both will have learning opportunities on their own. This process is called the co-generation of knowledge (Elden & Levin, 1991).

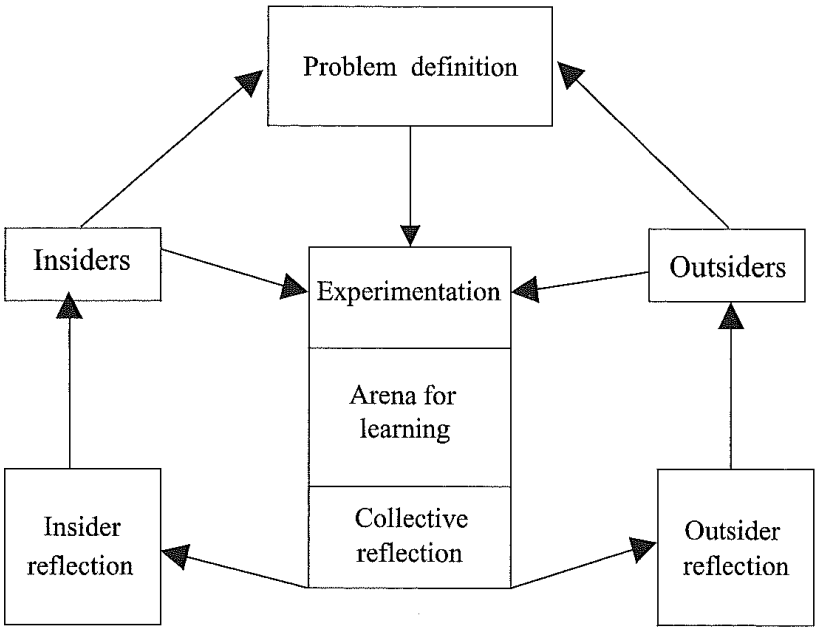

FIGURE 3.1 The co-generative model of organizational development

PROBLEM DEFINITION

The co-generative model identifies a double cycle in designing an OD process. The first phase is to search for the problem focus for the OD process. This is a challenging participatory process, as that starting point has to emerge from the problem-owner's own sense-making process. One simple solution to this process is either to accept the participants' points of view and instant understanding as the point of departure, or to go for the opposite position by making the outsider's understanding the focus of the problem. In conventional survey-based OD, a social science-trained person administers a standardized questionnaire, focusing on key organizational variables, grinds out the numbers, and performs an analysis and determines what to do. This is obviously an expert-driven process, leaving little leverage for local participation and influence. Many of the current consulting practices go in the same direction, where the outside expert has a dominating position in determining the shape and focus of the OD process. One quite extreme position in this regard is reflected in Business Process Reengineering as envisaged by Hammer and Champy (1993). In this model of organizational transformation, participation is hardly mentioned or recommended. The expert has full control, and is the one who delivers the new innovative work structures. This position has gradually been modified, both through academic-oriented writing and through the practice of BPR and now points to the importance of participative change processes. At the other end of the scale, we find models where the insiders have full control over determining the focal point of the OD process. This is the case, for example, in committed participative approaches such as search conference strategies (Herbst, 1980; Emery, 1993) and in dialogue conferences (Gustavsen, 1992; Pålshaugen, 1998). Both rely on high participatory involvement where the outside facilitator usually takes on the role of a strong process leader, making little or no substantial contribution to the problem issue at all. The potential need for substantial knowledge of the actual organization, its social climate, the market, and technology is not an issue at all. The skills of the facilitator are limited to being capable of running the processes that are to lead to a participative decision on what to prioritize in the developmental process.

Our argument is that there is a middle road. It is obviously as much a waste of resources not to use the insiders' knowledge, as it is not to take advantage of the outside 'expertise'. Our position is that through creating a joint learning situation (the co-generation of knowledge), it is possible to have the

best of both worlds. It is also important to remember that the backdrop is participative change strategies, and we have argued that the *laissez-faire* situation where the participants have dogmatic control over the process is as equally problematic as the power play by the outside expert. The centre road has to be a place where insiders and outsiders join in the same learning process. This puts forward demands from both parties to at least agree on a discourse ethic that creates a space for everyone's voice, to agree to consider all arguments on their substantial value, and to try to understand all involved actors' positions and interests. This ethical stand on communication processes is not automatically held by the actors involved, so quite a substantial effort has to be made to ensure that participants understand the discourse ethics and know how to practise it. Hence, this is a meta-learning process involving both insiders and outsiders that pretty much encapsulates the essence of co-generative learning.

The initial phase of a participative OD process is obviously the most difficult. Insiders and outsiders do not know each other (at least to a certain degree), their world-views are potentially very different, their mutual understanding is at a minimum, and there is probably minimal practice of open and free discourse. All these obstacles have to be overcome if a participative developmental activity is to take place. The criteria listed identifying the discourse ethics share the feature that they can only be solved (or rather developed) through mutual learning. A simple position is to point to the need of having the actors meet in a joint problem-solving process. That is why it is crucial to find a common point of departure that is meaningful both to the insiders and to the outsiders. The first negotiations must accordingly seek a problem focus that is significant for all. An old consultant's trick is to start by finding a problem that has an easy (and hopefully valued) potential solution. If these initial steps are successful in creating a common ground of practice and reflection between outsiders and insiders, the road is paved for further developmental activity. The actors would subsequently be ready for the next phase, which is the creation of a cycle of continued experimentation, reflection, and learning. In this process it is vital to merge the insights and creativity held by the insiders and by the outsiders in the co-generative discourse where everyone has a say as they bring to the table differences of opinions and skills. The co-generative discourse ethics values diversity and aims at bridging differences in the creative learning process.

Experimentation and Reflection

The 'engine' of a co-generative model is the experimentation–learning–reflection cycle. This is in principle the same cycle that Kolb et al. (1984) have called experiential learning, and it is important to make explicit that this cycle involves both insiders and outsiders in the same learning and reflection process. Adding on to this basic cycle, two or more supplementary learning and reflection cycles will be in operation. The secondary cycles can either be planned or they can emerge spontaneously. The issue is that experiences from the core learning cycle will also invoke other peer processes, where colleagues or professional comrades meet and reflect on what has taken place in the OD process. For the outsiders, this can take place through involving colleagues in a professional discussion on the OD activity. For insiders this process will often take place through spontaneous discussions or it can be designed as planned activities.

In the introductory definition of OD we stressed the point that the aim is practical problem-solving to improve the everyday operation of the organization. Conscious and systematic experimentation is seen as the vehicle that can create workable and improved solutions. It is important to separate this conceptualization from a scientific experimental position where experimentation is controlled and carried out by the scientist and often the aim of the experimentation is not known to the participants (see, for example, the critique of Milgram's social psychological experimentation in Greenwood & Levin, 1998: 193–194). Experimentation should be understood in a pragmatic philosophical way as a way to solve a pertinent problem (as identified jointly by insiders and outsiders) through making the best attempt to develop a solution. This whole process takes place in a natural and holistic organizational

setting. Experimentation is the driving force for learning and knowledge creation and should be clearly distinguished from the potentially negative connotations created by much social scientific experimentation.

Collective reflection is initiated, based on examining the results from the concrete attempts to solve a problem (experimentation). Collective reflection was introduced as the second building block (in addition to participation) of OD. The collective reflection process has to be built on judging results from the actual attempts to solve the organizational obstacles. The 'fuel' for the experimental engine is generated in the collective reflection process. Serious considerations must be paid on how to create opportunities for collective reflection. It is also important to remember that the outsiders are equal but different partners with the insiders in the same learning process, as the outsiders will have the additional responsibility of keeping the process running. In addition to being a process consultant in Schein's (1988) terms, the outsider is also a co-learner. This is in many ways a self-evident argument, but it is all too easy to overlook the fact that the process consultant is both a participant and an activist.

Collective reflection might spontaneously take place or it might be planned. In both respects it is vital in an OD process to secure the institution of collective reflection. Collective reflection is framed by the actual participants, the material context (space and time), and by the type of communication processes that is mandated. The material context and the people involved in the discourse create an arena where reflection and learning can take place. In the co-generative model for OD, conscious construction of appropriate arenas is vital. For most practical purposes, arena construction would be the responsibility of the outsider, at least in the initial phases of a developmental process. Later, the aim would be that the insiders acquire the necessary skills to take control over this process. Ability to shape appropriate arenas, given the actual situation, is the key to creating opportunities for collective reflection and learning. Reading a developmental situation, and knowing the potential learning capacities of different arenas, will be important areas of knowledge that must be in the repertoire of the outside facilitator. An arena can be anything from an informal meeting, a planned discussion between management and union people, to a departmental meeting or a structured search conference.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING PARTICIPATIVE CHANGE PROCESSES

We have so far identified participative OD as a co-generative learning process involving insiders and outsiders in a collective experimentation and learning process. First, the friendly outsider, as the facilitator was coined by Greenwood and Levin (1998), emerges in the initial phase of the developmental activity as the actor responsible for the design of the process. The core design parameters are the construction of arenas for collective reflection, securing that experimentation takes place, and engaging the involved actors in reflection on the results of the experimentation. The major effort is to shape an adequate arena, given the concrete situation, both regarding who is to be involved, the problem situation, the local competence level, and the learning potential for the group enrolled in the OD process. It is evident that the outsider has the specific task of judging these different aspects in order to design an appropriate process.

What follows next is a discussion on some major alternatives available when designing fruitful reflection opportunities. These opportunities will have different characteristics and will accordingly have to be chosen, dependent on what needs to be achieved. It is beyond the limit of this chapter to deal with all the possible participative arenas, as only some select few are presented and discussed. The aim is to discuss the arenas that seem to be most convenient. In the following we discuss five major arenas for collective reflection. These arenas are: (1) search conferences; (2) dialogue conferences; (3) mutual gains bargaining; (4) conventional meetings; and (5) task forces. Search conferences and dialogue conferences are usually considered a key structure in participative approaches to OD, whereas mutual gains bargaining, meetings, and task forces are either considered to be everyday organizational

events or as approaches that do not necessarily resemble OD. Therefore, it is useful to show how these activities can support participation and collective reflection. Again, the issue for the friendly outsider is to have enough knowledge to choose skilfully from potential ways of constructing learning arenas to fit the local context. The judgement of an appropriate arena must take into consideration the goals of the OD activities, the local context (the organization, the market, the technology, the politics, etc.), the actors involved, and the available resources.

Search Conference

This method emerged from the Tavistock tradition and had a fairly parallel development on two continents. In Australia, Fred and Merrelyn Emery played a central role in developing and applying search conferences in social change processes (Emery, 1993). In Europe, cooperation between Tavistock and the Norwegian Work Research Institute created experiments with search conference design (Herbst, 1980). A search conference is a staged joint planning conference where the outcome is concrete working plans initiating change activity. A search conference is usually conducted over two days and brings the participants together in a setting separate from the ordinary work context. Search conferences have been used to help organizations, schools, local communities, non-governmental organizations, etc., so a search conference can be applied in many different contexts.

Search conferences build on the assumption that the participants can develop a joint understanding of what to do, but a search conference has limited options in situations where the participants hold conflicting points of view (Martin, 2000). There is no one accepted way of running a search conference, as we empirically can see a wide variety of approaches, even though Emery (1993) strongly argues for only one potential way. We consider a search conference as a cluster of activities that is characterized by a structured process of problem definition, development of creative alternative paths to solving the actual problem, and collective priorititizing, leading to concrete plans and activity. The whole process builds on collective interaction, leading to participative learning processes and concrete experimentation. The normal procedure for a search conference is to organize a follow-up conference to enable collective reflection on obtained results and further planning for new experimental activity. In this regard it creates a collective experiential learning cycle and is very much in line with the general structure of learning and reflection cycles in the co-generative learning model. The outsider is the facilitator who is in charge of the whole search process. This role can vary from just devoting time and energy to keeping the process running to engaging directly on substantial developmental issues. A facilitator leaning towards the co-generative model would bring to the table substantial knowledge, and will actively contribute that to the collective process.

Dialogue Conferences

Dialogue conferences emerged in the Scandinavian context, building on the extensive knowledge from search conferences and action research. A trademark of dialogue conferences is the focus on the discourse as a key factor in an OD activity. The intellectual influence is clearly Habermas' (1984) work on the ethics of communicative actions as a pragmatic ideal of how to equal out differences in social exchange and Wittgensteinian philosophy on language and action (Monk, 1990). The core issue in structuring a dialogue conference is to clarify a set of rules that guide the process. These rules were formulated as 13 points by Gustavsen and Engelstad (1985) and Gustavsen (1985), where the central idea is to secure the participative process characteristics, the right to participation, the right to speak, and the listeners' obligation to judge the arguments put forward. These rules guide the process and the outside facilitator usually takes on a policing role. It will be up to the participants to take the initiative and to control the process, and all potential solutions to the problem will be up to the insiders. No outside influence is generated expect for 'policing' the process. This is both a strength and a weakness

of the dialogue conferences as active and substantial intervention in the process is outside the rules. A dialogue conference usually lasts about two days, and everyone relevant to a specific change activity participates, The conference takes place away from the company premises, giving some chance to avoid a situation where hierarchical positions dominate the conversation. The actual conference process is organized to enable the participants to single out key factors for change, and to envisage a process whereby the participants start working on solving these problems when they return home to their own organization.

In a situation where it is vital to give the participants as much control over their own process as possible, the dialogue conference might be a suitable solution. The downside of this approach is the potential lack of practical progress as there might be the tendency to focus too much on the process and too little on concrete experimental activity to enable a practical solution. Another weakness is the fairly passive role of the outside facilitators, as most of their duty involves keeping the process moving, with no explicit demand for substantial input to the collective reflection and learning process. The dialogue conference assumes that there is a basic line of common interest among the participants, and that no conflict will potentially derail the collective learning process. The conference will most probably stall if conflicts arise. There is no inherent mechanism to facilitate conflict resolutions in the dialogue conference.

Mutual Gains Bargaining

Mutual gains bargaining can be traced back to the Harvard negotiation project (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Fisher & Brown, 1988). The underlying idea is to stage a learning process where the actors involved can learn about their differences and commonalities. Two concepts are vital in mutual gains bargaining. It is important to make a distinction between *positions* and *interests*. A position is a statement of a concrete choice of action whereas an interest is an identification of what an actor actually wants (the underlying interest). The difference is that a position identifies a very specific set of actions that would solve the 'problem', whereas an interest opens up a process where other possible actions might create a solution. The argument in mutual gains bargaining is that we are all too often focused on our positions and not on our interest. The core process elements are to identify the conflicting situations (the involved actors' different positions and interests) and to shape a creative process where the participants shape new actions that would potentially fulfil their interest.

Many different approaches to mutual gains bargaining can be seen. It has, for example, made some important progress in shaping the ground for cooperation between trade unions and management. In effect, mutual gains is not necessarily a participative process that leads to collective reflection, but it might easily be shaped in the format of an arena that is participative. The full potential of this mode of working has probably not been fully exploited yet.

The strength of this approach is the acknowledgement of the participants' conflicting interests as a natural fact. In mutual gains bargaining a creative process is designed where conflicting issues can be addressed and creative and workable solutions might be achieved. Neither search conferences nor dialogue conferences are particularly suitable in situations where there are explicit conflicts between participants. The outside facilitator plays an important role both in using her or his power to design a forced learning process aimed at letting the participants understand the difference between interests and positions and to support the creation of alternative solutions that attain mutual gains.

Meetings

A meeting is often conceptualized as an arena that needs little attention; people do not consider clarifying the goal of the meeting nor imagine a meeting as a learning opportunity. From the perspective of OD, a meeting will always be an element in a change process that will enable or put off participative

processes. A meeting is, of course, a social arena that can deliberately be designed to achieve specific goals. A meeting can contain one-way communication from the power-holders or it can encourage an open discussion involving all attendees. Meetings of different shapes and structures will always be elements of OD activities. A meeting might be an approach to inform the employees of a future development, or it might take the form of stocktaking an already running change process. In either case, there are design options. Depending on what is the expected outcome, and on what signals are transmitted to the audience, the meeting should be very consciously designed. One of the major challenges in arranging meetings in participative processes is the danger of communicating a non-participative practice, as a meeting all too often takes the form of staged one-way communication.

Task Forces

A task force is a group with a fairly clear and stated goal. These goals will, in the context of OD, often be the experimental activity initiated to create a more effective organization. A task force can in itself be a mini-cosmos of a larger OD process, as it is important to create opportunities for reflection and learning within the boundaries of the group. A task force can be structured to support participation and it can be structured to give room for collective reflection. A task force is often the inner cogwheel of the larger change process and it is important to design its structure and operation in line with the general principles and values in OD. Much is written about learning and development in groups and we will not repeat that here but direct the reader to the actual literature on groups, group dynamics, teams, etc. The literature is rich and stimulating (as a starting point, see, for example, Hackman, 1990; Kolb et al., 1984).

Choosing Arenas

Choosing a suitable arena for collective reflection is an essential design criterion in OD. An arena should make it possible to create a participative collective reflection process. Hence, it is important to be able to make a conscious decision on what would be an appropriate arena, given the actual context and problems. Several questions have to be answered in order to make the right choice. This selection process can be summarized by answering three questions. Answering these questions would principally be the responsibility of all participants (insiders and outsiders), but in certain phases of the OD process the outsider would have to take on specific responsibility in shaping the answers:

1. *What concrete challenges are facing the actual organization?* It is important to make an assessment of the organization and to decide what the problem should be. The idea is to be explicit about the immediate and long-term objectives of the OD process. The answer to this question must be shared by the involved parties, but the friendly outsider might take on a special responsibility for the process leading up to an answer to this question.
2. *What type of learning would be beneficial?* Different arenas create different options for learning, and with a given focus of attention, it is important to choose an arena that would facilitate the expected learning process.
3. *How can one link learning to experimental activity?* An arena creates different opportunities for problem-solving activity. In some arenas the experimental activity emerges directly from the learning process, while other arenas only create learning possibilities and imply that action has to be organized separately. In some situations the separation of learning and action might be beneficial, while in other contexts it would be important to have a direct and strong link between learning and action.

The answers to these questions will support the information base that will enhance the judgement of the appropriate arena and subsequently create the basis for the design of the OD process. It is not

automatically assumed that this should be the sole responsibility of the friendly outsider (the process consultant). Such decisions can also be the responsibility of the participants. In fact, the highest goal of the OD process is to create enough local skills so that the insiders take control of the change processes. In such a situation, the development process has created an organization that is able to continually learn and transform itself. The friendly outsider is basically the key person to facilitate a process whereby the insiders are expected to take control of their own developmental activity. This is the discussion we embark on in the next section.

THE ROLE OF THE FRIENDLY OUTSIDER—DESIGN, MONITORING, AND MANAGING RESOURCES

The friendly outsider is a key person in the OD effort. Using the singular form of friendly outsider does not necessarily indicate that we are only talking of one person. There might be more than one friendly outsider cooperating in facilitating the same change process. In fact, we would strongly argue for the positive benefits of having more than one person involved, as it shapes a fruitful ground for outsider learning and reflection.

In the conceptualization of the OD process as co-generative learning, the friendly outsider becomes the key person in the initial phase. The friendly outsider often plays a powerful role in this phase. The outsider is the model strong actor (Bråthen, 1973) and will in most circumstances dominate the decisions on initial design. The model strength is a consequence of mediating a potentially consistent set of concepts that eventually mould the change process. In fact, co-generative learning is such a model. It is vital for the outsider to bring with him or her a professional conceptualization of organizational development as it will guide the structuring of the change activity, but a major challenge for the outsider is to make the insiders understand the premises on which the transformation activity is founded.

Before starting a change activity, it is important that the outsider develops a prior understanding of the core dimensions of the actual organization, its surroundings, and the problem. The friendly outsider has to develop a self-supported knowledge of the organization to keep his or her own integrity in the co-generative learning process. A preliminary research process is one way of creating the necessary knowledge base for the outsider to be able to make sense of the local situation. The outsider would, on her or his side, bring to the table knowledge of different types of arenas, their potentials and pitfalls, and in the actual context make a judgement on what to recommend as concrete OD activities. Such recommendations would realistically be strong in the initial phases of the project, but in a 'good' transformation process, the insiders will gradually acquire knowledge necessary to make their own decisions.

In OD design and redesign is a continual process. It lasts as long as the OD process operates. A developmental process consists of an unlimited sequence of action–reflection–new understanding–new action. In this view, design becomes a sequential and continual process that requires judgement in each sequence in order to follow an appropriate process. This mode of operation demands a monitoring function.

Monitoring will, in a sequence of learning cycles (experimentation, reflection, and learning), keep track of the developmental process. Being aware of the different elements of the change process, figuring out if problems have been solved, understanding where learning stalls, making sense of potential conflicts, and remedying adequate response are pretty much what a monitoring function should do. There is, however, one important feature of monitoring, i.e. it is always connected to a preparatory activity that will direct the developmental process to the desired goals. In a sequential design procedure, the goals will also change. For the monitoring function, this presents demands for adjustment to what is the stated goal for the developmental sequence in focus. The target for the developmental process will change and the monitoring function has to take account of this fact. Both re-design and monitoring will move in parallel.

The management of the design and monitoring function has so far been communicated as the prime responsibility of the outsider. On the other hand, I have argued strongly for a handover of responsibility for design, monitoring, and management from the outsider to the insiders. In order to fulfil this demand, one central dimension in designing a participative developmental process is to create reflection and learning that will shape the ground for the participants' increased involvement. It is not enough that the participants have a say in the day-to-day transformation process planned by the outsider, it is equally important that the insiders gradually and systematically take control over their own developmental process. This becomes, in fact, the core design, monitoring, and management principle, as it is vital to transfer skills and responsibility to the insiders.

CONCLUSION: DON'T LOOK FOR A BLUEPRINT—MAKE YOUR OWN JUDGEMENT

I have conceptualized OD as a participative change process where participation and collective reflection are the two main building blocks. Further, I have argued for the co-generative learning process where problem-owners and outside facilitators share the reflection and learning opportunities. The major guidelines for insiders as well as for outsiders are to continually monitor the developmental process in order to judge the process and its outcomes, in order to make wise decisions on how to advance the transformative activity. This is, of course, not an activity that follows a pre-drawn blueprint. The actors involved, the local context, skills, and the resources of the outsider will create the developmental picture. Blueprinting developmental processes must be replaced by continual judgement, both from insiders as well as from outsiders.

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