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Abstract

In this article we critically analyze micro-processes of sensemaking during change implementation under a macro-level discourse of top-down planned change management, which we coin ‘change managerialism’. We demonstrate how taken-for-granted enactments of managing change interweave with organizational change discourses and how this subsequently inhibits sensemaking micro-processes. Adopting a reflexive research methodology, this article contributes to the sensemaking of change literature by illustrating how change managerialism infiltrates an organization’s managerial change discourse and sensemaking micro-processes, causing a disruption in sensemaking. Empirical material of a case study conducted at a professional services firm suggests these dynamics unintentionally inhibit sensemaking micro-processes and bracket off direct experience of the organization’s change recipients through lifeworld colonization, detachment, discursive closure and constrained reflexivity.

Keywords

Sensemaking, organizational change, managerialism, reflexivity, performativity

Introduction

Sensemaking and change in organizations are research topics that go hand in hand: uncertainty, equivocality, and paradox induced by either planned or emergent change represents a major trigger for sensemaking (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Empirical research in the field of management and organization studies illuminated in the past decades how organizations and their members make sense of change (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Helms-Mills, 2003; Maitlis, 2005; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010), emphasizing the cognitive, social, and discursive micro-processes of sensemaking. Although this research broadly acknowledges that sensemaking does not unfold in a vacuum (Taylor & Van Every, 1999; Weber & Glynn, 2006; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), there is a penchant to assume that sense is predominantly enacted in intra-organizational contexts, merely assuming the taken-for-granted presence of macro-level forces, without exploring the deeper mechanisms and processes through which micro-processes of sensemaking are affected. In short, the dynamics through which specific and dominant ‘macro-level discourses’ (Brown, Colville, & Pye, 2014) shape sensemaking processes remains under researched.

When it comes to organizational change, sensemaking processes seem not only to be guided by individual and organizational actions, they are also influenced by unquestioned and often unwittingly held assumptions and commonly held beliefs about reality ‘out there’ (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008). Much of the change literature is in this respect grounded in onto-epistemological assumptions of being-realism (Chia & Tsoukas, 2003; Stacey, 2011; Tsoukas &

Chia, 2002) granting primacy to stability, rational choice, and planned top-down approaches towards change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008; Burnes, 2005; Chia, 1999; MacKay & Chia, 2013; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). This strand of the literature conceives organizational change as a top-down planned managerial process. In line with Alvesson and Sveningsson (2011) we coin this a discourse of ‘change managerialism’. It is precisely the process of how such macro-level discourses, in this particular case the discourse of change managerialism, affects sensemaking micro-processes that remains largely under-researched in the sensemaking literature (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015; Weber & Glynn, 2006).

Therefore, this article sets out to illustrate how a change managerialism discourse interweaves with an organization’s managerial change discourse and sensemaking micro-processes. We analyze, based on empirical material from a case study conducted at a professional service firm, how change managerialism – largely unintentionally and unwittingly - affects the sensemaking processes of organizational actors that are supposed to bring the planned change alive. This paper thus addresses the following research question: *How does change managerialism influence sensemaking micro-processes during the implementation of planned organizational change?* More specifically, we look into (1) the process through which change managerialism infuses the organization’s change discourse, and (2) the effect of this ‘mixed’ change discourse on sensemaking micro-processes. To address these questions this article adopts dual perspective in terms of analyzing and understanding sensemaking processes. First, sensemaking of organizational actors is analyzed through a ‘sensemaking of change’ lens (Balogun, 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005) in order to depict how sensemaking processes are shaped and enacted by an organization’s change discourse. Second, a reflexive research methodology (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009) is adopted with the objective to surface the taken-for-grantedness in managing change process and to analyze the interdependent nature of macro-level discourses and sensemaking processes from a critical perspective.

This article contributes to the sensemaking of change literature by illustrating how change managerialism as macro-level discourse infiltrates in an organization’s managerial change discourse and how it affects sensemaking micro-processes. More specifically, we describe how a macro-level discourse of change managerialism brackets off or constrains sensemaking micro-processes from lived experience by what we call sensemaking ‘inhibitors’. These ‘inhibitors’ are factors that constrain ongoing sensemaking micro-processes in terms of quality rather than quantity. As sensemaking is a continuous process (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015), inhibiting factors refer to a change in sensemaking quality when the level of pre-interpretation increases and the sensemakers’ thought-action repertoire narrows. By portraying the interweaving of change managerialism presumptions in the organization’s discourse, we point at four inhibitors: lifeworld colonization, detachment, discursive closure, and constraining reflexivity. From a methodological point of view, adopting a reflexive research methodology that borrows heavily from a critically-inspired interpretative repertoire, unveils explicitly the taken-for-granted status of dynamics induced by mainstream change managerialism on sensemaking micro-process.

We proceed with an elaboration of our interpretive repertoire adopted, concentrating on sensemaking of organizational change, and change managerialism as critical perspective. After explicating the research methodology adopted, we present the case analysis consisting of the managerial change discourse, sensemaking micro-processes, and impact of change managerialism on the former two focusing on the vehicles that inhibit these micro-processes under the influence of change managerialism. The subsequent discussion focuses on the contributions to the sensemaking literature and presents arguments as to the performative effect of dominant macro-level discourses of organizational change on sensemaking micro-processes.

Change managerialism and sensemaking of organizational change

Making sense of organizational change

There is a growing sense among organizational scholars that current theorizing on organizational change does not adequately capture the lived reality of organizational change (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008; MacKay & Chia, 2013; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002). In order to remedy these shortcomings, a sensemaking lens (Hernes & Maitlis, 2010; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) towards change has been advanced to better comprehend the processes of organizational change from a phenomenological perspective. Framed in cognitive, social, and discursive processes, this lens emphasizes meaning construction and structuring of reality during social interaction, a complex, idiosyncratic, interactive, retrospective and continual process through which captured cues are translated into meaningful information (Daft & Weick, 1984; Weick, 1979, 1995). One particularly relevant stream of work in this context relates to ‘change recipient sensemaking’, stressing the role of ‘change recipient’ interpretive schemes in interpreting and realizing organizational change (Balogun, 2006; Balogun & Johnson, 2004, 2005; Guette & Vandenbempt, 2013): “Environmental forces are likely to initiate the change, but the way the environment is interpreted by organizational members affects the type of change that takes place” (Bartunek, 1984, p. 355). And it is this impact of ‘the environment’ on the sensemaking process that remains highly under researched in the current change and sensemaking literatures.

The sensemaking literature remains in this respect largely silent on how unexpressed contextual assumptions impact sensemaking processes (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weber & Glynn, 2006). Reviewing the sensemaking literature critically, Sandberg and Tsoukas (2015, p. 16) have pinpointed that “although the influence of the institutional context has been acknowledged, very few empirical studies have empirically investigated how this influence may occur”. Research on sensemaking in organizations displays a predominant cognitive and social orientation, putting a premium on micro-level constructs in order to describe and analyze sensemaking processes, including discursive practices, language, identity, emotions, expectations, etc. (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). What remains unexplored is the explication of how a dominant ‘macro-level discourse’ (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012; Brown et al., 2014; Marcuse, 1968) guides or constrains sensemaking of organizational members, often in subtle and concealed ways. Indeed, frames of reference at macro, meso and micro level (Cornelissen &

Werner, 2014) enable people to interpret organizational reality and make sense of equivocality, providing guidelines on how to enact meaning and respond to organizational change. It is this exploration of the “constitutive effects of macro-level discourse on sensemaking” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 98) that contains potential for better understanding how micro-processes of sensemaking are enacted, including the role of power and politics: “Quite overlooked, or certainly underplayed, are the social, cultural, economic, and political forces that shape what groups will notice, how they can act, with whom they interact, and the kinds of environments that can be collectively enacted.” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 98). It is here where adopting a critical management perspective will contribute to fill the gap of how macro-level discourses impact micro-level sensemaking processes, and to provide cues as to how change managerialism impacts sensemaking during change implementation.

Bringing in a critical management perspective: change managerialism

Adding a critical management perspective to micro-processes of sensemaking allows for reflexive denaturalizing the existing order and unveiling the implied ‘taken for granted-ness’ (Alvesson, Bridgman, & Willmott, 2009) that are embedded in acts of organizing and managing. The objective thereby is to challenge “the authority of managerialism that saturates modern organizational life” (Phillips & Dar, 2009, p. 420). We draw in particular upon ideas of ‘managerialism’ (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011; Clegg, 2014; Locke & Spender, 2011; Parker, 2009) in order to critically analyze micro-processes of sensemaking and to shed light on hidden dynamics induced by certain managerial logics.

Managerialism is based upon a “view of managers as a distinct group (as opposed to non-managers) of (rational) actors providing and applying the necessary business oriented means for the good of organizations” (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2011, p. 349), or phrased differently: “Managerialism refers to a strong emphasis on managers being in charge, possessing a superior overview, knowledge and authority.” (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2008, p. 151). In a context of organizational change, managerialism emphasizes the underlying belief that managers have to manage change, preferably in a planned and rational way adopting formulaic prescriptions that reflect a specific version of a ‘best practice’ n-step model, e.g. Lewin’s three-stage model of change (Lewin, 1947), punctuated equilibrium models of change (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), etc... We coin this dominant managerialistic approach towards conceiving and managing change ‘change managerialism’.

We particularly zoom in on the interdependence between ontological assumptions commonly held in managerialism on the one hand, and their discursive and representational considerations on the other hand. From an ontological perspective, managerialism is reflected in deeply held beliefs that social systems are governed by instrumental rationality emphasizing the logic of the system rather than the lifeworld, whereby the former colonizes the latter (Alvesson et al., 2009; Habermas, 1984). The underlying assumption is that managerial practices are objective, impartial, scientific, and technically superior, eventually resulting in one-dimensionality that emphasizes “how a

dominant social logic effectively produces people that are mesmerized and subordinated to its mode of operating” (Alvesson & Willmott 2012, p.66). Managerialism thus presupposes that complex, equivocal and fuzzy phenomena can be reduced to “(o)verly dominant static categories that obscure a logic of observational ordering based on the representationalist principles of division, location, isolation, classification and the elevation of self-identity.” (Chia, 1999, p.210).

Managerialism also induces a series of discursive effects, including discursive closure and associated power effects (Alvesson et al., 2009), construction of a ‘professionalization’ discourse and what it takes to be perceived by the outside world as ‘professional’ (Alvesson et al., 2009), creation of metaphors through meticulously chosen symbols, rituals, ceremonies, and other impression management techniques (Alvesson & Willmott 2012; Alvesson 2013), elevating mundane activities to a ‘strategic’ level, emphasizing the ‘strategic’ nature of nearly all activities of organizing (Alvesson & Willmott 2012), and embarking on current fashions and fads in management, as well as ‘best practices’ carved out by management gurus, and representing nothing more than ‘pseudo events’ which are “regarded as real and significant by some half-informed but naïve individuals, but that closer critical examination reveals the structure to be primarily concerned with the symbolic and ceremonial.” (Alvesson, 2013, p.18). The enactment of these unreflexive representations of underlying ontological beliefs clearly affects how organizations subsequently make sense of change, and hints at the performative effect of dominant rational top-down change theories.

Research methodology

Empirical context

The case study presented analyses a major organizational change at professional service firm which we call ServiceCo. Professional service firms (Alvesson, 1993; Lowendahl, 1997; Starbuck, 1992) are characterized by a set of three distinctive and core attributes: knowledge intensity, low capital intensity, and professional workforce (von Nordenflycht, 2010). Other, more peripheral characteristics include idiosyncratic client services, subjective quality assessments, information asymmetry, high degree of discretionary effort and personal judgment, substantial interaction with clients, and adherence to professional norms (Lowendahl, 1997).

ServiceCo is an international organization listed on the stock exchange, active in the broad domain of Human Resources services to a variety of organizations. The organization, consisting of several divisions to service different market segments, faced increased ‘market pressure’ since the financial crisis of 2008-2009. Pressured by decreasing margins of their core activities, the Board of ServiceCo hired external consultants for advise on how to secure their competitive advantage moving forward. Based on these outcomes as well as on overall market trends in the professional services industry, ServiceCo’s Board announced a new organizational structure along with the creation of a new division that would regroup a series of existing departments, under the ‘Expert’ label. This case focuses on the strategic change associated with the creation of the Expert label.

Following the Board announcement of the reorganized structure and associated value propositions, a management team of 3 senior ServiceCo members and a COO for the new division were appointed. This management team was mandated to craft a new strategy for the Expert division, stipulating how the newly assembled division could realize its imposed objectives in terms of revenue increase and revenue composition driven by new ‘consulting’ services. The strategy formulation process was spearheaded by the management team and a program manager, employing a participative approach that involved all general managers of the merged departments that eventually had to create the Expert division. This crafting exercise, initiated immediately after the initial Board announcement, culminated in a strategic plan for the Expert division about 1 year later. By then the new strategy kicked off, the new label was introduced to the broader organization, all ServiceCo employees - and specifically those that would be part of the Expert division - were formally informed on the content of the strategy, and the media was invited to celebrate the launch of the new division.

This merger of various international departments into one division being rebranded ‘Expert’ was aimed at introducing a series of consulting services. The objective of introducing these consulting services consisted of fostering a stronger partnership with ServiceCo’s customers, and providing more value-added end-to-end services addressing the customer’s organizational and strategic challenges. Consulting services were expected to reach 50% of total Expert revenues in 5 years’ time. In order to facilitate this strategic reorientation, the strategic plan prescribed gradual relocation of Expert staff to national headquarters adopting a ‘new way of working’; new administrative and support IT systems and processes; the adoption of new go-to-market models; increased performance expectations and competence levels for Expert employees; and not the least, the development of expertise and competence in providing consulting services.

Research design

This paper adopts a qualitative interpretative abductive research design (Prasad, 2002; Prasad & Prasad, 2002; Sandberg, 2005) aimed at generating a deeper understanding of how meaning construction and sensemaking processes unfold adopting a single case study design. Our research design was heavily inspired by a reflexive research methodology (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009) granting priority to problematizing surface meaning and aiming at a critical hermeneutic understanding (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009; Palmer, 1969; Prasad & Mir, 2002) of empirical material based on an interpretative repertoire that gradually evolved from sensemaking of change literatures (Holt & Cornelissen, 2013; Weick, 1979, 1995; Weick et al., 2005) to eventually including critical management studies literatures.

Collecting empirical material

Empirical material consists of 32 open-ended and semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted between December 2012 and September 2013, as well as selected documents (including PowerPoint presentations to the Board and to the larger organization, as well as the ‘poster’

synthesizing the change process) and a corporate video of the ‘official’ kick-off meeting of the new division. Purposefully sampled interviews consisted of 4 members of the management team, 1 program manager, 1 vice-president, 6 division managers, 20 expert employees and consultants¹. All interviews were recorded and transcribed ad verbatim.

Both (senior) managers and ‘change recipients’ were interviewed in order to analyze sensemaking processes from different hierarchical angles. A major objective of the interviews was to probe informants for taken-for-granted assumptions, terminology and practices in order to surface deeper meanings. The interviewer-researcher adopted therefore a ‘not knowing’ attitude, asking for clarifications, explanations and illustrations of adopted jargon and discourse, focusing on four broad themes: the informants’ responsibilities and concrete activities in the organization (what is my work about?); their story of the Expert division strategy (what is the change about?); how the new strategy affected their work (what’s in it for me?); and how they experienced the management of the implementation process (how was it managed?).

Analyzing empirical material

Data analysis followed a predominantly abductive logic (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Dubois & Gadde, 2014; Van de Ven, 2007) during which ‘systematic combining’ is used to go systematically “back and forth between framework, data sources and analysis” (Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p. 556). The abductive logic of this research implies that the research question and interpretive repertoires used during data analysis evolved in an effort to generate plausible and valid explanations and explorations of the empirical material. According to a reflexive research methodology, empirical material was analyzed through different interpretative repertoires.

A first interpretative understanding was generated through the construction of the empirical material: a raw or *low-abstract interpretation* was constructed by generating ad verbatim transcripts of recorded interviews. The objective consists in familiarizing the researcher with the empirical material while staying close to the informants’ discourse. In this primary interpretation, the researcher’s interpretative repertoire is not focused on any particular theme or subject, other than the overarching literatures of organizational change and sensemaking.

Second, empirical material was further interpreted in-depth through a structured and *hermeneutic interpretation* of the constructed narratives of Expert informants. In this phase, the researcher’s interpretive repertoire steps on the foreground as a frame of reference used to interpret and construct meaning out of the multiplicity of primary interpretations embedded in the empirical material. This repertoire consisted primarily of theoretical and empirical organizational sensemaking literatures, organizational change literatures, and interpretive, phenomenological and hermeneutical strands of organizational research. To do so, all transcribed interviews were analyzed inspired by the ‘Gioia methodology’ (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013) in order to

¹ Quotations in the case analysis sections are referenced as follows: management team: MT; program manager: PM, vice-president: VP; division managers: DM; expert employees and consultants: Expert.

consistently identify first order concepts, second order themes, and aggregate dimensions. The outcome of this round of analysis resulted in the managerial change discourse and sensemaking micro-processes sections of the case analysis, illustrated in Appendix 1, and elaborated in the first case analysis section ‘Managerial change discourse and sensemaking micro-processes’.

Phase three, the *critical interpretation* of the empirical material, consists in problematizing ‘data-confirming’ interpretations fueled by dominant theories and stimulating alternative interpretations by questioning what underlying meanings may reside behind the initial, self-evident interpretations that the researcher sometimes automatically produces. At this state the researcher’s interpretative repertoire gains in interpretive richness nourished by its generative capacity (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 307) and explicitly included critical theory, critical management studies, and postmodernism literatures. This phase was conducted essentially by re-encoding empirical material explicitly adopting an interpretive repertoire grounded in critical management studies in order to generate alternative interpretations that would surface underlying taken-for-granted assumptions. The outcome of this analysis is represented in the ‘Change managerialism inhibits sensemaking micro-processes’ section of the case analysis and is supported by Appendices 2 and 3.

The analysis presented are nevertheless subject to some limitations. First, we adopted a rather eclectic interpretive repertoire in terms of analyzing the empirical material rather than focusing on the works of one particular stream or scholar within critical management studies. Whereas we believe that a broad repertoire aligns best with an abductive research design, the empirical material could be further analyzed with different and more specific lenses in more deductive designs. Second, this article focused on analyzing the consequences of adopting change managerialism logics in managing organizational change. Although this represents a prevalent approach both in theory and practice, other approaches are prevalent too. We also adopted a rather critical perspective in terms of presenting change managerialism without, nevertheless, aiming at any normative implications.

Managerial change discourse and sensemaking micro-processes in ServiceCo

The case analysis of ServiceCo consists of two sections. This first section presents the change discourse from the Expert division’s management team and elaborates on observed sensemaking of business unit managers (middle management) and business unit employees or professionals (see figure 1)². In the subsequent section, we try to further understand the situation at ServiceCo by zooming in on the macro-level change managerialism discourse as an antecedent to the observed managerial change discourse and micro-processes of sensemaking.

Figure 1: ServiceCo’s managerial change discourse and sensemaking micro-processes

² Appendix 1 includes a sample of informant quotes used during case analysis in order to construct the case findings enclosed in this section.

Managerial change discourse

The creation of the Expert division was the result of, on the one hand, the Board's homework based on a 5-year old consulting report recommending the current strategic change; and on the other hand, the monitoring of current market trends that affect professional service firms in their go-to-market strategies. Based on this input, a 5-year strategic plan was established that would create a new and futureproof organization that would be able to address current trends in the market. Expert division's management team was faced with the challenge of designing a series of strategic changes in order to implement the new corporate strategy, and subsequently of disseminating and communicating the overall strategic design, organizational rebranding, and new organizational structure to the seven business units that would aggregate to the newly assembled Expert division. Expert MT's change discourse contained a rather strong sensegiving emphasis by repeatedly using metaphors and aiming at unpacking the strategic change. Whereas the discourse adopted displayed a solid process focus, it also included clear signposts in terms of impact awareness.

Sensegiving of change through metaphor and unpacking

Assisted by an external consultant, the management team focused its efforts on unpacking the broader change into a series of more graspable changes that included the creation of a new label (rebranding), the creation of a mid-office in order to centralize most back-office staff (reorganization), the move to a new office that would serve as headquarter for the new division, and most importantly a series of strategic change projects that would transform the organization's operations. In order to unpack the overall change design, a 'poster' had been designed that illustrated all nine change projects, with associated targets, 'promises', and performance metrics. This 'poster' represented a crucial materialization of the change process, as it fed the various road shows of the management team among different office locations and business units, and served as pivotal element in the corporate kick-off meeting. As such, Expert's management team aimed at giving sense to the top-down initiated strategic change process by unpacking the change into graspable pieces. In order to tie the pieces together, the change discourse leveraged the power of using metaphors in order to facilitate the sensegiving process. The metaphor of rebuilding a ship while sailing in order to transform the business while remaining fully operational, was used on many occasions in shaping the sensegiving of the change process.

Process focus

Characteristic to many top-down strategic change processes, the management team was in charge of designing a solid process in order to disseminate the strategic change message throughout the organization. Guided by a program manager from headquarters, a strong emphasis was put on the process through which the change was going to be managed, deciding when to move forward and hold back, involving external assistance and clearly mapping ‘as is’ and ‘to be’ situations. It also focused on the perception of employees, in order to make the change visible, and to make sure that the process of changing was not totally hidden from the organization’s employees. After the conducted road-shows and kick-off events organized throughout the organization, the management team came to realize that somehow the enacted discourse and process followed did not reach its desired effect. Both feedback received, and lack of action in the different business units, caused the team to reflect on the actions taken in order to realize that the process followed thus far needed some adjustments.

Magnitude recognition

Although Expert’s MT was carrying out the entire implementation and dissemination process, the change was designed under heavy pressure from the organization’s Board of Directors. Strategic objectives were not mild: quadrupling turnover in 5 years’ time, expanding operations to 5 new countries, and generating 40% of total revenues from high-end value-adding solutions with which the organization had no prior experience. While crafting the strategic change discourse, and communicating the new strategy and related change program, Expert’s MT was well aware of the impact that the change would have not only on the organization, but mostly on the employees. In order to demonstrate this recognition in the discourse, it was occasionally put forward that targets should be interpreted as guidance rather than hard goals.

Micro-processes of sensemaking

Middle management sensemaking is characterized by awareness of the impact of the change magnitude on the organization and its employees. More precisely, this awareness is present in terms of the impact of the strategic change on the internal processes and internal organization, of the impact on the mindset of the professional population, of the risks associated with the pace of change, and of the perception of change through very practical and tangible means.

This awareness goes along with sensemaking that is characterized by struggling with the process, more precisely with its top-down nature. Given the top-down and cascading design of the strategic change program, most if not all middle managers struggle with the process as it was designed and implemented. A significant portion of this struggle related to the creation of change projects that were pushed forward by the MT, whereby the overall feeling was that these projects were ill defined and only contributed incrementally to understanding and disseminating the change throughout the organization. Along these lines, a call for slowing down was voiced, in order to

first redefine more concretely the fundamental building blocks of the strategy, and then to move forward taking into account the current organizational context and market climate. Another source of struggle was the communication process that occasionally was perceived as suboptimal, as well as the struggle of identification whereby some business units voiced their concerns of losing their idiosyncratic identity under an umbrella label.

Among the professional population of the various business units, sensemaking was characterized by recognizing the novelty and lack of experience facing the change process, a quest for materiality in order to acknowledge and see the change, a discourse-practice divergence between the change discourse and the practice they faced, and a somewhat critical approach towards the change implementation process.

Despite measures taken by the management team and business unit managers, professionals were unaware of the impact on their work. This condition of ‘not knowing’ was related to the competences needed in order to realize the change, the identity of the organization and its business units, the endpoint or final destination of the change trajectory as well as to the foundations of the change strategy related to definition of solutions and an overall ‘not knowing’ mindset pointing to the fact that professionals did not know today what they would face tomorrow.

The ‘not knowing’ of the professionals gave rise to a quest for materiality whereby professionals tried to grasp the big strategic change by looking for specific anchors, for very operational and pragmatic elements that helped them to grasp the meaning of the change. These artefacts somehow helped to make the transition from the conceptual sphere of the change discourse to the pragmatic sphere of lived reality. These anchors seemed to be related to the organization’s new name, television and radio advertisements, training and coaching sessions, rebranded stationary and pens, car stickers with a new logo, a revamped divisional website, the idiosyncratic development of solutions, the existence of precise targets, etc... The quest for materiality also highlights the relevance of having clear definitions and targets, which need to be provided and/or translated by management.

This quest for materiality was much aligned with a discourse-practice divergence between the conceptually perceived change discourse on the one hand, and the experienced reality on the work floor on the other hand. Despite the efforts made by the management team to deliver a clear message of the strategic change, it appears that the message didn’t stick when it came to translating or interpreting the message from a practitioner perspective.

Another characteristic of the professionals’ sensemaking process was a somewhat critical questioning of the approach followed by the management team. The critical questions covered a rather broad range of themes, with a specific focus on the uniform umbrella approach for all

underlying business units, the expectations shaped by the change discourse, and the rather strong top-down nature of the change process.³

Eventually, professionals' sensemaking processes displayed a struggle to balance 'business as usual' on the one hand, and 'the change' on the other hand. There is a paradoxical struggle in terms of wanting to generate solution-based projects and lacking the time to do so, receiving freedom to manoeuvre and a need of administrative over-justification, wanting to know what lies ahead and realizing the un-readiness of the organization to adopt the change anytime soon, balancing the longer term strategy realization and the short term workload, the desire to truly believe in and live the change and holding on for the next change wave to appear.

Inhibited sensemaking micro-processes through change managerialism

This section offers an explanation from a critical perspective on the macro-micro linkages during change implementation. We first describe the dominant macro-level discourse of change managerialism, and then identify the (unintended) consequences on the sensemaking micro-processes.⁴

Macro-level discourse of change managerialism

Applying a more critical lens to the empirical material results in pinpointing a series of assumptions both in the managerial change discourse and sensemaking process that are a consequence of a dominant macro-level discourse of change managerialism. These assumptions include, for example: the assumption that change needs top-down cascading and communication processes (*"The entire change trajectory has been imposed by the Board of Directors, and now we start the process of cascading that message in our division."*, MT1), change comes on top of 'business as usual', change conflicts with short-term stock market pressure (*"A major challenge resides in the fact that we are changing our organization, which consists of a full time job, on top of running the business as usual. We also want to realize a lot. Even if we support our ambition for the full 200%, we face the DNA of a publicly listed organization that breeds on cost efficiency, ROI and selling the business case."*, MT2), and a strong focus on image and impressions during the process. (*"The doubt that we experience during the translation of the strategy is something we have to keep for ourselves as we cannot share it with our teams"*, MT4).

Looking at the empirical material from this perspective, it appears that the enacted change discourse includes a series of elements that are underpinned by change managerialism assumptions adopted, molding subsequent sensemaking processes.

³ It needs to be remarked here that this questioning of the change process was voiced during informant interviews, sometimes after a period of hesitation. It is therefore unclear whether professionals also voiced their questioning at other occasions.

⁴ Appendix 2 and 3 include a sample of informant quotes used during case analysis in order to construct the case findings enclosed in this section.

Categorization and standardization

Managing change at ServiceCo was characterized by a strong urge to categorize and standardize in an effort to create uniformity among the division, as well as uniformity in understanding and interpreting the new strategy through tightly orchestrated PowerPoint presentations, roadshows, and kick-off meetings. For example, management emphasized the use of ‘reference projects’, ‘best practices’, and other ‘methodologies’ to standardize project execution. The call for best practices resonates both in terms of internal organization “*We have to make sure that we communicate uniformly and exchange best practices*” (MT3) or in terms of change processes “*In terms of the change process, an external consultant helped us in making sure that we followed best practices in our approach, and that we did the classical steps of change*” (MT2). Standardization was also clearly present in terms of mapping current capabilities and capability development as part of the strategic change discourse. “*We conducted a SWOT analysis, have divided our people into levels to see how much competence we have at each level*” (DM4) or “*We made an inventory of who is standing where in terms of competences*” (DM5).

The management team’s change discourse referred frequently to building a ‘futureproof’ organization that would be able to face the challenges of the future, thereby assuming stability of challenges over time. “*We finally have a story to tell that is futureproof*” (MT3), or “*Our futureproof consultants are responsible to increase the quality and excellence of our customers’ business processes*” (Expert4). Also the sailor metaphor assumed a stable and fixed destination as end point: whereas the turbulent process is emphasized, a fixed destination is equally presupposed, assuming that once the destination has been reached, a future-proof organization has been constructed. “*We are like a group of sailors on a shaky boat, and we have to rebuild the boat piece by piece while sailing to our port of arrival*” (MT1).

‘Professional’ discourse

The ‘professional’ and ‘professional service’ discourse leveraged during the change dissemination process was eagerly replicated by Expert staff and was granted the status of change in itself through a pre-fabricated ‘rebranding story’ that Expert staff was expected to use during client interaction: “*We have all received a rebranding story that we can tell to our clients so that we know what we have to tell our customers*” (Expert4). Expert staff that thus far were merely active in sales and cold calling activities considered themselves as consultants: “*We call ourselves also consultants*” (Expert11) - “*We are a team of future-proof consultants*” (Expert4) whereas the typical employee profile nor Expert’s organization and processes did reflect a typical consulting profile: “*attending training has always been an issue: people work from 9 to 5 and then they want to go home rather than attend a training*” (Expert8); “*I sit at the client’s offices from 9 to 5 and never have contact with ServiceCo, except for submitting my timesheet, and yes, they pay my salary*” (Expert9); “*Last year, ServiceCo organized an event on social media, however, people were not interested as it was not within working hours.*” (Expert7).

Not only were Expert staff expected to become consultants, they needed to be experts in their respective fields of expertise, whereby a major managerial concern consisted of “*being perceived as experts by the market*” (DM6), “*distinguishing us from competitors as real experts*” (MT4), and “*becoming a real expert*” (Expert18). The approach to transform the team of sales staff to expert consultants was however less ambitious and limited to an ‘Expedition 2020 Sales Training’ consisting of a 2-day consultative selling training session followed up by sales coaching sessions. As such, it was presumed that expert consultants are developed by providing a two-day sales training to existing sales staff: “*We have to work on people’s expertise, that’s why we are giving this training to everyone*” (DM4), “*We are being trained to ask our customers what solutions they need to their most strategic problems*” (Expert2), and “*We received training in consultative selling and personality types, so that we know what questions to ask in order to discover the real problems of our clients*” (Expert4). The ‘professional’ was somehow ‘constructed’.

Discursive amplification of change

In line with the previously discussed discourse-practice diversion, the discourse adopted resulted in a discursive amplification of change, i.e. an amplification of the magnitude of what was really going to change, at least in the short to medium term. The magnitude of the upcoming change was amplified both in terms of timing and content. The temporal dimension related to referring to the change as being the last rescue prior to corporate death, the last way out: “*if we continue with providing the services that we do now, we can turn off the light and our organization doesn’t exist anymore*” (Expert2), or referring to the boat & sailor metaphor: “*not only do we have to rebuild the boat, the boat is sinking, so we need to rebuild and shovel water, and fast*” (VP). The content dimension inflated the magnitude of change in terms of positioning the new consulting services as something completely different: “*the consulting services that we’ll offer are totally different from our current services: you need a totally different skill set, different processes, different infrastructure, everything is different*” (MT3).

For Expert staff, nevertheless, it was not very clear what this big difference was, “*the difference is indeed vague, in theory you could make a difference, but in reality...it depends on how you package it*” (Expert1) to the extent that its magnitude was put in a broader perspective: “*Maybe we expect that we will do something completely different, whereas this eventually may not be the case*” (Expert2). The buzz created upfront clearly created amplified expectations: “*I actually expected much more in terms of content, I missed a lot of content as to what is going to change, it sounded like abracadabra*” (Expert3).

Repackaging of emptiness

The change discourse was also embodied through adopting a rather vague vocabulary in describing the change, a vocabulary that was replicated throughout the division carrying only limited meaning, and served as a repackaging of emptiness. Change was characterized through “*competence thinking ... integral projects ... multidisciplinary teams ... shifting from business units*

to competence centers” (Expert4). When asked what the shift from business units to competence centers implied, the answer was: “*That is not clear to me, it remains vague...I think we will focus more on competences, on competence thinking and integral projects...*” (Expert4).

The grandiose change discourse elaborated upon earlier was clearly replicated by Expert staff, unaware of the void in terminology and the lack of concrete content. On the surface, Expert staff had a sense that they embarked on becoming ‘strategic’, addressing ‘strategic’ issues of ‘strategic importance’: “*Having experts, we can help our customers with their strategic problems, and we can start doing consultancy*” (DM4) even to becoming “*strategic partners*” (Expert6), “*trusted advisor*” (DM5) or creating “*strategic thought partnership*” (Expert14) with customers. Furthermore, in terms of providing ‘strategic’ services, the type of services alluded to seems to imply “*doing a (standardized) quick scan of a department to see what goes wrong*” (Expert2), “*doing an audit and then delivering a report*” (Expert8), or “*having the consultant sitting in our office rather than at the client’s*” (DM5).

Complexity reduction

This (re)packaging nevertheless implies **complexity reduction** of the intended strategic change, thereby circumventing the complex and equivocal messiness that is associated with change implementation. Expert’s MT was infatuated with an urge to simplify all change communications in order to keep everything as simple as possible: representing the change process in 5 simple slides, short elevator pitches, templates, factsheets and other highly simplified representations.

As a result, Expert staff experienced the major strategic change in ‘reduced’ versions, emphasizing highly operational dimensions, including: the rebranding, new headquarters, new methodologies, the ‘change poster’, new distribution models, new email addresses, new promotional material, increased internal collaboration between business units, centralization of administrative processes in a ‘mid-office’, introduction of a new way of working, different usage of databases, project management tools, etc. In a similar vein, operationalizing the strategic consulting services emphasized highly operational characteristics rather than its strategic content, such as invoicing processes in terms of hours charged versus fixed fees; whether the project was executed at the client office or in Expert’s office; overall length and number of staff assigned to a project, etc.

Crisis rhetoric

Eventually, the change discourse was performed under a **crisis and market pressure rhetoric**, legitimizing the imposed change plan as a response to ‘the crisis’ and ‘the pressure’ from ‘the market’. Although change implementation was predominantly framed from a positive perspective, it also contained a crisis rhetoric: the fact that we live in difficult times; that we were hit by financial crises, increasing market pressure, and a shifting competitive landscape. Although the crisis is put forward the major culprit for declining business and revenues, which precise elements of ‘the crisis’ or ‘the market pressure’ are to blame for the decline, remains unclear.

Whereas the lack of agility in detecting early signals and weak cues could have been pinpointed as a possible reason for revenue decline, it was clearly ‘the crisis’ fueled by social networks: “combined with the impact of social media and the knowledge of our customers, our business model is eroding” (MT3), “A major risk lies in social media: organizations can do the work themselves and they don’t need us anymore” (Expert20). This reactive mode towards evolving trends in ‘the market’ amplified the generated sense of urgency created by the change discourse adopted even further in an effort to avoid becoming redundant in times of crisis and increased competition.

How change managerialism inhibits sensemaking micro-processes

The intertwined macro-level change managerialism and organizational change discourses resulted in ‘inhibited’ sensemaking micro-processes. These ‘inhibitors’ refer to a change in sensemaking quality when the level of pre-interpretation increases and the thought-action repertoire of change recipients narrows: put differently, forces that inhibit or constrain sensemaking micro-processes due to the dominance of the change managerialism presuppositions (see figure 2). Whereas both middle management and change recipients displayed an overall searching mindset in order to make sense of the organizational change process, these sensemaking processes were largely undermined by the four inhibitors, causing a disruption in sensemaking of the organizational actors. This disruption in sensemaking was displayed through stronger adherence to the change managerialism induced change discourse, thereby eschewing the more reflexive processes illustrated through forces of lifeworld colonization, detachment, discursive closure, and constraining reflexivity.

Figure 2: Change managerialism inhibits sensemaking micro-processes

Lifeworld colonization

The interweaving of change managerialism in the organization's change discourse caused a somehow grandiose discourse that to some extent contradicted the lifeworld or lived reality of staff, and subsequently 'colonized' their lifeworld during sensemaking. System colonization of the lifeworld (Habermas, 1984) refers to the increasing dominance of instrumental rationality and modernity over the contexts of meaning and interpretation of individuals, and an "encroachment which undermines the basis of mutual understanding through open intersubjective communication and critical reflection" (Hancock & Tyler, 2008, p.37).

Change managerialism thus supplanted the staff's practical concerns and questions resulting in a strategic discourse floating above the employees' heads. Daily practice concerns of employees were opposed to grandiose topics announced in the organization's change discourse, resulting among other things in balancing and materiality quests during sensemaking. Employees' lifeworld was colonized mainly by the use of container terminology that did not connect with the practices and activities of employees, by the overemphasis on tools, databases, and reporting requirements that do not align with the operational business where the real work gets done and by somehow shifting focus during the change from people to tools. As such, efforts to indoctrinate the 'new strategy' overwrote lived reality and resulted in replicated emptiness. Expert's MT, under influence of change managerialism presuppositions, functioned as a colonizing power that eroded the lifeworld of organizational members through decoupling knowledge from experience, insight, reasoning and reflexive judgment (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012).

In the words of Habermas we can argue that the change discourse, empowered by change managerialism, colonizes the lifeworld build on communicative reason, whereby change managerialism supplants the lifeworld (Alvesson et al., 2009; Habermas, 1984). Lifeworld's colonization implies that processes of interpretation and meaning enaction become reduced by the power of the rationalized discourse of the organization. The direct phenomenal experience of people tends to be substituted by the objectified logics that are discursively orchestrated by organizations. These power relations thus shape, often unintentionally, the sensemaking process of employees, and normalize lived experience in line with the predominant macro-level logics. Through this colonization "change is increasingly driven by the attempt to gain control over ever-increasing swathes of people's lives and their subjectivities" (Alvesson et al., 2009, p. 256), which results in detachment.

Detachment

Expert staff experienced the change implementation in a rather detached mode, as something happening out there, higher up in the organization, at the headquarters, not really affecting their work, and being rather detached from their work-as-usual. The quest for materiality elaborated upon during the case analysis exemplifies the detached nature of sensemaking. This detachment was partly induced by the rationalized and top-down approach to change and managerialistic underpinning of organizing in general. As such, change developed into something 'out there' unfolding on top of work-as-usual. In cascading a uniform change story throughout the

organization, and indoctrinating Expert staff with ‘the story’, employees are deprived from enacting their own interpretations linked to change implementation that are based on their lived experience (rather than on an imposed story), creating a sense of detachment with the change implementation process.

Detachment, based upon Heidegger’s existential ontology (Dreyfus, 1991; Heidegger, 1973) and subsequent theorizing in organization studies (Chia & Holt, 2006), highlights the intentionality of organizational actors to act according to a representation of organizational reality through strategic plans, change roadmaps and other planning instruments that aim at controlling the change process. Detachment inhibits sensemaking processes by stimulating intentional reflection ‘on action’ (either anticipatively or retrospectively) rather than ‘in action’ (Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009). As a result, organizational processes get chopped in a series of steps to achieve, measured by performance indicators that are supposed to represent the alignment of the organization’s performance with the intended plan. Underpinned by what Whitehead (2010) labelled the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness’ (the belief that things exist as isolated systems), the illusion is created of an independently existing social reality that can adequately be represented by the construction of organizational typologies (Chia, 1996): perceptual phenomena and concrete experiences are filtered selectively into pre-existing conceptual categories to make sense of lived experience (Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking under detachment operates from a conceptual order that filters experience through precast concepts and mental models whereby we “selectively reduce and make more comprehensively manageable our lived experiences” (Chia, 1996, p. 39).

Discursive closure

The strategic discourse adopted by Expert’s MT created a disconnection in Expert’s staff sensemaking process of change, as highlighted in the discourse-practice divergence during sensemaking. The formulated strategy and its dissemination was dissociated from implementation and real life on the ground, which was often labeled as a ‘battle for survival’. The disconnection was manifested in an inability of Expert employees to capture the essence of what the change was about, referring to rather operational issues that have a direct impact on their work practice.

Beyond a mere discursive replication of the change discourse, a void appeared that was filled with uncertainty, fuzziness, lack of clarity, ambiguity, equivocality, not knowing, not understanding. The result was that on the one hand the strategy or consulting discourse was eagerly espoused, whereas on the other hand the mindset of standardized HR services was still fully adopted: temping logic continued to be enacted under advocacy of an expert discourse. Examples include situations whereby custom-made solutions were advocated and realized through replicating a standardized best-practice project, whereby strategy consulting was attempted at being ‘sold’ through phone prospection, and whereby promotional leaflets and posters were being used as marketing material to ‘sell’ tailor made integral projects that address strategic issues.

Rather than allowing equivocality and meaning quests to emerge, Expert's discourse fostered discursive closure whereby the indoctrinated change story was represented as *the (only) correct way* to make sense of change. Alternatives were banned. Discursive closure (Deetz, 1995; Johnson & Duberley, 2003) refers to "mechanisms employed in conversation that suppress potential conflicts of meaning" (Alvesson et al., 2009, p. 445) and which is embedded in micro-processes in order to normalize meaning-making processes.

Along these lines, the dominant temping logic emphasized ServiceCo's collective identity as Recruitment & Selection player and warded off deeper identification with a Consulting logic. In other words, the legitimacy, sense of order, ontological security, identification, status, mental categorizations, attention focus and interpretive schemes (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) embedded in the temping logic, reinforced the managerialistic approach in ServiceCo's managerial change discourse and clashed with the competing consulting logic intended by ServiceCo's management.

Constraining reflexivity

A final and major consequence of the intertwined corporate discourse with a dominant change managerialism discourse relates to 'cognitive closure' or 'closed-mindedness' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2012) whereby organizational actors display reduced capabilities of reflexivity during their sensemaking. Despite the rationalized discourse of Expert's MT, the so-called 'lower echelons' expressed some kind of awareness that 'the plan' was there and that time will bring clarity as to what will really happen. There was thus a recognition that the strategic plan provided a general direction of the change to be implemented, while eventually the unfolding of the process remained somewhat unknown, reflecting a degree of pragmatism that is part of a 'way-making' approach to strategy (Nonaka & Zhu, 2012).

This recognition was nevertheless not necessarily picked up or acted upon by Expert's MT. Priority was granted to rule-following rather than engaging with the emerging complexity embedded in the change process. Even though reflexivity was present among Expert employees, it was suppressed prior to its potential emergence through the managerialistic approach in managing change. This induced constrained reflexivity pinpoints the role of reflexivity during sensemaking as well as the level of awareness of sensemakers in the sense that "not all choice is aware choice" (Schutz, 1979, p. 34).

As such, the issue is not so much whether sensemaking micro-processes during organizational change are influenced predominantly by agency or macro-level discourses, rather, whether sensemakers are aware of their choices, of their decisions, and of their actions. 'Reflexivity' presupposes a dialogical and relational activity for critically examining underlying assumptions, discourses and practices of social reality (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004; Cunliffe & Jun, 2005). As such, reflexivity represents a situated, engaged, relational and discursive practice, characterized by 'in-the-moment' awareness (Keevers & Treleaven, 2011) that fosters critical thinking on the impact of social practices, opening the window for new organizational and social realities (Cunliffe

& Jun, 2005). It is the blending of an organization's change discourse with change managerialism assumptions that restrains this type of reflexivity during sensemaking micro-processes.

Discussion

The ServiceCo case highlighted how the organization's managerial change discourse is infused with assumptions and framings grounded in a macro-level discourse of change managerialism, and unveiled how this impacts change recipient sensemaking micro-processes (see figure 3). In this discussion section we first elaborate on the contributions made to the sensemaking of organizational change literature and subsequently elaborate on the performative effect of dominant macro-level discourses of organizational change on sensemaking micro-processes. We close the discussion by offering some reflections on the adoption of a critical reflexive research methods.

Figure 3: Inhibiting forces between macro-micro linkages during change implementation

Macro-level discourses and sensemaking micro-processes

This article contributes to the sensemaking literature by explicating the interlinkages between macro-level discourses and micro-level sensemaking processes from a critical perspective. It exemplifies how a macro-level discourse of change managerialism induces sensemaking micro-processes that are inhibited by mechanisms of lifeworld colonization, detachment, discursive closure, and constraining reflexivity (see figure 3). Whereas sensemaking research traditionally grants primacy to cognitive, social, and discursive micro-processes of sensemaking, our analysis adds to this an emphasis on the intertwined nature of these micro-level elements with a prevalent macro-level discourse, in order to indicate how taken for granted assumptions of change managerialism are embodied in rhetorical practices.

The interwoven macro-level discourse and micro-level sensemaking points at the typically adopted dividing lines between macro and micro contingencies in management and organization studies (e.g. upper vs. lower echelons, internal vs. external environment, agency vs. structure, individual vs. organization, etc...). This article highlights that, in terms of the agency-structure debate, the divide is not only a matter of structural tension between environment and individual, rather, an

interpretative tension whereby underlying macro-level discourses drive agency, i.e. the degree of awareness with which people enact their environments. In the words of Chia and Holt (2009, p.61): “man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun”. As a consequence, the presumed agency-structure tension is not so much a quantitative tension (i.e. one dominating the other), rather, it is a qualitative dynamic with different underlying and often competing ideologies. A similar dynamic interdependence arises in terms of the individual-organization divide. Viewing organizations as constructions of “temporarily stabilized event clusters abstracted from a sea of constant flux and change” (Nayak & Chia, 2011, p. 281), it merely represents acts of organizing carried out by interdependent webs of actors, thus emphasizing processes of organizing above either individual actors or organizations. The main point is that macro- and micro-levels are likely more entwined than traditionally represented in organization studies: “individual behavior is more ‘macro’ than we usually recognize, and organization behavior is more ‘micro’ than is generally acknowledged” (Chatman, Bell and Staw, 1986, p.211)

A second contribution to the sensemaking literature encompasses an exemplification of inhibiting forces on the reflexivity of sensemakers. Indeed, the macro-level discourse of change managerialism suppresses the sensemaker’s reflexive capabilities during the implementation process, while being – partially – blinded by the macro-level discourse of change managerialism. It is the – likely unconscious – adoption of dominant macro-level discourses that restrains the degree of reflexivity during sensemaking, which eventually induces a false sense of being in control of change whereby an overconfident change discourse overshadows the actual lack of change. It appears that over-packaging change entails the actual blocking off of changing processes. It was moreover through adopting a critical and reflexive attitude in analyzing sensemaking processes that the hegemony of change managerialism became manifest.

Despite our critical assessment, restrained reflexivity during sensemaking may prove beneficial in change work: change projects are often initiated ‘on top’ of business as usual and require organizational actors to remain productive. Through a lack of reflexivity, practitioners limit the impact of change in their day-to-day sensemaking, and thus manage to move on with their work. At other times, in order for organizations to move forward and keep the ball rolling, practitioners benefit from being detached or separated from what really happens ‘out there’ and ‘unreflectively’ stick to the plan that was agreed upon or imposed by senior management. As such, change managerialism may result in ‘functional stupidity’ (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) whereby change roadmaps are unreflectively been adhered to, either in a functional or dysfunctional way.

Presented findings are nevertheless grounded within their particular context. As “no organization can properly be understood apart from its wider social and cultural context” (Scott, 1995, p. 151), so can sensemaking not properly be understood apart from underlying mechanisms that emanate the interdependence between situational context and social structures. This context is characterized by a post financial crisis market environment in which professional service firms seek to stabilize their businesses after significant financial drawbacks, and to reconfigure their service offerings in

line with efforts to attract and retain new customers. It is in this light that the predominant discourse of change managerialism comes particularly to the foreground.

Performative effect of change managerialism on sensemaking micro-processes

The ‘infiltration’ of change managerialism both in an organization’s change discourse and change recipient sensemaking processes, hints at the performative effect of change management theories, and planned top-down theories infused with managerialistic assumptions in particular. A theory is performative “when it influences social reality in such a way that its premises, and sometimes even its predictions, become true” (Cabantous & Gond, 2011, p.578). Performative studies have, for example, revealed how economic theories are enacted by organizations and their actors through embedded assumptions and presuppositions in social reality (Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Callon, 1998a; D’Adderio & Pollock, 2014; Ferraro, Pfeffer, & Sutton, 2005, 2009; Ghoshal & Moran, 2006; MacKenzie, 2006; Mackenzie & Millo, 2005).

The findings in this article pinpoint the performativity of top-down organizational change theories on social reality, and in particular on the enactment of managerial change discourse and change recipient sensemaking micro-processes. Applying Cabantous and Gond (2011) performative praxis mechanisms of conventionalizing, engineering, and commodifying to change managerialism sheds some insights into the dynamics and intertwinement of change managerialism, change discourse, and sensemaking micro-processes; or how change managerialism is enacted into being.

Conventionalization mechanisms, the way theory equips practitioners (Cabantous & Gond, 2011), including managerial education (Mintzberg, 2004; Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel, 2013), theory transmission (Ghoshal, 2005; Khurana, 2010; Paton, Chia, & Burt, 2014), and an overall penchant towards being-realism as onto-epistemological presuppositions (MacKay & Chia, 2013; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002) that fits the Western capitalistic culture (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Callon, 1998a, 1998b; Chia, 2013; Chia & Holt, 2009) foster the infiltration of change managerialism in change practitioners (managers, professionals, change recipients). Through this cognitive embeddedness of change managerialism, sensemaking micro-process are undermined whenever ‘not knowing’ occurs, or whenever the managerial change discourse fails to penetrate the change recipient’s lifeworld. This induces a situation whereby the change recipient activates its dominant cognitive framings in order to make sense of the situation, thereby allowing change managerialism to actively guide meaning creation. In other words, managerial change discourses are always subject to struggle, and never totally cohesive (Phillips, Lawrence, & Hardy, 2004), inviting power relations to enter discursive formations.

Engineering mechanisms - the way tools incorporate theoretical assumptions (Cabantous & Gond, 2011) - such as program management tools, PowerPoint presentations, roadshows, excel spreadsheets, etc..., incorporate dominant change managerialism assumptions, and stimulate actors to replicate these embedded assumptions in social life, resulting – as the case illustrated – in

disconnection and detachment between the overall change discourse and experienced lifeworld. Through the use of socio-material tools that are embedded with change managerialism ‘theory’, managerial change discourses subsequently become embedded with change managerialism.

Commodifying mechanisms - the way market forces diffuse practices (Cabantous & Gond, 2011) - include management consultants and related knowledge professionals hired that shape change managerialism into a commodity. It is in this respect no surprise that ServiceCo hired a change management ‘guru’ which clearly adheres to the grand discourse of top-down planned change management, and that the early stage of change implementation was coordinated by a program manager that provided the tools needed for dispersing change managerialism.

These performative mechanisms and the performative effect of change managerialism on sensemaking micro-processes also induce feedback loops (cfr. white arrows in figure 3). Inhibited sensemaking micro-processes provide overall neutral to positive feedback to management thereby affirming the ‘success’ of their change strategy and managerial change discourse, reinforcing the approach implemented. For example, constrained reflexivity inhibits sensemakers’ questioning processes of the change approach followed and allows to fill in the ‘not knowing’ parts with presuppositions and framings provided by the macro-level discourse of change managerialism. Inhibited sensemaking micro-processes thus continue to fuel planned top-down change management theories and the managerial change discourses they inspire. Along the same lines, managerial change discourses and their apparent successful implementation tend to maintain the overall macro-level discourse of change managerialism. As such, managerial change discourses fuel dominant macro-level discourses (Phillips et al., 2004). Even if there is awareness of its flaws and unintended consequences, the performative mechanisms at force continue to feed its popularity, eventually contributing to the self-fulfilling nature (Ferraro et al., 2005, 2009) of dominant change management theories embedded in managerialistic presuppositions, as well as the discursive reproduction of this dominant logic by the use of specific categories (Loewenstein, Ocasio, & Jones, 2012; Ocasio, Jeffrey, & Nigam, 2015).

Reflexive research

Adopting a interpretive repertoire fueled by critical reflexivity, may result in a better comprehension on the entangledness of ‘organizing’ in general and ‘changing’ in particular. Whereas practitioners adopt unquestioned beliefs and assumptions in managing change, so do academics adopt unquestioned presumptions and paradigms in researching and developing knowledge and theories on managing change. As the case study in this article exemplified, adopting critical and reflexive research methods allows the field to look at processes from a different perspective, a perspective that denaturalizes our taken-for-granted lenses and unveils dynamics which we are unaware of.

It is this type of reflexive theorizing that “seeks to remain sensitive to the paradoxes of the postmodern world, that entails a commitment to recovering the concreteness of our brute

experiences as they emerge” (Chia, 1996, p. 47). The objective is eventually to produce knowledge claims along a process of “being critically vigilant enough to penetrate the modes of abstraction, the veneer of ready-made explanatory concepts which serve only to glow over and reduce the complexity of our lived experiences” (Chia, 1996, p. 48). Bottom line, the challenge that both organization scholars and practitioners are facing is one of addressing the fundamental question of “how complex interlocking micro-practices of organization, ordering and representation work as event-structuring happenings to create a relatively stabilized but precariously balanced version of social reality from an initially undifferentiated reality” (Chia, 1996, p. 51).

Conclusion

This article set out to illustrate how the entwinement of an organization’s managerial change discourse embedded in a macro-level discourse of change managerialism enacts sensemaking micro-processes. We thereby contribute to the sensemaking of change literature by illustrating how change managerialism as macro-level discourse infiltrates in an organization’s managerial change discourse and how it affects sensemaking micro-processes. More specifically, we describe how a macro-level discourse of change managerialism brackets off or constrains sensemaking micro-processes from lived experience by sensemaking ‘inhibitors’. By portraying the interweaving of change managerialism presumptions in the organization’s discourse, we point at four inhibitors: lifeworld colonization, detachment, discursive closure, and constraining reflexivity. From a methodological point of view, adopting a reflexive research methodology that borrows heavily from a critically-inspired interpretative repertoire, unveils explicitly the taken-for-granted status of dynamics induced by mainstream change managerialism on sensemaking micro-process.

This article is also a call for more reflexive and critical research in the area of organization studies in general and sensemaking research in particular. For organizational scholars to generate impact by producing both rigorous and relevant research, we need to become more aware of our interpretive repertoires and hidden assumptions in researching organizational phenomena and sensemaking thereof: in order to talk about sensemaking in a meaningful way, organization scholars can play a role in disseminating how managerialism colonizes our sensemaking and eventually organizing processes.

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Appendix 1: Case analysis – Managerial change discourse and Sensemaking micro-processes

Aggregate dimension: Managerial change discourse	
Themes	Informant quotes
Sensegiving of change through metaphor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We use the metaphor of the sailor and his boat: sailors start their journey with a shaky boat. During the trip they have to replace the entire boat, piece by piece, else it will sink. So by the time they arrive, they will arrive with a new boat. And the question for us is: when do we build the new boat? We have to build it while on the sea, while we are sailing.” (MT1) – “And when we explained this metaphor, people found it an inspiring story, but at the same time, there was insecurity: am I capable of doing that? This requires long term thinking, but aren't we going to shift to short term urgencies when we need it?” (MT1)
Sensegiving of change through unpacking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “The way we will roll out the change will be based on three important pillars which will be implemented in 7 countries for our 7 fields of expertise” (MT1) – “We will be working with three target groups and for each of the target groups we have designed three promises which we subsequently translate to lead and back measures. We do this for both the strategic and tactical projects that are part of the change process.” (MT1) – “All directors have received strategic objectives, actually they all receive the same objectives in terms of leadership, solutions, and employee satisfaction” (MT1)
Process focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “The fact that you invest in new offices, as well as the amount of attention that is devoted to the new project makes people think ‘they do mean it, things are on the move here’” (MT3) – “The change will have an impact on all our processes. Therefore we are currently describing all our ‘as is’ and ‘to be’ processes”. (MT1) – “This means that in the ‘to be’ situation many people will have to work differently, and this increases the need for being in control.” (MT1) – “All directors were involved as well as the senior management team. We also appointed a program manager to manage the whole process and our COO required the assistance of an external consultant as our major concern was the implementation of the strategy that we had designed.” (MT2) – “We are now actually back on the drawing table...we all understand that our classic business has no future, and that growth will come from something different, but we have to better define what that something different is... We also realized that for roughly 90% of our people, with their backgrounds, it is nearly impossible to make the shift to solutions.” (VP)
Magnitude recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “You should better ask the question of what will not change... Everything will be changing, and if there will be impact? I can assure you, there will be huge impact” (MT1) – “What you get is a number of divisions that are obliged to start working together and that is where a piece of the change starts: we have to create a unity while we are searching what that unity exactly is.” (MT2) – “We are integrating 2 countries into the new organization. The situation in one country is totally different than the situation in the other country. Organizations are different, our distribution model is different, our history is different, our level of maturity is different. And you realize there is a strong difference in culture as well.” (MT2) – “Our target is to quadruple our revenues in 6 years’ time. Not only do we have to start selling solutions, also our current activities will need to double in terms of revenue. This is nevertheless an excel exercise, who can look 6 years into the future? It is a direction. It is an ambition. It is not going to replace our current business.” (MT2)
Aggregate dimension: Sensemaking micro-processes	
Themes	Informant quotes
Change impact awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Somehow we have to redefine our impact: before we drafted our marketing campaigns sitting at the table, discussing and dividing the work, and the things got done. Now we have a centralized marketing department and we have to live with what they produce. That was something we had impact on, now not anymore, so people need to redefine their impact, more specifically towards commercial targets, in terms of turnover, much more than the content itself, as was the case before.” (DM2) – “The strategic shift is rather big. You notice that people are being pushed out of their comfort zone and if I try to summarize what people experience, most of them deal with the question whether the new strategy will work, whether the market is ready, whether we'll be able to sell these solutions. On top, people notice that our current business model is being squeezed by market pressure, so how are we going to expand our business?” (DM2) – “The biggest change for me is the amount of change that people have to deal with in a short period: a new strategy, a new name, a new office, a difficult market,... it is a lot in a short time. We run the risk that people do not live the change as it will change tomorrow anyhow.” (DM2) – “The strategy has been set out, projects have been initiated, but 90% of the (change) work needs to be done, and that needs to be done within the business units. So I am responsible for this 90% of the change.” (DM2)

Struggling with the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "We were well connected with the change program, but the trajectory itself was not well thought through: it seemed to me as if we started with projects and programs and then had to think backwards to figure out what the strategy was, rather than starting with a very clear strategy." (DM1) - "There have been much projects simultaneously and I fully agree that we are going to work with higher value added services, but somehow we need to have clear definitions of what we are doing: what are solutions? What service are you going to call a solution? So the question I have is if we didn't started too many projects simultaneously" (DM1) - "I think we should have incorporated some time to rest, some time to think, in the formulation of the strategy: that we first had a closer look at where exactly we want to go, what are the foundations of our strategy, and then what needs to be done in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc... place. So we needed more time to think about it." (DM3) - "The start of the process was good: all general managers were taken on board to lead a change project. What I missed afterwards is the involvement and communication: we lacked moments where we could inform each other on the status of all the projects. There were sessions every 2 or 3 months, but that is not enough. Maybe there were also too many projects with in increased agenda load as a consequence." (DM2)
Not knowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "We are facing a very big change...How are we going to approach the market? Who is our entry point in organizations? What added value do we bring? What methods are we going to use? What about costing, pricing, contracts,...? It is difficult to put all this in practice because nobody within the organization has any experience with this." (Expert4) - "What is needed for a successful shift to solution-selling is good support from management, because it is all new for us, these are questions that we never received before and then you need to be able to discuss this with your hierarchy. So we also need to map very well what competences we have in house, and what we can deliver: who is able to do what?" (Expert5) - "We will be confronted with many different things, things that I cannot think of, and then we have to wait and see what the precise question will be" (Expert5) - "There are things that will have to change that, today, I am not even aware of. And honestly, today we are not ready to tackle them, it is not even clear to me what is going to happen. Everything is still very vague, many things are going to surface where I am today not really concerned about." (Expert11)
Quest for materiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "At the beginning we thought that maybe this is all hot air, as we have seen in the past: changes were announced and then nothing changed. But now we see that things are changing, it is being approached in a big way: we have a new name, we get adds on television, we will be receiving training, etc... We more and more get the feeling that this is serious, that something is happening." (Expert2) - "Now I understand better in what type of organization I work, and that we have 7 different business units. But more than that didn't change for me, except that we have new pens and stationary, and new stickers on our cars, but more than that didn't change for me. In fact, nothing changes, you just continue to work at the client." (Expert9) - "There have also been changes in the past, so we'll just wait and see what happens. There was a lot of talk, but suddenly it all became more concrete, like with a new website, and it all became more concrete, that was the moment when I started to believe in it." (Expert11) - "There is also lack of clarity about what a solution is. Every business unit has to develop their own solutions. And probably it needs to run for a year, and then it can be made more concrete." (Expert15)
Discourse-practice diversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Theoretically the story makes sense, but practically I don't have the feeling that we know how to do it...we can offer solutions to our customers, but how will we do it? Imagine the customer has a problem to solve, how will we tackle it? As we speak I am dealing with such a customer problem right now, which requires working with different business units, but it is already very difficult to even understand each other, or to get hold of time of an expert within another business unit. So here I have lots of question marks." (Expert1) - "You notice that few people have been informed of the change: 'solutions', 'experts' ... but if you ask people what it means, they don't know. Then there was an official announcement on the rebranding and the new strategy. This was a long story, and because it was such a long story, people thought the message to be quite chaotic. People asked questions: what is going to change? What solutions are we going to do? So what are we going to do, concretely? And how will the organization look like in 4-5 years from now? There was a very strong feeling of uncertainty, lack of clarity." (Expert2) - "For a professional, what happens at the headquarter is all very high level, that is actually none of our business. That needs to be translated to us, and that is somewhat the bottleneck, as well with the communication process and the fact that you need a couple of projects, reference projects, so that you better understand what they mean." (Expert8) - "There is still a large distance between the conceptual ideas and bringing them into practice. And you notice that in all sorts of things such as invoicing, contracts, etc...Additionally, the entire change is being directed by the top, but there is nobody up there possessing the knowledge on how to implement the conceptual ideas in practice." (Expert10)

Questioning the approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “The fact that we are rebranded to Professionals caused quite some discussions, because how do you define a professional? That surfaced some emotions. What defines whether you are a professional, is that your education or your experience? Now it seems like we are all put in the same bucket of ‘professionals’ without making distinctions.” (Expert16) - “Even after the announcement of the change, people have no clue at all about what will change. Overall I think that it is very difficult to have one vision for all business units, because then you can fit almost anything under that vision. What is needed is a translation per business unit because it will be different for all of us.” (Expert3) - “About the kick-off meeting, I had some issues with the communication: ‘we’re going to do this and that, this is our future, this you will be able to tell your grandchildren, etc...’ These are big things, and we went through difficult times already, there was already lots of change, people were not happy, so some recognition of this may be appropriate. I was really annoyed by this rational good news show. Wonder if they will also say that there are no issues with the numbers.” (Expert11) - “I had a double feeling with the whole change story: on the one hand the set-up was nice, but I expected much more that what eventually was presented content-wise. The set-up was nice, but content-wise it was a missed opportunity to really explain the background and what will exactly happen. It was all a bit abracadabra... a nice show, but our professionals had no idea what was being discussed, and what was relevant for them, which is regrettable.” (Expert3)
Balancing tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “We do have enough freedom to maneuver, but there is some lack of clarity. Even if we have good numbers, we receive mails from the corporate office asking more of this, more of that... You sense that there is some lack of clarity and inconsistency, that every few weeks corporate office comes with something different. “ (Expert15) - “I think that many people have had it, they are tired, close to a burn-out, facing their limits. There is too much work, especially combining business as usual and the new strategy. There is nothing so annoying and frustrating as to work very hard for tomorrow rather than wanting to work to build a better tomorrow, so working with a long term vision on the very short term. Investing in what is feasible or investing in the things that really matters, you have to choose as I cannot do both. (Expert4) - “It is hard for us to balance both, because we only hear management talking about solution-selling and nothing else, and for all questions we receive we want to think solution-based, but we also have to continue with our recruitment and selection activities, so it is hard to balance both. Consulting is something that goes step by step, it is not something that will go fast, so finding a balance is really difficult.” (Expert5) - “A good example is the request we received last week to deliver tons of information to headquarters on the actions we were going to take to increase our turnover for next month. So you have to drop all your work and collect all types of information, while you were also focusing on developing initiatives for the longer term, which you have to drop as the analyses required are priority and take time to compile, so you end up days filling in excel spreadsheets. And our numbers are good, so imagine the load in other business units filling in excel sheets. I guess these are the things that you have no control over.” (Expert16)

Appendix 2: Case analysis – Change managerialism

Aggregate dimension	Themes and informant quotes
Categorization & standardization	<p>Need for a reference project and a standardized methodology for replication across projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We need a reference project: a project that is very clear, so that we can see what we should do, and then we can start to copy that” <p>Efforts to conduct ‘as is’ and ‘to be’ mapping of skills, SWOT analysis, etc...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We are making an inventory of all processes, competences, skills we have, really everything...so that we can go from ‘as is’ to ‘to be’” <p>Setting objectives for target groups that translate into promises, into lead measures, and into back measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We translated our baseline to 3 target groups, and each target group gets 3 promises, which we translate then to lead and back measures.” <p>Following the classic steps of implementing change, categorizing ‘the change’ in 9 projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We have split the change into 9 strategic projects, and each project is led by a different senior manager.” <p>Emphasizing a harmonized and uniform understanding of the strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “If we tell the same story, this is reassuring”
Professional discourse	<p>There is strong need in the organization to think ‘We are consultants and we thrive on expertise’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We call ourselves consultants (...) We are becoming future-proof consultants” <p>Solution strategy as the new buzz-word throughout the organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We have received a booklet from our managers with some solutions that we can sell to our customers” <p>Sales training & coaching is the golden key towards becoming consultants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Our Expedition 2018 sales training enables our people to talk to our customers on a deeper level in order to uncover their strategic needs” <p>Aspiring to imitate a consulting logic by surfacing the strategic needs of customers through asking the right questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We profile ourselves as experts for experts. Our sales teams go to our clients and ask what their biggest strategic issues are, and then we can sell them a solution.” <p>Dissemination of a pre-fabricated rebranding story cascaded through organization with strength & conviction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We have received a rebranding story that we have to tell to our customers. We also have received lots of material to support it”
Discursive amplification of change	<p>The new strategy is advanced as a last rescue for the organization, creating false sense of urgency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “The boat is sinking. Things as we do them now don’t work anymore, so we have to change, and we have to change fast” <p>Strategy is (re)presented as major departure from current business, even though it does not seem the case</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Actually, solutions have been defined as anything different from 1-on-1 projects, and that is something we already do. I do not see the difference.” <p>Change discourse is radically opposed to lived reality remaining more or less constant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “For us, the strategy happens at the headquarters, we are on the field, and we do our job at the client.” <p>Change is amplified through TV-shows, Kick-offs, roadshows, PowerPoint, radio ads & metaphors that nicely package the change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We have to get people on board, intense campaign, radio commercials, billboards, promotion material. We have to radiate professionalism” <p>Announcing a series of trainings, projects, new tools, etc... provides the impression that big changes are on the way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We are setting out training paths for all our people, as well as consultative selling coaching sessions. They have to learn how to ask the right questions.”
Repackaging of emptiness	<p>Change consists often of no more than a shifting vocabulary referring to basically the same activities prior to the change announcement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Honestly, we hear a lot about the change, as we are becoming a different company. But I don’t see it, we are still doing the same thing, everything is very fuzzy.” <p>Announcements are filled with grandiose, vague, void terminology lacking concrete content, which nevertheless gets easily replicated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “We have to think more holistically and competence-based to work on total projects with multidisciplinary teams” <p>Management and ‘professionals’ employ a jargon subject to managerial fads & fashions, labelling everything as “strategic”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Rather than offering a person to fill the job, we have to ask why they need the position filled. We are strategic thought partners of our customers.” <p>Change is represented through superficial elements: names, business cards, car stickers, ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “What I noticed of the change? We received new pens and stationary, and we have a new sticker on our company cars...” <p>Organization advocates custom-made tailored solutions addressing the strategic needs, which in practice are represented by standardized quick scans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – “Solutions are custom-made projects to address strategic issues at our clients. We could for example ask our clients to conduct a quick scan on a department or process, and then suggest ways to improve it.”

Complexity reduction	<p>Strategic change is reduced to: rebranding, new HQ, methodology, the change poster, projects, new distribution, email addresses, promotional material, increased internal collaboration, mid-office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We now have lots of promotional material that we can use to sell our services to our customers."</i> - <i>"We now have a new name, so this is a good opportunity to call all my customers to see if they have any work for us."</i> <p>All communications should be kept as simple as possible: 5 simple slides, elevator pitch, templates, factsheets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We have to formulate our strategy on no more than 5 slides, like an elevator pitch. Every director received a template to fill out. It needs to be simple so that people are with us on the story."</i> <p>Solutions are defined based on superficial characteristics (length of project, invoicing method), rather than on relevant content-related variables</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"The biggest difference is that we are going to adopt a different method to invoice our customers: not per hour but per project."</i>
Crisis rhetoric	<p>There is an overall strong emphasis that we live in times of "financial crisis" – and that action to survive is eminent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"It is very hard to live in times of financial crises. You need to perform much harder, and on top we also have to deal with the change."</i> <p>A strong blame of the decrease in temping revenues on the social networks, the customers, and new competitors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Our current business model is totally being eroded by social media and the knowledge that our customers are building."</i> <p>The crisis is used to leverage the move to solutions, and it seems to be the only option viable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Our typical services are not selling enough anymore due to the crises, so unless we move to solutions we will loose our credibility in the market."</i> <p>Strong reactivity mode toward external trends that generates a sense of urgency to act upon the trends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Organizations move towards providers of solutions, so we have to do the same, or we will be redundant"</i>

Appendix 3: Case analysis – sensemaking inhibitors

Aggregate dimension	Themes and informant quotes
Lifeworld colonization	<p>New strategy contains 'container terminology' that doesn't align with lived reality of employees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"The new strategy contains lots of jargon, carefully chosen, but it still is jargon that does not help us in what we are doing."</i> <p>Daily practice concerns of employees opposed to topics covered in 'strategic projects'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"It is nice to have all these strategic projects, but it is too much, it comes on top of all the rest. We do not even know what a solution means."</i> <p>Concern of being submerged by tools & databases that are not aligned with business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We are supposed to work with tools and systems that are designed for the temping business, not for the solutions we want to sell."</i> <p>New tools, databases and systems appear protagonists of strategic change, rather than people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"The change basically means that we are mutating to a new database, beyond that I think that little is changing"</i>
Detachment	<p>Change is 'something out there' that unfolds on top of work-as-usual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"All these project come on top of our own work, luckily we have a project administrator that really pushes us through the process, he is really pushing us to do all of this"</i> <p>Grand disconnection between formulated strategy and implementation on the ground</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"It is hard to find the right person when you call a company, and it now gets harder if we have to sell solutions, because that is something new."</i> <p>Change happens somewhere up in the organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"For us, the strategy and the change is a far from our bed show, that happens somewhere at the headquarters. (...) "Decisions are made 2 levels up in the hierarchy, what can we do about it?"</i>
Discursive closure	<p>Uncertainty, fuzziness, lack of clarity, ambiguity, equivocality, not knowing, not understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"It is not clear what is meant by a solution... We have heard several things, but we don't really know."</i> <p>Grandiose change discourse opposed to reality described as "battle for survival"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Giving a show about the change is one thing, but keeping the communication up, and keeping the possession of our people, is something else."</i> <p>Inability to capture the 'essence' of what the change is about, falling back on temping logic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Rather than filling a vacancy, we will carry out the work, so the objective is that we hire experts rather than placing experts".</i> <p>Bohica: we'll wait till the next change comes - too much (formalized) change happening all the time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"There is always so much change happening at the same time. We'll better wait till the next one is coming."</i>
Constrained reflexivity	<p>Awareness of the magnitude, complexity, planned nature & idealistic approach towards change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We do want to do a lot, we maybe have too many projects, especially for a listed organization, but we have to continue..."</i> <p>Call for slowing down and to respect the heterogeneity of processes used to achieve outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"Although we realized that we were more complex and diverse than we initially thought and that the projects defined represented a mere tactical nature as opposed to diving into the core of our strategy, we nevertheless continued with the steps of our formulation process and identified the 9 project to be carried out"</i> <p>Realization that change becomes noticed through practicalities, not through grand discourses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We have to make the change tangible, through a new website, and other tangible stuff, that way people see it."</i> <p>Awareness of heterogeneity of organization requiring different approaches in getting change done</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We did not realize that we were that different, we are totally different companies, and the story will have to look different for different people."</i> <p>Realization that current capabilities are likely incapable of executing the change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>"We realized in the middle of the year that about 90% of our people are not ready for this change, or cannot make this change."</i>