

Using Management Inquiry to Co-Construct Other Memories About the Future

Journal of Management Inquiry
2018, Vol. 27(2) 246–259
© The Author(s) 2017
Reprints and permissions:
sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
DOI: 10.1177/1056492617696889
journals.sagepub.com/home/jmi



Mette Vinther Larsen¹ and Søren Willert¹

Abstract

The focal point in this article is to explore how management inquiry in the context of reflexive dialogical action research can be used as a way for researchers and managers to jointly construct knowledge that partakes in developing organizational life from “within.” This article builds on the acknowledgment that people in organizations have memories of the future. And it is argued that the prospective memories managers have of how an organizational dilemma will unfold in the nearby future shape their actions and co-construction of meaning in the present. In the article, we exemplify and explore how researchers and managers by using “unadjusted responses” and “social poetics” as ways of gesturing and responding can engage in management inquiry and enhance the future managers remember to make room for more desirable future memories to emerge that expand managers’ possible space for action in the present.

Keywords

qualitative research, communication, organization theory, management education

Introduction

The need to bring academia and practice closer to one another and develop knowledge that not only increases our understanding of organizational life from “within” (Shotter, 2011) but also supports developing the organizational life we explore is becoming increasingly underlined in parts of social science (Gergen, 2015; Helin, 2015; Hosking & Pluut, 2010; McNamee, 2014; Ripamonti, Galuppo, Gorli, Scaratti, & Cunliffe, 2016; Shotter, 2016; Van Nistelrooij & Caluwé, 2016). The focal point in this article is to—based on two longitudinal qualitative reflexive dialogical action research projects¹—explore how management inquiry can be used as a way for researchers and managers to jointly construct knowledge that partakes in developing organizational life from “within.” Management inquiry offers managers and researchers a unique possibility to explore and enhance the possible ways managers can deal with a dilemma they have caught themselves in. The excerpt below illustrates such a dilemma. It stems from a management inquiry that one of the authors (Mette) of this article (the researcher) held with Mike.² Mike is one of two managers and owner of a small Danish Shoe company and at the moment where the inquiry takes place the two managers are in a process where they want to bring in new competences and they have found a qualified candidate for one of the positions. Mike is, however, reluctant about hiring the candidate:

Mike: We’ve got our eyes on a person for the export-seller position . . . it seems like this kind of job whets his appetite. He’s got that killer instinct we’re looking for . . . But we’ve heard and it’s also our impression . . . that he isn’t very empathetic. On the one side it doesn’t matter because most of the time he’ll be on a plane and visiting customers. On the other side we’ve created this special atmosphere [in the organization] . . . where we really care a lot for each other and he’s *not* going to fit into that . . . But how much should we care about what the little close-knitted family [organization] thinks?

The excerpt illustrates a known managerial challenge that most researchers, consultants, and professional workers who have been in conversations with managers would recognize. The excerpt also illustrates two other aspects that are of significance in this article. First, from a management inquiry perspective, the story Mike shares with the researcher gives

¹Aalborg University, Denmark

Corresponding Author:

Mette Vinther Larsen, Associate Professor, Department of Business and Management, Aalborg University, Fibigerstræde 2, 9220 Aalborg, Denmark.

Email: mvl@business.aau.dk

us a glimpse of how organizational life is being lived and meaning is constructed in the Shoe company. The excerpt illustrates what within Mike's local "somewhere" tacitly is being taken-for-granted and accepted as legitimate and sensible ways to talk and construct meaning (Cunliffe, 2002b; Gergen, 2010; Shotter, 2010, 2016; Vološinov, 1986). Second, the excerpt draws attention to the role we as researchers can have in such management inquiring conversations. As a researcher—being a stranger to what within Mike's local "somewhere" is taken-for-granted—inquiry conversations with managers like Mike can be a unique possibility to draw attention to the reality-generating aspect of language. It draws attention to how people incrementally constitute the organizational reality they live in and try to make sense of as they communicate and co-construct meaning (Cunliffe, 2002b; Larsen & Madsen, 2016; McNamee, 2000; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter, 2010). It becomes possible to see how managers like Mike sometimes catch themselves in a dilemma they prefer to avoid. Hence, it becomes possible for managers and researchers to engage in management inquiry to understand and develop organizational life differently from within.

The dilemma, Mike has caught himself in, is the outcome of conversations between Mike and his comanager as they several times have discussed the possible outcomes of hiring the candidate. Ironically, neither of the two possible outcomes Mike and his comanager have identified is desirable for them; either they hire the un-empathetic blood thirsty export seller and do away with the close-knitted family feeling in the organization, or they nurture to the close-knitted family feeling and look for another export seller with less drive and who will fit better into the existing organizational culture.

As a researcher you come from another local "somewhere" and have other taken-for-granted assumptions, ways of talking, and constructing meaning. Being in an inquiry with Mike and listening to his story, it becomes obvious that other and possibly more desirable understandings and ways to deal with the dilemma can be co-constructed (McNamee, 2014; Shotter, 2010). And this is where management inquiry between researchers and managers offers a unique possibility.

We will return and unfold this, but before we move on and present the purpose of this article, we want to draw attention to another aspect that is of significance in this article. Revisiting the excerpt and the story Mike shares about the two possible undesirable outcomes, we found it interesting how Mike has some quite strong future-oriented anticipations about the consequences of hiring the candidate. He knows even before hiring the candidate that it will do away with the close-knitted and valued family feeling; "we've created this special atmosphere [in the organization] . . . where we really care a lot for each other and he's *not* going to fit into that . . ." As Mike goes back and forth and tries to become more clarified about what to do here-and-now, his

anticipations about how the future will unfold guide him; the candidate will spend most of his time on a plane, but hiring this candidate will do away with the close-knitted family feeling and is this the future they envision for the Shoe company? The oxymoron of this is that Mike knows all of this even though none of it has happened yet.

Purpose and Structure of the Article

In the excerpt, Mike has two memories about the future and because they are both undesirable it becomes difficult for Mike to make a decision in the present. And this is where the article's purpose comes into play. The purpose with this article is to present ideas on how researchers and managers jointly can use management inquiry to enhance the possible ways managers can understand and handle a dilemma they have caught themselves in. In the article, we pursue this purpose by exploring the role memories about the future have as managers in the present are figuring out how to deal with a dilemma. We present the argument that management inquiry can be used to explore existing and undesirable future memories and make room for other and more desirable future memories to emerge. And these other and more desirable future memories enhance what managers, like Mike, understand as their possible space for action in the present. The research question we pursue in this article is as follows:

Research Question 1: How can researchers and managers jointly use management inquiry to co-construct other memories about the future?

Pursuing this is an acknowledgment of the need to bring practice and academia closer to one other, as presented in the "Introduction" section. Concretely, this is a response to invitations raised by other researchers who underline the need for further understanding how managers and researchers jointly can engage in a collaborative and reflexive dialogue that nurtures and supports developing organizational practice (Ripamonti et al., 2016). More concrete, this revolves around exploring how managers in practical ways make linkages between past, present, and future (Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013). And, how these linkages lead to undesirable memories about the future (or "future negative thinking"; cf. Atance & O'Neil, 2001) that form and shape the way people co-construct meaning in the present (Atance & O'Neil, 2001; Gioia, Corley, & Fabbri, 2002).

We will first present the guiding assumptions and premises behind the ideas for management inquiry we present in the article; language as ontology and the role future memories play as people co-construct meaning in the present. Here we will also introduce the first part of an excerpt that constitutes the remaining part of empirical data that we use in the article. Second, we will explicate the methodological setting and context for the management inquiring conversations

between researchers and managers that we explore in the article, reflexive dialogical action research. Third, two central practices, unadjusted responses and social poetics, that managers and researchers can use during management inquiry to support co-constructing other memories about the future will be presented and exemplified. This will center on the second and last part of the recurring excerpt that will be introduced and explored in this part of the article. Finally, the specific findings, conclusions, and recommendations of this method and practice will be discussed.

Guiding Assumptions and Premises

The perspective applied in this article assigns ontological primacy to language. To assign ontological primacy to language means to acknowledge that people come to know and generate the reality, in which they live, as they gesture and respond (Cunliffe, 2002b; Larsen & Madsen, 2016; Mead, 1974; Shotter, 2005b; Vološinov, 1986). The significance of language in relation to organizing has been advocated for long and especially the linguistic turn within organization studies have argued for more focus on talk and sensemaking among people in organizations (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2016; Cunliffe, 2002b; Ospina & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Weick, 1995).

An Ontological Perspective on Language

According to Cunliffe (2002b), three premises become relevant and crucial if one wants to explore organizational life from an ontological perspective on language: (a) language is metaphorical, (b) language and meaning are embodied practices, and (c) language is indeterminate. First to argue that language is metaphorical underlines how words in themselves mean nothing. Words only become meaningful as people metaphorically speaking “pick them up” and begin to communicate (Vološinov, 1986). Reality unfolds and takes on images from language concordantly as people speak (Cunliffe, 2002b; Larsen & Madsen, 2016). The way people speak and use language becomes reality generating, and as Mead (1932) writes, this reality-generating process takes place in the present as people co-construct meaning. Based on what Mead (1974) terms “gestures” and “adjusted responses,” people mutually invite each other to construct meaning and initiate what they here-and-now believe are sensible actions (Mead, 1974). Hence, to construct meaning is a responsive and joint process (Cunliffe, 2002b; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). The ontological aspect of this is that the meaning people co-construct in their everyday unique interactions constitutes how organizational life unfolds and what people view as true and meaningful (Cunliffe, 2002b; Vološinov, 1986).

Going back to Mike’s story, he and his comanager have incrementally talked a dilemma into being that they take to be true; if they hire the competent candidate, it will mean

letting go of the close-knitted family feeling in the Shoe company. Even though neither Mike and his comanager nor anyone else knows how the future will unfold and they find both of the possible alternatives they have co-constructed undesirable, they still talk as if these alternatives were the only ones to choose between. And they initiate actions based on the alternatives they have co-constructed.

Exploring the dilemma Mike and his comanager have co-constructed further leads to the second premise of perceiving language ontological; language and meaning are embodied practices. Past experiences and understandings previously co-constructed shape how people in the present gesture and respond to generate meaning (Mead, 1932; Shotter, 2016). In this sense, language can be understood as an embodied form of being (Cunliffe, 2002b; Shotter, 2010, 2016). That language is an embodied form of being means that when people communicate and generate meaning, the words and intonations they use and the assumptions they make on one hand emerge spontaneously (Shotter, 2010, 2016). Yet words and intonations are also reflections of their past experiences and what people take for granted and find meaningful: their “generalized other” (Mead, 1974, p. 154). Mead (1974) argues that to be able to co-construct meaning through adjusted communication processes, people have to be able to call out similar attitudes and meaning systems in one another. They have to rely on a shared generalized other that consists of previously enacted and socially accepted: “actions . . . already embedded within a tradition of acts and supplements” (Gergen, 2010, p. 7). This shared generalized other come to shape and influence the way people gesture and respond in the present to co-construct meaning (Mead, 1974; Van Nistelrooij & Caluwé, 2016; Weick, 1988, 1995). As people react in the present, they both draw on and reconstruct local and social rules of what it implies to be a person in this particular setting (Gergen, 2010; Mead, 1932; Shotter, 2005a, 2005b; Van Nistelrooij & Caluwé, 2016; Vološinov, 1986).

An embedded shared generalized other not only enables people to reduce complexity, co-construct meaning in adjusted and intuitive ways, it also makes it possible for people to anticipate what will happen and how people will react in situations that have not taken place yet (Mead, 1932; Shotter, 2005b, 2006; Van Nistelrooij & Caluwé, 2016). Like Mike and his comanager in the opening excerpt, people can—based on their experiences and shared generalized other—anticipate or even remember how a given problem will unfold and how it should be dealt with. Also when their future memories—like in Mike and his comanager’s case—is a future that takes them further away from what they find desirable. Shotter (2006) uses the terms “action guiding anticipations” and “action guiding advisories” to describe how people embody taken-for-granted assumptions, ways of constructing meaning and acting that advise the language people intuitively, and often unquestionable use in their everyday communication. Hence, these embedded anticipations about the

future not only shape the language people use as they engage in relational constructions of meaning in the present, they also partake in generating and realizing these due to the ontology of language. Language becomes a way of being; “it is within our embodied, responsive dialogue that we articulate and create relationships with our surroundings and, in doing so, (re) create ourselves, others, and landscapes of possible actions, that is new forms of life . . .” (Cunliffe, 2002b, p. 130)

Bringing in the third premise for perceiving language ontologically; language is indeterminate adds yet another dimension to the role language plays in shaping the way people live their everyday organizational life. Despite the embeddedness of language and people’s ability to—based on a shared generalized other—anticipate what to expect of each other and themselves and act accordingly, the ability to co-construct meaning and initiate sensible actions depends on how people relationally use language in the present (Cunliffe, 2002b; Mead, 1932; Shotter & Cunliffe, 2002). Meaning construction is a contextual and unfinalizable co-constructive endeavor where the meaning constructed depends on how people communicate in the present as they try to make sense of and deal with an organizational situation (Bakhtin, 1981; Cunliffe, 2002a, 2011; Mead, 1974; Vološinov, 1986).

The language people use to co-construct meaning is both reality generating as well as indeterminate. Language and relational construction of meaning help people create order, reduce complexity, and reach a shared understanding—like in the opening excerpt where Mike and his comanager have talked an understanding about their dilemma into being. Their understanding of the dilemma reduces complexity and creates order, because it narrows a long range of possible ways to deal with the dilemma down to two possibilities. Simultaneously, because meaning co-construction takes place in the present, there is an ever-present possibility for previously co-constructed meaning to be deferred and changed (Cunliffe, 2002b; Vološinov, 1986). Just as language can help people reduce complexity and create order when they gesture and respond based on a shared generalized other, language can enhance complexity and destabilize existing order if people gesture and respond in other ways. This means that the future that Mike and his comanager anticipate and almost remember will unfold - if they hire the possible candidate - can be deferred and destabilized. It could be deferred and destabilized if other ways of gesturing and responding were used in the present. More than two alternatives to deal with the dilemma could be talked into being.

Based on the ontological perspective on language we apply in this article, it is difficult for Mike and comanager to gesture and respond in other ways than they are used to, even if they wanted to, because their generalized other are shared. They both intuitively know and rely on the shared—and relationally constructed—rules in the Shoe company and they are able to anticipate how each other will react and respond

as they gesture and respond. It is not easy for them to gesture and respond in other ways because all of this is embedded. The way Mike and his comanager gesture, respond, and co-construct meaning are both constituted by and constitute what is taken to be true within their local “somewhere.” And even though the future memory of how the qualified candidate they want to hire will do away with the family feeling in the company, is a memory they find undesirable, it is really difficult for them to co-construct another future memory they find more desirable.

The uniqueness of management inquiry where people—whose generalized others are unlike—are allowed to meet and mesh as dilemmas and future memories are explored is a topic we will return to and unfold shortly. But before we do this, we want to bring attention to the role future memories can play, as managers like Mike and his comanager in the present co-construct meaning.

How Future Memories Shape the Way People Co-Construct Meaning in the Present

Discursive frames used for talking about memories will often view them as retrospective and refer to the ways in which past experience and knowledge structures are recollected or made use of in the present (James, 1958; Mead, 1932). Several studies and researchers (e.g., Atance & O’Neil, 2001; Dieckmann, Reddersen, Wehner, & Rall, 2006; Graf & Uttl, 2001; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; McAdams & Mirza, 2009; McDaniel & Einstein, 2000; Mead, 1932) do, however, argue that memory can *also* revolve around the future. Weick’s seminal work on sensemaking, including concepts like “retrospection,” “enactment,” and “future perfect thinking,” has helped people understand how past, present, and future are entangled in organizational life, and how this entanglement shapes the ways in which people construct meaning and act in the present (Weick, 1979, 1995). According to this line of reasoning, people engage in future perfect thinking in the present and use this kind of mental time-travel to construct spaces for their possible action in the present. Some cognitive neuroscientists use the term “prospective memory” to describe brain-based functional and location-based similarities between backward- and forward-oriented “memory” (Addis, Wong, & Schacter, 2007; Atance & O’Neil, 2001; Botzung, Denkova, Ciuciu, Scheiber, & Manning, 2008; Gaesser, Spreng, McLelland, Addis, & Schacter, 2013).

Studies on the interplay between past, present, and future—as experienced or memorized—show a certain topical variation. Across these variations and based on other studies (e.g., Emirbayer & Mische, 1998; Gioia et al., 2002; Suddaby, Foster, & Trank, 2010; Weiler, Suchan, & Daum, 2010), there is an underlying concordance that is in line with Mead’s (1932) assertions about past and future as both being irrevocable and revocable. Like the premises associated with perceiving language ontologically, the meaning people co-construct in the

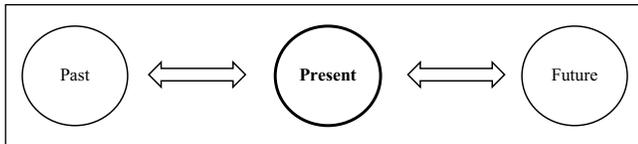


Figure 1. The past and future is constructed in the present.

present as they gesture and respond are both shaped by and shape what within a local “somewhere” is taken to be true and real. Past and future are constructions belonging to the present and how they are remembered depend on how people co-construct meaning in the present (McAdams & Mirza, 2009; Mead, 1932; Shotter, 2005b). Figure 1 renders a graphical illustration of how the past and future both shape and are shaped in the present.

We draw inspiration from statements saying that memory is both retro- and prospective. What combines these perspectives is an argumentation of how organizational life and people’s actions show a paradoxical interplay between memories about the past and anticipations about the future (Gioia et al., 2002; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2013; Lüscher, Lewis, & Ingram, 2006; McAdams & Mirza, 2009; McDaniel & Einstein, 2010; Weiler et al., 2010). This means that we follow the argumentation that there is no set past that determines how the present will unfold, nor is there any causal connection between the present and the future (Mead, 1932). However, people—like Mike in the opening excerpt—still gesture and respond in adjusted ways as if these connections existed (Mead, 1932, 1974).

Special Emphasis to Memories About the Future

Even though we are inspired by both retro- and prospective understanding of memory, we in this article pay special emphasis to the role memories about the future have and how they shape people’s co-construction of meaning in the present. Much in line with McAdams and Mirza (2009), we are “intrigued by the notion that it is the stories of the future that create the present much more than the stories of the past” (p. 180). Below we present the article’s second excerpt that exemplifies the above quote by McAdams and Mirza. In the excerpt, we meet Paul³ who is the managing director of a smaller Danish hospital. Paul has—like Mike did in the opening excerpt—some very strong anticipations or future memories about how a dilemma he is facing in the present will unfold. Paul has been the managing director of the hospital for some years and previously he has been able to engage in constructive and strategic dialogues with the Region’s Governing Board about the structuring and managing of the hospital. Lately, however, Paul has experienced himself challenged when trying to engage in strategic dialogues with the Region’s Governing Board. Below he explains to the researcher why and how maintaining a

constructive dialogue with the region’s Governing Board has become increasingly difficult for him.

Paul: In September a new restructuring [of the hospital] was approved . . . by the all the necessary regional boards. What happens then is that in November I’m summoned and I’m told that they cannot support the restructuring after all . . . I really find this annoying . . . and in such situations the conversation becomes a bit unprofessional. They raised question like why don’t we make a matrix structure instead, but God damn it, we’ve been through all of those discussions and there are solid arguments behind our decision . . . and I don’t get it . . . earlier I was able to have constructive and good dialogues, also with the ones in the top management . . . I don’t know how it came to this and that’s also why my big issue is: How can I make it possible to engage in constructive strategic dialogues with the Regional Governing Board . . . In 3 weeks I have a dialogue meeting with the regional Governing Board members.

Mette: How are you going to act during this meeting?

Paul: In my darkest hours I would wish the meeting wasn’t taking place at all because I have these images of the last meeting [where the restructuring was withdrawn]. And it was just not good in any way . . . it’s just like being on one of those critical political debate programs [in the television] where the host just ignores what you are saying and jumps to the next question before you manage to answer the previous. And then you stand there thinking when is this going to stop so I can leave and get back to my work.

The above excerpt illustrates two things that are of significance here. First, it exemplifies what Figure 1 illustrated; how the memories Paul has about the past shape his anticipations and memories about the future in the present. During the management inquiring, Paul shares his past experiences and based on them, he remembers prospectively what will take place. Paul “knows” how the future meeting will unfold and how he is going to feel during the meeting even though the meeting has not as yet taken place. Second, it exemplifies how these future memories shape the way Paul in the present feels, talks about, and prepares himself for the future Regional Governing Board Meeting. To use the words of McAdams and Mirza (2009), as people communicate they are “projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectations that brings the future powerfully into the present” (p. 181). Earlier in the conversation, Paul has told the researcher how he and parts of his staff at the moment do what they can to gather analyses, statistics, and user surveys that show where his hospital is superior compared with other hospitals in the region. And he is going to bring all these data with him to the coming Regional Governing Board Meeting so he is armed with solid arguments when they begin to shot at him with accusations like they did last time.

As Paul shares his story, he does not “choose” in any way to deliberately remember an undesirable future or co-construct an unconstructive space for action in the present. Like Mike, Paul simply talks in ways that within his local “somewhere” is viewed as adjusted. As he talks what locally is taken for granted as commonsense and embedded shapes his future memory (Mead, 1932; Shotter, 2005a; Weick, 1995). The future memory is not Paul’s solely, it has been co-constructed with people who have the same generalized other both in- and outside the hospital. Viewed from an ontological perception of language Paul plays an active role in co-constructing the dilemma he wants to solve as he in the present gesture and respond based on an undesirable future memory. Paul wishes that the future Governing Board meeting would not take place, because he is certain that it will become unconstructive. And this future memory come to generate what Paul believes is his possible space for action in the present (Flaherty & Fine, 2001; Gergen, 2010; McAdams & Mirza, 2009; Mead, 1932; Shotter, 1996).

In the present, Paul prepares himself to engage in a political debate program even though he wants to engage in a strategic dialogue. And like in the case with Mike and his comanager, it is extremely difficult to gesture and respond differently with people from the same local “somewhere” who embed the same generalized other and follow the same socially accepted ways of acting and engaging in co-construction of adjusted meaning. This brings us back to the value of management inquiry that we touched upon briefly earlier. In management inquiry, the situation is different. Managers and researchers often come from different local “somewheres” with unlike generalized others and various taken-for-granted ways of gesturing and responding and this means that they can engage in joint explorations of managers’ dilemmas and future memories in other ways than people who live in the same local “somewhere.” Below we will unfold and illustrate how reflexive dialogical action research can be used as a method to inquire managers’ existing future memories and expand what they understand as their possible space for action in the present.

Method: Using Reflexive Dialogical Action Research to Inquire About Future Memories

Reflexive dialogical action research⁴ is a method that Ripamonti et al. (2016) have developed to strengthen the co-construction of relevant theoretical and practical knowledge and learning between managers and researchers and, in greater details, described “how relevant knowledge and new practices—to both researchers and practitioners—can be dialogically generated in collaborative ways” (p. 2). It is a research method that is anchored in social constructionism and invites both managers and researchers to build up: “a

greater self-awareness and understanding of the role we as researchers and managers play in shaping organizational ‘realities’ and knowledge” (Ripamonti et al., 2016, p. 3)

Unfolding Reflexive Dialogical Action Research

To unfold how we have used reflexive dialogical action research to inquire managers’ existing future memories and expand what they understand as their possible space for action in the present, we will briefly unfold the tree central terms in the method: (a) reflexive, (b) dialogical, and (c) action research. We start backward by unfolding the term action research first. There is, across various ways action research is practiced, a shared understanding of how the explorations undertaken are dynamic and mostly take their point of departure in concrete and current challenges (Czarniawska, 2007; Lewin, 1947; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Schein, 1995, 1996; Shotter, 2010). Another common feature in action research is how researchers and managers co-own the problems being explored in the present as the inquiry takes place (Lewin, 1947; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Schein, 1995, 1996; Shotter, 2010).

Viewed from a social constructionism perspective and due to the ontology of language, this means that the involved researcher becomes a part of both understanding and further exploring the organizational situations managers introduce during the management inquiry (Cunliffe, 2002a; Gergen, 2010; Helin, 2015; Shotter, 2010; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). Mike/Paul chooses the concrete and current dilemma to explore, but both Mike/Paul and the researcher jointly “co-author” (Shotter & Cunliffe, 2002) the dilemma Mike/Paul at the present moment faces. They also coauthor how it will unfold in the nearby future, as well as what can be understood as the possible space for action in the present (McNamee, 2014; Ripamonti et al., 2016).

In the process of co-authoring both Mike/Paul and the researcher’s generalized other, socially and locally constructed knowledge and taken-for-granted assumptions shape the co-construction of meaning (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Alvesson & Kärreman, 2016; Cunliffe, 2002a, 2011; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). This brings us back to the value of management inquiry. These conversations are possibilities for unlike generalized others and various taken-for-granted ways of gesturing and responding to meet in a dialogue and shape how joint explorations of managers’ dilemmas and future memories take place.

This leads to the unfolding of the second central term in reflexive dialogical action research: dialogical. Ripamonti et al. (2016) define dialogic as a process:

when multiple voices and sources of knowledge are incorporated into the inquiry process and different logics of actions, and different professional or organizational cultures and visions meet each other. Far from being harmonious encounters, these

processes require the recognition of differences as sources of creativity and actionable knowledge . . . (p. 3)

This means that dialogues and management inquiry does not necessarily revolve around gesturing and responding in adjusted ways to co-construct a shared meaning (McNamee, 2014; Mead, 1974; Shotter, 2010). Dialogue can also revolve around co-constructing a “moving effect” (Shotter, 2010, p. 274) where a manager suddenly can see a possibility in a situation he had not seen before (Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter, 2010). Going back to the second excerpt, the inquiry with Paul could then also revolve around co-constructing a moving effect. A moving effect that would allow for exploring future memories that are unknown to Paul and that could make room for him to see possibilities in the dilemma that he had not seen before. The other future memories that would emerge from such an exploration could expand the possible space for action Paul experiences he has in the present. And it could generate other possible and maybe more desirable ways for Paul to deal with what he refers to as his: “big issue.”

The third central term in reflexive dialogical action research is reflexive. Reflexivity revolves around acknowledging that people always have the option of co-constructing new meaning, acting differently, and altering their ways of engaging in organizational life (Cunliffe, 2008; Larsen & Madsen, 2016). By participating in reflexive conversations, people become more attentive to how they “construct multiple and emerging ‘realities,’ and selves with others, through . . . dialogue” (Cunliffe, 2008, p. 135). To incorporate reflexivity in action research means that participants invite each other to question their own taken-for-granted actions and underlying assumptions (Ripamonti et al., 2016). In management inquiry, researchers and managers—like Mike/Paul—can help each other recognize how their ways of gesturing and responding are shaped by their embedded generalized other and what they take for granted. Furthermore, how their language use and meaning co-construction have ontological implications and shape their organizational “realities,” future memories and what they understand to be their possible spaces action in the present (Cunliffe, 2002a, 2011; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter, 2010). Acknowledging the reflexive and dialogical aspects of action research during management inquiry can enable managers and researchers to jointly explore existing future memories and co-construct others to expand manager’s possible space for action in the present. In Figure 2, these ideas are translated into graphical form.

In the perspective we use here, we argue that using management inquiry in the context of reflexive dialogical action research to explore other future memories can nurture the co-construction of knowledge and facilitate changes that have relevance to practice. Enhancing existing and co-constructing other future memories about the concrete and

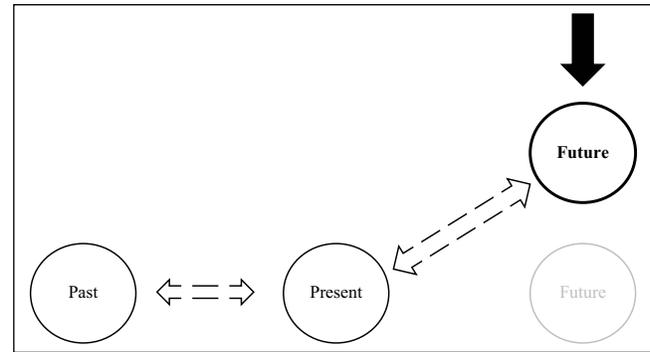


Figure 2. Co-constructing a different memory of the future.

current dilemmas that managers—like Mike and Paul—face, can make them see new possibilities and expand what they understand as their possible space for action in the present. This process is illustrated in figure 2 with the second possible future memory.

Engaging in Reflexive Dialogical Action Research in Self-Reflexive Ways

Engaging as a researcher in reflexive dialogical action research calls for a need to engage in self-reflexivity in at least two ways: (a) the way we as researchers engage in co-construction knowledge during the management inquiry and (b) the way we continue to work with the co-constructed data in academic texts. The ontological perception of language and its three premises that were applied in the exploration of Mike and Paul’s local “somewheres” also apply for us as researchers and the meaning and knowledge generated represent only one out of many possible and meaningful co-constructions (Cunliffe, 2002b, 2011; Gergen, 2015; McNamee, 2000; McNamee & Hosking, 2012). This means that as we engage in management inquiries and subsequently write academic texts, we work toward embracing and proactively incorporating the reflexive dialogical aspects of action research presented in the article: “recognition of differences as sources of creativity and actionable knowledge” (Ripamonti et al., 2016, p. 3).

Concretely and in relation to (a) the way we engage in management inquiry, our guiding premise has been that managers and researchers are coresearchers and coauthors on equal terms (Cunliffe, 2001; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter & Cunliffe, 2002). This means that the meanings and knowledge that are co-constructed during the management inquiry are the outcome of a joint generative process with the purpose of curious exploring where meshing the various perspectives that emerged during the inquiry as we gestured and responded would take us. In that process, we have paid special emphasis to incorporating a “not-knowing” (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) perspective. We have, as researchers, no knowledge of what is taken-for-granted and how people

gesture and respond according to their generalized other within the local “somewhere” managers like Mike and Paul live their everyday organizational life. This means that as we explore an organizational dilemma, we as researchers have to remain curious and not assume to know what the dilemma revolves around (Anderson & Goolishian, 1997).

In relation to (b) our subsequent work with the co-constructed data, our guiding premise has been to remain attentive to what is taken-for-granted and viewed as meaningful within the local “somewheres” Mike and Paul live their organizational life and allow that to coauthor the stories told (Cunliffe, 2002a). The data used for this article stem from two different longitudinal qualitative studies. These have been carried out as reflexive, dialogical action research projects where the researchers in total have participated in more than 60 management inquiries and conducted more than 50 exploratory observational studies that all have been documented via transcripts or field notes (McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Robson, 2011; Shotter & Cunliffe, 2002). In the process of generating data for this article, we have prioritized some activities, excerpts, and co-constructions of meaning at the cost of others. This kind of continual reweaving and reconstruction of data is an integrated part of writing up research from a social constructionism perspective (Cunliffe, 2002a, 2011; McNamee & Hosking, 2012).

To remain attentive to Mike and Paul’s local “somewheres” we have in the generation of data for this article placed considerable emphasis toward contextualizing the data and perspectives we present up against the total amount of data generated through the research projects. And we have worked toward generating stories that resonate with word usages, jargon, phrases, understandings, and practices within each of their local “somewheres” (Cunliffe, 2002a; Czarniawska, 2004; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter, 2006). A practical example of this is that—based on each management inquiry and exploratory observational study—the researcher wrote a summary and sent it to the participating manager for him to further coauthor by rewriting it according to what he found meaningful.

Another practical example of the coauthoring that has been used, during the studies presented here, is to look at the emergence of the central concept explored in this article: memories about the future. The concept emerged as the researcher was immersed in re-listening to recordings and reading the piles of transcripts from management inquiries. The way Mike, Paul, and other managers with certainty in their voice storied about the way their dilemmas would unfold in the future made the researcher think that it almost seemed like these managers could remember the future. Despite the oxymoron of this way of framing, it resonated with the researcher and initiated a longer literature review regarding the interplay between memories and the future. Simultaneously, the researcher presented and discussed the idea of future memories with Mike, Paul, and other managers

both in research and teaching settings to explore if and how the ideas presented in this article resonated with them (Meier & Wegener, 2016). The purpose with this way of meshing local academic and practice-anchored understandings was to bring these two disciplines closer to each other and facilitate changes that resonated and were viewed as relevant within the local “somewheres” managers like Mike and Paul participate in (Gergen, 2015; McNamee, 2014, 2015; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter, 2016).

Using Management Inquiry to Co-Construct Other Memories About the Future

There are ways of gesturing and responding that can support meshing local academic and practice-anchored understandings and co-constructing other future memories, and in this article we present two: (a) unadjusted responses and (b) social poetics. We will return and present these shortly. But before we do so, we would like to present the article’s third and last excerpt. The excerpt is a continuation of the management inquiry with Paul and it exemplifies how it is possible to be reflexive and gesture and respond in unadjusted ways that allow the researcher and Paul to explore other future memories. It is important to say that working on co-constructing other future memories is not the only way researchers and managers can generate other possible space for action in the present. As mentioned in the opening part of the article, one can also work with reconstructing memories about the past. We have chosen to explore the role future memories have because for managers—like Paul and Mike—exploring and enhancing future memories have been viewed as liberating and interesting.

The researcher’s question starting the excerpt below is a response to Paul’s last comment in the article’s second excerpt: “it’s like being on one of those critical political debate programs . . . And then you stand there thinking when is this going to stop so I can leave and get back to my work.”

Mette: If you should try and look at it from their perspective?

Paul: I don’t know [whistles] it has something to do with how you think. Some people care for others and some only take care of their own business . . .

Mette: Could it be a help to you when you have to take part in this dialogue meeting that you can see things from their point of view? Could you say to yourself “I might have handled this differently if I was in their shoes, but now we are here so how can I work constructively from here and onwards, so we can get closer to having a strategic dialogue?” [Paul coughs slightly] . . . It is not that I do not understand you, because I do.

Paul: It pisses me off.

Mette: It might be completely incomprehensible and against all sorts of reasonable thinking, but that does not help you in your everyday practice.

Paul: No that is right . . .

Mette: There is a risk that these meetings turn out to become a play where you all act in certain ways during the meeting, use a certain language, draw on certain discourses, and realize what you already before the meeting knew would happen. Someone has to break it, change the game, and invite all of you to play different parts . . . I mean what is the worst that could happen at this point?

Paul: Well nothing . . . and it cannot get any worse than it already is . . .

Mette: But it is not easy, it is one thing to say it and quite another to do it.

Paul: It's right and one also has to look into the mirror. We had a Governing Board meeting last week and here the Regional Health Director and I had a fierce debate which really wasn't pretty and he called me afterwards and left an apology on my machine and said that I could just call him back tomorrow. And here I am, so old and bull-headed that I have not contacted him . . . [sighs]. And we are both of us well aware that something has to be done. That is also why my big challenge is how we get to smoke that calumet.

Mette: . . . It is difficult because before you get to smoke that calumet someone has to have the courage to act in ways you have not acted before.

Paul: Exactly . . . and personally I find it really difficult to pick up the phone and call him because what should we talk about?

Mette: What would be sensible to talk about, what would you like to talk with him about?

Paul: Why . . . uh I cannot understand why he does not like this hospital.

Mette: Could you imagine yourself asking him that question?

Paul: I think that if we sat down in front of each other soon we would be able to have a good dialogue, at least at that moment, how it would unfold afterwards I don't know . . .

By looking at the excerpt above, it becomes apparent how there is a difference between the researcher and Paul's way of gesturing and responding. Paul is very focused on constructing meaning about how the Regional Board members' actions are incomprehensible. The researcher, on the contrary, tries to open up for other possible ways of making sense of these actions. Paul and the researcher's generalized other differ and they do not spontaneously call out similar attitudes and meaning structures in one another as people often do when they come from the same local "somewhere."

This way of communicating and opening up for future memories to be explored might—and often do—feel unfamiliar and a bit anxiety provoking because people conversing this way avoid certainty and the immediate construction

of meaning that they are used to generate relatively easy based on adjusted gestures and responses (Van Nistelrooij & Caluwé, 2016). In the excerpt above, Paul whistles, coughs, and sighs because his immediate and taken-for-granted ways of co-constructing meaning that others from within his local "somewhere" would support are being momentarily paused (Larsen & Madsen, 2016). Despite Paul's coughing, whistling, and sighing, the differences in generalized other ways of gesturing and responding become a possibility for Paul and the researcher to explore alternative perspectives and move the inquiry forward in other ways (McNamee, 2015; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter, 1996).

Using Unadjusted Responses to Pause the Immediate Co-Construction of Meaning

Although the possibility exists, being reflexive about one's own practice together with people who embed the same generalized other is, nevertheless, as Paul mentions often, "really difficult." Primarily because, as mentioned earlier, when facing a dilemma, people from the same local "somewhere" instantaneously gesture and respond in adjusted ways. Using what we term "unadjusted responses" is a way of gesturing where people jointly can question what is taken-for-granted within their local "somewhere," enhance complexity, and destabilize order by exploring other perspectives of a dilemma.

Often managers and researchers are not able to anticipate what the other will say or expect of them to say, because they embed, gesture, and respond based on different generalized others. When these differences are embraced and understood a strength by the manager and the researcher, it becomes possible to use unadjusted gestures as a way to—metaphorically speaking—pause the immediate co-construction of meaning and momentarily enter a meaning vacuum and not only direct ". . . attention to the meaningful connections and relations . . . [they] already are making but also explore the other possible connections and relations that . . . [they] have not yet made, but might make" (Shotter, 2005a, p. 130).

Going back to the third excerpt, Paul gestures in a way where he invites the researcher to co-construct meaning about how the members of the Regional Governing Board have acted unconstructively: "In my darkest hours I wish this meeting wasn't taking place at all . . ." Paul anticipates mutual adjustment to reign between his own and the researcher's gestures and responses. As the researcher comes from another local "somewhere" and embeds other generalized other ways of gesturing and responding, this does not happen. The researcher responds based on a shared awareness that Paul wants to engage in strategic dialogues with the Regional Governing Board members. This leads to the emergence of an unadjusted response raised by the researcher: Mette "If you should try and look at it from their perspective?" The unadjusted aspect of the response is that instead of

agreeing that the Regional Governing Board members have acted unconstructively, the response becomes an invitation for Paul and the researcher to explore another future memory and realize what other meaningful connections and relations they have not yet made, but might make.

The unadjusted response offers a possibility for Paul and the researcher to gesture and respond in different ways and make room for co-constructing other future memories. They allow themselves to: “‘wander around’ within the situation, testing possible ways in which to express its nature in words while sensing how it ‘talks back’ . . . as to whether . . . words are fitting or not” (Shotter, 2016, p. 63).

This wandering around is not a question of the researcher offering advices. Rather it is a question of making room for the manager to take the time he needs to be able to connect the new with the known in his own words and in ways that resonate with him (Meier & Wegener, 2016; Ripamonti et al., 2016). Looking at the excerpt Paul begins to connect his existing future memory with other and new possible future memories as he explains how he is too; “old and bull-headed,” to contact the Regional Health Director after a fierce debate, even though, later, the Regional Health Director left an apology on Paul’s machine.

Gesturing in unadjusted ways often turn out to be experienced as liberating for managers, because it is a move away from a judgmental focus on the possible correctness of a given action or understanding. The intention with gesturing in unadjusted ways is not to allocate blame or correct behavior, but search for new and more desirable ways to deal with their dilemma (Ripamonti et al., 2016). In the excerpt above, the way Paul feels is acknowledged by both researcher and Paul and they do not discuss whether Paul’s actions or understandings are right or wrong. They co-construct other future memories to enhance Paul’s possible space for action in the present.

Engaging in Social Poetics to Make Room for Imagining Other Future Memories

Another practice that can support co-constructing other future memories is engage in what Cunliffe (2002a) and McNamee (2000) refer to as “social poetics.” Cunliffe (2002b) describes social poetics as “forms of talk that reveal possibilities or new ways of connecting” (p. 135). During social poetic conversation people are imaginative and allow each other to see things differently - with the purpose of making room for other possible meaning and actions to emerge (Cunliffe, 2002b; Larsen & Madsen, 2016; McNamee, 2000). People engage in social poetics to explore what else they might do and “give wings to the imaginative” (McNamee, 2000, p. 1).

Paul and the researcher engage in imaginative explorations around how a possible phone and face-to-face conversation between Paul and the Regional Health Director might unfold. They do not know how the phone call could revolve,

but they explore various and desirable possibilities and concordantly begin to talk a possible new future memory into being. They start developing ideas about possible questions Paul could pose to the regional Health Director if they decided to sit down in front of each other and have what Paul refers to as: “a good dialogue.” Social poetic inquiries are a possibility to co-construct other ways of relating and orienting in the organizational lives people partake in: “The world can only be ‘imagined’ in language; that is, in what we do together” (McNamee, 2000, p. 5f). By imagining other future memories, the possible space for action in the present is suddenly enhanced and other ways to deal with a dilemma become possible for managers like Mike and Paul.

Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The focal point in this article has been to explore how management inquiry can be used as a way for researchers and managers to jointly construct knowledge that partakes in developing organizational life from within. The research question pursued was as follows:

Research Question 1: How can researchers and managers jointly use management inquiry to co-construct other memories about the future?

The purpose with pursuing this research question was to enhance existing knowledge about how academia and practice can enrich each other by engaging in reflexive dialogues that nurture and support developing organizational practice from within. In this final part of the article, we will start by presenting the findings and conclusions we have made and finalize the article with presenting some recommendations for future research.

Findings and Conclusions

The central findings we present in the article revolve around three meshed and interwoven conclusions: (a) Managers embody future memories about organizational dilemmas that shape the way these managers co-construct meaning and act in the present. In the article, we—based on an ontological perception of language—illustrated how Mike and Paul both express strong prospective memories about how a current dilemma will unfold in the nearby future. And even though the future has not happened yet and the memories about the future are socially constructed, Mike and Paul gesture, respond, and co-construct meaning in the present as if these future memories already had taken place. Hence, their memories about the future shape what they take to be their possible space for action in the present. (b) Management inquiries in the context of reflexive dialogical action research can be used to explore and enhance existing future memories about

an organizational dilemma with the purpose of expanding the possible space for action managers have in the present.

Due to the unfamiliarity between researchers' and managers' embedded generalized other and because they live their organizational life in different local "somewheres," managers and researchers often gesture, respond, and co-construct meaning in various ways. When these differences mesh and are embraced in the context of reflexive dialogical action research, they can have a moving effect that enable managers to see a possibility in a situation they had not seen before. In the inquiry with Paul, gesturing and responding with a researcher whose generalized other is different allow for other perspectives to emerge and be explored. Such reflexive dialogues make room for different and more desirable future memories to be co-constructed, hence expand the possible ways Paul can deal with the dilemma in the present. (c) Exploring unadjusted responses and engaging in social poetics are dialogical and relational practices that can support exploring and enhancing future memories and expanding the possible space for action in the present. Contrary to gesturing and responding in adjusted ways, unadjusted responses allow for researchers and managers to momentarily pause their immediate co-construction of meaning and enter a meaning vacuum. Unadjusted responses and social poetics enable managers and researchers to question what they take for granted within their local "somewhere" and make room for other perspectives and future memories to emerge. In relation to Paul's dilemma, he and the researcher take time to explore other future memories based on an unadjusted response. And gesturing back and forth for a while without immediately co-constructing meaning but allowing imaginative explorations of future memories make room for other and more desirable ways for Paul to deal with his organizational dilemma.

The conclusion we can draw from the findings we present is that when researchers and managers during management inquiries engage in social poetics and reflexively explore unadjusted responses, they are able to enhance existing future memories about an organizational dilemma and make room for more desirable future memories to emerge, hence expand the possible ways managers in the present can deal with the dilemma. The conclusion also identifies practices necessary if the co-construction of new and desirable future memories are to occur. The three interwoven and central findings, presented above, can be understood as necessary factors if future desirable memories are to be co-constructed. Gesturing in adjusted ways, lowering complexity by reaching agreement instantaneously, and co-constructing meaning aligned with what already is taken-for-granted within the manager's local "somewhere" are necessary practices. But by only practicing these, they will function as a kind of barrier for the method we have presented here that centers on co-constructing other and different future memories successfully. Hence, a limitation of the reflexive dialogical action

research method presented here is its focus on the complexity-enhancing exploration, where efficient and rapid decision making and reduction of complexity are bracketed. To succeed with co-constructing new and desirable future memories, inquiring partners are instead invited to take on a not-knowing perspective and engage in curious exploration of the different perspectives on equal terms. This necessitates that inquiring partners focus on and take the time needed to wander about the unknown to generate and explore unadjusted responses and social poetics, and allow for new and desirable future memories to emerge incrementally.

Recommendations for Future Research

In the article, our focus has been on co-constructing other future memories about an organizational dilemma. The method and the practices we present can also be used for enhancing existing future memories about other things than organizational dilemmas. In some of the other management inquiries we have taken part in, we have also used this method and these practices to, for example, explore various ways a manager could present the new strategy to the organization. In another situation, we have used this method and these practices during management inquiries to make room for a manager to engage in a self-reflexive process about various ways he, in practice, could handle a newly presented reorganizing of his unit. In both instances, the managers wanted to develop their future desirable memories more fully, make room for new and other perspectives to mesh with their existing. They wanted to dedicate time for the new understandings to resonate with their existing, and explore how these future memories could shape their actions and co-construction of meaning in the present.

In the article, we have focused on management inquiries taking place between a researcher and a manager. Mainly because both of the authors of this article are researchers and the prime way we generate knowledge and data are through research projects. This does not mean that the practices we present are not applicable (e.g., consultants or professional workers). The practices could especially among consultants and professional workers who adopt a systemic thinking and/or work inspired by the Milano School in their work, resonate very well with their existing practices (Cronen, Pearce, & Tomm, 1985; Selvini, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1980; Tomm, 1987). Systemic work, with for example reflexive and circular questions, exploring curiosity, working with irreverence and neutrality invites conversation partners to approach a situation from a different perspective and explore alternative scenarios (Cecchin, 1987; Tomm, 1987; Tomm, St. George, Wulff, & Strong, 2014), a practice that resemble what we have presented in this article. In the article, we are also inspired by work done by full- or part-time consultants and professional workers (e.g., Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; McAdams & Mirza, 2009; Shoter, 2005b, 2010). And further

explorations of how researchers', consultants', and professional workers' practices, methods, and knowledge could mesh would enrich and further develop existing knowledge about how the unfamiliarity between generalized other ways of gesturing and responding can be used as a strength to explore unadjusted responses and make room for reflexive dialogues about future memories.

With this article, we wanted to enrich and contribute to existing knowledge in both an academic and a practice-anchored way. This means that the above enrichments and contributions also need to have a practice-anchored relevance. The purpose with engaging in management inquiries like the ones presented in this article and partaking in co-constructing other future memories is to embrace the ontology of language and acknowledge that we, as researchers, play an active role in talking local realities into being as we inquire with managers. This argument has been presented by several researchers (Cunliffe, 2002a; Gergen, 2015; McNamee, 2015; McNamee & Hosking, 2012; Ripamonti et al., 2016; Shotter, 2016), and the findings we present identify at least three areas—regarding the attempt to bring academia and practice closer to each other—that could be researched further in the future: (a) How can researchers and practitioners in greater details understand and generate knowledge about how future memories—both undesirable and desirable—shape the way managers act and co-construct meaning in the present? (b) What other practices besides unadjusted responses and engaging in social poetics can support exploring and enhancing future memories during management inquiries? (c) How can practices, methods, and knowledge used and generated by consultants and professional workers enrich existing knowledge about how it is possible for people to engage in management inquiries with the purpose of reflexively and dialogically co-constructing and enhancing existing memories about the future? The recommendations for future research we present here are only three out of many, and we hope that we, with this article, have been able to pique other researchers' curiosities and we invite them to take part in further exploring and discussing how academia and practice can be brought closer together by using management inquiries to co-construct other memories about the future.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and the associate editor for making the becoming of this article such a constructive, reflexive, and dialogical inquiring process. They have provided us with relevant and insightful feedback that have helped us move the perspectives presented in this article forward in generative ways. The corresponding author also wants to thank the magnificent "Boundary Pushers" for their support and engagement in developing the practices and concepts presented in this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. Data material generated and used in this article can be accessed by contacting the corresponding author.
2. Both the name of the manager and the company are pseudonyms used to respect agreed anonymity with the involved managers and organizations.
3. Paul is a pseudonym, and the hospital's name and location are not mentioned to respect the agreed anonymity with the manager and organizations that participated in the research project.
4. A central aspect of reflexive dialogical action research as it is developed by Ripamonti, Galuppo, Gorli, Scaratti, and Cunliffe (2016) is to use first-, second-, and third-person written accounts as a form of discovery. This practice was also used during the reflexive dialogical action research project where Mike participated. This is, however, not the focus in this article where we focus on management inquiry as conversations between researchers and managers, and therefore this practice will not be further explicated during the article.

References

- Addis, D. R., Wong, A. T., & Schacter, D. L. (2007). Remembering the past and imagining the future: Common and distinct neural substrates during event construction and elaboration. *Neuropsychologia, 45*, 1363-1377.
- Alvesson, M., & Deetz, S. (2000). *Doing critical management research*. London, England: SAGE.
- Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2016). Intellectual failure and ideological success in organizational studies: The case of transformation leadership. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 25*, 139-152.
- Anderson, H., & Goolishian, H. (1992). The client is the expert: A not knowing approach to therapy. In S. McNamee & K. J. Gergen (Eds.), *Therapy as social construction* (pp. 25-39). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.
- Atance, C. M., & O'Neil, D. K. (2001). Episodic future thinking. *TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences, 5*, 533-539.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Botzung, A., Denkova, E., Ciuciu, P., Scheiber, C., & Manning, L. (2008). The neural bases of the constructive nature of autobiographical memories studied with a self-paced fMRI design. *Memory, 16*, 351-363.
- Cecchin, G. (1987). Hypothesizing, circularity, and neutrality revisited: An invitation to curiosity. *Family Process, 26*, 405-413.
- Cronen, V. E., Pearce, W. B., & Tomm, K. (1985). A dialectical view of personal change. In K. J. Gergen & K. E. Davis (Eds.), *Springer Series in Social Psychology. The social construction of the person* (pp. 203-224). New York, NY: Springer-Verlag.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2001). Managers as practical authors: Reconstructing our understanding of management practice. *Journal of Management Studies, 38*, 351-371.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2002a). Reflexive dialogical practice in management learning. *Management Learning, 33*, 35-61.

- Cunliffe, A. L. (2002b). Social poetics as management inquiry—A dialogical approach. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *11*, 128-146.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2008). Orientations to social constructionism: Relationally responsive social constructionism and its implications for knowledge and learning. *Management Learning*, *39*, 123-139.
- Cunliffe, A. L. (2011). Crafting qualitative research: Morgan and Smircich 30 years on. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, *14*, 647-673.
- Cunliffe, A. L., & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations*, *64*, 1425-1449.
- Czarniawska, B. (2004). *Narratives in social science research*. London, England: SAGE.
- Czarniawska, B. (2007). *Shadowing: And other techniques for doing fieldwork in modern societies*. Denmark, Liber: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Dieckmann, P., Reddersen, S., Wehner, T., & Rall, M. (2006). Prospective memory failures as an unexplored threat to patient safety: Results from a pilot study using patient simulators to investigate the missed execution of intentions. *Ergonomics*, *49*, 526-543.
- Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, *103*, 962-1023.
- Flaherty, M., & Fine, G. A. (2001). Present, past, and future: Conjugating George Herbert Mead's perspective on time. *Time & Society*, *1*, 147-161.
- Gaesser, B., Spreng, R. N., McLelland, V. C., Addis, D. R., & Schacter, D. L. (2013). Imagining the future: Evidence for a hippocampal contribution to constructive processing. *Hippocampus*, *23*, 1150-1161.
- Gergen, K. J. (2010). Co-constitution, causality and confluence organizing in a world without entities. In T. Hernes & S. Maitlis (Eds.), *Process, sensemaking, and organizing* (pp. 55-69). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Gergen, K. J. (2015). From mirroring to world-making: Research as future forming. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, *45*, 287-310.
- Gioia, D. A., Corley, K. G., & Fabbri, T. (2002). Revising the past (while thinking in the future perfect tense). *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *15*, 622-634.
- Graf, P., & Uttl, B. (2001). Prospective memory: A new focus for research. *Consciousness and Cognition*, *10*, 437-450.
- Helin, J. (2015). Writing process after reading Bakhtin: From theorized plots to unfinalizable "living" events. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *24*, 174-185.
- Hosking, D. M., & Pluut, B. (2010). (Re)constructing reflexivity: A relational constructionist approach. *The Qualitative Report*, *15*, 59-75.
- James, W. (1958). *Talks to teachers on psychology: And to students*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton.
- Kaplan, S., & Orlikowski, W. J. (2013). Temporal work in strategy making. *Organization Science*, *24*, 965-995.
- Larsen, M. V., & Madsen, C. Ø. (2016). Exploring how social poetics can be used to understand processes of management learning. *Management Learning*, *47*(5), 1-17.
- Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; Social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations*, *1*(5), 5-41.
- Lüscher, L., Lewis, M., & Ingram, A. (2006). The social construction of organizational change paradoxes. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *19*, 491-502.
- McAdams, E., & Mirza, K. A. H. (2009). Drugs, hopes and dreams: Appreciative inquiry with marginalized young people using drugs and alcohol. *Journal of Family Therapy*, *31*, 175-193.
- McDaniel, M. A., & Einstein, G. O. (2000). Strategic and automatic processes in prospective memory retrieval: A multiprocess framework. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *14*(7), 127-144.
- McNamee, S. (2000). The social poetics of relationally engaged research. In K. Deissler & S. McNamee (Eds.), *Phil und Sophie auf der couch: Die sozialepoesitherapeutischer gesprache* [Philosophy in therapy: The social poetics of therapeutic conversations] (pp. 146-156). Heidelberg, Germany: Carl-Auer-Systeme Verlag.
- McNamee, S. (2014). Research as relational practice. In G. Simon & A. Chard (Eds.), *Systemic inquiry: Innovations in reflexive practice research* (pp. 74-94). Farnhill, UK: Everything Is Connected Press.
- McNamee, S. (2015). Radical presence: Alternatives to the therapeutic state. *The European Journal of Psychotherapy & Counselling*, *17*, 373-383.
- McNamee, S., & Hosking, D. (2012). *Research and social change: A relational constructionist approach*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mead, G. H. (1932). *The philosophy of the present*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Mead, G. H. (1974). *Mind, self and society from the standpoint of a social behaviorist*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Meier, N., & Wegener, C. (2016). Writing with resonance. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 1-9.
- Ospina, S. M., & Uhl-Bien, M. (2012). *Advancing relational leadership research: A dialog between perspectives*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Ripamonti, S., Galuppo, L., Gorli, M., Scaratti, G., & Cunliffe, A. L. (2016). Pushing action research towards reflexive practice. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *25*, 55-68.
- Robson, C. (2011). *Real world research*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley.
- Schein, E. H. (1995, July). *Process consultation, action research, and clinical inquiry: Are they the same?* (Working Paper No. 3833). Retrieved from <https://dspace.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.1/2583/SWP-3833-33296503.pdf?sequence=1>.
- Schein, E. H. (1996). Kurt Lewin's change theory in the field and in the classroom: Notes toward a model of managed learning. *Systems Practice*, *9*, 27-47.
- Selvini, M. P., Boscolo, L., Cecchin, G., & Prata, G. (1980). Hypothesizing, circularity, neutrality: Three guidelines for the conductor of the session. *Family Process*, *19*(3), 1-7.
- Shotter, J. (1996). "Now I can go on": Wittgenstein and our embodied embeddedness in the "hurly-burly" of life. *Human Studies*, *19*, 385-407.
- Shotter, J. (2005a). Inside the moment of managing: Wittgenstein and the everyday dynamic of our expressive-responsive activities. *Organization Studies*, *26*, 113-135.
- Shotter, J. (2005b). Inside processes: Transitory understandings, action guiding anticipations, and witness thinking. *International Journal of Action Research*, *1*, 157-189.

- Shotter, J. (2006). Understanding process from within: An argument for “witness”-thinking. *Organization Studies*, 27, 585-604.
- Shotter, J. (2010). Situated dialogic action research disclosing “beginnings” for innovative change in organizations. *Organizational research Methods*, 13, 268-285.
- Shotter, J. (2011). *Getting it: Witness-thinking and the dialogical in practice*. New York, NY: Hampton Press.
- Shotter, J. (2016). Undisciplining social science: Wittgenstein and the art of creating situated practices of social inquiry. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 46, 60-83.
- Shotter, J., & Cunliffe, A. (2002). Managers as practical authors: Everyday conversations for action. In D. Holman & R. Thorpe (Eds.), *Management and language: The manager as practical author* (pp. 15-37). London, England: SAGE.
- Suddaby, R., Foster, W. M., & Trank, C. Q. (2010). Rhetorical history as a source of competitive advantage. In J. A. C. Baum & J. Lampe (Eds.), *The globalization of strategy research (Advances in Strategic Management)*, 27, 147-173. Bingley, UK: Emerald.
- Tomm, K. (1987). Interventive interviewing: Part 11. Reflexive questioning as a means to enable self-healing. *Family Process*, 26, 167-183.
- Tomm, K., St. George, S., Wulff, D., & Strong, T. (2014). *Patterns in interpersonal interactions: Inviting relational understandings for therapeutic change*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Van Nistelrooij, A., & Caluwé, L. D. (2016). Why is it that we know we have to—or want to—change, but find ourselves moving around in circles? *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 25, 153-167.
- Vološinov, V. (1986). *Marxism and the philosophy of language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Weick, K. (1979). *The social psychology of organizing*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Weick, K. (1988). Enacted sensemaking in crisis situations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 25, 305-317.
- Weick, K. (1995). *Sensemaking in organization*. New York, NY: SAGE.
- Weiler, J. A., Suchan, B., & Daum, I. (2010). When the future becomes the past: Differences in brain activation patterns for episodic memory and episodic future thinking. *Behavioural Brain Research*, 212, 196-203.