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Understanding One Management Consultancy Practice

A Case Study on Consultant- Client Interactions in Change Efforts

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ABSTRACT

Management Consulting is a rapidly growing profession, in which large and small firms compete unevenly on the Swedish market. While the larger firms have a competitive advantage in their global knowledge net, the smaller firms are in a position where they need to develop a "unique" practice.

The consultant- client interaction was identified as manifesting the core of a management consultancy practice. Consequently, an in-depth case study was conducted to focus on the development of a practice in *one* smaller consultancy firm. Therefore, the focal point of the research is two diverse projects, each aiming at a mutual change effort.

The main findings are: that consultants as active change actors face dilemmas in their interaction with the client; that consultants need self-confidence in their usage of knowledge in the interaction; and that consultants can in fact facilitate sensemaking in clients through the creation of "shared understandings" in the interaction.

It is concluded that this management consultancy practice could be developed through the expansion of their structural capital, in relation to an increased conceptual understanding of the self-confidence and manipulation.

Keywords: Management consulting, Practice, Consultant- client interaction, Change, Actorship, Knowledge, Action, and Sensemaking

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1 INTRODUCTION

*T*his introductory chapter is of an explanatory nature. Firstly, we raise some issues that concern the work of management consultants. Secondly, we develop our main research focus in relation to our research partner PreEra. Thirdly, we extend this research focus into three theoretical research clues. We conclude this chapter by stating our purpose and, finally, outlining our general path for this thesis.

1.1 Background of Management Consultancy

The history of management consultancy has its origins in Anglo-American culture, namely in the USA. Traditionally, most of the management consultancy firms have based their businesses on Taylor and Gilbreth's views, which were established in the beginning of the twentieth century. Taylor had an engineering view on consultancy, which was more of a problem solver orientation, while Gilbreth's view was more human oriented. Since the eighties, the management consultancy business has been greatly influenced by theoretical trends, such as Japanese models and methods, culture issues, Human Resource Management and the global knowledge net. (Rassam, 2001a)

Today, management consulting is a huge business sector, although it is debatable whether it is an industry or a profession. We continuously view management consulting as a profession, since it suits the aim of this thesis, which is to try to understand a management consultancy practice. Management consulting is a fast growing profession that continuously becoming more international and diverse. Several authors have recently advocated this perspective (e.g. Sadler, 2001; Rassam & Oates, 1991; Harris, 1999). In this sense, Harris (1999) defines the profession.

> Management consulting is an advisory service contracted for and provided to organizations by specially trained and qualified persons who assist in an objective and independent manner, the client organization to participatively identify the system of problems, and through synthesized solutions, helping to dissolve the problems in implementation, demonstrating the level of success in innovation through evaluation. (p. 6)

In the Swedish management consultancy business, there has been immense structural change during the last twenty years or so. According to Werr and Stjernberg (2001), global management consultancy firms, such as Ernst and Young, Accenture, Boston Consulting Group and McKinsey, have in fact been much more successful than their Swedish and European counterparts, especially during the last decade. The authors state that it is nothing less than startling that the truly global management consultancy firms are able to charge about three times as much as the Swedish management consultancy firm. Certainly, we agree with the above authors' belief that it partly depends on the global consultancy firms' greater ability to move and transfer knowledge worldwide. This ability has been regarded as a competitive advantage (Sarvary, 1999; Werr and Stjernberg, 2001).

Traditionally, management consulting was seen as a knowledge industry, applying and selling knowledge and experience for organizational change to create a more effective and efficient client organization (Werr and Stjernberg, 2001). Rassam (2001a) elaborates further, stating that during the last decade, this view has been strengthened, which depends on the prerequisites clients have today. Accordingly, the most important factors' in production have traditionally been land, labor and capital. However, the undisputed importance of these factors has been challenged by the "new" factor, known as knowledge. Today, most companies' competitive advantage is constituted by their knowledge. It is of crucial importance to companies to be able to generate and exploit new knowledge. This has changed the management consultancy industry towards a further knowledge management oriented business. (Rassam, 2001a)

According to Rebbeck and Knight (2001), management consultancy is mainly considered to be a service industry that acts on a truly global market level. The business is mostly known through the legendary "big" firms.[1] Nevertheless, several small and medium-sized management consultancy firms exist in Sweden and those primarily act on the local markets[2]. Consequently, they still compete

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[1] Global firms like McKinsey, Accenture, Andersen, Boston Consulting Group, Ernst & Young and Arthur D Little.

[2] With local markets we mean the national/regional markets in which small firms mainly compete.

with the larger firms in the local market. However, the larger firms claim to have a competitive advantage in their global knowledge net (Rebbeck and Knight, 2001).

There have been quite a lot of studies performed that investigate how the consultants in larger firms work with clients (e.g. see Werr, 1999). It is interesting, since it in smaller firms seldom exists the support of a global knowledge net that can transfer the knowledge necessary for the consultant (Bäcklund and Werr, 2001). Firms without the support of a global knowledge net need to find other procedures to make them competitive.

In this manner, we believe it to be of vital importance for the smaller firms' practice to be "unique" and to offer a "product" or even a practice dissimilar to others, in order to grow and compete on the local market. Consequently, the question is how such a practice may be manifested in the actual work of the management consultancy firm? Let us elaborate…

1.2 Establishing a Research Focus

1.2.1 Elaborating on Practice

According to Sadler (2001), there are three main tasks for a management consultancy practice: identifying a problem, recommending a solution and helping the client with implementation. These tasks can be achieved through a variety of different approaches. However, a consultant is required to have different skills and to be able to perform different roles. Hence, the emerging question is how the management consultancy firm accomplishes these three tasks? According to Long (2001), the answer is in the approaches towards these tasks, which can be found in the practices of the firm. Long describes the elements of a consultancy practice. He makes a division between the *outward-facing aspects* and the *inward facing aspects*. The former aspects are constituted by market sectors, knowledge of technologies and alliances of key suppliers. However, the latter aspects address the consultants in the practice. The author states, "…a consultancy practice is nothing without their people" (2001:341). The inward-facing aspects are:

- Consultant skills and competences including credibility, integrity, imagination and the ability to influence customers.

- Knowledge of markets, sectors, technologies and business trends and how to continually innovate new business models with enabling technologies.

- Products, models and services that allow consultants to deliver value to their customers. (2001:341)

Of vast interest is the emphasis on the people in the practice, i.e. the consultants. It is through the consultants that the firms' practice is illustrated and realized to influence the customers or clients.

Our research partner[3], PreEra, is a firm that has continually developed its management consultancy practice. PreEra is mainly competing on the local market and some of its competitors are large firms that have global knowledge net support. PreEra claims that they have a different and somewhat "unique" practice. In concordance with the above, i.e. our interest in how the smaller firm may endeavor to succeed on the local market and the importance of its practice; we may now establish our general research focus.

Our main research focus is:

To explore how a firm can develop its management consultancy practice.

The focus is articulated in an exploratory and broad manner. However, clarity and simplicity will assist us in our quest. According to Yin (1994), any exploration in research should be guided by "theoretical clues" as to where the researcher is headed. Hence, in the following section, we will elaborate on the practice as a "problem".

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[3] For further reading see chapter 3.1 and Appendix I.

1.3 Extended Research Questions

1.3.1 Re-addressing Practice as the Consultant- Client Interaction

Let us re-address what we believe to *really* constitute the core of a management consultant practice. Well-recognized Schein (1990) declares that the core of any consultation is to help clients through the *interaction.* The goal of the consultation is to enhance the client's ability to attain its goal. In an empirical study of the roles of *methods* in management consultancy Werr (1999) states that: "Understanding the role of methods in a change process means to simultaneously understand the consultant, the client, the methods and their interactions, as well as the context in which the interaction take place" (p.101).

According to Risling (1988), consultation is always about a relationship between a consultant(s) and client(s). In a similar, yet somewhat different fashion, Clark and Salaman (1998) state that:

> Like a bottle of wine, a restaurant meal, or a book, the quality of a consultancy service is determined during enactment/consumption. This indicates that the outcome of consultancy service is highly dependent upon the quality of the interaction between the client and the consultant in practice. (p.22)

Our focus in this sense is the practice of PreEra, not the methods used in the practice or the specific goals. However, the above authors all give insights as to when the *core* of the consultancy practice actually becomes constituted, i.e. *in the consultant- client interaction.*

In this sense, if the consultant and the client want to get something done, they need to interact and develop some kind of relationship with each other. Barber and Mulligan (2001) argue why this relationship has to exist at all: "The client needs help with something they are unable to do or choose not to do for themselves, and the consultant offers assistance and expertise in one form or another in response to this need" (p. 84).

1.3.2 Change Effort as a Purpose in a Consultant- Client Interaction

Although establishing that the core of a management consultancy practice might be seen as the consultant- client interaction, we have not addressed for what purpose this interaction exists. In order to do that, we follow Risling (1988) who states that a developmental effort is an activity that changes the client organization in a goal oriented way. In this sense, many regard the consultant to be a change agent, who is indirectly engaged in the problem situation. Then, the client is responsible for and solves the problem in the change effort. Primarily, the consultant works to improve the client's capacity to manage the problem. The aim is to gradually transfer a capacity to the client, which enables the client to, independently of the consultant, be able to manage the correspondent problem and continuous change. The alternative is that the client initiates the interaction, and asks for and expects to be aided with the identification of the real problems. The consultation is, in this sense, fully concentrated on the client's work related problems (Risling, 1988). Sadler (2001) offer us some broader insights into change as the objective.

> Consultants must develop considerable competence in the field of change management if they are to be of real value to their clients. Successful implementation in today's climate calls for great sensitivity to the various causes of resistance to change, sensitivity of a kind that comes with considerable experience of change management in a range of situations. (p.15)

1.3.3 Developing Three Areas as Extended Research Questions

By focusing our research on the interaction that takes place between the consultant and the client, we are aiming at understanding in what way this assistance and expertise manifests itself in a mutual change effort. Hence, understanding the management consultancy practice as manifested in the *consultant- client interaction* (towards a mutual change effort) means focusing on several perspectives. We have identified a couple of theoretical perspectives that seemingly cover different aspects of the interaction.

As a point of departure, we understand the consultant is offering some kind of expertise to the client; this is the basic point of the relationship. However, this expertise can be of many different natures. The characteristics of the expertise knowledge are, therefore, of crucial importance for the design of the consultant-

client interaction. Barber and Mulligan (2001) state that there are two main orientations in the expertise that consultants provide and possess: *task-oriented* or *process-oriented* expertise. In this sense, the task-oriented consultants are focused on the actual problem and they do not necessarily give as much attention to the people and relationship issues. On the other hand, Barber and Mulligan state that the process-oriented consultants give more attention to people and relationship matters; but, they do not solve the actual problem. Instead, they are facilitating the client to solve the problem. This implies a diversification of the consultant's work, which we elaborate on further in chapter two in our theoretical framework.

From one perspective, Philips (1988) decided in his empirical study on influential consultants and clients, to: "…focus on their action, to call them 'actors' and to study 'actorship' as a phenomenon developed and practiced in the interaction between an actor and a work development process" (p.173).

Individuals, i.e. consultants and clients who involve themselves in influencing the work organization, are seen as prerequisites and objectives for the change effort. Philips' hypothesis is that there arises a constant need for actors and actorship, since these types of change efforts can no longer be understood as strictly time and organization limited.

From a second perspective, Werr's (1999) notion is that to establish the *link* between abstract knowledge and practical action you develop a central clue for understanding the actions of consultants in an organization. In establishing such a link, awareness should be raised about how knowledge is used in the interaction.

However, from a third perspective we ascribe power to the client in the mutual change effort. According to Sturdy (1997), this empowerment is somewhat misleading and underestimated in the literature. The client has, in fact, an ability to resist the activities of the consultant. In this manner, Sturdy suggests viewing both actors as equally influential. Thus, we frame how change is induced into the

client organization; this enables us to understand how the clients' perceptions change.

In accordance with these theoretical perspectives, we have formulated three extended research questions with regards to the consultant- client interaction towards a mutual change effort. These will be our continuous guides in exploring how to develop management consultancy practice:

- How and why do the consultants act in a certain way in the interaction with their clients?
- What knowledge is used by the consultants in the interaction with their clients?
- How is change facilitated through the interaction to affect the clients' perceptions?

1.3.4 What Does Research Tell Us About Consulting Matters?

Werr (1999) identifies three foci in his overview of empirical studies that deal with the understanding of consulting activities concerning roles, knowledge and change. These are: consulting as a problem solving activity; consulting as joint reality construction; and consulting as an organizational effort. Interestingly, two of them seem to offer some general insights into our extended research questions say.

- **Consulting as a problem solving activity:** the studies in this category focus on understanding the experienced consultant's problem solving process and the knowledge involved in the process in order to be able to transfer this knowledge to less experienced consultants (Werr, 1999:32).

- **Consulting as joint reality construction:** These studies aim at understanding consultants' actions in relation to the client system in order to establish the basic nature of the consulting process. These studies question the view of the consulting process as a problem solving process and instead describe it as a process of reality creation (Werr, 1999:32).

1.4 Illustrated Research[4]

As described in length above, the interaction between PreEra management consultants and their clients essentially constitutes practice. However, this mere assumption is not enough. We need to demonstrate an established approach towards an understanding of the research focus. In doing this, we hereby present the context in which we conduct our research.

In this sense, we are interested in the consultation process in a real setting. Usually, this is visible in the format of projects and PreEra is no exception. The consultation processes are constituted by different phases in which consultants are performing interventions to aid the process in different directions (Schein, 1990). Together with our research partner firm we have selected two projects labeled *Alpha* and *Beta,*[5] in which the consultation process in time and scope have been identified (see chapters 3.1.2, 3.1.3).

In the illustration below we establish a working pillar for this study. The focal point in the research is the consultant- client interaction in the two projects.

Figure 1: The consultant- client interaction, understood in the two projects.

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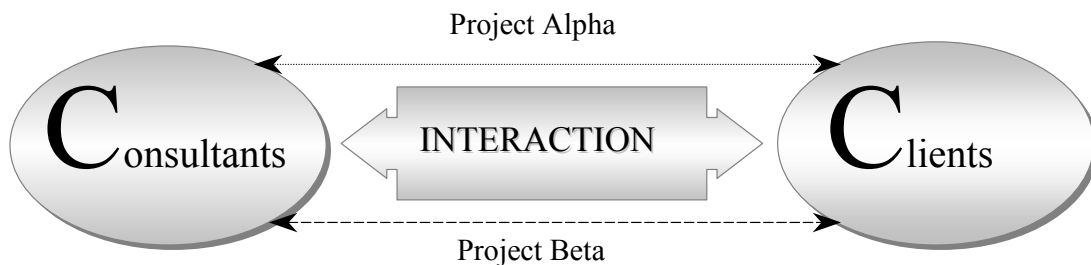
[4] For further reading, we have presented an extensive statement on this matter, in Appendix I, i.e. the research process.

[5] See Appendix I "The Research Process" for our explanation of this selection.

1.5 Aim and Purpose of the Study

The aim of this thesis is to understand PreEra's management consultancy practice in depth. In this sense, our aim is to study the consultant- client interaction, which manifests this practice. Thus, our ultimate purpose is to present useful feedback for PreEra that will enable them to develop their management consultancy practice.

1.6 Generic Delimitations[6]

Our intention is to contribute to the existing practice and knowledge of the consultant firm as well as to academia (theory), although our feedback is mainly aimed at contributing to PreEra's practice. Secondary, albeit importantly, is our theoretical contribution. Pålshaugen (1996), view such delimitation as sufficient in this sense, meaning that we still search for theoretical interpretations based on practice.

We conduct our research through one completed project and one project in progress, which helps frame time and scope. In this sense, our intention is not to investigate the project itself, as a matter of success or failure. Rather, the projects function as mere prerequisites for the empirical investigation. We also delimit ourselves to an organizational unit of PreEra's "competence circles" (IT/IS, Marketing and Management), the management circle of the firm (see chapter 3.1).

1.7 Thesis Outline

In Chapter Two, we establish our theoretical framework, which creates a basis for our case study. As the point of departure, we discuss different orientations and related models. We continue to frame three different domains of theory as an extension of the above-mentioned "clues." The areas of *Actorship*, *Knowledge*

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[6] For a deeper discussion of empirical limitations and likewise please refer to the research approach presented in Appendix I.

Linked to Action, and *Change as Sensemaking* are highlighted to achieve more depth. These areas are seen as separate domains of theory, albeit interrelated, in this study. This is done for the sole purpose of integrating existing knowledge into a coherent understanding of the consultant- client interaction. We end the chapter by briefly reflecting on how these theories are to be used in the empirical study and related analysis.

In Chapter Three, we present the management consultancy practice and the two studied projects, Alpha and Beta, as a setting of context. We thereby ensure that the reader obtains an insight and prelude of the results of the empirical investigation. In the next section of this chapter, we conduct a deepened analysis in conjunction with our theory. We let the thematic content of our findings guide us as we identify the following; contradiction in terms, dimensions of knowledge in individuals, and implications of different sensemaking models in use in Alpha and Beta.

In Chapter Four, we present our conclusions and bring our results and analysis to yet another level, (i.e. into a holistic understanding of the management consultancy practice in PreEra). We use our line of thought in the analysis to present arguments in the conclusion. Therefore, we also present "new" theory to strengthen our conclusions. Finally, we discuss the possible implications for and contributions to existing knowledge through our study, as well as the need for further research.

In the appendix we make a reflective account of our own methodology and choices made during the research process. Among other things, we explain how and why we conducted a single case study with embedded units.

1.8 Chapter Summary

In this introductory chapter we established the basic path for our study. We concretized our main research as a real question, derived from the actual practice of PreEra. This assures the "relevance" of the study. This has launched our main research focus:

To explore how a firm can develop its management consultancy practice.

Since there is no evident answer initially, we need to further capture the nature of the practice to give us additional research clues. Hence, we established three extended research questions that enable us to further explore the consultant-client interaction in PreEra's management consultancy practice.

- How and why do the consultants act in a certain way in the interaction with their clients?
- What knowledge is used by the consultants in the interaction with their clients?
- How is change facilitated through the interaction to affect the clients' perceptions?

We declared that the aim of our thesis is to understand PreEra's *management consultancy practice* in depth. Thus, our ultimate purpose is to present useful feedback for PreEra that enables them to develop their management consultancy practice.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

*I*n this chapter we establish our theoretical framework, in order to create a foundation for the following case study. As our point of departure, we discuss different consulting orientations and related models. We continue to frame three different domains of theory. The areas of Actorship, Knowledge Linked to Action, and Change as Sensemaking are highlighted to achieve more depth. In the chapter summary, we briefly reflect on how these theories are used in the empirical study and related analysis.

2.1 Establishing a Conceptual Framework of Consultation

In our thesis we aim to explore and study the consultant- client interaction. To be able to do this, we need to establish an understanding of the conceptions and approaches used in such interactions. This is done by examining two of the orientations that exist in theory.

2.1.1 Consulting Orientations

Through interventions the consultant can *interact* and accomplish a general task, for example as a change agent. In the interaction the consultant can perform different roles. To carry out appropriate interventions the consultant chooses an approach or orientation for the role. It may be various roles in different phases of the consultation, but they need to comply with the aim of the intervention. The roles chosen also depend on the character of the consultation.

In the literature on consultation, as well as on organization development, scales are used to enlighten the roles of consultants that exist. French and Bell (1978) state that consulting roles vary between being *task-oriented* or *process-oriented*. The latter is oriented towards the process of change.

Lippit and Lippit (1978) describe the possible roles of consultants as ranging from *directive* to *non-directive.* The different roles are defined by how the influence over the change effort is divided between the consultant and client. Within the more directive roles, the consultant is the one who leads the change

process and influences the changes. In contrast, in non-directive roles the consultant contributes by observing, asking questions and supplying the client with data. The clients decide how to use these resources in the change process, which the clients initiate and run themselves. (Lippit and Lippit, 1978)

In a similar fashion, Stjernberg and Werr (2001) declare that in the discourse on management consulting, there is a classical polarization between two models of consultation, i.e. *the expert model* and *the process model*. Schein (1987) has identified three main models in consultancy practices, these are: *Providing Expert Information*, *Playing Doctor,* or *Process Consultation*.

Schein (1987) is a firm advocator of process consultation. Accordingly, *the expert model* has traditionally been the most prevalent, where the ability as problem-solver is the main role of the consultant. Contrarily, *the process model* means that the consultant and client aim at joint diagnosis of the problem situation. We will apply Schein's (1987) understandings about *the expert model* and *the process model* to our exploration of PreEra's management consultancy practice.

The Expert Model
Schein (1987) defines the expert model as: "…the core of this model is that the client has made up his mind on what the problem is, what kind of help is needed, and to whom to go for this help" (p.22). The definition implies that the consultant is there to solve a problem; it is the knowledge of the consultant that is required for solving a particular problem. The consultant is adding value for the client by demonstrating knowledge in an expertise area. This is expressed in numerous ways; designing new systems, training personnel in new skills and being the troubleshooter in areas where the client does not have the right competence. The client expects advice and solutions for the problem. The message from the client to the consultant is, "Please take the problem off my shoulders and bring me back a solution" (Schein, 1987:23). Consequently, the consultant has ownership of the problem. Rassam (2001b) defines the expert role as, "The consultant as expert is the initiator, the repository of knowledge and is

seen as the primary problem solver. The client is offloading a problem on to the consultant" (p.144).

If the expert model should work, it is important that the client has diagnosed the problem correctly. If not, there is a possibility that the consultation will deal with the wrong problem. Schein (1987) identifies one irony within this model; i.e. the outcome is dependent on a correct diagnosis made by the client, although, it is the consultant who has been given the expert role.

Another problem with the expert model is that there is a chance that the human dimension is lost in the consultation. The clients may feel that they just receive what the consultant declares passively; the active participation is missing. This may diminish the desired outcome of the consultation. (Barber and Mulligan, 2001; Critchley, 2001)

The Process Model
Schein (1987) defines the process model as, "A set of activities on the part of the consultant that help the client to perceive, understand, and act upon the process events that occur in the client's environment in order to approve the situation as defined by the client" (p.34). The most essential principle in the process model is that the consultant should *not* own the problem. The ownership should stay with the client throughout the whole consultation. (Schein, 1987)

Hence, the role of the consultant is to assist the clients to find the answers themselves; the consultant has a supportive function. (Barber and Mulligan, 2001, Critchley, 2001) This is an important issue and the consultant must send the signal, "It's your problem, but I'll help you work on it and help you solve it" (Schein, 1987:30). However, this is not an easy task for the consultant because it can be tempting to reveal the solution to the client. In addition, it is important to understand that the consultant does not need to be an expert on the actual problem that needs to be solved, instead the consultant should have the competence to facilitate the client through the problem setting and solving process. The consultant should intervene in the human actions that occur in the organization and help the client to gain insight about what is happening in the

organizational human system. (Schein, 1987) There is a possibility, when performing the process model, that the interpersonal and group process roles are overemphasized. The clients may not be ready for the personal exposure that this could generate. (Critchley, 2001)

According to Risling, (1988) the distinction between process and expert should be abolished since it creates confusion and is too limiting. It is easy to confuse the way in which the consultant works and the consultation's aim. He argues that since the distinction is based on the assumptions that reality is a reflection of academic principals, it is of little use to be preoccupied with this distinction in consultation practices.

Stjernberg and Werr (2001) argue that these models might instead be viewed as complementary and that an eclectic use of expert and process models of consultation is more pronounced today. In the sense that, the clients' thoughts function as the link connecting the consultants' interventions and the resulting changes in the organizations. In this thesis, we also see them as complementary. For us, it serves no purpose to view them as polarized; rather we view the process vs. expert roles and models as a point of departure in our case study. Consequently, they aid us in conceptualizing the projects.

2.2 Framing Actorship in Consulting

With the theoretical framing of actorship we are able to further develop the understanding of the consultants' different actions and approaches in the consultant- client interaction. As mentioned in the introduction chapter, we embrace the ideas of Philips (1988) since his understanding of actorship is made in relation to change efforts (in work development).

In his empirical study, Philips (1988) decided to: "…focus on their action, to call them 'actors' and to study 'actorship' as a phenomenon developed and practiced in the interaction between an actor and a work development process" (p.173). Individuals who involve themselves in influencing the work organization are

seen as prerequisites and an objective of the effort.[7] He points out that these kinds of change efforts can no longer be understood as strictly time and organization limited.

Consequently, the author's hypothesis is that there arises constant need for actors and understanding of actorship in organizations in regards to change efforts. As such, we elaborate further on this hypothesis since it enables us to address our first extended research question, "How and why do the consultants act in a certain way in the interaction with their clients?" Expectantly, we will be able to see the difficulties that the management consultants came across in the consultant- client interactions toward the mutual change efforts.

2.2.1 Elaborating on Change Actors in Change Efforts

The Consultant as a Change Actor
In his work, Philips (1988) emphasizes *two actors*[8] as change actors externally. Moreover, Philips (1988) emphasizes that most process consultants working with change efforts have a basic principle, which is to help the clients to learn and change from the their own experience as they go about their work. According to Philips (1988), this is also highlighted in most research on actorship.

Some research focuses on the roles and actions of change actors. One of these traditions deals with people who could be labeled "change masters". Activities like change, creativity and problem solving demand a masterful use of knowledge and human competence that is difficult to grasp. This tradition examines how professionals, such as consultants, architects, corporate leaders and others, think, act and learn (Philips, 1988). Schön (1983; 1987) describes

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[7] Philips (1988) showed that actorship has, in this sense, mostly been studied and practiced in Scandinavian action research and in the American organization development traditions.

[8] We will delimit us further by simply relating to process consultation, when Philips use the term Organizational Development- consultation, since it is closer to the actual practice of our case study projects - albeit we are aware that this is simplifying reality.

how the masterful professional, *the reflective practitioner* acts, for example, in a context such as the consultant- client interaction.

According to Philips (1988), another interesting research approach towards actorship examines people that could be categorized as *change agents* and who have *change roles* (see e.g. Tichy, 1974). More recently, this tradition has evolved into understanding organizations, leadership and change agents from a cognitive frame of reference (e.g. see Weick, 1995).

Within process-oriented consultations, e.g. in the tradition of organization development, learning becomes a concept of increasing interest. The epithet *change* becomes somewhat insufficient since learning is viewed as an equally important outcome of the change effort as the actual organizational changes. The role of the change actor is to encourage the involved individuals' skills and ability to learn from their own experiences, so they will be able to change their own organization on the basis of their learning. (Philips, 1988)

In this sense, Chinne and Benne (1976) explicate some general strategies for a change effort in individuals, groups and organizations. The *empirical- rational* strategy is built on the assumption that people are in fact rational human beings and that an expert proposes a change for other people. The others either reject or accept the change if it is seen as reasonable and possible to gain on. This attitude towards change is what we believe characterizes the expert-oriented consultation to a high degree.

The process-oriented tradition of organization development in change efforts is first and foremost based on another strategy for learning and change, i.e. the *normative- re-educative* strategy, which assumes that change also demands emotional adaptation and that human actions are also partly unconscious. (Chinne and Benne, 1976) By developing the conscious mindset, the person becomes capable of changing. In this sense, the relationship between the change actor and the client is an important tool and the client needs to be motivated to participate in the change effort. Philips (1988) states: "In making the adaptation that the change demands, the client enters a relationship of mutual giving and

taking with the change agent. The interaction facilitates increased self-awareness and self-control" (p.20, translated from Swedish).

Relating to literature (e.g. Weisbord, 1987), Philips (1988) explains that the role of the consultant is to create a "climate of learning" where the consultant is participating in learning together with the client. They should converse with each other and together reach an understanding of what to do. The role of the consultant is, thus, to "set the stage" and to facilitate the dialogue among the people involved.

As of now, we have established a view on how to regard actorship in consultants, i.e. as "external" change actors heavily involved in an organized and mutual change effort, in the interaction with the client.[9] However, we need to further understand what difficulties the external change actor (the consultant) faces in the change effort

A Basic Paradox for the Consultant as a Change Actor
According to Philips (1988), process consultants working with change efforts most often face problems. Since process consultation *per se* is based on people solving their own problems and developing their own working organization, no one else is supposed to solve that problem other than those involved in the change effort. However, the contradiction is that these consultants at the same time participate and influence the relationship with the individual or unit. The major paradox evolves when each consultant engages and acts in a group of people, and at the same time has the intent that these people on their own should define and solve their problems. Even though the consultant might not belong to the group itself, he takes on a more or less active change role when attempting to influence the group.

In this context, Philips (1988) states that every change actor should understand, what strategies, knowledge and skills are necessary for the change

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[9] We acknowledge that there are as well *internal* change actors (Philips, 1988), i.e. managers and leaders (the clients) in the organization that heavily influence the consultation. However, we will limit ourselves further and study the consultants as change actors.

actor/consultant to master in order to be able to manage this paradox in the consultant- client interaction. How then could the consultant as a change actor approach these difficulties and what choices could be made more or less explicitly during the process? We elaborate on this in the following section.

2.2.2 Approaches in Actorship

Two Approaches Towards Change
Philips (1988) mainly describes the change effort as a "means" of changing the organization. In practice, the actors are faced with problematic choices. Accordingly, the choice is between two approaches, which cannot be exercised at the same time.

- The actor chooses to *Direct* the change effort.
- The actor chooses to *Support* the change effort.

From the context in which the actor acts, he is exposed to different signals, for example what type of change is wanted and how these changes should be facilitated. These signals may come from the unit of the client organization or from the firm. Philips (1988) explains in his study that two signals in such a case may be especially evident. The author exemplifies one signal from the environment that he acts on which often is according to *content*; "increased participation is wanted!" While the other signal is often related to *form*; "a planned change effort!" It is in this context that the actor implicitly or explicitly decides between these two approaches.

The Directive change approach means that the actor chooses to act according to the maxims; "I run this change effort" or "I change the work organization." The actor's attitude can be described as if the entity of change, i.e. the unit within the client organization, becomes an "object" for the actor. Consequently, he put himself outside the unit. As a result, the actor views himself as a subject who can influence, change and steer the object. The actor's attitude means that he most likely let the environmental signal: "a planned change effort!" rule or at least be prioritized. (Philips, 1988)

According to Philips (1988), in the Supportive Change Approach, the actor chooses to act according to the maxim; "I support the changes in the organizational unit and the developmental activities that make the desired objectives of change to be fulfilled" (p.68, translated from Swedish). Applied to the context of change efforts, the actor does not primarily see himself as separated or exclusive in his role as "influencer" of the other individuals involved in the change effort. If the unit externally hires him, as a consultant or such, the actor chooses not to influence the content of the change. Change is seen as a growing phenomenon in the unit, and the actor participates in this process. If this approach is chosen the actor lets the environmental signal of "increased participation" rule or at least be prioritized.

Two Approaches Towards Learning

Previously we have not mentioned the concept of *Learning* as related to the change effort in any length. We did however, state in chapter 2.2.1 that *change*, as an epithet might be insufficient as to understand what the consultant- client interaction towards a mutual change effort really aims for. According to Philips (1988), embedded in the context of actorship is the fact that the actors also see the change effort as an opportunity for learning. Consequently, the actors face another problem to manage. This is described as a choice between two approaches, in which a bias is apparent.

- The actor has an Experiential learning bias.
- The actor has a Diffusion learning bias.

Philips (1988) states that in the experiential approach towards learning, the actor through his actions stresses the importance of experiences for those individuals involved in the change effort. The diffusion approach towards learning is characterized by the actor choosing to stress intermediation of lessons learned to a wider set of people.

2.3 Framing the Domains of Knowledge Linked to Action

In this section, we elaborate on two domains of theory, Knowledge and Action. These are directly applicable to the ways in which we could understand what guides the actions of consultants in the consultant- client interaction. However, instead of focusing on these vast theoretical areas separately we view the establishment of a link between abstract knowledge and practical action as central (Werr, 1999). By this, we are able to address our second extended research question: "What knowledge is used by the consultants in the interaction with their clients?"

We continue by briefly discussing the notion of the practical and theoretical traditions of knowledge and action. Then we categorize practical knowledge types and, lastly, connect our categorization to Schön's (1983; 1987) framework on the reflective practitioner.

2.3.1 The Theoretical vs. the Practical Tradition

In reviewing the literature on knowledge and action in relation, several authors argue for the *practical tradition* of knowledge and action as opposed to *the theoretical tradition*. The first tradition is assumed to be better suited for the aim of understanding the actions of practitioners, such as consultants (e.g. Göranzon, 1988; Molander, 1997; Werr, 1999; Schön, 1983; 1987). However, we have come upon an equal adherence to this view of preferring the practical tradition of knowledge and action as better suited to understand the actions of practitioners. Schön (1983; 1987) states (somewhat reluctantly) that the technical rationality (i.e. theoretical tradition) dominates the common sense view on the work of practitioners. The basic assumptions guiding the theoretical tradition of knowledge are, according to Werr (1999), highly questionable on the basis of empirical studies of the work of practitioners.

Molander (1997) summarizes the assumptions of the practical tradition as viewing knowledge as based on participation and dialogue with other people. Knowledge is included as a "living" with material, tools and such. Further the author states that this practical tradition rests on the conviction that knowledge is

knowledge in action, i.e. *"living"* knowledge in the world. Consequently, knowledge does not depict the world, but leads from questions to answers and from tasks to accomplishments within human activities. (Molander, 1997)

2.3.2 Exploring Practical Knowledge Linked to Action

Werr (1999) summarizes the practical tradition of viewing knowledge and experience in action as embedded in the body of the actor. This perspective also acknowledges the social nature of knowledge as embedded in a professional culture. In this perspective, action is an experienced-based reflective interaction with reality. Contrastingly, viewing action as a guided analytical activity in the theoretical tradition. We see ourselves as belonging to the practical tradition of knowledge.

Moreover, to explore theory related to the daily practice of consultants, we need to acknowledge what Werr (1999) describes as *practical knowledge*. In this domain, based on the literature, we recognize *techne* and *phronesis*. Techne is a type of knowledge, which a skilled craftsman possesses, for example, a type that supports production in a specific activity aiming at a specific outcome. On the other hand, phronesis means knowing for action. It is the kind of knowledge manifested in *praxis*. This kind of knowledge is expressed and obtained in collective action together with fellows and colleagues. Phronesis is entirely based on experience, which cannot be formalized and abstracted from practice. It is closely connected to the carrier of the knowledge, i.e. the actor himself. (Werr, 1999)

The Level of Articulation- Explicit vs. Tacit Knowledge

The distinction between *explicit* and *tacit knowledge* is a popular and broadly used technique to grasp the concept of knowledge. Targama and Diedrich (2000) define tacit knowledge as "all kind of knowledge that a person is not capable of formulating explicitly" (p.3). An individual's tacit knowledge is constituted by experiences, actions, values, ideals and emotions, which could be ascribed as phronesis. According to Targama and Diedrich (2000) the two dimensions of tacit knowledge are:

- **The technical dimension**, which is the skills that are called "know-how", a person creates fingertip knowledge about a subject from the experiences.

- **The cognitive dimension**, which are the mental models an individual acts upon. These models are the way people perceive the reality that surrounds them.

Explicit knowledge, on the other hand, has been identified by Nonaka (1995) as the knowledge that is more easily codified and formulated into statements that can easily be communicated and shared in a social context. In this manner, tacit and explicit types concern the form of knowledge at the level of articulation. In this way, techne is similar to what is an explicit form of knowledge, while tacit knowledge is a dimension of phronesis.

The Level of Abstraction - Abstract vs. Specific Knowledge
Another dimension concerning the form of knowledge that "separates" techne from phronesis is the level of abstraction. Lillrank (1995) offers some insights on the issue, describing it as matter of differences in the *abstract-specific dimension*.

Abstract forms of knowledge have been detached from their direct empirical and experiential basis. Thus, they consist of generalizations. This orders the world in an objectifying manner. Conversely, specific knowledge is directly embedded in the experiential basis in which it emerges. The specific knowledge has the character of a holistic understanding of a complex world that orientates action.

2.3.3 The Reflective Practitioner
So far, knowledge and action have been briefly investigated. The investigation on this part of our theoretical framework has been quite general and not linked to empirical findings. Schön's (1983; 1987) empirical efforts offer us ideas on the process in which techne and phronesis meet, i.e. the process of reflection in action, so as to understand the actions of practitioners. We will also refer to other studies; for example, Werr's (1999) empirical work in which Schön's ideas has been important to understand the context of management consultants.

Schön (1983; 1987) views professional activity (such as management consulting) in most businesses as guided by the view on technical rationality and the separation between means vs. ends, research vs. practice and knowing vs. doing. More recently, interpreted by Bäcklund and Werr (2001), this prevalent view implies that a certain problem (ends) can be solved by a certain approach (means).

Furthermore, considering management consulting as an expert activity is the foundation for the research vs. practice dichotomy. The problem of translating knowledge into action is reflected in the dichotomy of knowing vs. doing. Often the management consultants present themselves as having the competence to surpass this dichotomy.

From this perspective, Werr (1999)[10] states in his empirical study on the roles of methods in management consulting that: "The pursuit of professional activity is seen as the application of a number of tools to a well defined problem" (p. 56). Seen from this perspective, the knowledge of the practitioner or consultant is thus to choose the right method for the defined problem and use this method in the right way.

This is well in line to Schön (1983) who states that it is not enough to view the professional, (i.e. the management consultant) as a mere problem solver since this will not fairly reflect the reality. The reality is much more multifaceted than these three dichotomies the technical rationality entail. In this manner, Werr (1999) concludes that neither clear ends nor well-defined problem situations typify the domains of the practitioners' actions. Instead, these domains are characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity.

Understanding the Activities of the Reflective Practitioner
With the above in mind, how can we then understand this uncertain and ambiguous situation in which consultants act? By embracing Schön's ideas on "confusing messes", we realize that this often includes a strategy, which attends

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[10] Referring to Schön (1983).

to the most central problems. Werr (1999) mentions that in such a case, problem solutions based on technical rationality, for example formalized methods (e.g. Business Process Reengineering or Balanced Scorecard etc) could be of limited usefulness.

When interpreting Schön (1983; 1987), we can suggest two types of activities done by the practitioner. The first concerns the activity of routine applications of existing rules and routines, which is problem solving and limited to merely well defined problems. The second concerns the activity of responding to surprising findings by inventing new rules on the spot, thereby requiring the person to make new sense of uncertain, unique or conflicted situations. This is labeled problem setting, which is a precondition for problem solving in the "confusing messes" in which practitioners act. (Schön, 1987)

In this way, experienced-based types of knowledge are emphasized, where intuition and artistry guide the actions of practitioners in messy situations of real life on trial and error bases. These types of knowledge underlying action is similar to what we mentioned earlier as "knowledge in action", described by Schön (1987) as intuitive and difficult to articulate. According to Werr (1999), it indicates some similarities to phronesis.

2.4 Framing Change as Sensemaking within Clients

In the above, we have framed two perspectives (i.e. actorship and knowledge linked to action), which mainly, but not exclusively, aim at understanding the activities and actions of consultants. As we mentioned in the introductory chapter, we also need to ascribe power to the client, which according to Sturdy (1997) has been somewhat underestimated in the literature. The client has, in fact, an ability to resist the activities of the consultant. In this manner, Sturdy suggests viewing both actors in a change effort as equally influential and to focus on the interaction between them.

In this section, we go even further as to ascribe our main (but not all) interest into the client's side of the change effort. In the following sections, we elaborate

on how we could understand and examine the change in perceptions of the clients in the context regarding the consultants' facilitation of change. Through this approach, we believe us are better equipped to address our third extended research question: "How is change facilitated through the interaction to affect the clients' perceptions?" We begin by defining how we perceive change in this context.

2.4.1 A Basic Understanding of Change and Development in this Study

In this thesis, we define change and development as change associated with individuals and organizations growing in order to meet their true potential. (Bruce and Wyman, 1998) This definition sprung from the well-recognized Kurt Lewin[11] who defined change as development - albeit as opposed to a change that is regressive.

In essence, we agree with the paramount principle that organizations do not really change; only the people within them do. If the people do not change through a process of re-educating themselves and their perceptions, the consequences are that the organization cannot really change. (Gardner, 1974)

2.4.2 Sensemaking in Organizations

Agreed, change starts in people minds. Hence, Weick (1995) means that this understanding with the notion on how the perception of members, i.e. sensemaking processes vastly constitutes organizations. Therefore, these processes in which members' perceptions are developed, are central to accomplish organizational change (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001).

Gephart (1992) adds to the description of sensemaking, stating it is: "the verbal intersubjective process of interpreting actions and events" (p.118). Weick (1995) describes sensemaking in organizations as the "level of social structure," having the distinguishing characteristic of a shift from inter- subjectivity between individuals to a generic subjectivity in the organization.

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[11] Kurt Lewin, a German born American social psychologist known for his field theory of behavior, see http://www.britannica.com.

Using Stjernberg and Werr's (2001) considerations on related terms and theories in this sense means acknowledging that a shared understanding of a problem or situation is the glue that holds the organization together and that most of these understandings are taken for granted. Another related term of interest is *local theories*, which accordingly could be described as cognitive maps that steer people's understandings of the settings or where they find themselves; thereby steering their behaviors in the same settings (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001).

2.4.3 A Framework of Sensemaking as Change within the Client

In their empirical research Stjernberg and Werr (2001) have used a similar cognitive perspective to understanding organizational change and identified three *triggers* of sensemaking in the individuals' understanding of the organization and its environment. There are the *objective situation*, *shared cognitive maps* and/or *generic models*. Seen in a context of the consultant- client interaction, Stjernberg and Werr (2001) state:

> The client's sensemaking processes, in which she creates her understanding of the organization, could thus be viewed as the main variable the consultant can manipulate in order to accomplish change in the organization. Not only will the client's actions change as her understanding of the organization and its environments changes, but these actions of the client will also in turn change the organization and its environment in the direction of her understanding of it. (p. 263-264)

Sensemaking as a topic is seemingly essential from the consultant's perspective of inducing change, as well as out of the client's perspective of changing itself. In the following section, we briefly discuss Stjernberg and Werr's (2001) above-mentioned notion of different triggers of sensemaking, as these are vital in the consulting context of PreEra. Consequently, we relate to them again in the analysis part, regarding our explorative extended research focus.

The Objective Situation
Where an individual's actions, and the actions of others are affected, is within the so-called *objective situation* in the relevant "unit" of the organization. It is made understandable through the individual's sensemaking processes, in which the problems of the situation are defined. In this way, the power to create changes in the *objective situation* is in itself important for creating changes in

people's cognitive maps. Besides, changes in the environment and the organization can trigger changes in people's judgment of the situation too. (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001)

Shared Cognitive Maps

A second input to the individual's ability to make sense of the organization and environment is, according to Stjernberg and Werr (2001), what may be labeled as *shared cognitive maps*. As such, the individual is confronted with the thoughts of colleagues and others' understandings of the organization and environment. These are never *truly* shared by the members, since they never are identical in different individuals. However, some aspects are more shared and stable than others and these are what the authors refer to as *shared cognitive maps*.

Generic Models

A third trigger, the *generic models* of the organization, most often establishes a need for change, provides a set of tools to support the change process, and identifies key actors in the process. Two recent and popular examples in the management discourse are the Business Process Reengineering[12] and the Balanced Scorecard[13]. The latter has, in different aspects, been quite prevalent in the practice of PreEra. Often, these have a daring rhetoric, with a claim of universal applicability. *Generic models* thus present ready- made problem and solution packages, which the individual can use to reassess his understanding of the organization and its environment (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001).

Different Characteristics of the Sensemaking Triggers

Not many believe that generic models presented as universally applicable do render any organizational success; even if all the advice is followed (Huczinsky, 1993). Instead, these models are characterized by a lack of linkages to the actor's specific situation. However, Stjernberg and Werr (2001) argue that, if these models are involved in a contextualization or translation process, they are in fact made applicable to a specific situation. More over, in this process the situation is reinterpreted in the light of the model at the same time. If so, the generics

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[12] See e.g. Hammer and Champy, (1993)

[13] See e.g. Kaplan and Norton, (1996).

models may be influential through their power to provide structure, language and symbols for the individual to make sense of the situation and share the understanding with others.

On the other hand, changes in the objective situation, are characterized by triggers in the individual sensemaking processes through the creation of experiences that do not fit his taken for granted models. These taken for granted models that every individual holds in life and about the organization are changed by *input* from both others' thoughts *and* generic models or theories. (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001) When the individual shares his thoughts with other members about the specific situation, his input consists of already contextualized knowledge. In this context of collegial discussions, experiencing an others interpretation of the situation might trigger changes in the individuals' mental models (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001).

2.5 Chapter Summary – Theory in Relation to the Case Study

Firstly, we began this chapter by establishing some concepts that concern the consultation in general. As a reference point in our case study, we use Schein's (1987; 1988) elaboration on *the expert model* and *the process model* as tools for our basic understanding of PreEra's management consultancy practice. We also discussed the individual consultants roles performed in these consulting models, which we hereby simply refer to as the expert- and process-orientations.

Secondly, we established Philips's (1988) perspective on *Actorship*, in which we identified consultants and clients as actors in change efforts. Furthermore, we established two approaches towards change and two approaches towards learning in Actorship. Using this in our case study facilitates us in our analysis of how and why the consultants act in a certain way in the interactions with the clients.

Thirdly, we framed the practical tradition of knowledge linked to action. In the categorization of practical knowledge, we sketched out two types: phronesis and techne. These were then understood in terms of two separate dimensions, techne

as mainly *abstract and explicit*, and phronesis as mainly *specific and tacit*. This enables us to study what knowledge the consultants in the interaction with the clients apply. Further, to be able to understand the knowledge basis for practical actions of consultants we initiated Schön's (1983; 1987) framework on *the reflective practitioner*. In the case study, we are able to evaluate the process of problem solving in a commonsense meaning, including both activities of problem setting and problem solving.

Figure 2: A basic categorization of "Practical Knowledge Types" and Reflection in Action

Types	Techne	Phronesis
Level of Articulation	Explicit ←┄┄→	Tacit
Level of Abstraction	General ←┄┄→	Specific
Process:	Reflection	In Action
Activity:	Problem solving	Problem setting

Finally, we presented theory (Weick, 1995; Stjernberg and Werr, 2001) that enlightened the basic understanding of sensemaking in the context of management consulting. We understood the assumptions on sensemaking as being a central item for consultants to manipulate in order to facilitate change. The sensemaking process could be triggered either by changes in organizational members' perceptions on the *objective situation*, or by changes in the *knowledge base*, which are the cognitive maps used by members to interpret and understand these situations. According to Stjernberg and Werr (2001), the *objective situation* of the organizational members is normally outside of the direct reach of the consultants to change, as it is simply triggered by sensemaking processes. Instead, in their empirical example, the focal point was the possibilities for the consultant to induce change by changing the client's knowledge base and thereby his interpretation of the situations. In this sense, the knowledge base could be changed in two ways. We mainly address these in our empirical case study and analysis.

- From an individual's contact with theories and models of general nature.

- From developments in the (shared) cognitive maps, for example in dialogues and interactions with other individuals.

3 THE CASE STUDY RESULTS

*I*n this chapter, we present the management consultancy practice of PreEra and the two studied projects, Alpha and Beta. [14] We thereby ensure that the reader obtains an insight and prelude of the results from our empirical investigation. In the following three sections, we conduct a deeper analysis of the consultant- client interaction in conjunction with our theory. We let a thematic content of our findings guide us as we identify; contradiction in terms, dimensions of knowledge in individuals and implications of different sensemaking models in use in Alpha and Beta.

3.1 The Setting of the Case Study

3.1.1 Research Partner PreEra

History

The consultancy firm PreEra was founded in 1997. The head office is located in Gothenburg and they have one small office in Stockholm. The number of employees is roughly forty at the moment. PreEra is a consultancy firm that has its roots in three diverse business areas, *IT/IS*, *Marketing* and *Management,* which they brand as their three competence circles. The borders of these circles are not very clear; rather they overlap, which denotes that PreEra believes their diverse business competences are integrated. Nonetheless, there is a quite clear character to the type of projects that each of these circles serve and the core competences that are required to execute these projects. For PreEra this is a vital virtue; by this they aim to introduce the firm with the ability to act as both generalists and specialists. In our research we have focused our interest towards the consultant's activities in *the management circle* at PreEra.

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[14] The empirical data for this presentation is from interviews, documentation and PreEra's homepage, http://www.preera.com.

The Management Circle's Conception of Change Efforts

PreEra's belief is that management in an organization should influence behaviors that drive the business enterprise's activities to create actions in a preferred direction. The most essential task for management is to deal with "soft" values, in other words human relations. PreEra's point of departure is that an organization consists of humans that interact vividly and thereby develop the organization. Therefore, humans' understandings of the business actions are of decisive importance in work with change efforts. The fundamental idea to focus on the process of change is founded in the belief that it is within the process of change that real understanding evolves. With this stance it is crucial to involve the employees in the organizational work with goals and strategies. Two cornerstones summarize PreEra's paradigm; dialogue should be used as an approach and tool for change efforts and this is based on the concept of understanding as vital for any progress in change efforts.

The Journey of PreEra's Management Consultancy Practice

The character of the management consultancy practice was more expert-oriented in 1998 when the Alpha project started. The management circle has historically focused its consulting efforts in the field of financial controlling and, consequently, the main competence of the circle has been financial controlling. Both historically and today, methods are of great importance for the management circle. The *Balanced Scorecard* has been used quite a lot for financial controlling projects. However, PreEra has used a modified and developed version of the concept, namely *Balanced Controlling*. This method is based on the assumption that humans in organizations, should to a large degree, participate in projects that aspire to change.

Today the situation is different; there was an internal development in the circle around the methods and models. PreEra developed a model for the work with Balanced Controlling that has its foundation in their conception of change efforts, which is *Dialogue Based Development*. Balanced Controlling is used as the agenda for this model. The dialogue is supposed to provide a tool for both the consultants and the clients in change efforts. PreEra believes that dialogue is the tool that can facilitate change, development and understanding. It is decisive

for the management consultants to setup arenas, use methods and create a will for dialogue and participation. They do not believe that you can "buy change"; the client organization must fulfill its own journey to be able to change. The client must "own" initiatives as well as content. The process should be in the hands of the clients and the consultants should just be facilitators of the process. The people in the client organization need to be involved in the change efforts and, therefore, participation is obligatory. PreEra does not believe that a successful change effort can be carried out through a limited group of people, who later formulate a decision that is forced upon the remaining part of the organization.

This internal development has altered the management consultancy practice from an expert-oriented towards a more process-oriented practice. PreEra wants to be regarded as a management consultancy firm with a process-oriented practice. This entails that they do not want to be viewed as the driving force of change; instead they want to be seen as participants in a change process. In this sense, the process itself has a value, sometimes even more, or at least as much as the actual result. When PreEra uses a process-oriented approach to management consulting it implies a lot of issues. This means that the consultants should transfer their knowledge to the client and solve the problems together with them. In this approach there is also a belief that it is necessary to design the methods and models for change efforts for each and every client organization. With an expert-oriented approach the consultant is providing the answers. In PreEra the consultants should facilitate the client in problem exploration. The consultants should ask the right questions, not provide the answers. This will give the client the opportunity to truly learn something new.

Nevertheless, the fact is that PreEra does not get the permission from their clients to use Dialogue Based Development in as many projects as they want. If the projects have a more clinical financial character the consulting roles become more expert-oriented. Among some potential clients the perception remains that PreEra is a management consultancy firm mainly working with financial controlling models, with an expert-oriented approach. PreEra is aware of this perception and actively tries to change it. Internally PreEra has moved from

being experts on their version of the Balanced Scorecard, namely Balanced Controlling, towards a more process-oriented view where the Dialogue Based Development is the main tool and model. Externally however, PreEra's management consultancy practice is mainly viewed as expert-oriented with expert knowledge on the Balanced Controlling Method.

The Consultants

In the management circle the consultants come from various backgrounds, both small firms and larger firms with other practices. PreEra also has the two other competence circles, *IT/IS* and *Marketing*, and as mentioned earlier the borders between these circles are quite vague. This provides the consultants with further inputs to their practice. Moreover, the consultants have different educational backgrounds, such as financial controlling and behavioral science. In addition to this, each and every consultant has his or her own individual preferences regarding consultancy practice. Hence, PreEra strives to develop their management consultancy practice in a very dynamic internal setting.

Consequently, there are different views and opinions about the practice. There is one deployment that has a strong belief in the more expert-oriented financial controlling discipline and another that believes in the more process-oriented Dialogue Based Development. The polarization is not that strong even if the process-oriented deployment does attain greater attention for the moment. PreEra has recruited consultants with more interest in these issues and the already employed consultants have broadened their views towards process-orientation. In this sense, one consultant, in particular, is a strong spokesman for the process-orientation. The same consultant has the role of internal facilitator and guru concerning these issues.

The more process-oriented practice has had various demands on the individual consultants. They supposedly practice a consultation process that is built on frankness in their relationship with the client. The consultant should openly communicate his or her beliefs about the client's problem and problem situation. In this role, the ambition is to make the consultant "unnecessary"; the client should "capture" the consultant's knowledge. The more expert-oriented

consultant has the role of investigator and reporter of the problem; this is not seen as essential in the relation with the client. Instead the consultant becomes the facilitator of the process for the client, he or she does not offer the outcome of the process but instead offers the structure and tools for the clients' change process.

3.1.2 Project Alpha

Aim of the Project

The consultant's assignment in this project was to use a holistic view and map how an upcoming reorganization would affect the task of financial controlling in the client organization. The purpose was to create a financial control model with help from the mapping, which was in accordance with the new organizational structure and the controlling philosophy of the client. The client organization wanted to have a financial model that provided better opportunities for follow-up. They also wanted a program for the computer system that supported this model. This project was a fraction of the reorganization. The result of this project was a finished and implemented financial controlling model with a program for the computer system. Initially, there was an objective of creating a financial control model, which was influenced by the method of Balanced Scorecard. However, this objective was put aside quite early in the consultation process.

Project Acquisition

It all started when one of the consultants at PreEra held classes at the client organization. This consultant did not work at PreEra at the time when the classes were held. However, it was through this opportunity to expose the knowledge of the coming consultant that the interest was raised in the client organization. When the clients demanded this knowledge this person happened to work at PreEra and the management circle accordingly took over this project.

Project Setting

The client organization was on the eve of a large reorganization when PreEra entered the stage. The consultants were not involved in the design work of the

new organization; the new organizational setting was a fixed factor that they could do nothing about. Nevertheless, the fact is that the reorganization was of importance. This reality affected to a large extent what the consultants could do and in which manner they could perform their objectives.

Usually, in consultancy projects there is a formal steering group for the project; however, in this project this was not the case. Instead, there existed a kind of an informal steering group, which was constituted by one person in the client organization. This person could be described as the "driving force" for this project. Unfortunately, this person left the client organization after a while and this created an uncertainty about the results of the project as well as further assignments for PreEra with the client organization.

Expert- or Process-Orientation

The roles of the consultants in this project could to a large degree be characterized by their role as experts. PreEra did not achieve the contract because of their way of practicing management consultancy; instead they acquired the contract because the client demanded some of the individual consultants' knowledge. Their role was supposedly to offer the ideas and knowledge to solve the client organization problems.

The knowledge that the client demanded from PreEra was the expertise that some of the consultants had in the area of financial controlling. Later on, it also showed that the client organization demanded more basic knowledge about financial issues. This clearly shows that the consultants were seen as experts by the client organization. The consultants preferred to work with a consultancy approach that was clearly expert-oriented, due to the fact that it was what the client demanded and because of the character of the task.

Interventions

The interventions that the consultants performed were in the form of half structured interviews with one-way communication, check-up discussions with the client project organization throughout the project, and presentations where results were presented with limited discussions.

3.1.3 Project Beta

Aim of the Project

The cooperation with this client began with one project that led to further projects. We will treat all these projects as one project with different phases. The first task was to do a preliminary study that investigated if the Balanced Scorecard was a suitable method for the client organization's need for a financial controlling system. In connection with this study it developed a need to find new ways of working with visions, goals and steering in the organization. It was obvious that the structure the Balanced Scorecard could offer was suitable for the client, but also that the working procedure and the approach used in the method were applicable. After this study it was decided that the collaboration should continue by using the Balanced Controlling Method. Hence, PreEra were able to perform a preliminary study that showed the Balanced Scorecard to be a suitable method, i.e. it was PreEra's developed version of the Balanced Scorecard that were most suitable for the client.

As the collaboration continued with the Balanced Controlling Method it was acknowledged that there was need of a dialogue between the actors in the client organization to make the Balanced Controlling to function. Consequently, PreEra got the opportunity to use Dialogue Based Development with the client. Therefore, this collaboration has two main standpoints, the Balanced Controlling Method and Dialogue Based Development.

Project Acquisition

Some of the consultants in the management circle have a working history with this client. There was already an established contact between the consultants and the client before PreEra was established as a firm. However, this is not the only motive why the client preferred PreEra as the firm for this project. The client had another consultancy firm working with them for a long time and they wanted to renew themselves by working with another firm. The fact that PreEra offered a fixed price for their work was also an advantageous factor. Nevertheless, the most important reason for the choice of PreEra was that they had a practice with a process-orientation this suited the approach the client demanded. One incident

of significant importance for the choice of PreEra occurred when members of the client organization were at a lecture performed by one of the management consultants. As a result of this, they demanded that this consultant should be involved in the project.

Project Setting

The client organization was in a phase when they had realized that it was necessary to make a change in the organization. The approach to the change that PreEra offered was just the kind of process that the client was demanding. On the other hand PreEra did not reveal all their plans to the client for this project. However, the consultants were allowed to "steer" the clients in a direction that fitted well with the plans the consultants had for the project. This is a project where the consultants have been allowed to perform the consultation they wanted. This was a setting where both the consultants and the client organization had a great opportunity to learn. The atmosphere became quite familiar between some of the consultants and some members of the project group in the client organization.

Expert- or Process-orientation

This project started as an expert consultation where PreEra were seen as experts on the Balanced Scorecard, which was one of the reasons why they had an opportunity to cooperate with the client. During the evolvement of the project, the character of the consultation became more and more process-oriented. Today, it is a truly process-oriented project where the consultants facilitate the client with the process leading in the clients work with the mission to change the organization. This process is time consuming and has been given time in this project. The client has realized that they cannot "buy the change", it is their problem and they have to solve it themselves. In this process consultation three different roles for the consultants can be identified: dialogue partner, facilitator and teacher of the methodology Balanced Controlling.

Interventions

The interventions the consultants performed in this project were half structured interviews with two-way communication, continual discussions with the clients, presentations, and several working seminars.

3.2 Analyzing Actorship in the Consultant- Client Interaction

3.2.1 OVERVIEW: Focusing on Consultants

From our empirically collected data we identify various themes of content that represent what we label "contradiction in terms." These are divergent themes or phenomena interpreted and identified by us. These will be interplayed and contrasted with relevant theory. Moreover, we will generally focus on Beta, since this type of process-oriented change effort is closer to the theory of Actorship discussed in chapter 2.2.

However, in order for us to present this section in an easily read and somewhat anonymous fashion we define the dominant change actors as the prevalent "actorship" identified by our empirical findings in *each* project. Similar to what Philip's (1988) did in his empirical study, we restrict our interest to a couple of actors *in their actorship*[15] that had a certain degree of influence in the process. This is again re-addressed with relevant theory. By this conduct we can address our extended research question: "How and why do the consultants act in a certain way in the interaction with their clients?"

We analyze the actorship of the change actors in the specific context of each separate project. This means that we can only analyze their roles of actorship in *these* specific projects. We limit ourselves to the external change actors, i.e. the consultants. These may have different preferences or roles in other projects and the assessment should, therefore, not be valued on a personal basis. This is a very important statement to recall for the reader.

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[15] For simplifying reasons, the identification was primarily based on collegial labels such as "souls-of-fire", on those consultants most influential in each project.

3.2.2 ANALYSIS: Contradiction in Terms and Dilemmas in Theory

A Contradiction in Terms – Results vs. Process

In this contradiction, the dimension of consultant and client needs is explored. Consultants want to feel confident in what they do, and by showing results they can check with their own "plan" that they are heading in the right direction. Clients want results or concrete evidence of progress that legitimizes the consultant's interventions; this will enable them to check the consultant's fulfillment of the task in the interaction towards a mutual change effort. For clients, it is important to have results that legitimize the purchased consultation within the organization.

Client Beta	"People in the organization say that they are very exited, but they don't see where this is heading, what the will result be. There is clear frustration over the dilemma that it is not possible to see the result."

The actual contradiction is whether you, in a process consultation, should be able to see or have results when you not are sure what the outcome will be. Should the consultant try to create clearer milestones, or goals, so certainty is created concerning where the consultation is heading and actually is at a certain time? If these milestones are created, there is a risk it will direct the outcome of the consultation. According to Schein (1987), this contradicts the purpose of a process-orientated consultation. In fact, the milestones could have a decreasing affect on creativity and ideas in the project, which may diminish the aimed change effort according to the clients.

Client Beta	"It could be valuable to have milestones, but on the other hand, maybe this would counteract its purpose?"

In fact, the only *real* difficulties that have been perceived by the client in the Beta consultation *so far* concern the lack of apparent results on a continuous base.

Client Beta	"It has been relatively painless, but sometimes there are questions and thoughts about the result."

This created a feeling of frustration and insecurity in the Beta organization. However, it has also clearly shown that this feeling was conquered when time was given for reflection. This is a good example of the positive and negative effects of a process consultation. If the client had *not* been able to conquer this feeling, the outcome of the consultation could have been a failure. The consultants have succeeded so far in creating a new understanding among the clients about the client's own ability to learn. Although, in this context we interpret it as an example where there still is an obvious lack of concrete results.

Client Beta   "During one period it was really tough, the frustration was high. But then, suddenly, one step forward was taken, something concrete, and then you felt calm and secure again to continue the journey."

A Contradiction in Terms – Nearness vs. Distance
This contradiction is mainly evident in the process-oriented Beta, but also, somewhat differently identified in the expert-oriented Alpha. Simply put, we found that there is a possibility that the consultant- client relationship is too good or even too close and, thus, may distress the interaction. There is also the possibility that one consultant and one client will "connect" to each other and believe they have established the "right solution" for the change effort, as this could disturb the spread of participation in the client organization. It demonstrates that cautiousness is required when practicing this approach. The predicament is how to manage a dispute when a relationship has evolved outside the professional consultant- client sphere.

Consultant Beta   "If you feel that the contact with the client is too close then dispute situations are hard to handle."

Consultant Beta   "It can be a hindrance to be too close with the client. It can be interesting and that has happened once in this project, when we experienced a clash in paradigms of thoughts. The consultant was very process-oriented and the client was a very task-oriented person. They clashed in a seminar but were able to resolve their differences later."

In the more expert-oriented Alpha, the nearness vs. distance contradiction was different. We interpret the contradiction in the Alpha consultation to be more of

an issue to keep the distance to the actual problem solving. The consultants seemed to personalize the outcome of the change effort, almost as if the problems were "shouldered" by the consultants. According to Schein, (1987) this is a common problem that expert consultants meet, since it is in the nature of the expert role to take the ownership of the problem from the client. This was manifested in the consultants like this:

Consultant Alpha   "I think that the changes that were planned to be made, were carried out in this project… I came in and fulfilled the expectations that were on me. But, I felt that much more could have been done and I felt some kind of an ownership of the client's problems. …Maybe I'm too self-critical."

Consultant Alpha   "After the project there was a feeling of 'we are not ready'. This is quite common when you as a consultant get committed and don't get the response that you want from the client. We had the feeling that the will for change was not as strong as necessary. We didn't get enough attention to our ideas and this created frustration."

Consequently, when ownership is taken there is a risk the distance to the problem will wane. The nearness to the problem will decrease opportunities to spread participation within the client organization; the ownership and the outcome of the consultation become *too* personalized.

A Contradiction in Terms – Frankness vs. Manipulation
This contradiction is concerning two "aptitudes or attitudes", i.e. frankness and manipulation, that we interpret as evident in the consultant- client interaction. How frank can a consultant be towards the client? All our interviewees on the consultant side talked widely about their "sincere attitude" towards the client. In this lengthy quote below, one consultant exemplified this contradiction, manifested in the larger context of the practice in Beta:

Consultant Beta   "The practice, our way of working, and how we carry through our projects [Beta], and our thinking behind them you mean? Well, we seldom work as expert consultants, like many others do, as I understand it. Of course, I have biases, but I believe that we try to ask the right

questions concerning the problem areas, trying to solve the problems together with the client, and get them to participate in the efforts. Or else they don't want to be in it, I think. Often they like it if the consultants can draw the outline, but they appreciate if they are allowed to think that it was their own idea that is mirrored in the outcome or the result of the change effort. We are trying to transfer the knowledge, give a lot of examples and it feels like we are sincere with the client, and don't hold back any secrets."

Still, is it fair to manipulate the client, although it is for the benefit of the client and the process? This is also dependent on the kind of relationship that exists between the actors. One consultant stated:

Consultant Beta "It is necessary that there is trust in the relationship between the consultant and the client. …Then your able to communicate with openness."

Thus, in this sense we see that the trusting relationship between consultant and client are of importance; frankness and sincerity can create an open atmosphere. On the other hand, we also found that to be able to "balance" the frankness with manipulation, i.e. "for the good of the client", demands a feeling of confidence in the work and daily practice of the consultants.

Consultant Beta "To be able to always be as sincere as possible towards the clients and the problems, demand that you feel secure in what you do and what you are able to achieve."

Without feeling confident in your work it was seen as difficult to be frank *at all times* towards the client. Furthermore, while there is a need of frankness towards the client at all times, there is also a need to *withhold knowledge* about the problems, so that the clients themselves will find the "solutions". This withholding of knowledge- situation could be seen as a manipulation, since in many respects the consultant has a fair idea of what the problem might be. In this sense, we found a clear contradiction in terms illustrated in this quote:

Consultant Beta	"The consultant must withhold his knowledge towards the client. This is frustrating. Instead, the consultant must have the ability to ask the next question, to continue the exploration."

However, we do not interpret manipulation as met in Beta only as negative, in the sense of a contradiction in terms. Obviously, it creates ownership in the clients of the issues surrounding the organization, since they believe to have understood it themselves.

Interpreting Alpha and Beta as a Change Dilemma in Theory
As briefly mentioned in our theoretical framework, Philips (1998) has identified two main dilemmas, which are in concurrence with our *contradiction in terms*. Philip (1988) states that the Change Dilemma emerges because the actor regards the change effort as a means of change in the work organization. The actor has to choose between two approaches to change or, alternatively, balance them against each other. If the actor is biased in favor of a Directive Approach, he can be quite sure that something will happen in the developmental process. However, the effects of his actions work against the participatory objectives of their efforts.[16]

Consultant Alpha:	"In the expert role that I sometimes have been in, you just do as the client says, solve their problem, bow your head and do what the client wants to be done."

This quote indicates that the Alpha consultant did not have a Directive approach, but on the contrary, it showed that the Directive approach was evident according to a client:

Client Alpha	"The consultant X, drove the model more radically than we wanted to accept. He had quite a hard theoretical pressure, but after some discussion, we compromised."

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[16] We want to re-address the fact that the manifestation of actorship is not necessarily a bias - albeit it has been the preference in *these* projects due to, amongst other things, the prerequisites of the context.

Alternatively, if the actor has a bias towards a Supportive Approach, such as in Beta, he may contribute to the participatory aims. However, there is no guarantee that any manifested changes in the work organization will be rendered (Philips, 1988). This quote explains which actorship is most prevalent in Beta:

Consultant Beta "Our organizational support towards change must be processed during the work. We are making conclusions during the work, but if you want the client to follow you must make them draw these attentions themselves."

In this sense, change is seen as a phenomenon that is growing within the unit. In Beta, actorship is emphasized as participation in the process for the actors, while the consultant's role as the change actor is to be a mere property for extensive usage. According to Philips (1988), since this approach is chosen the actor let the signals from the client organization guide the "increased participation" rule and be prioritized.

However, we have found another complication related to the Change Dilemma, which is in concurrence with "frankness vs. manipulation" above. Namely, the consultant should be able to withhold one's *own* knowledge in the process of a change effort, as well as towards the client. This seems to be a very frustrating restriction on the individual consultant. This is well illustrated in this quotation.

Consultant Beta "The consultant should help the client to learn the tools. He helps the client to self-analyze. The consultant is holding back his/her own knowledge, not only filtrating the information through his knowledge."

Interpreting the above quotation also means emphasizing that the consultant is pushing the client to participate. The consultant views the interaction as the possibility to teach the client the tools (such as Dialogue Based Development), so that the client can make the change himself. Hence, the consultant withholds the agenda as to how the change process could be led and lets the client figure this out for himself.

Consultant Beta "We are setting the agenda together with the client, but we are trying to give the impression that it is the client that has set the agenda."

From another viewpoint the consultant's ability to be a process-oriented consultant is truly tested.

Consultant Beta   "As a consultant you learn to withhold the answers, be patient. Hold back your ego-trip."

Consequently, the demand on the consultant in the process-oriented Beta is to withhold his knowledge, which will decrease the opportunity to immediately for the consultant to demonstrate the skills for the client. This ego-trip must be postponed. This demands a great deal of patience both from the consultants who withhold and the clients who await the knowledge. Therefore, in this sense frustration and patience become closely related.

Interpreting Alpha and Beta as a Learning Dilemma in Theory
The Learning Dilemma (Philips, 1988) emerges because the actor regards the change effort as an opportunity for learning about the development processes and the work organization. The actor then has to decide between two major approaches to learning, or (likewise in the change dilemma) balance them against each other. Philips (1988) found that: "If he is biased in favor of the Experiential Approach, he will facilitate learning within the company unit which is experiencing change, but he will also contribute to the isolation of the unit and make it more difficult to disseminate its experiences - outsiders will not listen" (p.175).

We interpreted Actorship in Beta as being mainly evident in the Experiential Approach. However, this approach to Learning was not as evident to us as the Supportive Approach to change and it mainly concerned the learning in clients, not the consultants:

Consultant Beta   "I am a tool for their own discovery, but I learn every time too."

Consultant Beta   "We have the benefit of having wise clients to practice and learn with."

Consultant Beta   "Furthermore, I take all the knowledge in me and just filter it. This is not leading to any learning for the client. Learning is created when I

give the client the tools to self-analyze and problem-analyze. The client is getting help for insight..."

Conversely, if the actor has a bias towards a Diffusion Approach, then he will put emphasis on the communication of the unit's insight to its surroundings, albeit this endeavor will hinder the creation of an innovative climate within the unit, (i.e. there may not be any innovations and experiences to diffuse). We experienced this as a difficulty in the consultant- client interaction as it was explained in this manner:

Consultant Alpha   "First and foremost, the model did not reach out to the organization, perhaps more people should have been involved earlier. The spread of participation to the larger organization should probably have been earlier."

The clients we interviewed did in fact support the Diffusion Approach towards the relative importance of communication with the larger organization. Consequently, diffusion and participation as a problem became apparent to us.

Moreover and interestingly enough, we found that in the process-oriented Beta consultation the lack of distance to the client, (i.e. *the nearness vs. distance*), meant that the client was in the position to demand more from the consultant, since there existed a personalized relationship between them. This is in line with the ideas of the Learning Dilemma (Philips, 1988). Additionally, it was said from both parties of the consultant- client interaction that there existed a symbiotic learning relationship between PreEra and Beta organization.

Consultant Beta   "The client organization is a very demanding customer. This is wonderful. We are in a very symbiotic learning relationship with this client."

Client Beta   "We also want a part of the profit, the part that PreEra takes with them, it is obvious that they too learn from the project."

The focus on learning views the actual consultant- client interaction, i.e. the development process. It could be questioned how great this really is? There is a

chance that the legitimacy of the consultant role will be lessened. As such, we use the Learning dilemma somewhat differently than Philips (1988) intended, regarding the experiential and the diffusion biases an actor holds. Rather we emphasize the type of "transferring of knowledge and learning" in the consultant- client interaction.

Methods Towards the Two Dilemmas in Alpha and Beta
If the above choices toward the learning and change dilemma are combined, we may use Philips' (1988) results from his empirical study to categorize actorship as mainly manifested in Alpha and Beta. These four types are directly linked to the interaction between the change actor (i.e. the consultant) and the context, in which the client functions. These decide which way the actor relates to the above-mentioned learning and change dilemmas. As such, these describe the basic methods that the actor has to choose from in his practice. (Philips, 1988)

The *Innovator* is eager to pursue his own thoughts, knowledge or solutions (i.e. directive), and to observe what will happen if these are tried out in the developmental effort (i.e. experiential). The *Demonstrator (actorship in ALPHA)* follows his thoughts as well, although with the ambition of observe them far and wide disseminated (i.e. diffusion). The *Participant (actorship in BETA)* involves himself in a unique development and learning process (i.e. experiential). The change in the client organization is developed within the company unit, which is the subject of the development effort (i.e. Supportive). The *Observer* finally, follows and registers a process, in which the change is developed within the unit (i.e. supportive). His observations collect experiences and insights that can be employed somewhere else (i.e. diffusion). (Philips, 1988)

Figure 3: Methods on Actorship as manifested in two projects.

		APPROACH TO CHANGE	
		Directive:	Supportive:
APPROACH TO LEARNING	Experiential:	*Innovation*	*Participation (BETA)*
	Diffusion:	*Demonstration (ALPHA)*	*Observation*

Source: Philips (1988:175)

3.2.3 DISCUSSION: Re-addressing Our First Extended Research Question

The Importance of Actorship as a Demand on the Individual
In this section of the analysis we focused on *Actorship*, in which the external change actors (the consultants) were of specific interest. As such, the "answers" to our first extended research question, "How and why do the consultants act in a certain way in the interaction with their clients?" were of twofold character. Firstly, we found three empirical "contradictions in terms", in our analysis on this matter.

1) **Result vs. Process,** a lack of concrete results during the interaction with the client was contrasted with counteracting process needs.

2) **Nearness vs. Distance,** a problem of having *too good* of a (as in the process-oriented Beta) relationship with the client. This we saw as easily distressing the "effectiveness" of the consultant- client interaction towards a mutual change effort. On the other hand (as in the expert oriented Alpha) actorship in this sense also manifested itself as being distanced from the individual client, which instead meant a high ownership of the "problem" and caused frustration since the change effort did not came out as expected.

3) **Frankness vs. Manipulation**, a true contradiction in terms that concern aptitudes or attitudes towards the consultant- client interaction, which most

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interviewed consultants implicitly brought forward. It concerned being frank towards, for example, a client problem, in the mutual change effort, but at the same time "manipulating them" as to let them believe to have solved it themselves. This is of course an admirable aim, but it has its problems, being highly dependent on what kind of relationship there actually exists in the interaction. Moreover, it demands that the consultant as a change actor is able to balance "frankness vs. manipulation," as well as being able to balance the need to "withhold the knowledge vs. lead the change process". This demands that the consultant feel secure in the daily work practice and those tools and theories used in action. As such, it becomes a matter of self-confidence.

Secondly, we interpreted the above and tried to understand actorship in the context of two dilemmas identified in theory: the Learning and the Change Dilemmas (Phillips, 1988). Moreover, these were understood as having specific prerequisites and demands in each project. Thus, the prevalent actorship manifested left each with a couple of individual choices in regards to both dilemmas and personal biases. In project Alpha, *the Demonstrator,* was interpreted as the prevalent actorship in which the actor follows his own thoughts, although with the aim of seeing them far and widely disseminated. In project Beta, *the Participant* was the dominant actorship manifested in the consultants. The Participant involves himself in a unique development and learning process, while change is developed first and foremost within the unit of the client organization.

Quite important from the above analysis is the notion that in any consultant-client interaction, regardless expert- or process-orientation, there is a demand that the change actor makes active choices and is aware that his or her biases towards those choices affect the client as well. Similarly, if the expert- and process-orientations manifested in these projects are as different as we think regarding actorship and personal preferences, how may the management consultancy practice inherit those?

In this sense, we again turn to Philips (1988) who states that if active Actorship is pursued it is truly demanding. The consultant has a personal need to

participate (*the Participant*) in the mutual change effort, which creates a paradox since the purpose is to influence other clients' possibilities to participate. The very presence of the consultant affects the clients implicitly or explicitly. The difficulty in such a case is that in the consultant- client interaction the dilemmas described above are in play. While at the same time, the consultants must have a highly developed competence, which is practical, reflective and theoretical towards managing those dilemmas (Philips, 1988). If this is true, we could easily state that our identified empirical phenomena or contradiction in terms is of valid interest for the management circle to understand how and why the consultants act in a certain way.

3.3 Analyzing Knowledge Linked to Action in the Consultant-Client Interaction

3.3.1 OVERVIEW: Focusing on Consultants

Our framing of theory mostly regarded the practical tradition of knowledge. In this tradition, knowledge is regarded in an inseparable manner from the actor. Knowledge is inherited in action and, in this sense, hard to codify. We also sketched out two practical knowledge types in our theory: phronesis and techne. These were then elaborated on and categorized in two dimensions: *techne as abstract and explicit;* and *phronesis as specific and tacit.*

Thus, by firstly interpreting our empirical findings as the usage of knowledge manifested in the consultant- client interaction, we develop a *new* clue to our extended research question: "What knowledge is used by the consultants in the interaction with their clients?" Therefore, a lot of "new" theory is inserted.

Secondly, we evaluate the problem solving activity, i.e. the process of "problem understanding" by considering the problem setting in Beta and the problem solving in Alpha. Through this approach, we relate different types of knowledge to the practical actions of the consultants in which the messy reality is transformed into a well-ordered problem.

3.3.2 ANALYSIS: Interpreting Knowledge and Problem Processes

Interpreting Knowledge Types Used by Consultants as None Separable in Action
Not very surprisingly, consultants seemed to view the phronesis type of knowledge, such as experiences and previous result of change efforts and outcome of projects, as the most important to transfer to the client. However, tools and models such as the Balance Scorecard, Balanced Controlling and Dialogue Based Development were important features.

Consultant Beta: "Somehow it's our experience-based knowledge that must be transferred to the client organization."

Consultant Beta   "It is important that we are able to show tools to the client's, this shows that we know what we are doing."

Regarding this dimension of knowledge, we found an interesting structure in our interpretations, namely that tacit knowledge, hard to transfer (according to theory) and explicit knowledge, easily articulated (according to theory) - is difficult to even *separate* in the actions of consultants. They see them, and use them as inter-connected:

Consultant Beta   "Rule number one is to listen to the client, that is the most important thing really, to try to understand the clients and their problems and what they want to do. Then it is up to me to contribute to this with material from my collected experiences, from other cases, as well as the tools and models we use."

Initially, we saw these (tacit and explicit) as clearly defined and different in form. However, in this sense we agree with Polanyi's (1983) notion that this dimension: *the level of articulation* is a continuum rather than a dichotomy.

According to Targama and Diedrich (2000), explicit knowledge is best understood as a kind of "raw material" that is used in action. They state that it seems reasonable to consider acquired and memorized explicit knowledge as being possessed by human beings. As an epistemological dilemma, they believe

that knowledge *per se* "can only be defined in practice, in the activities of each and every individual" (2000:15). In this sense, we need to be aware that every time we conceptualize knowledge and make it abstract, we do not really capture its essence. As a second interpretation of tacit and explicit knowledge used in action, we use Polanyi (1983) who suggests that tacit thoughts form an indispensable part of all knowledge. The difficulties for us, as well as for the consultants, is to separately understand tacit and explicit, and this may not even be necessary. Instead, wee see both knowledge types as "possessed" by the individual consultants.

Consultant Alpha   "What I use in action is not easily described. I have it in the back of my mind as something inherit in me, that is part of our activities with the client."

In a similar sense, Targama and Diedrich (2000) refer to this rather controversial issue, i.e. the distinction between knowledge, as something possessed by an individual or as "knowledge as action". According to Targama and Diedrich (2000), Cook and Brown (1999) have integrated a conceptual understanding to overcome this controversy.

> With respect to all four forms [dimensions], however, we have maintained the sense of knowledge as something that is possessed… Accordingly, we use the term 'knowing' to refer to the epistemological dimension of action itself. By 'knowing', we do not mean something that is used in action or something necessary to action, but rather something that is part of action. (in Targama and Diedrich, 2000:4)

This understanding brings us even closer to some sort of essence in the studying of actions of consultants, evident in the consultant- client interaction. For example, Targama and Diedrich (2000) explain: "By focusing on knowing rather than knowledge, the traditional distinction that is assumed between knowledge (as some sort of object) and learning (as some sort of activity) is avoided" (p.16).

Connecting the Transfer of Knowledge Among Consultants to Self-confidence
A first occurrence of this heading was found in the above description of knowledge or knowing, since it was evidently difficult to transfer to *other* consultants in the management circle. This was mentioned on two occasions by a

junior consultant when talking about a process tool, Dialogue Based Development and a related framework, which guides the way of working and, the interaction.

Consultant Beta   "I have noticed that it is very hard to talk about Dialogue Based Development when I don't have so much experience with it. Still, a year after I've learned the framework and concepts that we use in the seminars with clients, it is difficult, although, it's a very useful tool."

Consultant Beta: "These concepts have not been framed as a model to me earlier. Now X has put together this framework in a model based on his understanding… X reads a lot of books and theories. Now, I can really see how things make sense. They really go without saying, but they are important to think about. I guess I think about it [the framework] in all my projects."

In another part of the conversation with a junior consultant, the reflection was made that the words of the senior consultant were "adopted" by this junior consultant.

Consultant Beta: "I can almost hear X talking through me. I had not realize how influenced I really am. …X creates a common language inside the organization and towards the client."

In his definition of tacit knowledge, Polanyi (1983) described it as non-verbalizable and intuitive. Although difficult to transfer to others, he describes the transfer of tacit knowledge as a process of "indwelling," in which the novice (junior consultant) tries to enter the thoughts of the expert (senior consultant). Nonaka (1994) adds to our understanding, by stating that this matter of indwelling is best facilitated by extended face-to-face interactions. This was mentioned to be a matter both inside the management circle, where continuous discussions were held, as well as in the interaction with the client. According to one senior consultant, process consultation might even be a matter of self-confidence.

Consultant Beta   "I wish that more consultants at PreEra were process-oriented, but this is probably a question of self-confidence."

As exemplified by a junior consultant, the interaction with the client becomes a matter of self-confidence; you must not only have explicit knowledge, such as tools and theories to use, you must also be confident in using them. If this is true, then self-confidence in the individual practice is an important feature in any consultant- client interaction whether it is process-oriented (as in the above example) or expert-oriented. Of course, the difficulty might be how consultants actually become self-confident. As such, it could be a matter for the management consultancy practice to develop.

Identifying Problem Solving in Alpha and Problem Setting in Beta
As we interpreted it previously, a conceptualization of knowledge (although not capturing its essence) in the firm needs to be linked to the practical actions of consultants in order to get a deeper understanding of the consultant- client interaction. According to one consultant, the "problems" they act on in the client organizations are in general, said to be *"approximately 50-80 % about relations, leadership, or power issues"*. Another consultant states that the orientation in approaches has to be based on the problem and that both, expert and process have its place in the management consultancy practice.

Consultant Alpha: "Many clients today are blind about their own problems."

Consultant Beta: "I think we are quite unique in this sense. We are not just looking at the obvious problem on action or pattern level. We have brought it to another deeper level of understanding structural problems, a level where we actually think together with the client, taking it even further to a visionary level and so on. That's the challenge in understanding the problem."

Furthermore, we draw from the expert and process-orientations practices in the two studied projects Alpha and Beta, i.e. how to regard the process of "problem understanding". In the diagnosis phases of the consultation processes, *the problem setting* was described mainly as an intuitive and experienced-based

process, while the *problem solving* draws attention to the activity of routine applications of existing rules and routines, limited to merely well-defined problems. In this sense, we may also, albeit simplified, say that the expert-oriented Alpha could be characterized as a problem solving activity.

Client Alpha   "We had a problem with our financial control system. PreEra had the right knowledge and was called in to 'fix' this. Already, when we met them the first time, they had a picture of what they wanted to do. They solved this specific problem for us."

Consultant Alpha   "In the expert role that I have been in sometimes, you just do as the client says, solve their problem, bow your head and do what the client wants to be done."

In the process-oriented Beta a consultant described the approach towards the problem as:

Consultant Beta   "They had quite a good picture of what the problem was. However, we did not just say: 'OK, you have this structural problem, and this what you should do'. That would have been wrong. In doing that, I take responsibility over something that I should not influence. Furthermore, if I take all the knowledge in me, and just hand it over to the client, this is not leading to any learning or change for the client. Learning is created when I give the client the tools to self-analyze and problem-analyze. The client is getting help for insight of the problem in a process of understanding."

In consequence, our findings are similar to the view on *problem setting* as a process, in which the consultants and the clients interactively name the thing to which they focus and then frame the context (Schön, 1983). However, in this context Schön views the framing process as largely taking place as a reflective conversation within the situation. Framing and reframing the situation means testing ideas and being receptive to the situation "talking back". We have not been able to elucidate whether this has been evident or not to the same extent.

Processes of Problem Understanding - Making Sense of Confusing Matters

Having elaborated on the above we re-address the important feature of the practitioners' knowledge in the process of reflection in action. According to Schön (1983), this is a creative activity in which the practitioner approaches an unknown, unfamiliar and messy situation and makes sense of it, or sets the problem. One consultant described his general approach towards a problem as the following:

Consultant Beta	"Rule number one is to listen to the client. That is the most important thing really, to try to understand the clients and their problems and what they want to do. Then it is up to me to contribute to this with material from my collected experiences. …Usually the client feels that they have a problem or that they want to do something; if not, you are not there, so to speak. I must try to start a dialogue about what the real reason is for my presence. In most cases, it is not the reason that first was mentioned. The problem that the client first identified is usually not the real problem. You have to understand the complex set of things in another way."

Thus, we realize that in order to convert a problematic situation to a problem a consultant must perform a certain kind of work. The consultant must make sense of an uncertain situation that initially makes no sense. Again, we turn to Schön (1983), who illustrates this perfectly:

> When professionals consider what road to build, for example, they deal usually with a complex and ill-defined situation in which geographic, topological, financial, economic, and political issues are all mixed up together. Once they have somehow decided what road to build and go on to consider how best to build it, they may have a problem they can solve by the application of available techniques; but when the road they have built leads unexpectedly to the destruction of a neighborhood, they may find themselves again in a situation of uncertainty. (p.40)

In this sense, consulting reflectively in the consultant- client interaction demands the active framing of the situation while it evolves. A client in Beta described a consultant in Beta like this:

Client Beta	"I have the feeling sometimes that the consultant X does not really know what assignments to give us, but then I think X adjusts to the

situation as we go along. That is a great ability to be able to perceive and act on emotions during the meetings."

Werr (1999) ascribes this framing and making sense of a messy situation as supported by several kinds of knowledge (techne as well as phronesis). Molander (1993) elaborates on how the more technical knowledge, such as theories and rules, fit into Schön's (1983; 1987) framework on problem setting, reflection in action and conversation. According to Werr (1999), Schön mainly draws attentions to experienced- based kinds of knowledge (tacit), declaring that the practitioner primarily draws on experiences from earlier assignments. Whether Molander or Schön has "the upper hand" in this "dispute" has not been evident in our empirical findings. Nonetheless, we did in fact state above that it might not be necessary or even possible to separate between tacit and explicit knowledge other than in theory. As such, it holds no great importance for us.

However, if we transfer this to our interest in the consultant- client interaction, one of the main contributions by the consultant is to structure and give meaning to the situation and reality.

Client Beta: "I think the interviews the consultants did with us, through which the problem was brought to the surface, was most important during the consultation process. Later on, structure was given to it through their knowledge of these matters."

3.3.3 DISCUSSION: Re-addressing Our Second Extended Research Question

The Importance of Individual Knowledge Linked to Individual Consultants
In this section of the analysis, we address the central issue of a management consultancy practice, trying to link knowledge with action manifested in the interaction (Werr, 1999). Thus, we sought "answers" to our second extended research question "What knowledge is used by the consultants in the interaction with their clients?"

Although in hindsight, we interpreted our results to show that any categorization of tacit vs. explicit or specific vs. general might be somewhat unnecessary, we came to realize with the inspiration of further theory that a categorization would not capture its essence anyway. In this focus, we developed a "new" insight which lead us to realize that "how and what knowledge that is used" would be better understood in terms of seeing knowledge as "something possessed by the individual". As we came to assume, knowledge possessed by the individual, whether labeled explicit or tacit, would be difficult to transfer both, inside the management circle or to the client organizations through the interaction.

We also understand that transferring individual knowledge within the management circle was very much a matter of indwelling between master and novice, (i.e. between senior and junior consultants), as well as the general sharing of experiences among all. However, this transferring of knowledge should also be useful in action. In this sense, our empirical findings showed that there is a need to understand that less- experienced consultants must not only know these tools and theories or individual practices; they might need to know how to develop the self-confidence to really make use of it in their own practice.

Secondly, we turned to the interesting theory of *the reflective practitioner* (Schön, 1983; 1987). We would presumably establish a *link* between the knowledge described above and those activities performed. Therefore, our analysis focused on the diagnosis phase of the consultation process, where the problem solving activity (see chapter 1.3.3) could manifest itself in the consultant- client interaction. In this sense, we found that the underlying structures in this process were rather different in each project. We interpreted the results as showing the expert-oriented Alpha as a "problem solving activity", where existing rules and routines were applied, and limited to a well-defined problem. In this project it was the change of financial controlling models. Thus, the knowledge "used" in action was mainly of *explicit nature*[17]. In contrast, we interpreted the process-oriented Beta in which the diagnosis phase to be

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[17] Although we realize above that knowledge might be something possessed by the individual consultant and not easily separated in categorizations (tacit explicit and so on), the actual *character* of the knowledge was explicit!

characterized as problem setting. In this context, problem setting was understood as the process in which the consultant and client interactively name the thing to which they will attend and then frame and reframe the situation.

Finally, in this discussion we turn to another issue, yet to be addressed. Whatever individual we interviewed, consultant or client, they drew us a similar picture. Related to the demand for one, (or just a few), specific consultants for a specific project to be undertaken. However, viewing it as a demand for the individual consultants knowledge, or in broader terms problem solving competence, means acknowledging it as an individual dependence.

Consultant Alpha	"I was brought in, since I had expert- knowledge. Besides, I had also held the classes [an education on financial control] earlier on, before the actual project started."
Client Beta	"Our process of change started way before PreEra was involved. I knew X from before, but we asked for X in this project since this consultant has specific knowledge and skills of this type of process. It was what we were looking for."

If a certain consultant (i.e. his "knowledge") is asked for with emphasis, it is more or less impossible to "send" another consultant to the client. Most often a relationship in some sense exists, which becomes a prerequisite for the continuous consultant- client interaction. It is difficult to learn how to manage this, because the client might regard every consultant's knowledge and skills as somewhat unique. They are related to previous experiences and projects and, in the view of the client, they become prerequisites to the change effort and project.

3.4 Analyzing the Triggers of Sensemaking in the Consultant-Client Interaction

3.4.1 OVERVIEW: Focusing on Clients

In this section of the analysis we use the same theoretical framework on sensemaking as we used in Beta, which we already labeled as *mainly* process-

oriented. As well, this type of consultation is mainly ascribed the characteristics of one sensemaking model, which in this project is labeled the conscious creation of a shared mental model of the organization. However, in Beta the consultant did not only "assign" one type of sensemaking model to induce change. This was the generic model, Balanced Controlling; an important tool in the consultant- client interaction towards the mutual change effort.

This will be understood in light of the expert-orientated Alpha in which another sensemaking model has mainly been ascribed, i.e. the use of generic model as triggering these processes of cliental perceptions on their own organization. In fact, in Alpha, a "ready-made solution" package was presented as a distinctive financial control model, although not underlined by the rationale of Balanced Scorecard.

Bringing the basic understanding of sensemaking into a context of consulting models could be done by applying the ideas of Stjernberg and Werr (2001), on "management consulting as facilitating sensemaking" (p.264). The authors sympathize with the basic assumption of the process-consulting model (Schein, 1988) that emphasizes the need for clients to find their own solutions to make lasting change. They argue that the skepticism of process consultants against ready made-models is partially unjustified. In this sense, they argue that generic management models and tools can also contribute to consulting approaches and practices: "…where the clients own problem solving and reinterpretation of the organization and its environment" (2001:260).

As we argue in our analysis below, our findings do not support their findings completely. In this way, we are able to address our extended research question: "How is change facilitated through the interaction to affect the clients' perceptions?"

3.4.2 ANALYSIS: Identifying Sensemaking Models in Alpha and Beta

The Ready-Made Solution for Facilitating Change in Alpha
The main consulting model in Alpha was facilitated through a ready-made solution. Our findings supported this as the following quotations from both parties of the consultant- client interaction show.

Client Alpha	"The role of PreEra was, since they are very good in financial controlling, the Balanced Scorecard and such, to bring in the knowledge and then aid in practically 'setting up' the model for the people. …The 'seminar' was more of a presentation of the model and ideas behind it. "
Consultant Alpha	"This was a classic expert assignment where we were brought in because of our knowledge in the field. We aided in the implementation of the model as well as, on a basic level, explaining how to actually use it in the system."

Although, a ready-made solution was presented, the clients in Alpha assessed the role of the generic model discussed in the initial phases of the project as being of limited usefulness.

Client Alpha	"The value of the theory was greatly emphasized by the consultant X [who held the presentations]. We had already earlier embraced some of the ideas on Balanced Scorecard in the initial phases of the project. It aimed at to be maybe developing the 'balanced view' on the organization further."

This is partly congruent with what Stjernberg and Werr believe creates a role for the consultant as a "translator" or "implementer" in an expert-oriented project. Both consultants and clients observed that they, through the financial model, (i.e. the ready-made solution package), did reinterpret the relevant part of the organization in light of the specific situation. However, the ready-made solution package presented was not related to the abstract concepts underlying Balanced Scorecard. Thus, neither clients nor consultants are said to have believed that the aim was to reinterpret the concepts provided by the generic model, even though discussions and aims of it were mentioned. This is due to the fact that the generic

model was not carried through in the actual project; it stayed at the level of discussions and aims. Therefore, we believe that the implementation and continuous work with the ready-made solution (i.e. the financial control model) became more practically oriented than initially intended. However, since the Balanced Scorecard had been up for discussion, we did expect the clients to view their organization in some light of this hyped rationale.

The Generic Model as Structure in Beta

Stjernberg and Werr (2001) state that "Changes in the client's knowledge base could be triggered either by generic models or through an exchange of situation-specific information, e.g. with colleagues" (p.264). While Stjernberg and Werr used Business Process Reengineering as an example of a change approach based on generic models of an organization, as well as a generic model of the change process, we use the Balanced Scorecard as a manifestation. Obviously, the two generic models (Business Process Reengineering and Balanced Scorecard) are not the same. However, they share some main characteristics that we discussed in the theoretical framework.

In Beta, the modified and developed version of Balanced Scorecard, labeled Balanced Controlling, was applied and still is in progress. In Beta, the rationale underlying Balanced Controlling was strongly emphasized in the initial phases of the project, mainly because of the clients' preferences. Apparently, the consultants involved did contextualize the model to the specific situation. In conjunction, we found that the Beta- project did in fact, "*present a rational for change*" and a "*new perspective on the organization*", very similar to what Stjernberg and Werr (2001) found. This quote is one out of a number that support this finding.

Client Beta   "For us, the Balanced Scorecard in the initial phases of the project, or the Balanced Controlling as PreEra make use of it, was of interest since we needed follow up on our operations. Earlier, we had had too much focus on the financial aspects and with this we could better balance our view of the organization."

The generic model did not *"present clues to solve the problem"* to the same extent in this project as it did in the above-mentioned authors' empirical example. Instead, the problem was *diagnosed* on the basis of interviews, which described the cliental picture of the problem, as interpreted by the consultants. However, this was only the beginning of a problem setting process, where a shared understanding of the organization evolved. In this sense, Balanced Controlling mainly functioned as *structure*, as an agenda for the continuous development of a shared mental model of the organization, (i.e. the vision). One client interviewed expressed it in this fashion:

Client Beta   "Through the interviews early in the process it became evident that the structure in Balanced Controlling was important for our organization, but equally important was the way of working and attitudes towards work, as we understood it. The attitude of 'dialoguing' has become more emphasized along the road but we still need the agenda, which is Balanced Controlling."

If we try to compare how the use of generic models was used in these projects we may interpret Lillrank (1995) who, in this sense, distinguishes whether or not the generic models are used as *sensemaking triggers* or just as *ready-made solutions*. The former is the desired way of spurring on an innovational climate. Clearly, in Alpha a ready-made solution was presented, while in Beta the character somewhat leaned towards an understanding of the organization or more specifically as a structure for developing it.

The Conscious Creation of a Shared Mental Model – A Vision in Beta

In Beta, or at least the lion's share of it so far, the focus of the development has been on a shared view and vision of the organization. Several meetings and seminars have been held during the six months period involving all the people necessary. In our discussions with both clients and consultants in Beta, we realized that there has been a widely accepted focus on process aims for creating change.

Client Beta   "We must develop a shared understanding of the issues first, then we start to measure things - not the other way around. You have to keep a

> cool head. Fast results are nothing to have in order to establish lasting change. … It is the process that it is important for understanding what we really are doing and want to do in the future. Our different processes in work are complex."

When this quotation was made the client showed us a model that illustrated how the different processes and the vision worked in relation to the development of the organization. The client describes how to use this mental model in the larger organization:

Client Beta   "We know where we are and what we want today, but earlier we weren't ready to show that to the larger organization.[18]…Now that has changed, we need to be able to diffuse this understanding to them."

This could be interpreted as if a shared understanding has evolved in the smaller unit and in those who have been directly involved in the change effort. However, frustration in working with this vision in seminars, i.e. developing shared model of the immediate part of organization was expressed like this:

Client Beta   "Earlier on, we had more debate than dialogue, something that I personally preferred maybe. But, I've learned in relation to my way of working, to have more patience. Personally, I would have wanted to come further in the process."

On the other hand, something quite evident in respect to this model of sensemaking triggering was the notion of *aha-experiences* (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001; Weick, 1995). During the creation of shared vision and understanding of the organization the clients experienced the character of revelations. One client described it like this:

Client Beta   "I think one big revelation for me, as for many others, was at one of the seminars working with the vision. Finally, pieces fell into its place.

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[18] This "larger organization" is the part that has not yet been involved much in this project. They are now starting with to evolve their understanding of the Balanced Controlling, "their own journey" as it has been called.

During earlier seminars working with this, we could not really see the result."

Client Beta   "I have to say that I, in the beginning, wondered what was to become of this. But now, I must say that somehow … at the end of the day, we really came up with something. We really got results from something that seemed almost chaotic early on!"

Furthermore, the consultants in Beta have had mostly positive experiences in their interactions with their clients. One consultant said that when the other consultants came back from these meetings they were in an inspired state of mind, talking about how much that had happened and describing the vast change and development that they had experienced in the client organization.

A Comparison of Sensemaking Models

As mentioned earlier, Stjernberg and Werr (2001) state that successful consultation practice means combining both the process and expert consultation models, just as we saw in Beta. Similarly, process skills and process tools are potentially valuable to an expert consultant's repertoire. In Beta, generic models were actually complements to the process tool, Dialogue Based Development.

Moreover, for a comparison between those sensemaking models empirically found in Alpha and Beta, we will elaborate on some of Stjernberg and Werr's "empirical mapping" (below) and compare them to our findings[19].

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[19] Stjernberg and Werr (2001) undertake two case studies in which each of them were evaluated in regards to the expert and the process consulting models and then compared. In Beta, both sensemaking models and "consulting models" were evident. Instead, we analyze both projects in direct conjunction, not in comparisons. Besides, both orientations and sensemaking models are parts of the overall practice.

Figure 4: Sensemaking in the two models of consultation.

	Model 1: Expert-oriented	Model 2: Process-oriented
Triggers	General model	Cognitive maps
Model of legitimacy	Shared understanding of a translated general model	Shared understanding of complex realities
Sensemaking focus	Everyone relates to the same model	Everyone relates to the others
Power of interpretation	Consultant	Every individual

Source: Stjernberg and Werr (2001:278)

In this sense, it is interesting to see if either is perceived by the client to be better suited as to influence them in the consultant- client interaction towards a mutual change effort. We have identified a couple of concepts in this regard of specific interest.

Ownership, Diffusion and Legitimacy - Issues Regardless of the Sensemaking Model

In Beta there is the expressed purpose of establishing a shared view of the organization and to identify its weaknesses and potentials. According to Stjernberg and Werr (2001), the underlying assumptions are that the language and labels already in use in the model should be of primary focus, and those implicit and individual to be made explicit and shared. In this sense, the interactions face to face have been many and supported by the consultants' activities. In this respect, the feeling of ownership has been strong within the participants in Beta:

Client Beta: "All along I've felt that this is something most participants agree on doing. People seem engaged and committed. More so now when we have come along a bit in the process."

According to Stjernberg and Werr (2001), this model has its drawbacks as well since this strong feeling of ownership could be difficult to diffuse to individual members not directly involved in the process. Today, the client organization in Beta faces diffusion of their shared understanding to the rest of the organization

(i.e. the vision - step one out of twelve in the Balanced Controlling process). As such, we cannot make a posterior analysis in this regard. Albeit, it was seen as possibly becoming a problem:

Client Beta: "I've got indications that most units of the larger organization like the ideas, and want to be a part of this, making their own journey. But still, in some parts I think we will have difficulties in getting this view accepted, or even to get them to 'participate' with their full attention."

This is in accordance with Stjernberg and Werr (2001), who in their study showed that it was difficult to diffuse to the rest of the unit. The process in which the local theory, (i.e. the shared meaning) is established is very much part of the meaning and non-participants will not "share" the meaning. However, it might lead them to reformulate their individual mental models. On the other hand, in Beta diffusion is facilitated in regards to the creation of shared understandings *and* the generic model. It seems it would be an easier task to diffuse.

Furthermore, Stjernberg and Werr (2001) propose the usage of general models (in their case the Business Process Reengineering) as overcoming these matters above. They state that: "It can further be argued that the use of a formalized model, with a label which is generally accepted, will give the results of the diagnosis process some extra legitimacy. In many cases, the people would probably rather accept the results of the 'BPR analysis' than the result of the local analysis process of a rival department " (p.275).

We could not find any support for this in Beta, which included a generic model *and* the "local analysis", nor did we find support in the expert-orientated Alpha. In the latter, it was rather seen as problematic to diffuse the model, not so much from a *legitimizing* standpoint, but from an implementing standpoint regarding the usage and understanding of the model. Both clients interviewed in Alpha mentioned that their organization had had difficulties diffusing the developed model, i.e. getting people to understand it. The discontent was based on the fact that it did not "work" as planned.

Client Alpha   "The model took almost a year in use before it actually worked, or rather, until we really understood it."

Even though the legitimizing factor was in another respect tied to the use of generic models, PreEra had benefited heavily from the recent success of the Balanced Scorecard. The consultants explained the phenomena like this:

Consultant Alpha   "Historically generic models, such as the Balanced Scorecard have been a door opener for us, it has been used as a legitimacy tool."

Consultant Alpha   "Models as legitimacy tools give the consultants security and a manual to work towards. For the clients, it provides an opportunity to follow the work and see actual results."

This may be interpreted as if the legitimizing factor is as important for getting the assignment, as it is to actually triggering sensemaking. Put in simple terms, it is a business reality to benefit from.

Consultant Alpha   "Models are very important for the demand of management consultancy services."

Consultant Beta   "The models create a foundation for the discussions with the clients."

We realized that legitimacy in generic models as a "door opener" was also related to the issue of timing, since the client organizations and their members seemingly need to be receptive. This is elaborated on in the following section.

Timing and Receptiveness as Related to Power and Influence
In Alpha the clients state that PreEra came in at a time when the organizational members were in a state of readiness and acceptance for this change of financial controlling models. It was seen as a necessity for the continuous prosperity of the organization.

Client, Alpha   "We realized that we had to do it, or else it had gone very bad with this company."

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Client Alpha	"We had grown out of our suit, through vast expansions and growth. We could not monitor our operations, so change was necessary. Entering as an expert of financial controlling and the Balanced Scorecard, the consultant had a strong mandate in our organization. …The consultant had quite a hard theoretical pressure, but after some discussion, we compromised."

In Beta, the change effort was also a part of several other projects. As such, it was perceived to be almost a prerequisite for further organizing.

Client Beta	"We had already worked with another consultant on some issues earlier. This is an important project in this sense, we were engaged in change efforts already, and therefore this was necessary at this moment."
Client Beta	"By this time, many members of the organization were tired of bashing heads. They now had the same goals, and were ready for the process. I think they wanted to do their own journey"

Interpreting the above means acknowledging Stjernberg and Werr (2001), whom in this sense relates to the issue of *power* and *influence*. If the organizational members already are in a state of conscious sensemaking activities about their organization when the consultant enters, then the clients "will be quite open to the consultant's efforts to reestablish an ordered picture of the world. This guarantees the consultant a considerable influence" (p.277).

3.4.3 DISCUSSION: Re-addressing our Third Extended Research Question

The Importance of Convergent and Divergent Results
In this part of the analysis we turned tables; that is, we focused on the *clients* in both Alpha and Beta. Our point of departure was two sensemaking models, which denoted two different consulting orientations or models: the expert and the process (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001). A comparison between these aimed at addressing our third extended research question: *"How is change facilitated through the interaction to affect the clients' perceptions?"* The expert-orientation inherits the sensemaking models, which were labeled *generic models* (Balanced Scorecard/Balanced Controlling), was identified to be at work in the

early phases of Beta. In Beta the facilitation of change, (labeled shared understanding of the organization) was used to trigger sensemaking in the clients, although not always very explicitly.

In our interpretations we found *convergent and divergent results* in comparison to Stjernberg and Werr (2001). To speak in brief and broad terms, from a cognitive perspective we find less of confident results than them in having the generic models as preference to triggering sensemaking *even* in a process orientation (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001:279)[20]. In contrast, we found that in the consultant- client interaction of Beta so far *both* sensemaking models have been in use and that clients by far emphasize the construction of a shared and local understanding, in terms of making sense of the situation, organization and to understand where they are headed. However, since this client is in a state of diffusion of this understanding to the larger organization we are not yet able to study the possible drawbacks that a local understanding of one organizational unit may have.

Our final issue in this analytic discussion concerns the importance of participation as a prerequisite as how the facilitation of change was induced. In the respective projects participation was seen as:

Client Alpha: "We should have anchored the understanding of the model earlier in the larger organization. The model is quite easy to grasp now for most people. In this sense, if we had had more people that were affected by the model participate in the development of it, I think it would have been much easier. Hence, they could have participated more in the implementation."

Client Beta   "There are a hundred methods to make people to participate that all have the same aim; to make people committed. To do so, they need to participate and do their *own* journey."

In this sense, we also need to remember that we interpreted the ready-made solution in the expert-oriented Alpha and the generic model and shared vision in

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[20] Although they acknowledge both sensemaking models as having pros and cons.

the process-oriented Beta as triggering sensemaking. In connection to sensemaking Stjernberg and Werr (2001) explicate it concerning participation.

> Consequently, seen from a cognitive perspective, the use of general systems models as triggers in a process consulting approach seems most suitable. This also seems to be the direction in which developments are heading in practice, where traditional expert consultants increasingly emphasize the importance of the client's participation in the change process. (p.279)

Today, the consultant- client interaction is mostly manifested in process-oriented projects. However, somewhat contrary to the above authors' notion on the more suitable usage of generic models in process consultations to trigger change, this practice moves towards *less* usage of such models. Instead, participation is emphasized as a major concern regarding the creation and diffusion of shared understandings. Simply put, the generic model is seen as structuring this process, while the process of collegial sharing of understandings is what puts emphasis on participation in the change effort. In this sense, we see these shared understandings as better suited to facilitate change through triggering changes in clients' perceptions. Especially manifested in Beta as the creation of a shared vision and every individual and unit making their own journey.

3.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter we began with a descriptive part where the case study setting of the management consultancy practice and the development of it in recent years were emphasized. We also set the stage for our two studied projects, Alpha and Beta, as complementary samples of the consultant- client interactions constituting their practice. Thereafter, in three separate parts, the following was found in our explorative analysis of the consultant- client interaction:

Actorship in Alpha and Beta – Focusing on Consultants:
- *Three contradictions in terms* (Result vs. Process, Nearness vs. Distance and Frankness vs. Manipulation) characterize the consultant- client interaction.
- *Two dilemmas in theory*, (the Change- and Learning Dilemma) which in combination meant interpreting Alpha as *the Demonstrator* and Beta as *the Participant.* Hence, it manifests the consultants Actorship in the consultant- client interactions.

- *In the discussion,* we focused on the concept of participation as a matter of Actorship, and as well *self-confidence and withholding the knowledge* to be connected to the contradiction of Frankness vs. Manipulation.

Knowledge Linked to Action in Alpha and Beta – Focusing on Consultants:

- We interpreted knowledge types in consultants to be non-separable in action since "explicit" and "implicit" knowledge were used interchangeably and implicitly by the consultant in the interaction. Knowledge was seen as possessed by the individual.
- We found that inside the management circle (i.e. a competence area of PreEra), transferring knowledge was difficult and a matter of "indwelling" between master and novice. However, even if tacit/explicit knowledge was transferred, we interpreted it as a matter of the consultants' self-confidence in action, if this knowledge was seen as working well in the consultant- client interaction.
- By studying a specific part of the consultation process, the process of understanding the problem, we were able to characterize the expert-oriented Alpha to be a matter of problem solving, and the process-oriented Beta to be a more complex matter of problem setting. In the latter, the management of confusing matters was seen as important.

Sensemaking in Alpha and Beta – Focusing on Clients:

- Firstly, we interpreted the expert-oriented Alpha as having the ready-made solution as the facilitation of change. Contrarily, two sensemaking models, the generic model and the creation of a shared understanding characterized the process-oriented Beta.
- Empirically we found results that did not match the applied theory. We found that the usage of the creation of a shared understanding was better in facilitating change in clients (according to themselves). We found less obvious drawbacks with this sensemaking model, than would have been expected. On the other hand, the diffusion of the shared understanding (i.e. the vision) is yet to be diffused in Beta.
- Moreover, we came to focus on the importance of, amongst other things, participation in the respective project, related to the sensemaking models. Hence, we found that participation was of major concern in both projects – albeit in Beta more directly connected to the preference of sensemaking models.

4 CONCLUSIONS

*I*n this chapter, we bring our results and analysis to yet another level, into a holistic understanding of the management consultancy practice of PreEra. Since the aim of this study has been to understand this practice in-depth, we see the conclusions as an opportunity to enable PreEra to think about and develop its practice on a collective level.

4.1 General Outline

We have formed a general outline for the conclusion in which we readdress our main research focus: *to explore how a firm can develop its management consultancy practice.*

Figure 5: Conclusion build-up

In the previous chapter we presented our findings in relation to three extended research questions that all regarded *the consultant- client interaction* as the core of the management consultancy practice. The consultant- client interaction was mainly analyzed through three framed theories *Actorship*, *Knowledge Linked to Action,* and *Sensemaking.* These were analyzed separately (see figure 5).

In the following conclusions, we firstly *reinterpret* the management consultancy practice from our earlier understanding. Secondly, we use the focal points in the different analyses as a basis for our argumentative conclusions and implications into a holistic understanding (see figure 5). Consequently, while the analysis only looked back, the conclusions view the developments until today - *then look ahead...*

4.2 Reinterpreting PreEra's Management Consultancy Practice

As with any other firm, PreEra faces difficulties in remaining viable in an environment that is characterized by change and uncertainty. In this sense, we realize that PreEra needs to be able to continuously change their management consultancy practice. However, it requires considerable self-scrutiny and continuous effort to adapt. Unfortunately, although well documented, many consultant and other organizations fail to adapt effectively (Edmondson and Moingeon, 1998). In this sense, as illustrated in chapter 3.1, the practice has in fact changed quite a lot during the last couple of years, a collective journey has been undertaken. How may this journey be understood?

Previously we derived our understanding of PreEra's journey from the separation of being expert-oriented (earlier - as in Alpha), and mostly concerned with financial controlling, into becoming more process-oriented. The latter include a shift towards a more holistic approach towards viewing organizations via the Balanced Scorecard/Balanced Controlling, to more recently emphasizing Dialogue Based Development (as in Beta). However, subsequent to our analysis of the empirical data regarding consultant- client interactions we are now able to reinterpret the practice. In a theoretical manner, we may now conclusively explain the shift in focuses and changes (Chritchley, 2001). In this sense, we establish three shifts that have occurred in roles and approaches in the practice.

We conclude that the first shift is from the *notion of intervention* to the *notion of participation*. In this sense, the consultants in the management circle have in their practice left their role as the "objective" intervener and instead gone towards the role as a participator who brings beliefs and prejudices that affect the client organization. We further conclude that a second shift has been from a *positivist perspective* to a *relational perspective*. Hence, this shift means that the practice of the management circle has left the view where organizations are seen as consistent of hierarchies, structure and rules, to a view where organizations are socially co-created constructions. In consistence, we interpret a third shift that has been from *politics of salvation* to *politics of revelation*. This means that the management circle has mainly abandoned the view that the consultants

should be the problem solvers (such as in Alpha). Instead, the consultants should facilitate the clients in their search for the solutions to the problems (Critchley, 2001), which we enlightened in our analysis on the process of problem understanding (chapter 3.3.2). It clearly showed that in the practice of today the work mainly concerns problem setting.

A related conclusion to these shifts in the practice is that we interpret the practice today to inherit two "paradigm of thoughts" (traditional financial controlling vs. dialogue and process-orientation). As of today, we conclude that there exists a lack of versatility, i.e. those involved in expert-oriented projects (such as Alpha) seemingly tend to prefer similar projects and vice versa. Although both add to the multiplicity of the practice we believe that these two paradigms of thoughts need to be integrated into one *community of practice*, which inherits the variety of "individual practices and preferences".

However, this concluding assertion acknowledges that a community of practice does not necessarily imply an identifiable group or noticeable social boundaries. The consultants still have different interests, they still hold diverse viewpoints and they make varied contributions to the activity. As such, it is in the social interaction in the community of daily work that practice exists and evolves. (Wenger, 1998) Moreover, this implies that we may view the practice as an activity system. A system that inherits the consultants shared understandings (or private understandings), united (or not), in both action and in the meaning that that action has, both for themselves and for the larger collective (Wenger, 1998).

4.3 Concluding Arguments

The overall conclusion following this case study regarding the three theoretical perspectives in the analysis is that these perspectives alone, or even interrelated, cannot fully explain a phenomenon such as the consultant- client interaction. There are three main reasons for this statement, firstly our choice and combination of theories (Actorship, Knowledge Linked to Action and Sensemaking) has been somewhat arbitrary, thus we cannot state that other theories would capture the dynamics any less good. Secondly, we have

deliberately focused mostly on the consultants' side of the interaction since the aim has been to develop the practice. Thirdly, we have not focused on the actual change process, or key activities in the change effort, which could have helped us to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the consultation process at large (Werr, 1999).

Independently, we were able to study the consultant- client interaction in "parts" through our usage of these theories. However, the way we have interpreted the interrelationships of theories and empirical findings it presents a holistic understanding of concepts. This is elaborated on in the following sections.

4.3.1 Developing Manipulation as a Tool to Influence the Client

Through our analysis of Actorship and Sensemaking in the consultant- client interaction, we conclude that "manipulation" is an underestimated concept in the management consultancy practice of PreEra. The Actorship part showed us that there was a need for an increased awareness about the *contradiction in terms* labeled *Frankness vs. Manipulation*, and that manipulating clients is a possibility as long as the consultants are aware of how this influences other actors and their participation in the change effort.

Similarly, we established that sensemaking when triggered in the clients' knowledge base, facilitates change. Therefore, we can conclude that sensemaking is a vital factor through which a consultant can manipulate the facilitation of change (Stjernberg and Werr, 2001). However, through our analysis we can only conclude that sensemaking processes could be facilitated through the creation of *shared understandings* in the local units (a vision in Beta). We found it to be better suited to "manipulate" sensemaking in clients than the *generic models*. However, this does <u>not</u> imply that the generic models could not induce sensemaking, albeit we found no support for it in these projects.

As our findings support, we understand that this usage of manipulation is mostly done implicitly in the practice today. We conclude that if made explicit it can

become a powerful tool to influence the clients in the interaction towards a change effort.

4.3.2 Developing Self-Confidence in Consultants

The empirical concept of *self-confidence* was emphasized in both the Actorship and the Knowledge Linked to action analyses. Thus, we may conclude that there is a demand on continuously developing the self-confidence of consultants. The Actorship part showed that being able to balance between being frank and "positively" manipulating the client demands self-confidence in the individual´s practice. Self-confidence was also seen as important in the usage of tools and theories (explicit types of knowledge) as well as the more tacit type of individual knowledge inherit in the practice. In conclusion, self-confidence becomes an important matter for the development of the practice.

Self-confidence is, in this sense, also concluded to be important in the problem setting process, which demanded consulting skills, such as the ability to "talk to the situation", and "identifying the *real* problem-mentality". Based on our extensive analysis on this matter, we argue that less self-confidence is needed when routine applications are applied to well-defined problems. Instead, there is reason to believe that when consultants make sense of confusing matters based on their intuitive and experienced based knowledge, self-confidence in the daily practice becomes of outmost importance.

In layman terms, our findings indicated the usage of tacit/explicit, as non-separable knowledge used in action is something consultants possess. Hence, we argue that self-confidence, as the belief in the own individual knowledge as well as in the collective knowledge, needs to be inherent in the consultants' actions and activities. In simplified terms, when self-confidence spurs the consultant to actively acquire these skills or rather knowledge in action, then he or she may contribute to the overall development of the practice.

4.3.3 Developing the Existing Structural Capital

If we continue to explore the management consultancy practice as a community of practice, we could view a third knowledge category following tacit and

explicit knowledge, referred to as *knowledge embedded in community.* (McLure and Faraj, 2000) This knowledge is then the social practice of knowing, in which the activity of learning is strictly related to human activity and linked to practice.

This perspective asserts that knowledge is embedded into the community, it is beyond individuals, and it resides in the context of the practice. If so, we need to address our conclusion in the context of how this is created. In this sense, we conclude that the creation of *structural capital in PreEra* (which aims to embed the knowledge) is of major importance in the practice.

Firstly, in relation to the empirical issue analyzed as *individual dependence* (chapter 3.3.3)*,* the clients' demand for certain skills, practice and knowledge is connected to *one* consultant. The problem becomes evident when a consultant already is tied up by other projects. If he cannot convince the client to whom he already has a relationship, that those skills and knowledge he possesses (tacitly and explicitly), could be practiced equally well by another consultant, then the firm might lose business. In this sense, the management circle can benefit from viewing this *transformation* from being dependent on individual knowledge into a social practice of knowledge as ongoing and something that constantly changes by those who are objects of its activities and those who work in these practices (Billet, 2001).

Secondly, structural capital may create a feeling of *self-confidence* in the daily practice. Moreover, we believe that a useful structural capital should also aim at supporting the consultants' self-confidence in action, to have something to fall back on. However, besides the establishing of theories to use in action, the consultants also need to share their *experiences* in an organized manner. To simply work together in a community of practice is not enough, *experiences* need to be transformed into structural capital, which can be shared by all members while referred to and used in other projects.

According to Maister et al (2000), the highest level of any consultant or any other professional for that matter is the "trusted advisor", who must have enough self-confidence to listen without prejudging. More so, the consultants need

enough curiosity to inquire without supposing the answer, have a willingness to see the client as an equal in a joint journey and have enough ego strength to subordinate their own ego. Trusting relationships lead to repeat business from the same client and to new business through referrals from existing clients. (Maister et al, 2000)

Obviously, it will be of great importance for legitimizing reasons towards the client, if financial effect and previous success could be made explicit. We conclude that this is missing in the structural capital of the management consultancy practice today. In contrast, the structural capital of the firm today is mainly theoretical. In this sense, Risling (1988) argues for the *conscious consultation* as to be guided by theories intended to explain complex phenomena that seems difficult to interpret. Thus, there is reason to believe that a theoretical model may help in observing an inner structure and making chaotic events understandable. In the view of the consultant, "truth" is created in pragmatic arguments with other actors and in interactions with clients. However, any arguments brought up during interactive consultation must be critically studied with a professional consciousness to achieve a perceived type of rationality and objectivity.

Accordingly, we conclude that an organization theory used by the management circle[21] in practice can in fact legitimize a completed consultation. In contrast, an organization theory cannot dictate the practical activities or validate daily practical conclusions. Rather, the accuracy of these activities is dependent on subtle nuances and quick intuitive decisions.

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[21] The structural capital developed today in PreEra is inspired by "Systems thinking- theory" among many others. The working name on the structural capital is "The PreEra Enterprise Model" in which they develop a "Theory of Change", a "Theory of Practice" and a "Theory of the Thing".

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APPENDIX I: THE RESEARCH PROCESS

This appendix is intended to show how, what and why we did this research. Rather than ascribing ourselves to specific concepts of research we have been inspired by some. As such we will give a reflective account of the choices we made in the research process of this thesis. We will spotlight some interrelated parts, i.e. our theoretical approach, and the empirically based case study. In the latter part, we derive much interest in order to illustrate and validate the study. We discuss our preferred method of data collection, strategy for conducting interviews and our general strategy for conducting the analysis extensively.

Two Ambitious Students

Our reason for doing this thesis was to learn how a consultancy firm works in relation to the clients in its practice. On the personal level, we sought good insights into the management consulting business - a possible career choice after graduation.

Mainly, the prerequisites of academia have been that we should function as *problem- solvers.* In this sense, we have identified the "problem" together with our research partner. However, we realized that there was not any evident problem to solve. Instead, we strived to explore and understand their practice. As such, we have actively engaged in being "learners" in the process of finding out what we knew about these matters in advance, what knowledge was available before, what we hope to know and what knowledge we can contribute; simply put, what we can learn and let others learn from this experience.

The Theoretical Approach

As a point of departure, we adopted a portion of Pugh's (in a paper presented at a research tutorial, 2001-04 -15) famous research assumptions, and tried <u>not</u> to be restricted by scientific boundaries in our "subject of study". Thus, we believe that an interdisciplinary approach addresses our key research focus

"holistically", which in the end also partly spurred our conclusions. In the thesis, we touched upon socio-psychological, sociological, behavioral science and financial perspectives, among others.

The interdisciplinary approach also mirrors our theoretical framework. Consequently, for the aim of this thesis we chose four "domains" of theory in our framework. One concerns the conceptualization of consultation, the consulting models and roles inherent and it was intended to contextualize and be a point of departure. Moreover, we chose to work with *theoretical clues* (Yin, 1994) towards our extended research question and in order to get depth. In our case, there were three "clues", that we perceived to be related to the core of a practice (in our view), *i.e. the consultant- client interaction.* The theoretical clues are; Actorship, Knowledge Linked to Action, and Change as Sensemaking.

One may argue that the scale and scope of such a research effort would be better suited to deal with maybe only one theory to get research depth. This is a valid critique, however we strongly emphasize the complementary nature and "closeness" between these theoretical areas, which permits us to view them as interrelated for our research focus. We believe that we would miss out on a more holistic view on the issues that arise if we had only chosen one of them. By adopting different theoretical perspectives, we did target the *consultant- client interaction* thoroughly. Still, we have made a conscious choice by "rejecting" other theories that could have been equally useful. Simply, we had to make those choices in regard to time and scope. (For instance, theories of organizational design, organizational learning and communication theory, amongst many others have been "rejected").

The Empirical Study – Conducting a Single Case Study

Just like many other researchers, we have adopted some of Yin's (1994) useful ideas on how to conduct a *case study*. Yin reflects upon when and if it is appropriate to use *case study* as the research method and concludes that case studies are a preferred strategy if 'why' and 'how' questions are of primary interest. If the investigator has little or no control over events as well as if focus

lies on phenomenon of contemporary nature in a real-life context, with Risling's (1988) experiences in mind, we have also tried to avoid that our case study become too abstract, simplified or strictly descriptive.

Amongst a variety of possibilities that Yin (1994) discusses when it comes to the design of the case study, we have chosen to conduct the single case study with embedded units. We chose this design in line with Yin's (1994) arguments of *uniqueness* as the rationale for choosing the single-case study over the multiple-case study. The phenomena of management consultancy practices are not unique. However, a single-case study is appropriate in a study of *"explorative" nature* (Yin, 1994) such as ours, where we study it from a variety of theoretical perspectives. Moreover, by also studying the consultant- client interaction, attention is given to *subunits* (Yin, 1994), so we have included *embedded* units in this single-case study.

Choice of Projects for the Case Study

The projects (referred to as *Alpha* and *Beta* for anonymity) were chosen through a mutual agreement during the first two interviews with our key informants, since they were regarded as important to PreEra and potentially good "illustrations" of their management consultancy practice. From our point of view, the projects were interesting since they were of a different nature in their point of departure (such as expert- or process-oriented). Still, both aimed at conducting a mutual change effort.

Moreover, we felt that this approach of using projects was intriguing; to draw samples out of a practice and let them "speak" for the development and different characteristics of the practice. In hindsight, we feel that we would maybe have benefited if we had included more subunits or projects in the study, since we would have gained an even better understanding of how the practice was manifested in reality. Though, we could honestly say that our two projects included more than enough of work!

Our Method of Data Collection

In respect to our case study, we acknowledge Yin (1994) who suggests that the investigator should benefit from more than one source of evidence such as observations, archival records, interviews of different kind, documentation, and physical artifacts. Initially, we aimed at using three out of these sources, e.g. observations, documentation and (two types of) interviews. Unfortunately, neither project was in a phase where observations could be easily made. The Alpha-project had ended, and although the Beta-project still is in progress, it is for the moment in a "state of reflection" so to speak, i.e. approaching diffusion to the rest of the organization. Thus, we have used the other two sources, which include a vast amount of documentation about the projects (mostly from the consultant side) as well as sixteen interviews.

We have used the documentation (secondary data) mainly as complementary information, since we realize that whatever was put in a document, was also put there for a reason - in a context that we cannot easily evaluate. As such, we never viewed or used it as objective fact. Some of these statements were, however, used with caution in the thesis chapter 3.1, a descriptive chapter about the setting of the case study and including a description about Alpha and Beta. We have made our research partner and the interviewees aware of this usage. Below, our choice of methods and strategies used regarding the data collection is explained.

Method for Using and Conducting Interviews

We believe that interviews give well-focused and insightful information about a certain fact or phenomena, dependent on the abilities, knowledge and willingness of both interviewees and the interviewer. The interview method we developed was founded on a mixture of ideas and research done earlier.

Early in the research process, we conducted what Merton et al (1990) label *'open-ended'- interviews.* These five interviews were conducted between May and the beginning of October, with two senior consultants at our research partner company. These were conversational and dialogical in nature and established what the joint research effort was to accomplish. As such, these senior

consultants became *key informants* (Yin, 1994) in the beginning of the research process.

Based partly on Risling's (1988) well-known action research conducted in Sweden, our next eleven "semi-structured" interviews (clients as well as consultants) were divided into two parts. Firstly, the interviewees had the possibility to account for important events that happened during the consultation. The consultants and clients were asked to openly describe these important events

- ✓ What the situation comprised and what was behind the event?
- ✓ Who was included in it?
- ✓ What he/she experienced, expected or was about to do because of this event?
- ✓ What he/she really did do (actions) because of this event?
- ✓ What was the result of this conduct?

We did not specifically ask all of the above questions in every case, although we let them guide us as checklists. This method has close resemblance with the "critical incidents method" used by several researchers, (e.g. Argyris et al (1985), Risling, (1988)). It gave us the possibility of studying in retrospect, the motives, experiences, expectations and actions during the intervention done by PreEra where consultants and clients interacted. One of our aims through this method was to avoid having the clients and consultants answer the question stereotypically; thus, inducing too rich and deep interpretations (Argyris et al, 1985).

Secondly, immediately after the first part, we conducted our second part, which was a more structured part of the interviews. Aided by an inquiry framework of pre-structured questions, which aimed at directly answer issues regarding practice and our theoretical clues. We realized early on that by interviewing *both* consultants and clients we would receive two perspectives (although not independently) on the interventions done. Seemingly, the consultant- client interaction would be better covered, (Both clients and consultants were aware of that the other parties were interviewed). By this conduct we were able to compare the different perceptions on the consultant-client interaction.

Using the classification of Merton et al (1990), our interviews were '*open-ended and focused*'. In this sense they aimed at being (and were too!) of conversational and opened-ended nature during a short period, ranging between one and one and a half hours. Although Yin (1994) argues that tape-recorded interviews provide basis for a more accurate interpretation than any other method we initially chose to use a video camera for recording as well a tape recording. In advance, we saw some apparent drawbacks. It could be that interviewees would be reluctant and/or affected too much by the camera so that the aim of a 'conversational nature' would be missed out in the interviews. In our view this did not occur. However, we continuously chose not to video record the interviews with clients since we had not met them face-to-face before and we obviously lacked any closer relationship to them.

Illustrating the Data Gathering Process

When we conducted the interviews and collected the data, we had four distinct periods, which helped us to reflect about our empirical data. As already implied, our first period stretched from May to beginning of October, in which we conducted the five interviews with our two key informants, i.e. senior consultants at PreEra (Step 1). During our last meeting/interview with those two, we asked to get as much documentation as possible on the respective project(s) (Step 2). We got a vast amount of documents but perhaps we would have benefited if we had asked for them earlier in the process. Now we had only one week or so to get a deeper understanding of the projects before conducting our interviews.

However, since we had planned to do our interviews focusing on one project at a time, we were able to prepare properly anyway. We began with Alpha, since this was a seemingly less complex and smaller project. During one week, we conducted those interviews (Step 3). After yet another week of preparations for Beta, we conducted those interviews during the following week (Step 4). Now October was almost at an end and we were about to "get close to our empirical data". During the whole of November we worked on our case study and the related analysis until we realized that we needed a follow up meeting with our key informants (Step 5). During this one and half hour conversation, we

interplayed our ideas and part of our analysis with them. As such, we wanted them to have a say on our findings. By this conduct, we were able to nuance our descriptions about their management consultancy practice.

Appendix figure 1: Illustration of the process of data gathering.
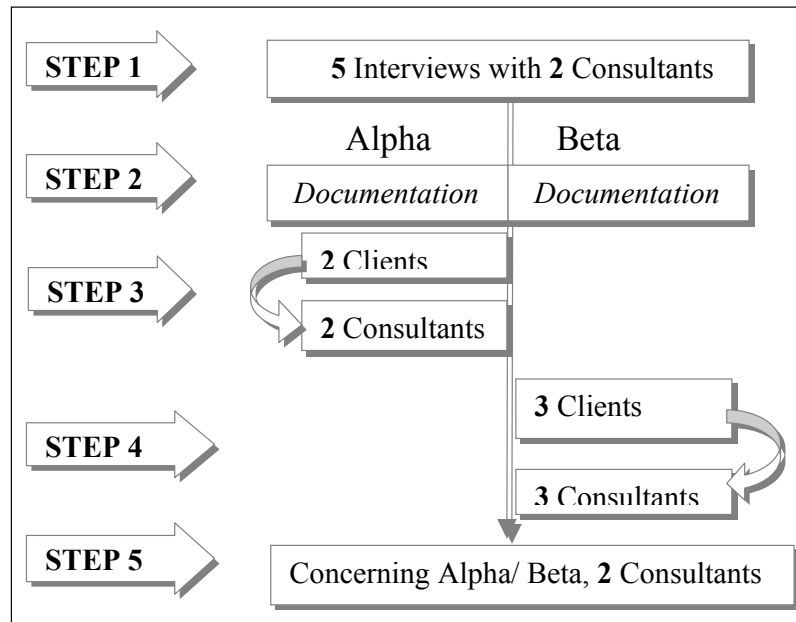
We targeted all those who were heavily involved with the preparations and continuous running of the projects. In this sense, we believe we have apprehended a multiplicity and variety in our answers. Even more so since the interviewees all held different "offices" in the client organizations, and different levels of seniority in the consulting firm, (i.e. senior consultants, and junior consultants). In addition, they had also different tasks and objectives in the projects; some were project leaders whereas others had less responsibility.

We also decided to be "in charge" of one project each, which helped us prepare better by relating to the amount of project-documents (approximately 200 p) in a short period. Looking back, we also feel that we benefited from a clear division of labor between us during the interviews conducted. Hence, we had prepared in advance on how to conduct the interviews, one kept structure, while the other ensured "width and depth" regarding our research focus

Strategy and Method of Analysis

We recognized quite early in the process that our general research focus and our extended research questions would lead us to conduct a quite complicated case study. Consequently, we anticipated that the categorizing, examining and recombining of the evidence would be difficult.

To be able to manage this we followed the advice of Yin (1994) and developed a general strategy towards the analysis, which yielded our priorities for what to analyze and why. The strategy follows a schematic where we let our theories guide us as "analytic tools" towards our main unit of analysis - the management consultancy practice. We also established which of our embedded units would be related to each extended research questions. In this schematic below, we also present the "focus" to which our analysis aimed and also what our "empirical analysis" came to evolve around.

Appendix figure 2: General strategy for analyzing empirical findings

Theoretical approach	Method. approach	Main unit of Analysis	Embedded units of Analysis	Focus in Analysis	Empirical Analysis
Concepts of Consultation	THE SINGLE CASE STUDY	THE MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY PRACTICE	Practice	Alpha and Beta	General roles and orientation
Actorship			The consultant-client interaction	Consultants in Alpha and Beta	Contradiction in terms
Knowl. Linked to Action			The consultant-client interaction	Consultants in Alpha and Beta	Individ. Knowl. Problem process
Change as Sensmaking			The consultant-client interaction	Clients in Alpha and Beta	Two Sense-making models

As a more direct *method* of analysis regarding the empirical focus and our interpretations of the findings, we were also inspired by a "thematic content analysis approach" used by Philips (1988). Simply put, our main idea was to categorize different empirical areas, which seemed to be "matching" findings.

APPENDIX I

Looking back, we believe that when we used this approach to analyze the consultant- client interaction (in Alpha and Beta), we were able to really get close to the data. As an example, from the Actorship perspective, we framed and reframed the themes repeatedly, until we had established our contradiction in terms. Although, this was a time consuming process, we might had not been able to "find" these contradiction in terms without this approach.

Validity of Data and Analysis

This part is sometimes unrecognized in research at this level. Although we have not really measured "validity and reliability" as in traditional "positivistic" science, rather we have tried to be as truthful as possible in our study as to be able to raise the quality of it. In testing the quality of our case study, we have reflected upon three "tests" mentioned by Yin (1994) that occur during the data collection, during the compositional stage, and during data analysis of the case study. We have already discussed some of these above when describing our choices made during the research process. Therefore, we will briefly summarize our work to ensure the overall quality in this sense.

1) To *construct validity*, i.e. to establish correct operational measures for the concept being studied, we have:

- ✓ Used multiple sources of evidence.
- ✓ Have key informants to review parts of our case study draft.
- ✓ Aimed at doing interviews, with both consultants and clients with a variety of positions in the organizations, i.e. management positions as well as in "lower" positions.

2) To demonstrate *Reliability,* so that the operations of the study such as data collection procedures can be repeated, we have:

- ✓ Created "a base of data" of documentations, interview guides written protocols of the interviews.
- ✓ Used thoroughly written protocols of the interviews.

Furthermore, through this conduct we have also tried not to apprehend any biased views on our findings of interviews, by time and again reading our protocols. However, it has been difficult, in fact we have identified a small bias held by us, i.e. of viewing the process-orientation in our case study as "automatically" better suited in a consultation- client interaction. However, since we have been aware of our bias, we have tried to leverage it in our presented results.

3) *External validity*, i.e. to establish the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized. However, as Yin (1994) states, single case studies often get criticized for providing little basis for generalizations. Thus, we have in fact to some extent tried to rely on analytical generalization of a particular set of results into a broader set of theories. However, our case study has not been tested through any replications attempts (yet), and could not in this sense automatically be generalized, until several "management consultancy practices" have been tested in conjunction to the theories that we have used.

Further Research

There is no self- value in proposing further research just because it is expected in a thesis. However, our case study has been conducted in an explorative manner, in which the "phenomena" of the consultant- client interaction has been tied to *one* management consultancy practice. Moreover, to our knowledge the interaction in this sense has not been studied in combination to those main theoretical clues or theories that we have used. Consequently, this research effort is somewhat "exclusive" and may be considered as a pilot-study. To be able to generalize our results a similar study could be conducted.

Since our main criteria in this sense has been to contribute to knowledge within the field of management consulting, we would also propose that the consultant-client interaction is studied further in combination of other theories that might illuminate the practice of management consultants.

APPENDIX I