Conversations "on a Threshold"

– a Bakhtinian Reading of an Organization Development Process in the Cultural Industries

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Dialogue is not the threshold to action, it is the action itself. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 252)

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Summary

In this thesis, I present the study of an Organization Development (OD) process at a large public theater. Drawing on the literature debate on the emergence of OD approaches inspired by social constructionism (“Dialogic OD”) and which focus on intervening in organizational conversations, I start by asserting that a deeper understanding of how OD conversations evolve is still lacking. In particular, I turn to the concept of organizational reflection as a notion which postulates friction when questioning an organization’s status quo. I hence ask the following double-edged research question: How do OD conversations evolve, and how is this evolvement mediated by organizational reflection? As a theoretical framework, I choose Bakhtinian concepts to do justice to conversations as “living” and dynamic. In particular, I draw on Bakhtin’s notions of “genre”, “voice”, “plot”, “eventness”, and “centrifugal and centripetal forces”. In a first analysis, I explore how workshop genres mediate the theater’s voice dynamics within these workshops; in a second analysis, I explore how surprise moments are enacted in the theater’s OD workshops. The first analysis results in the identification of four effects of workshop genres on voice dynamics: “dulling”, “softening”, “bridling” and “teasing”. These effects are influenced by the response actions to a conversation, in particular by expressing more consensus (e.g. by “deliberating” on an issue) or more dissensus (e.g. by “problematizing” an issue). The second analysis results in the identification of five features of surprise moments in OD workshops: they collectivize attention, counter the habitual, are relationally enacted, are often accompanied by negotiation or conflict, and convey a sense of the contingency of the organizational reality. In addition, I present twelve surprise actions triggering such moments. I interpret both analyses as showing how organizational reflection can be understood also as an implicit process, e.g. as voices questioning each other or as surprises questioning the habitual way of doing things. Furthermore, the analyses indicate the complexity and dynamicality of OD conversations: they are continuously shaped by voice dynamics, surprises, and reflective frictions. I discuss these findings in relation to “dialogicality” in OD, to a social constructionist understanding of OD, and to the meaning of a “dialogic mindset”.

Zusammenfassung

In dieser Forschungsarbeit über Organisationsentwicklung (OE) präsentiere ich eine Studie über einen OE-Prozess in einem grösseren öffentlichen Theater. Ausgehend von der Diskussion um die Etablierung von OE-Ansätzen welche durch Ideen des sozialen Konstruktivismus inspiriert sind ("Dialogische OE") und auf Interventionen in organisationale Konversationen fokussieren, beginne ich mit der Feststellung, dass ein tieferes Verständnis für die Entfaltung von OE-Konversationen in der bisherigen Literatur fehlt. Insbesondere beziehe ich das Konzept der organisationalen Reflexion mit ein, welches Reibungen bei der Infragestellung des organisationalen Status Quo mitkonzeptualisiert. Ich stelle entsprechend die folgende Forschungsfrage: wie entfalten sich OE-Konversationen, und wie wird ihre Entfaltung durch organisationale Reflexion mediiert? Als theoretisches Rahmenwerk nehme ich Konzepte von Bachtin heran, um Konversationen als "lebendig" und dynamisch Rechnung zu tragen. Insbesondere beziehe ich mich auf seine Begriffe "Genre", "Stimme", "Handlung", "Ereignishaftigkeit", sowie "zentrifugale und zentripetale Kräfte". In der ersten Analyse exploriere ich, wie Workshop-Genres die Stimmendynamik des untersuchten Theaters mediieren; in der zweiten Analyse exploriere ich, wie Überraschungsmomente in den OE-Workshops des Theaters erzeugt werden. Die erste Analyse resultiert in der Identifikation von vier Effekten der Workshop-Genres auf die Stimmendynamik: "eintönig-machen", "mildern", "zäumen" und "herauskitzeln". Diese Effekte werden von der Art auf eine Konversation zu reagieren beeinflusst, insbesondere durch Reaktionen welche eher Konsens (z.B. "über etwas beraten") oder Dissens (z.B. etwas "problematisieren") ausdrücken. Die zweite Analyse bringt die Identifikation von fünf Eigenschaften von Überraschungsmomenten in OE-Workshops hervor: solche Momente kollektivieren die Aufmerksamkeit, laufen Gewohnheiten zuwider, werden relational erzeugt, werden häufig von Konflikten und Verhandlungen begleitet, und vermitteln eine Wahrnehmung der Kontingenz der organisationalen Realität. Ich interpretiere beide Analysen dahingehend, dass sie zeigen wie organisationale Reflexion auch als impliziter Prozess verstanden werden kann, z.B. indem Stimmen sich gegenseitig infrage stellen oder Überraschungen Gewohnheiten infrage stellen. Ausserdem zeigen die Analysen die Komplexität und Dynamizität von OE-Konversationen auf: sie sind kontinuierlich geprägt von Stimmendynamiken, Überraschungen und reflexiven Reibungen. Ich diskutiere diese Ergebnisse in Hinsicht auf die "Dialogizität" von OE, auf ein sozialkonstruktivistisches Verständnis von OE, und auf die Bedeutung einer "dialogischen Haltung".

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1. Introduction: Situating the Study in the Field of Organization Development (OD)

> *The first and last sentences of an utterance are unique and have a certain additional quality. For they are, so to speak, sentences of the 'front line' that stand right at the boundary of the change of speech subjects. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 89)*

1.1 From theory to practice and back – the relevance of this study

This research project is situated in the field of Organization Development (OD). It is a field historically characterized by dynamic phases, ranging from times of rapid growth in its application and academic attention, to times of questioning its relevance (Burnes & Cooke, 2012). For example, a special issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences* (40/4) expressed a very pessimistic mood about the field of OD and contained titles such as: "Introduction: Is OD in Crisis?" (Bradford & Burke, 2004), "Wanted: OD More Alive Than Dead!" (Greiner & Cummings, 2004), and "Ideas in Currency and OD Practice: Has the Well Gone Dry?" (Bunker, Alban & Lewicki, 2004). Bradford and Burke (2004) reminisced nostalgically about former times when Fortune 500 companies auspiciously practiced OD, when OD Network membership exploded, and when professional OD programs were established. Greiner and Cummings (2004) mourned the disappearance of OD as the designation of organizational departments, the small number of OD university majors, the scarcity of books and articles concentrating solely on OD, and the unfavorable connotation of OD in some companies. And Bunker, Alban and Lewicki (2004) criticized the widening gap between theory-based research and practice. They attributed this to the shift in psychology to cognitive processes and then to neuropsychology, to the frequent practice of relocating organizational psychology in business schools, to a disengagement of practitioners from OD research, and to the lack of a common knowledge background among practitioners. Almost 15 years after issuing these warnings and concerns in the special issue, Bushe and Marshak (2018) still observed:

> In the US, many graduate programs in OD are closing or changing their names (often to some variant with the word leadership in the title, for example Change Leadership). In Seattle alone all three masters in OD programs have recently closed due to lack of student interest. There seem to be fewer and fewer OD titled jobs in industry (though more and more call for OD skills, using other names). Many of the institutional pillars of OD, like NTL and the OD Network are struggling. When we entered the field the OD Division of the Academy of Management had one of the largest memberships. Now it has one of the smallest. (p.1)

Obviously, one could continue to debate the status quo of OD relative to its past. However, this research project takes a different route. Instead of philosophizing the history of OD, it focuses on the current use of OD. Distant from theoretical and academic discussions, many people, and organizations "out there" still "do OD", and even open new application fields in the public and cultural sectors. As Bushe and Marshak (2018) hint at in the previous quote, numerous organizational processes can be labeled as OD, but they go under different names: "the issue here may be that while some organizations, especially the big consultancies, have shied away from the term OD, they have not necessarily shied away from its practice" (Burnes & Cooke, 2012, p. 1411). In fact, OD is still "the major approach to organizational change across the Western world, and increasingly globally" (ibid., p. 1395). Presumably, OD practitioners are less concerned with the historic relevance of OD or its specific labeling, but much more about the "how" of OD: "How is OD accomplished?" This overarching question inspires this research project. More specifically, the project is prompted by the academic debate that reflects a paradigm shift in the practice of OD – a shift from positivistic to social constructionist approaches to OD (Nerdinger, 2014). This shift does not only manifest in the OD community. As the psychologist[1] Kenneth Gergen (2020) observes:

> During the waning years of the 20th century, a range of conversations across the academic community began to challenge positivist assumptions about the nature of scientific truth, objectivity, and value-neutral knowledge. These dialogues ultimately gave rise to what is now characterized as a social constructionist (or constructivist) orientation to knowledge. As deliberations on this orientation have matured and made their way into circles of professional practice, the results have been astonishing. A spirited wave of innovation has swept across the professions, across many regions of the world, and its force has continued to the present. Early innovations in fields of therapy, education, and organizational development were soon followed by new practices in social work, law, counseling, cartography, practical theology, community building, and conflict reduction. (pp. 2/3)

A decade ago, research was already trying to catch up with this change in OD practice (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). Until recently, it was nevertheless uncommon to find studies using concepts that emanate from a social constructionist perspective and from empirical explorations (Aguiar & Tonelli, 2018). As Bunker, Alban and Lewicki (2004) indicated, social and organizational psychological OD research should have the potential to stimulate OD practice. At the same time, they contended that practitioners must make an effort to engage in academic deliberations. As the founding father of OD, the psychologist Kurt Lewin famously wrote: "(t)here is nothing so practical as a

[1] Throughout this thesis, I frequently point out the psychology background of authors. This is done to enhance the visibility of the relatively small community of researchers currently engaged in qualitative psychology.

good theory" (Lewin, 1952 [1943–44], p. 169). In response, this research project intends to deliver both theorizing that is grounded in contemporary OD practice, and theorizing that can further stimulate contemporary OD debates. Subsequently, it aims to make a contribution by strengthening OD as a research field and as a theory-backed intervention approach.

This research project thus engages in the debate on social constructionist OD and presents an empirical study from this perspective. As social constructionism emphasizes the importance of language in creating reality (Burr, 2015), the focus of this study is OD conversations. This turn to OD as conversation mirrors a broader turn toward organizations as communication (Schoeneborn et al. 2014; Blaschke & Schoeneborn, 2016). According to this viewpoint, organizations are socially constructed and communicatively constituted: "Organization is not given a priori but emerges and is perpetuated as a network of interlocking communication events or processes" (Schoeneborn et al., 2014, p. 308). To understand organizations, it is necessary to study how they are conversationally accomplished. Correspondingly, social constructionist approaches to OD conceptualize organizational change and development as a product of communication: "This contemporary approach views organizational change as primarily a process of social construction (i.e. change is made possible through talk and interaction)" (Oswick et al., 2015, p.6). This perspective has inspired both research and practice. As the scholar-practitioner Diana Whitney (2020, p. 217) commented: "human and organizational change practices, based upon the principles of social construction, are suited to address the complex organizational challenges of our time". Scholars also stress the need for more OD research from a social constructionist perspective (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Grant & Marshak, 2011). Indeed, whereas most research from this perspective depicts OD as "simply" changing narrations and discourses, little is known about the tension and friction involved in this challenge.

In my endeavor to explore OD conversations, I embrace the notion of organizational reflection. Parallel to the debate on social constructionist OD, a more recent debate emerged on how to conceptualize reflection, not only from an individual viewpoint but also as an organizational accomplishment. The notion of organizational reflection adds an important dimension to the concepts of social constructionist OD as it postulates that tension arises when questioning the organization's status quo (Vince, 2004). When people in organizations reflect – when they openly question how things are done – they clash with the dominant logic of doing things in the organization. Thus, when

OD is expected to change and develop as a result of conversations, tension is inevitable. By bridging two literature fields, namely the social constructionist OD and the organizational reflection literature, and by applying their respective streams of thinking to an empirical OD case, I address an existing research gap by exploring OD conversations as a reflective accomplishment. Consequently, this research project poses the following double-edged research question: How do OD conversations evolve, and how is this evolvement mediated by organizational reflection?

To answer this question, the selected empirical setting of this study is the OD process in a large public theater. Studies on OD in public and artistic institutions are rare. Traditionally, academic attention to OD has focused on industrial organizations (Cummings & Worley, 2015). However, public theaters are places where tension is very tangible: tensions between artistic freedom and administrative necessities, between popularity and critics' acclaim, and between an historic tradition and the pressure of new public management. In this context, OD projects are invaluable sites to study the evolvement of OD conversations and the role of reflection. This research project is specifically based on a theater that has undergone various changes over the years, ranging from departmental and hierarchical restructuring, through leadership development, to identify areas requiring further professionalization. My research commences at the moment of identifying these professionalization areas and initiating the first implementation of countermeasures. As a parallel initiative, the OD process expanded beyond the executive board to involve as many organizational participants as possible. Consequently, the implementation of a number of project measures and exchanges within the whole organization produced noticeable tension.

To summarize, by analyzing the data from a focused ethnography at a public theater, this research project addresses the gap between a better understanding of how OD is accomplished as conversations and how reflection mediates these conversations. This endeavor is not only of academic interest. It also provides OD practitioners with a better understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of what they actually do and could sensitize them to the challenges and possibilities of organizational development. Furthermore, it could serve as an example to other theaters, arts organizations, and public institutions of how OD is practiced in their settings. Hence, the relevance of this research project resides in the enhancement of OD theorizing based on an empirical study, and in the engagement of practitioners in theoretical deliberations that reflect what they do.

1.2 Toward a research design that embraces the livingness of OD conversations

To approach the research question on the evolvement of OD conversations and the role of reflection in this regard, the "livingness" of OD conversations as they are practiced in the "real" OD case of a theater is embraced by and explored with a qualitative research design[2]. Conversations are not static; they are situational accomplishments involving various actors. Also, conversations are not inanimate "things" or objects; they are alive in the sense of developing their very own dynamic as part of human interactions. Hence, they are unique and take place at specific moments in space and time. Since the required research design must align with this vivid quality of OD conversations, a qualitative research approach is imperative: qualitative research approaches are recommended for research questions addressing the exploration of processes (Patton, 2002). Traditionally, social constructionist research is "qualitative research" (Mertens, 2010). Qualitative research is defined as

> a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos of the self. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018, p.10)

Qualitative approaches have a long tradition in psychology: "Psychological research has always included qualitative research" (Sullivan, 2019, p.31). For example, the discipline's founding fathers, Wilhelm Wundt and William James, highlighted the role of introspection "because, for both of them, mind was still the object of study in psychology" (Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2017, p.4). Franz Brentano was similarly interested in consciousness and its relation to objects (Ashworth, 2015). Freud, Piaget, and Adorno all used qualitative interviews to gain psychological knowledge (Kvale, 2003). In addition, numerous acclaimed psychological studies of a quantitative nature also included qualitative methods, among others, studies on the exploration and development of the concept of the "bystander-phenomenon" (Stainton-Rogers & Willig, 2017). The acknowledgment of the value of qualitative approaches in psychology is still growing. For example, in 2003 the British Psychological Society (BPS) founded the journal *Qualitative Research in Psychology (QRiP)*, and in 2013 the American Psychological Association (APA) founded the journal *Qualitative Psychology*. At the same time, psychologists were at the core of shaping qualitative social research. For

[2] I highly enjoy the aesthetics of quantitative research and, as a practicing psychologist, I frequently consult statistical studies to reflect on the impact of my interventions. However, for the purpose of exploring the processual side of OD, I turn to the aesthetics of qualitative research for this project.

example, in the German speaking world, the pioneering and influential *Handbuch Qualitative Sozialforschung* (Flick, von Kardorff, Keupp, von Rosenstiel & Wolff, 1991) was edited and written mainly by psychologists (Mruck & Mey, 2010). A major advantage of qualitative approaches is their "ecologic validity", as they traditionally explore situations in their "natural contexts": "Many argued that, whilst quantitative methods have their uses, they produce a certain kind of knowledge that, when relied on exclusively, only really illuminates part of what we could know about psychology" (Sullivan & Forrester, 2019, p.4). Especially in organizational psychology, qualitative approaches are used because they acknowledge the uniqueness of each organizational setting (Dick, Schulze & Wehner, 2010). As a result, "work and organizational psychology has a rich tradition in qualitative research" (Doldor, Silvester & Atewologun, 2017, p.520)[3], evidenced by the well-established use of case studies and non-statistical methods in organizational psychology to conduct academic inquiries into organizations:

> Die gestalterische Aufgabe der AO-Psychologie lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Reichhaltigkeit des Kontextes menschlicher Arbeit und die Betrachtung psychischer Prozesse in ihrer Ganzheit. Diese qualitative Perspektive brachte einflussreiche Konzepte wie Organisationsentwicklung, soziotechnische Systemgestaltung oder die Arbeitsanalyse hervor. (Dick, Schulze & Wehner, 2010, p.769)

Qualitative organizational psychology thus acknowledges that organizations are "living" phenomena: every organization is unique, and it develops its own patterns and characteristics; every organizational situation is unique as patterns emerge and change; or these organizations and organizational situations may even have no patterns at all. The same applies to OD conversations and the way they evolve. To do justice to this livingness of OD conversations, I explore them from a qualitative research stance.

For my research, I opted for a theoretical framework inspired by Bakhtin's (1981; 1984a; 1984b; 1986; 1990; 1993) concept of dialogue, thus involving a perspective of dialogism. The psychologists Cheyne and Tarulli (1999) define dialogism as follows:

> Dialogism in the broad sense (…) valorizes difference and otherness. It is a way of thinking about ourselves and the world that always accepts non-coincidence of stance, understanding and consciousness. In dialogism, the subversion by difference, of movements towards unity and the inevitable fracturing of univocality into multi-voicedness represents the fundamental human condition. (p.11)

[3] However, the potential of qualitative methods has not yet peaked: "organizational psychologists have been criticized for lagging far behind other social science disciplines in utilizing qualitative methods" (Doldor, Silvester & Atewologun, 2017, p.520).

The assumption that the human world is essentially pluralistic lies at the heart of the work of the literary critic and philosopher, Mikhail Bakhtin: “For psychologists, the benefits from Bakhtin’s works come from his intense focus on differentiated particulars and the uniqueness of the individual in our interconnected world” (Bandlamudi, 2016, p. 95). Paralleling social constructionist thought, Bakhtin postulates that language is central to our experience. Language is not a mere tool of communication. On the contrary, language is filled with evaluation and opinion; it is a melting pot of a diversity of worldviews. Consequently, this perspective views language as being “alive”; meaning that language is created at a particular moment, picked up by someone else and reshaped, and then reshaped again by someone completely different. Language is dialogical: we draw on the words of others and address future others; we react and expect reactions. Thus, language never “stands still”. It is an ever-evolving and ongoing social accomplishment that is never “finished”. Bakhtin calls this “unfinalizability” – the plurality inherent in social interaction fuels a multiplicity of meanings. Because a Bakhtinian approach acknowledges the livingness of language, it is used to study organizations as living phenomena:

> If we imagine organization to be like Bakhtin described Dostoevky’s novels – multivoiced, intertextual, open-ended, upside down, seemingly chaotic – we understand differently than if we see organization as monological, bureaucratic, monolithic, and orderly. We hear organization as sound. The voice, for each person, is the source of author-ity. Language, ideas, and organization are alive and living among people rather than in or outside of one person. Differences are life-giving. Dialogue is not just a process of organization – it is organization itself. There is order in what appears to be chaotic; this order is rooted in dialogue. (Hazen, 2012, p. 467)

I apply this Bakhtinian idea of dialogue to the study of OD from a social constructionist perspective. Bakhtinian thinking offers a wide lens to explore the plurality of voices in and the momentary developments of OD conversations. In addition, by postulating that dialogue is frequently frictional and conflictual, Bakhtinian thinking assists in carving out the tensions inherent to OD conversations, and thus in revealing their reflective dynamics. I argue that the encounter of diverse voices has an implicit reflective quality: “Interaction with relevant others initiates reflection processes that develop awareness of the variety of perspectives” (Kluge & Schilling, 2003, p. 39). To do justice to the livingness of OD conversations, I conduct a focused ethnography of a theater undergoing an OD process; that is, my study focuses on the observation of the theater’s OD workshops and meetings. During a two-and-a-half-year period of observing these workshops, I took fieldnotes and made audio recordings. The resultant empirical data constitute the subject matter of my two dialogical analyses (Sullivan, 2012). The first analysis focuses on how voices encounter in the OD workshops of the

selected theater. I explore these voice dynamics in relation to the workshop “genres” enacted by the OD participants, and discuss the results in relation to the accomplishment of dialogicality and organizational reflection. The second analysis focuses on moments that surprised me as an observer of these workshops. I analyze the underlying patterns of accomplishing surprise and discuss them in relation to keeping the dialogue “alive” and to being implicitly reflective.

The results of the first analysis are summarized as follows: the genres enacted in an OD workshop, such as a prologue, a debate, or an examination, mediate how voices encounter each other; they encounter in open or silent consensus or dissensus, and thus have a “dulling”, “softening”, “bridling”, or “teasing” effect. Tendencies toward dissensus are understood as being implicitly reflective. Hence, the genres play an important role in how conversations evolve. The second analysis adds the insight that conversations are regularly “unsettled” by brief moments of surprise. These moments not only question the habitual performance of the OD workshops, but they also have an implicit reflective potential. They are accomplished by unsettling the formal or informal structure of a workshop, or by unsettling the dominant framing or emotion. Collectively, the two analyses provide a better understanding of how OD conversations evolve, and how implicit organizational reflection plays an important part in this process. Consequently, the analyses indicate how OD can be understood as a dialogical process: dialogicality is accomplished by different voices responding to each other, and by moments unfolding in unexpected ways. They also indicate how collective reflection can be seen as an implicit quality of conversations: a quality that is enacted by voices questioning each other’s perspectives, and by moments of surprise that question the habitual way of doing things. In all, this research project provides inspiration for what is referred to as a “dialogical mindset”; a mindset that assists attuning to the liveliness of conversations and intervening dialogically.

I titled this thesis “conversations on a threshold” for the following reasons. The term “threshold” is used in Bakhtin’s (1981) literary theory. It describes a situation in a novel where the hero experiences a crisis and is at a certain crossroad – the future is uncertain, depending on “which door the hero takes”. There is tension and contingency. I believe this description corresponds with the results of my analysis. Both analyses show how, from a social constructionist perspective, OD conversations have the potential to change an organization by positioning the organization’s status quo on a “tipping point”: conversationally, alternative ways of organizing are negotiated and enacted. There is also tension and conflict, and which perspective will prevail is

unknown at this point. This tension must be sustained when engaging in OD; and it could also be an OD intended and created tension to trigger development and change. It is tension that results from questioning the taken-for-granted way of how things are usually done in an organization.

Consequently, the aim of this research project is to contribute as follows: first, by linking organizational reflection and a social constructionist perspective on OD, it provides a better understanding of the reflective quality of OD conversations; second, by applying a Bakhtinian framework, it provides a social constructionist perspective of OD through a theoretical lens that frames social processes as essentially dialogical, and that assists in exploring the dynamics of OD conversations; third, by exploring an OD process at a large public theater, it sheds light on an under-researched empirical setting; and fourth, by conceptualizing a dialogical mindset from a Bakhtinian perspective, it offers OD practitioners inspiration to undertake their daily practice.

1.3 An overview of the chapters of the thesis

The figure below (*figure 1*) depicts the "inner logic" of my line of argumentation. The flow of this logic starts with the need to study OD conversations and their implicit reflective qualities as identified in the literature review; moves to a theoretical framework based on Bakhtinian thinking that frames social processes as pluralistic, dialogical and conflictual; continues with a methodology stemming from focused ethnography and dialogical analysis; applies the methodology to the empirical setting of an OD process at a public theater seeking professionalization and employee participation; results in the two analyses on workshop genres and voice dynamics, as well as surprise moments; and concludes with deliberations on the understanding of OD conversations as dialogical and reflective, and the elements of a dialogical mindset.

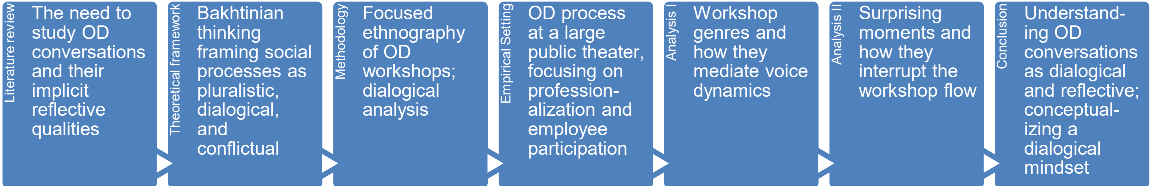

Figure 1: The structure of this thesis

In the next sections I outline the concrete structure of the thesis and, as an overview, briefly outline each chapter, starting with the literature review.

Chapter 2: The literature review – the need for a better understanding of OD conversations

In this chapter, I review the literature-based debate that I am contributing to and identify the research gap to be addressed. A central debate on the theoretical underpinnings of OD concerns the shift from a positivist to a social constructionist perspective on OD (Van Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010; Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Bartunek & Woodman, 2015). Social constructionist OD "locates the place of organizing and hence of change, as patterns of communication, networks of conversation, and narrative realities that are continuously being created and recreated through relational interactions" (Whitney, 2020, p. 2019). Bushe and Marshak (2009; 2014; 2015) and Marshak and Bushe (2009) refer to this as a shift from Diagnostic toward Dialogic OD. Whereas traditional OD approaches stem from positivist thinking in the enlightenment tradition, contemporary OD approaches acknowledge the role of conversations in socially constructed organizations. For example, positivist OD is mirrored in the classical diagnostic instrument of Survey Feedback, in which data on an organization are collected (through questionnaires) and then fed back to the participants in the OD process (Seo, Putnam & Bartunek, 2004). By contrast, Appreciative Inquiry is a prototypical example of a Dialogic OD approach (ibid.). In Appreciative Inquiry, the participants are asked to engage in conversations focusing on the positive potential of their organization (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). The transformational power is located in the narrations that create an organization, and less so in factual objectivity (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). In Dialogic OD, dominant organizational discourses are questioned to initiate organizational change (Marshak & Grant, 2008). The focus is hence on OD as intervening in conversations (Barrett, 2015). However, Dialogic OD approaches have been criticized as being one-sided and, due to their future orientation, as being insufficiently problem sensitive and thus unreflective (Oswick, 2009; 2013). I argue that OD conversations have a reflective potential, as the questioning of dominant discourses can be framed as a reflective process; when diverging perspectives encounter each other, they question each other's "truths". Considering that organizational reflection literature stresses the emotional friction arising from the questioning of the status quo (Swan & Bailey, 2004), OD conversations are likely to be tense. The concept of organizational reflection thus adds a dimension

of depth and intensity to the concept of Dialogic OD. This is the gap that I address in this research project: by linking the notion of organizational reflection to Dialogic OD, I explore OD conversations as potentially reflective. Therefore, the proposed research question: How do OD conversations evolve, and how does organizational reflection mediate this evolvement?

Chapter 3: The theoretical framework – OD conversations as dialogical in a Bakhtinian sense

In this chapter, I outline and explain the theoretical framework of the research project. The theoretical framework that I use to approach the research question on the evolvement of OD conversations and the involvement of organizational reflection is inspired by Bakhtinian thinking. The literature critic and philosopher, Bakhtin, has influenced psychology in general, but more particularly organization research. He assumes the existence of a social world based on a pluralistic understanding of language. Language represents the multi-perspectivity that we engage with on a daily basis. Consequently, language is not neutral, but shaped by different ideologies. Language is "polyphonic": multiple voices interact with each other, representing a set of truths and social perspectives. These dialogic encounters create vividness, "eventness" and surprise. Furthermore, the pluralistic nature of language is shaped by centripetal forces – tendencies toward unity and consensus, and by centrifugal forces – tendencies toward diversity and dissensus. Hence, social processes "never stand still" but are continuously fused by change and friction – they are "unfinalizable"; we cannot provide an ultimate definition of living entities such as human beings or organizations. How voices encounter in literature is influenced by the genre in use. For example, in an epic the author praises the hero, and there is little clashing of different voices. However, in a polyphonic novel the different characters meet and represent specific worldviews, independent of the author's stance. I apply this idea to OD conversations by asking how OD workshop genres mediate voice dynamics. In addition, in a polyphonic novel, the plot becomes unforeseeable even for the author as independent voices develop their own dynamics and surprise. I apply this idea to OD workshops by asking how surprise moments are enacted in OD workshops.

Chapter 4: The methodology – from a focused ethnography to a dialogical analysis

In this chapter, I outline and describe the methodology of the research project. I follow a focused ethnography approach (Knoblauch, 2005; Wall, 2015) for data collection, and a dialogical analysis approach (Sullivan, 2012) for data interpretation. Many studies that draw on a Bakhtinian framework utilize ethnographic methods to do justice to the "lively nature" of dialogue (Cunliffe, Helin & Luhman, 2014). After a pre-study phase involving 19 interviews with mainly independent OD facilitators, I gained access to and was granted permission to observe OD workshops in a theater with approximately 1400 employees. I observed 35 OD events. In addition, I conducted 20 supplementary interviews with OD participants. My analyses are mainly based on field notes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) of the OD decision board meetings, known as steering group workshops. In these quarterly workshops, the manager of the central department, 12 directors, about six staff members, and two to three external facilitators discuss the direction and progress of the OD process. Then I conducted a dialogical analysis (Sullivan, 2012), that is, paying attention to the polyphony in the transcribed texts. For the first analysis, I identified different voices audible in these workshops: a managerial voice, a stage voice, a democratization voice, a public voice, an artistic voice, an employees' voice, and an everyday people's voice. In addition, I identified different workshop genres, such as prologue and epilogue, presentation, examination, brainstorming and feedback, debate, and vote, etc. After this, I explored how these voices respond to each other in the different genres, and how this affects the voice dynamics. In the second analysis, I identified what for me were the three most surprising moments of each workshop. I explored four conversational spheres in which these moments occurred: the formal structure, the informal structure, the framing of a process, and the emotional sphere. Thereafter, I identified underlying surprise actions leading to these moments.

Chapter 5: The empirical setting – a theater's professionalization process

In this chapter, I identify and outline the current challenges theaters are facing, and the OD process in the theater on which I base my analysis. Theaters must adapt to different economic situations: from being profitable in terms of revenue, through being sponsored by the aristocracy or being co-financed by the public, to private sector involvement. In an increasingly competing recreational and entertainment market (Mieze, 2010), and due to increasing labor costs and limited opportunities to

compensate by using technology (Tajtáková, 2006), the economic situation of theaters is precarious. These economic pressures push managerial orientations in different directions (Daigle & Rouleau, 2010; Trevisan, 2017). It is necessary to balance the interests and demands of the different stakeholders, for example those of the local government, the management, the audience, and artistic employees (Boerner & Jobst, 2011). Previously, no OD studies were conducted in theaters, and even studies on OD in the public sector were a rarity (Cummings & Worley, 2015). For this research project, I gained field access to an OD process in the central department of a large theater. The central department consists of approximately 1000 employees (ranging from human resources personnel to stage technicians). The OD process started several years ago to improve the leadership situation by restructuring departments, by collaborating with external consultants to develop leadership principles, and by implementing obligatory training. In addition, new positions were created, such as quality management and staff development. Following on this, external OD facilitators helped to identify different areas requiring improvements (such as communication, processes, innovation, and personnel) and to develop a mission statement. In addition, a formal OD structure was established. This includes a steering group consisting of all the directors and staff members, which meets four times a year to decide on the direction of the OD project and to discuss its implementation; a coordination circle consisting of six staff members, which meets every six weeks to discuss the evolvement of the OD project and to prepare the steering group workshops; and four projects groups, which meet every six weeks to implement various projects within their respective areas of improvement, namely communication, processes, innovation, and personnel. In addition, a series of participatory workshops were held to inform and involve a larger part of the organization in the OD process.

Chapter 6: The first analysis – voice dynamics and responsiveness

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the first analysis. In this analysis I explore how different genres mediate voice dynamics. I describe four effects. First, genres such as presentations or epilogues tend to "dull": there is silent consensus and a monotonous but non-threatening dominance of a voice, with the main response actions being "deliberating" and "coordinating". Second, genres such as lectures, brainstorming, breaks, and celebrations tend to "soften": there is open consensus, a lively and peaceful mingling of different voices, with the main response actions being "deliberating" and "stepping out". Third, genres such as prologues, examinations,

evaluations, or feedback tend to “bridle”: there is silent dissensus, due to the domination of a single voice or the juxtaposition of different voices, with the main response actions being one-sided problematizations and deliberations. Fourth, genres such as votes or debates tend to “tease”: there is open dissensus, an audible clashing of voices, and the main response actions deal with problematizations (re-problematizing, un-problematizing, solving, making fun, etc.) and include deliberations. Dissensus tendencies are centrifugal and implicitly reflective, whereas consensus tendencies represent centripetal forces. All in all, the findings provide a detailed understanding of how “dialogicality” is accomplished in (Dialogic) OD, and how the tense encounter of voices creates organizational reflection.

Chapter 7: The second analysis – threshold moments and “eventness”

In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the second analysis. I identify what to me are the three most surprising moments in each steering group workshop and categorize them in four conversational spheres: the formal, informal, framing-related and emotional sphere. Furthermore, I explore the underlying surprise actions that lead to these moments. In all, I identify the surprise actions per conversational sphere: unsettling the formal OD structure is done by changing the OD setup, the agenda or the discussion ritual; unsettling the informal OD structure is done by confronting, dismissing loyalty, and changing informal roles; unsettling a dominant framing is done by changing the perception of an object, of oneself, and of others; and unsettling dominant emotions is done by opposing emotions, contrasting emotions, and switching emotional positions. What stands out about these moments is that they attune the collective attention to the unfolding of the interactions: both cognitively and bodily, they “catch” the group in a momentum. They create “eventness” and disturb the habitual OD “plot”. By enacting a reality that deviates from the habitual way of doing things, these moments question the habitual organizational status quo and convey a sense of its contingency. They thus have a reflective quality. Hence, I refer to them as “threshold moments”: “threshold” is a literary pattern in which the protagonist is in crisis and the continuation of the path is unknown. These moments assist our understanding of OD conversations as “alive” and “unfinalizable”.

Chapter 8: Conclusion – toward acknowledging the complex dynamics of OD conversations

In this chapter, I discuss the limitations of this research project and suggestions for further research. In addition, I discuss the major contributions of the project, which are the following: it enhances our understanding of OD conversations as complex, dynamic, and "alive"; it specifies a social constructionist understanding of OD; it enhances our understanding of organizational reflection, in particular in relation to OD conversations; it sharpens the term "development" in OD; it contributes to a conceptualization of a dialogic mindset; and it advances our understanding of the applicability of OD in public theaters. First, regarding the complexity of OD conversations, the research project "zooms into the details of how OD conversations unfold". By "unpacking" the voice dynamics and surprise moments, I show how "dialogicality" in OD can be thought of, and how OD conversations move dynamically and vividly. Second, regarding a social constructionist understanding of OD, the research project specifies how in OD, organizations create reality dialogically and conversationally: by attuning to voice dynamics and surprises, I show how voices confront each other and elicit responses, and how surprises create collective momentum and unsettle habits. Third, regarding organizational reflection, the research project conceptualizes collective reflection as an implicit process. Whereas most of the literature frames organizational reflection as an interventionist and explicit endeavor, I show how the "accidental" questioning dynamics, stemming from voices questioning each other's "truths" and from surprise moments questioning the habitual way of doing things, provide a framing of organizational reflection, also as an implicit quality of OD conversations. Fourth, regarding the term "development" in OD, the research project specifies the potential direction of OD intervention, with the aim to increase the reflective capacity of organizations. By linking the literature field of organizational reflection to the field of Dialogic OD, I propose the pursuit of organizational reflection through dialogue. Fifth, regarding discussions on a dialogic mindset, the research project specifies what could be entailed by this term. By showing some of the complex dynamics of OD conversations, I recommend that OD practitioners attune to the possibilities of voices encountering, to the possibilities of surprise occurring, to the implicit reflective potential of voice dynamics and surprises, and to be responsive to the vitality and "livingness" of OD conversations. Sixth, regarding our understanding of OD in public and artistic organizations, the research project sheds light on a field that has not received much research attention. By sharing observations from an empirical

OD case at a public theater, I indicate some of the challenges and specificities involved when applying OD in a public and cultural setting.

2. Toward a Reflexive Turn in Dialogic OD

> *Question and answer are not logical relations (categories); they cannot be placed in one consciousness (unified and closed in itself); any response gives rise to a new question. Question and answer presuppose mutual outsideness. If an answer does not give rise to a new question from itself, it falls out of the dialogue and enters systemic cognition, which is essentially impersonal. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 168)*

2.1 Introduction

To outline a research gap for my research project in the field of Organization Development (OD), my starting point is one of its major debates concerning the question how OD has moved from an objectivist ("Diagnostic") toward a social constructionist ("Dialogic") OD. The conceptualization of OD from a social constructionist perspective provides the theoretical underpinning for several contemporary OD approaches, including Appreciative Inquiry. It highlights the central role of conversation – OD is embedded in conversations, and Dialogic OD intervenes in these conversations to change the organization. But, what in my view is missing in these depictions, is explicating the challenge and difficulty of changing organizations by changing conversations. What may sound in the literature relatively easy – to change talk – is likely to come with major friction and tension: talk is "not cheap", but connected to belief systems, ideologies, emotions, and habits. How questioning the organizational status quo triggers anxieties and conflict, is in particular outlined in the organizational reflection literature. However, contemporary OD debates merely notice the propositions introduced by the reflection literature. I address this gap of the role of reflection in OD conversations and the inherent tension by posing the following research question: how do OD conversations evolve, and how is this evolvement mediated by organizational reflection? This chapter thus outlines the literature debate of OD inspired by social constructionism and indicates how a turn to reflection can advance the conceptualization of OD as conversation. This constitutes the theoretical starting point of my research project: understanding OD as conversational *and* reflective, and to explore OD empirically to make sense of the dynamics and evolvement of OD conversations.

This chapter is structured as follows: after providing an overview of recent debates in the field of OD, I pick up one debate in particular: the shift from positivist to social constructionist OD. I do so in three steps. First, I briefly depict the historical changes that this shift is embedded in. Second, I present the main ideas of OD from a social

constructionist perspective, most importantly the idea of organizations as conversations. Third, I explain a term that is frequently used to refer to the practice of social constructionist-inspired OD – the concept of Dialogic OD; a notion coined in particular by the OD scholars Marshak and Bushe. Thereafter, I outline scholarly reactions to this idea. By noticing the criticism that social constructionist OD approaches are one sided and not reflection oriented, I turn to how the relation between Dialogic OD and reflection was framed thus far. I continue by presenting the notion of organizational reflection and explain what it has to offer for social constructionist concepts of OD. In doing so, I specify the gap that this research project addresses, namely the exploration of the role of reflection in OD conversations. I conclude by outlining my research question.

2.2 The developing field of OD

2.2.1 Current debates in OD

Organization Development (OD) serves as an umbrella term for different movements fostering organizational change. The term has attracted various theoretical ideas and practical tools since its origin (Cummings, 2008). Its evolution has been shaped by “a wide range of disciplines including social psychology, group dynamics, industrial/organizational (I/O) psychology, participative management theory, organization behavior, the sociology of organizations, and even clinical psychology” (Church, 2007, p.2). The founding generation included four psychologists (i.e. Kurt Lewin: 1890-1947; Eric Trist: 1909-1993; Fred Emery: 1925-1997; Douglas McGregor: 1906-1965) and one psychiatrist (i.e. Wilfred Bion: 1897-1979) (Scherer, Alban & Weisbord, 2016). Despite OD’s long tradition, “we still have a problem of simply defining what OD is” (Burke, 2008. p.13). To a degree, OD is always what practitioners associate with it in their current practice: “when practitioners and clients talk about OD they often identify it with interventions that are current in practice” (Bartunek, Austin & Seo, 2008, p. 151). Nevertheless, when considering various definitions, a common ground is evident:

> Most practitioners in the field therefore probably would incorporate into their definitions the idea that OD is planned, a long-term process, based on commonly held values, and essentially about change and development through application of the behavioral sciences. (Burke, 2008, p.14)

These elements are also part of Beckhard's "seminal and most widely used definition of OD" (Baughen, Oswick & Oswick, 2020) that I draw on to enhance comprehensibility when referring to OD:

> Organization development is an effort (1) planned, (2) organization-wide, (3) managed from the top, to (4) increase organizational effectiveness and health, through (5) planned interventions in the organization's processes, using behavioral science knowledge. (Beckhard, 1969, p.9)

As this definition indicates, OD uses academic knowledge ("behavioral science knowledge") to address an organization's capacity ("organization effectiveness and health"). As I show in this literature review, the roots of academic knowledge changed over time to include social sciences, in particular social constructionism. Furthermore, what is not explicit in this definition is OD's humanistic philosophy. In contrast to change management, humanistic values are held in high esteem by OD: "Particular humanistic principles are clearly core to OD and have been since its beginnings (…)" (Bartunek, Austin & Seo, 2008, p. 151). These include participative decision making and the alignment of organizational needs with workers' needs. This humanistic orientation is what distinguishes OD from change management (Cummings & Worley, 2015). Although both approaches aim at organization effectiveness, they pursue different values: "OD's behavioral science foundation supports values of human potential, participation, and development in addition to performance and competitive advantage. Change management focuses more narrowly on values of cost, quality, and schedule" (ibid., p. 4). OD also facilitates organizations how to learn to develop themselves; an ability that is notably absent in change management. Without this humanistic aspect, change management has a much more instrumental and technical view of change. As such, "all OD involves change management, but change management may not involve OD" (ibid.). This feature has not always been to OD's advantage. In the 1980s, for example, OD lagged in certain areas. During this period OD was not used to facilitate downsizing and re-engineering, or to improve strategy and information technology in globalized competition (Marshak & Heracleous, 2008): "The relative inability of OD to respond effectively to these business trends helped create a void that was ultimately filled by what some have seen as a rival, more business-oriented approach referred to as change management" (ibid. p. 1051). In general, however, OD "has been, and arguably still is, the major approach to organizational change across the Western world, and increasingly globally" (Burnes & Cooke, 2012, p. 1395).

Recent debates in the field of OD focus on diverse topics, ranging from the legitimation of OD, through paradigm shifts, to the development of new tools or approaches. Burnes and Cooke (2012), drawing on Korten, Caluwé and Lewicki (2010), summarize the key questions in OD debates as follows:

- What is OD and does it have a strong theoretical base?
- Are the values of OD strong and appropriate?
- Does OD add value to organizations?
- Are OD practitioners responsive enough to organizations' needs?
- Does OD have the balance right between 'soft' people concerns and 'hard' economic concerns?
- Should more be done to 'quality-assure' OD practitioners? (p.1409)

These questions form part of debates that touch on topics such as the history of OD (Hinckley, 2014; Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Scherer, Ablan & Weisbord, 2016; Burke, 2018), the relationship between research and practice (Worley & Feyerherm, 2003; Bunker, Alban & Lewicki, 2004), the perception of the field by practitioners and experts (Korten, Caluwé & Geurts, 2010; Shull, Church & Burke, 2013), the priorities and direction OD should take (Greiner & Cummings, 2004; Wirtenberg, Abrams & Ott, 2004; Porras & Bradford, 2004; Burke, 2018), and the values of OD (Burnes, 2009a, 2009b; Burnes & By, 2011; Burnes & Jackson, 2011). In addition these debates discuss the relationship between OD and other organizational topics, such as its links with Human Resource Management and Development (Ruona & Gibson, 2004), as well as the internationalization of OD (Mozenter, 2002; Alban, 2003; Wirtenberg, Abrams & Ott, 2004; Mirvis, 2006; Wirtenberg et al., 2007; Ramos & Rees, 2008; Rees, 2012; Cummings & Worley, 2015), OD in non-profit organizations (Sminia & Van Nistelrooij, 2006; Wirtenberg et al., 2007; Golembiewski & Brewer, 2008; Patchett & Brown, 2015), and the "rebadging" of OD under new labels (Burnes & Cooke, 2012). Even more so, the theoretical underpinning of OD is debated, as evident in articles on the legacy of Kurt Lewin (Elrod & Tippett, 2002; Burnes 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2017; Coghlan & Jacobs, 2005; Boje et al., 2011; Cummings, Bridgman & Brown, 2015; Burnes & Bargal, 2017; Burnes, Hughes & By, 2018; Desmond & Wilson, 2018), on complexity theories (MacIntosh & MacLean, 2001; Olson & Eoyang, 2001; Worley & Feyerham, 2003; Stacey, 2003, 2015; Burnes, 2004a; Burnes, 2005), on organizational storytelling (Rhodes, 2011; Bryant & Wolfram Cox, 2011), on sensemaking (Werkman, 2010), on temporality (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015), and on neuroscience (Egan, Chesley & Lahl, 2016). Some debates also include the development of certain OD interventions, for example process consultation (Schein, 1999; Freedman, 1999; Lambrechts et al., 2009) and Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987;

Bushe, 2011; Trosten-Bloom & Lewis, 2020). A recent but prominent debate is whether and how OD has moved from an objectivist toward a social constructionist approach (Van Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010; Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Nerdinger, 2014; Bartunek & Woodman, 2015; Whitney, 2020). Bushe and Marshak (2009) famously labeled these two approaches as Diagnostic vs. Dialogic OD approaches. Whereas the former places emphasis on objectively diagnosing an organization, the latter emphasizes the conversational construction of reality: it "locates the place of organizing and hence of change, as patterns of communication, networks of conversation, and narrative realities that are continuously being created and recreated through relational interactions" (Whitney, 2020, p. 218).

With this research project, I intend to contribute to the current debate on OD from a social constructionist perspective. In particular, I focus on change and development through conversations. For this purpose, I outline this specific debate in the following sections in more detail. To provide an understanding of the emergence of this debate, I start by briefly outlining the history of OD.

2.2.2 The historic evolution of OD

Many academic texts on OD start by sketching its history to provide a sense of its philosophy. OD's history is usually organized around historic events (e.g. Burke, 2018; Cummings & Worley, 2015; Hinckley, 2014; Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Burnes, 2013), protagonists (e.g. Scherer, Alban & Weisbord, 2015), or key interventions (e.g. Bartunek, Austin & Seo, 2008; Seo, Putnam & Bartunek, 2004). What these narrations have in common is that they contextualize the development of OD in the context of societal, economic, and academic trends. The subsequent depiction is based on Bartunek, Austin and Seo's (2008) presentation of three generational phases, as they focus less on key figures and events of OD than on known intervention methods and their historical embeddedness. These authors' identification of three (overlapping) generations of OD interventions provides a compact overview of how OD generated successive intervention approaches: first-generation planned change (beginning in the late 1950s), promoting ideas such as action research, sensitivity training, team building, sociotechnical systems, quality of work life, and survey feedback; second-generation planned change (beginning in the 1980s), promoting ideas such as organizational transformation and large group interventions; and third-generation planned change (beginning in the late 1980s) promoting ideas such as learning organizations and appreciative inquiry. Accordingly, the underlying philosophy of OD

approaches changed from first improving organizations, through working with individuals and small groups and aligning the fit of organizations and their environment, to finally explore the self-construction patterns of organizations. OD has thus changed from a predominantly individualistic and group-interactional intervention approach, to one that embraces the whole organization and its social construction processes (Seo, Putnam & Bartunek, 2004).

While, in the 1940s, OD dealt with problems of racism and prejudice, overcoming strong authoritarian approaches to leadership, and improving military and industrial performance (Hinckley, 2014), in the 1980s major changes in the overall business world (i.e. globalization, industry shifts, technology; Burnes & Cooke, 2012) shifted the focus to the "fit" between organizations and their environment. As a result, "environmental scanning, competitive analysis, stakeholder analysis, and business planning" became popular methods (Bartunek, Austin & Seo, 2008, p.159). Punctuated equilibrium models were also favored (Seo, Putnam & Bartunek, 2004), and the focus shifted from individuals and small groups to organizational transformation and large-scale interventions (Burnes & Cooke, 2012). The third-generation approaches retained these transformational and large-scale intervention approaches but, instead of studying the environment, they emphasized the organization's self-constructed past, as can be seen in the learning organization or Appreciative Inquiry approaches (Bartunek, Austin & Seo, 2008). Postmodern theories, such as complexity theory and social constructionism, influenced this thinking (Burnes & Cooke, 2012). According to these viewpoints, there is not a single objective truth, but many socially constructed truths. As a result, it was assumed that OD should not attempt to intervene in a linear way, but rather facilitate dialogue: "dialogue is one of the primary methods whereby a plurality of perspectives is created, sustained and revealed, and dialogue is central to many OD techniques" (Burnes & Cooke, 2012, p.1412). This social constructionist perspective motivated the organization scholars Gervase Roy Bushe and Robert Marshak to argue that OD has transformed from an objectivist ("Diagnostic") OD into a social constructionist ("Dialogic") OD (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Marshak & Bushe, 2009; Bushe & Marshak, 2014; Bushe & Marshak, 2015). Dominant metaphors of objectivist approaches were "OD as health" and "change as a journey" (Oswick & Marshak, 2012). They went hand in hand with expertly diagnosing the organization's status quo, and then rationally planning a destination-linear way out of an organization as "a problem to be solved" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001, p. 23). By contrast, a social constructionist approach favors the OD metaphor of "change as a conversation" (Oswick & Marshak, 2012): "(…) change as a process which is inherently interpretive

and discursive in nature. (…) Hence, rather than envisaging an organization as a human entity with human attributes and qualities, it is possible to think of an organization as a discursive entity which is socially constructed” (ibid. p. 108). Because of this distinction between these two sets of philosophies, the influence of social constructionism on contemporary OD is explicitly acknowledged, and social constructionism is used as a concept to further theorize OD: “a number of leading OD scholars see social constructionism as a way of providing OD with a more coherent theoretical underpinning” (Burnes & Cooke, 2012, p.1412). The influence of social constructionism on OD is henceforth described in more detail.

2.2.3 Toward a social constructionist conceptualization of OD

When OD was “invented”, positivistic approaches to science and practice prevailed. OD came into being at the peak of the Industrial Age: “It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the mindset of those who designed the foundational OD interventions was part of the larger ethos of Industrial Age thinking inherited from the Enlightenment tradition” (Barrett, 2015, p.59). This change approach was teleological: identifying (diagnosing) a problem and planning appropriate actions to solve it (Seo, Putnam & Bartunek, 2004). Accumulating facts was the predominant method, also in social sciences, and organizations were mainly regarded as structural-functional (Barrett, 2015). This paradigm was also reflected in OD. Kurt Lewin’s (1952 [1947]) notion of unfreeze-change-refreeze (although not intended in this way by him, according to Cummings, Bridgman, & Brown, 2015) was used to justify linear interventions. Solid data collection and analysis were necessary for any OD intervention:

> Change is conceptualized as a planned process of “unfreezing” a current social equilibrium, creating “movement” to a new and more desirable future equilibrium that then needs to be “refrozen” to sustain the change. A key aspect of planned change is action research, which includes “diagnosis” of the existing situation – the elements, factors, and forces maintaining the current state – in order to know where and how to intervene to induce unfreezing and movement in the direction of the desired state. (Bushe & Marshak, 2014, p. 59)

As depicted in the previous section, the second generation of OD that emerged in the 1980s had a different focus and concentrated on the alignment of organizations and their (turbulent) environment. However, its diagnostic approach was similar: to design such an alignment, the environment first had to be properly analyzed (Bushe & Marshak, 2014). A stakeholder analysis, for example, requires accurate environmental data.

This “diagnostic” approach of “objectively assessing a situation” was challenged by social constructionism. Social constructionism shifted the focus to enable the change between different organizational perspectives, namely to different “organizational constructions”. The social constructionist does not view knowledge as objectively “out there”, but as a creation of interactions. As the psychologist and protagonists of social constructionism, Gergen (2012, p.1000), states: “The phrase, *social construction*, typically refers to a tradition of scholarship that traces the origin of knowledge, meaning, or understanding to human relationships”. This relational view of knowledge recognizes that different groups of people can have different assumptions of what is true and what is not. It recognizes the local situatedness of knowledge: “What any particular group believes is ‘reality’, ‘truth’ or ‘the way things are’ therefore is at least partially a social construct that is created, conveyed and reinforced through discourse in the form of theories, stories, narratives, myths and so on” (Marshak & Grant, 2008, p.11).

As knowledge and truth are created in interaction, language plays an essential role. In contrast to positivistic psychology, which sees language as “a more or less straightforward expression of thought” (Burr, 2015, p.10), social constructionism sees language as “a pre-condition of it” (ibid.): “Rather than viewing language as a route to internal psychological states, such as emotions or attitudes, social constructionism sees language as one of the principal means by which we construct our social and psychological worlds” (ibid.). This language orientation has implications for OD practices. Whereas objectivist approaches to OD could rely on “measuring the organization” in a reliable way, from a social constructionist point of view it becomes difficult to establish such a single truth: “constructionist and postmodern approaches have increasingly influenced the social sciences with ideas about multiple realities and the inherent subjectivity of experience” (Marshak & Grant, 2008, p.9). As a result, “if there are multiple realities then there can be no transcendent, objective truth to be discovered. Instead the issue becomes how agreements about the reality of a situation are negotiated among contending points of view” (ibid.). Several stakeholders are involved in organizations and OD processes, with very different images of the organization and its desired state. According to these viewpoints, rather than transforming an organization from one quantifiable state into another, dialogue is enabled and facilitated between different organizational members and their interpretations of the change situation. Change is thus seen as shift in the collective social construction of the organization; a shift in the way its members talk about their organization:

> From a social constructionist view, changing a system is a matter of changing a conversation. For OD practitioners, this suggests that perhaps the most powerful tool at our disposal is to propose a new way of talking. Since words create worlds, new vocabularies are invitations to new possibilities. If organizations are constructed through social agreement, they can be reconstructed in innovative, desired ways by changing the conversations that take place at work. This suggests that we pay attention to new voices, new action possibilities at the margins that can suggest new worlds of meaning. (Barrett, 2015, p. 71)

How new words can change organizations becomes visible when considering how some organizations have transferred the meaning of external "customers" to internal staff, calling them "internal customers". This often changes the relations with and attitudes toward these staff members, as well as toward work practices, in an attempt to make them more "customer friendly" (Barrett, Thomas & Hocever, 1995).

From a social constructionist perspective, change is not simply accompanied by communication, but actually refers to a change that is enacted through how communication processes are able to change. Communication does not simply represent reality; communication is performative, and it creates reality: "Therefore, in the absence of communication there *is* no intentional change and no intentional change process" (Ford & Ford, 1995, p.560). When organizational discourses and narratives change, the organizational reality changes. As Barrett (2015) indicates in his aforesaid quote, these changes are enacted in conversations. Conversations are defined as "a set of texts that are produced as part of a dialogue among two or more people and that are linked together both temporally and rhetorically" (Grant & Marshak, 2011, p.209), or as "clusters of interrelated speech acts" (Ford & Ford, 1995, p.545). A "text", in this context, refers to anything that conveys content or meaning, for example words or gestures. Conversations also include material and non-verbal associations (Ford, 1999). As such, they are "a complex, information-rich mix of auditory, visual, olfactory, and tactile events" (Cappella & Street, 1985, p.2). Conversations can range "from a single speech act (e.g. 'Do it'), to an extensive network of speech acts that constitute arguments (…), narratives (…) and other forms of discourse" (Ford, 1999, p.484). They can unfold over long periods of time, and the participants in conversations can also change over time. As a result, the stream of conversations creates organization continuously: "That is, organizations *are* networks of conversations rather than *have* networks of conversations. (…) Planning, budgeting, hiring, firing, promoting, managing, rewarding etc. are all conversations that are interconnected and constitutive" (ibid.p.485). An organization can thus be seen as a "meta-conversation" (Robichaud et al., 2004).

Organizations usually develop dominant discourses over time; language patterns that define organizational meaning and shape the organizational reality. OD, being inspired by social constructionist thinking, tries to elicit alternative discourses that have the power to challenge and question the dominant ones (Grant & Marshak, 2011; Marshak & Grant, 2008). A discourse is defined as "a set of interrelated 'texts' that along with the related practices of text production, dissemination, and consumption brings an idea or way of thinking into being" (Marshak, Grant & Floris, 2015, p. 79). The term conversation, to a greater extent, emphasizes the interactional and dialogic flow among actors that produces these texts and discourses:

> A conversation is defined as the production, dissemination, and interpretation of strings of texts, which are linked together both temporally and rhetorically as parts of interactions or transactions between two or more people (…). Conversations exist in a recursive relationship in which existing discourses provide resources to actors who engage in conversations that in turn produce, reproduce, and transform those discourses. (Marshak, Grant & Floris, 2015, p. 81)

As there are always a variety of conversations at play, organizations can be regarded as deeply polyphonic and pluralistic. Thus, to intentionally change an organization, means to alter a conversation: "if organizational change is to be accomplished, it will happen only through the conversations and dialogues in which organization members engage" (Bartunek & Woodman, 2015). Cognitive restructuring occurs through conversations, especially when confronted with a different interpretation (Schein, 1996). Social constructionist scholars "argue that organizations consist of a plurality of perspectives that are revealed through conversation, while change is recognized and generated through conversation and other forms of communication" (Van Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010, p.414). According to this perspective, "social interaction, and dialogue in particular, is the primary vehicle by which coincident interpretations are created, transmitted, and sustained, and as such 'dialogue' is a vehicle for organizational change processes" (ibid.).

This turn toward organizations as conversations is also expressed by the so-called "communicative constitution of organizations" (CCO) approaches (Schoeneborn, Kuhn & Kärremann, 2019). It is a consequent implementation of the linguistic turn in studying organizations (Deetz, 2003; Alvesson & Kärremann, 2000). The three main CCO schools are the Montreal School of Organizational Communication (e.g. Taylor & Van Every, 2011), the Four Flows Model based on Gidden's Structuration Theory (e.g. McPhee, 1998), and Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems (e.g. Luhmann, 1992; 1995). At the intersection of communication and organization studies, these streams of thinking assume that communication creates organizations, instead of organizations

preexisting prior to communication: communication is “more than an explanandum, that is, something that ought to be explained by our models or theories, but that it also be considered an explanans, that is, something that explains how our world is what it is and how it functions” (Cooren, 2012, p.2). Organizations are enacted on the micro level of communicative interactions (Schoeneborn et al. 2014). This viewpoint stresses the processual side of organizing: organizing is primarily the flow of communication (McPhee & Zaug, 2000). Correspondingly, OD intervenes communicatively, and aims at the conversations that constitute an organization.

Grant and Marshak (2011) propose a “bundle” of questions that change agents can consider when intervening conversationally, for example:

- How can we use conversations as opportunities to construct new premises and possibilities?
- How are prevailing narratives reinforced in day-to-day conversations throughout the organization and how might we change those conversations?
- Who are the actors who will be most influential to the intended change and how can their discourses and conversations be altered to support the change?
- How can we create settings where different actors and interests communicate, or where there is a greater power equalization among the discussants, or where the nature of the conversation is different? (p. 222)

Recently developed large-group interventions explicitly use conversations to change an organization, as can be seen in the café-like conversations of World Café (Jorgenson & Steier, 2013; Prewitt, 2011; Bartunek & Woodman, 2015). Therefore, social constructionism has a strong influence on the ways in which OD is understood and practiced and has shifted its focus from the search for objective facts to the consideration of conversations. It has brought the use of language to the forefront of studying and intervening in organizations.

Bushe and Marshak (2009) argue that the move toward a so-called “social constructionist OD”, combined with ideas taken from complexity theories, represents a paradigm shift in intervention philosophy. To indicate this shift, they label the more recent OD approaches “Dialogic” in contrast to the old “Diagnostic” approaches. However, they simultaneously stress that Dialogic OD approaches should also be called OD, as they share a set of higher values with the traditional forms of OD: both approaches have a major interest in implementing and spreading humanistic and democratic values, in increasing system awareness, in facilitating rather than providing expert advice, and in capacity building and development. In the next section, I briefly indicate the meaning Bushe and Marshak (2009) give to “Dialogic OD”.

2.2.4 The concept of Dialogic OD

In respect of what they refer to as the emergence of a "dialogic mindset", Bushe and Marshak[4] (2014) identify two influential theoretical streams, namely complexity science and interpretive social science. First, in respect of theories inspired by complexity science, Bushe and Marshak (2014) detect the concepts of Open Space Technology (OST) (Owen, 2008), of emergence (Holman, 2010; 2015), and of complex responsive processes of relating (Stacey, 2001, 2015; Griffin 2002; Shaw, 2002). These concepts have the assumption in common that organizational processes are complex and not controllable in a linear way. Therefore, what is needed are the considerate observation of organizational processes and a stance that deals with the impossibility to know the exact outcome of an intervention. Second, regarding theories of interpretive social science – i.e. social constructionism – the main concepts are those of the coordinated management of meaning (CMM) (Pearce, 2004; Cronen, 1991), of organizational discourse (Grant, Hary, Oswick & Putnam, 2004; Oswick, Grant, Marshak & Wolfram-Cox, 2010), and of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Cooperrider, Barrett & Srivastva, 1995; Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2008). The common denominator of these theories is their emphasis on conversations and talk as an entrance point for interventions. For example, CMM emphasizes the choice that lies in a conversation's turning point; organizational discourse approaches highlight that there is no reality beyond what is created through conversations; and AI intentionally rejects talking about organizational problems, instead shifting the focus to talk about an organization and its future in an appreciative way. Complexity and interpretive theories are not completely separated paradigms. For instance, conversationalist approaches emphasize the impossibility to fully control a conversation – similar to how complexity theory rejects the possibility to control social processes. This is exemplified when Ford (1999, p. 487) writes: "The difficulty is that we cannot tell a priori which conversations will make the difference needed for the results to obtain. In this sense, producing change is like experimental theatre or improvisational jazz where the script (music) is being written while it is being performed". Ford and Ford (1995) suggest that "both change and conversation seldom progress the way they talk about them, because neither phenomenon is linear of predictable" (p.559). They conclude: "For this reason, the idea that change processes move in a linear fashion from start to finish, from unfreezing to refreezing, or from formulation to implementation is an oversimplification" (p.560).

[4] For more background on the academic situatedness of the OD scholars Bushe and Marshak, see Kenward (2017) for Gervase Bushe and Wagner (2017) for Robert Marshak.

For Bushe and Marshak (2014) a dialogic mindset is one that takes the unpredictability of social construction processes seriously. Although there may be differences in how Diagnostic and Dialogic OD approaches are practically applied, what matters is the dialogic mindset behind an intervention: “There are dozens of methods that can be used dialogically (…), but many of those methods can also be used diagnostically. It is one’s mindset that determines how one thinks about and engages situations, including selecting and mixing which methods and approaches to use” (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). In a dialogic mindset, the intervention focus is on conversational processes:

> Thus, from the very moment of entry onward, the practices involved in engaging a system in dialogic inquiry, establishing and facilitating a container for meaning making and self-organization, and implementing any resulting changes need to be understood as related to, but philosophically different from, the practices associated with diagnostic OD. (Marshak & Bushe, 2009, p. 382)

However, differentiating Dialogic from Diagnostic OD approaches also results in a different way of doing things. For example, for Diagnostic OD, action research is a paramount approach, “including the stages of entry/contracting, data collection/diagnosis, data feedback/intervention, evaluation/assessment, and termination/closure” (Marshak & Bushe, 2009, p. 379). Dialogic OD approaches, in contrast to action research’s focus on diagnosis and feedback, instead focus on designing spaces where conversations with a change potential can unfold. For example, Open Space (Owen, 2008), Axelrods’ process of Collaborative Loops (Axelrod & Axelrod, 2000), the Technology of Participation of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (Oyler & Harper, 2007), and World Café (Brown & Issacs, 2005), all focus less on data gathering, and much more on hosting and facilitating generative conversations. Therefore, what Dialogic OD approaches

> (…) have in common is a search for ways to promote more effective dialogue and conversation and a basic assumption that it is by changing the conversations that normally take place in organizations that organizations are ultimately transformed. Dialogic forms of OD are more focused on when, where, and how to promote the kinds of conversations they advocate than on diagnosing the system against some kind of ideal model. When they engage in inquiry as part of the change process, the purpose of that inquiry is dialogic: to surface, legitimate, and learn from the variety of realities that coexist in the system. In Dialogic OD, the purpose of an inquiry is not so much to analyze how the system works but is more about increasing awareness of the variety of experiences contained in the system. (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, p. 360)

In practical terms, specifically to implement Dialogic OD, it is according to Bushe and Marshak (2015) necessary to facilitate dialogic interactions, to design dialogic meetings, and to create dialogic structures for a series of meetings. Facilitating dialogic interactions means to pay attention to people’s use of language; designing dialogic meetings means to “run great meetings” (ibid. p.44) that engage people, to make them

aware of their conversations, and to take ownership for new ideas and energy for the period after an event; and creating dialogic structures for a series of meetings means to involve multiple stakeholder groups and to encourage “a voice for the multiplicity of narratives and identities that must be respected for real dialogue, emergence, and new possibilities to take place” (ibid. p.46). A way of doing this, for example, is to work with organizational theater interventions. Badham et al. (2016) did this by working with customer service staff in a regional Australian bank. They found that in “many cases, the plays surface a lack of understanding, communication, and dialogue between formal front stage and informal back stage rhetoric, activities and accounts (…)” (p. 125). They concluded that in “this sense, organizational theatre is a distinctive and significant example of a “dialogic OD” intervention” (ibid.).

Despite practical suggestions on how Dialogic OD could be implemented, Bushe and Marshak (2015) warn that Dialogic OD is more than prescribing or facilitating “good dialogue” for a single discussion, but that it rather involves viewing the whole organization through a dialogic mindset. Bryant and Cox (2014), for example, show how the (difficult) emotions experienced by employees affected by a change process, can be viewed differently depending on either a diagnostic or a dialogic approach. They interviewed workers in an Australian industrial region extensively affected by the broader economic reforms of the 1980s and the 1990s, and which was accompanied by longer-term OD efforts. With regard to the change, many interviewees referred to “emotional labor”. In traditional OD, “the diversity of responses to change would be accepted (…), with OD practitioners working with the variety of participants’ emotions in order to better understand them and, importantly, what they can tell OD practitioners about change programmes” (ibid. p.716). In contrast to this expert-driven perspective, in Dialogic OD approaches the diversity of emotions and reactions to the changes would be used as a resource for further conversations: “the recognition of multiple responses to change under new OD could allow for the development of more productive communication and coping” (ibid. p. 717).

Dialogic OD is a term that was introduced to acknowledge new OD practices inspired by social constructionist thinking. These focus on designing and facilitating conversations that trigger organizational change. Dialogic OD thus is – despite new OD tools – also a mindset which is sensitive to dialogic processes in organizations. The introduction of the concept of Dialogic OD is one of the most taken on terms in academic OD literature. However, despite gaining recognition for acknowledging advancements in practices and OD philosophies, the concept has also been criticized

for creating an artificial dichotomy to traditional OD approaches. The reception of this concept is summarized in the next section.

2.2.5 Reactions to the concept of Dialogic OD

The concept of Dialogic OD has triggered a lively debate in the OD scholarly community. Whereas some scholars acknowledge Dialogic OD as an important contribution to the OD debate (Oswick, 2009, 2013; Cox, 2009; Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Hinckley, 2014; Bartunek & Woodman, 2015), others use the notion as a point of departure for empirical research (Bryant & Cox, 2014; Badham et al., 2016; Heracleous, Gösswein & Beaudette, 2018). Some, more radical, say "that the 'old' OD, with its neo-empiricism and psychological orientation has reached a dead end" (Voronov & Woodworth, 2012, p.440). Irrespective, the concept of Dialogic OD has drawn criticism. Some scholars criticize it for presenting the history of OD in a one-sided way (Van Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010; Burnes, 2013; Cox, 2009; Woodman & Bartunek, 2012), for dichotomizing OD approaches, and for overly favoring a single approach – the new and dialogic approach (Oswick, 2009; 2013; Cox, 2009). Other scholars, instead, propose a combination of "old" and "new" approaches, or at least an acknowledgement of their interconnectedness (Woodman, 2008; Cox, 2009; Oswick, Robertson, Scarbrough & Swan, 2015). Regarding the history of OD, Burnes (2013) for example claims that for Lewin "gaining insights and understanding was more important than gathering data and testing solutions" (p. 939). Similarly, Cox (2009) is of the opinion that "a move away from organizational diagnosis is not particularly contemporary" (p. 376). In fact, Van Nistelrooij and Sminia (2010) argue that the origins of OD were already social constructionist, especially considering the emphasis that OD, from its beginning, placed on how the social shapes the individual. Regarding the dichotomous contrasting of diagnostic versus dialogic approaches, Oswick (2009) criticizes the comparison of "old" and "new" approaches as leading to a preference for dialogic approaches, as they seem to be more "state-of-the-art" (Oswick, 2009, p. 370). Cox (2009) also criticizes the privileging of newer over older approaches. For her, in Bushe and Marshak's (2009) depiction, "both the language and recency attributed to Dialogic OD positions it as a little more advanced and a little more sophisticated than Diagnostic OD" (Cox, 2009, p. 375). Oswick (2013) warns that the marginalization of classic approaches and the favoring of solution and future-oriented interventions create a one-sided way of looking at organizations and of doing OD. Problems and the

past may have less attractive connotations than solutions and the future. As a result, reflective forms of OD may not be taken into consideration:

> This is deeply problematic because the highly contingent nature of organizations and organizational situations means that there are likely to be circumstances in which a problem-centred OD approach is particularly pertinent, but may be overlooked in favour of an alluring projectively oriented, alternative. (Oswick, 2013, p. 375)

Oswick (2013) also criticizes Dialogic OD approaches for overly focusing on talk and discourse. As a consequence, “OD approaches that are ‘harder’ and more tangible have been marginalized. This is apparent in the paucity of task-based and structural interventions being undertaken” (Oswick, 2013, p. 373). Although he finds evidence of organizational restructuring efforts, Oswick is of the opinion that they are driven by the need to save money or to advance technology, “rather than [by] behavioural science considerations around effective ways of organizing” (ibid.). Another consequence is the neglect of material conditions and outcomes of Dialogic OD interventions. For example, in Appreciative Inquiry the practice of identifying and distributing good practices “has direct and explicit material consequences insofar as it inevitably involves changes to procedures, structures, locations, roles and activities” (Oswick, 2013, p. 374).

The depiction of Diagnostic and Dialogic OD approaches as contrasting may also lead to an oversimplification of each (Oswick, 2009). In addition, this contrast shapes the fixing of two alternatives, instead of opening up space for dynamic and interlinked approaches (Cox, 2009). Burnes (2013), for example, finds that Lewin’s pursuit of democracy in organizations “fits neatly with the egalitarian nature of postmodern organizations” (p. 393).

Instead of opposing dialogic and diagnostic approaches, Oswick (2009) proposes to supplement their different logics, for example by stressing the provisional and plurivocal in process consultation; by experimenting with cause-and-effect assumptions in laboratory learning; or by replacing phases of “data gathering” and “data feedback” with “idea gathering” and “ideas sharing” in action research. More generally in OD, he suggests the combination of dialogic approaches for divergent processes and diagnostic approaches for convergent processes:

> In terms of operationalizing this two-pronged approach, one might commence with dialogic OD to facilitate the generation of “multiple realities,” “create containers and processes to produce generative ideas,” and place an “emphasis on changing mindsets and what people think.” This divergent phase could then be followed up with a convergent phase of more informed, diagnostically oriented practice in which “multiple realities” are acknowledged but, for pragmatic purposes, are tested and narrowed and “generative ideas” are refined and “objective problem-solving methods” are applied. Most important, the move from

> dialogue to diagnosis involves a switch from an “emphasis on changing mindsets and what people think” to “emphasis on changing behavior and what people do.” (Oswick, 2009, p. 373)

Furthermore, the decision on the OD approach may be contingent upon the task at hand: “For example, there may be some instances where the physical redesign of work activities or the reengineering of business processes lends itself to the more to the scientific approach of ‘traditional OD’ than the discursive-orientation of ‘contemporary OD’” (Oswick et al., 2015, pp. 18/19). In addition, Oswick et al. (2015) suggest treating different OD approaches as equal and “synchronic”, instead of “diachronically” favoring newer ones. They call for a methodological pluralism, conceptual blending, and the valuing of diversity and difference.

Empirical studies show that OD practitioners are indeed applying both Diagnostic and Dialogic approaches in the same OD process. For example, Heracleous, Gösswein and Beaudette (2018) researched an open strategy process at Wikimedia. They found that this intentionally dialogic process is very tension-ridden, being pulled between central decisions and the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders. They also concluded that “Wikimedia’s process included elements of both diagnostic and dialogic OD” (ibid. p. 28). The sequencing of this process involved diagnostic elements (“initial diagnosis and data gathering”, ibid.) first, followed by dialogic elements (“the attempt to cocreate a future for Wikimedia through broad dialogue, creating and sharing a vision and common narratives”, ibid.). This sequence contrasts with proposals in the literature for a divergent phase first, and then a convergent phase (e.g. Oswick, 2009; Marshak & Bushe, 2009). What can be deduced from these studies is that – as proposed by some OD scholars – OD practice is informed by both Diagnostic and Dialogic approaches. Although it could be important to point out differences in OD philosophies, these differences may not play an as important role for OD practitioners. Accordingly, in my research project, I prefer not to study the relationship of Diagnostic and Dialogic OD approaches. Instead, I focus on an elaboration of what it means to understand OD as conversation: if conversations constitute organizations and change, we need more knowledge on how OD conversations are performed and evolve – we need a processual perspective on how “dialogicality” is established in OD.

2.3 Studying OD as conversation: specifying dialogicality and considering reflection

As outlined above, social constructionist theory emphasizes the role of language and conversations in performing and changing organizations. However, we know little about the dynamics of OD conversations. Accordingly, Grant and Marshak (2011) demand more research to understand the role of conversations in OD:

> This also raises the question of whether some types of conversations are more influential in fostering change than others in terms of who has them, what they are about, and when, where, and how they take place (…). Moreover, in addition to position and power, that other factors may be influencing conversational impacts? It might also be important to distinguish between conversations that reinforce stability and those that might promote change or challenge the status quo. Are conversations to promote a change different from conversations to maintain the status quo and if so, in what ways? (p. 224)

I respond to this call for further research on OD conversations. However, in my view, an even more fundamental look is still needed than suggested by the questions in the above quote by Grant and Marshak: what constitutes these OD conversations, their dynamics and dialogicality? How can we think OD conversations from a process perspective (Steyaert, 2007; Helin et al., 2014)? How can we grasp the complexity of OD conversations? I hence suggest exploring OD conversations as processual phenomena, and to focus on how they dynamically evolve. OD and CCO scholars claim the conversational constitution of organizations and change; we thus need fine-grained knowledge about conversational OD dynamics. As seen in the aforesaid, OD conversations are mainly discussed with reference to conversational framing and narrative processes (Barrett, 2015), as well as to discursive change processes (Grant & Marshak, 2011). However, these conceptualizations still leave a number of unanswered questions. How can we imagine alternative discourses challenging dominant organizational discourses? How can we imagine the introduction of new narrations replacing established narrations? Is this a harmonious and quiet process, or one involving friction, conflict, and emotional intensities? These are the questions which this research project attempts to answer. It thus intends to “put more meat to the bones” of conversational OD.

To understand OD as truly dialogical, we need a theory of dialogue that makes the dynamic aspects of conversations visible, including the interactional frictions inherent in conversationally changing organizations. Bushe and Marshak’s (2015) concept of practical Dialogic OD – as facilitating dialogic interactions, designing dialogic meetings, and creating dialogic structures – provides important points for designing dialogic interventions. However, these aspects are still vague when it comes to understanding

dialogicality as a process that is complex and that needs to be enacted moment by moment. Hence, for this research project, I turn to a theoretical framework that acknowledges the dialogicality of human interactions. The literary critic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin provides such a view of social processes as dialogue. For Bakhtin (1981, 1984a, 1986), language is inherently dialogic: it is the encounter point for many conversation participants and worldviews; it is the sphere in which we respond to previous words and anticipate future reactions to our words; it is a potentially tense space as we battle over truths and meaning; and it is a pluralistic world in which everyone brings in a different, and thus a potentially enriching perspective from their standpoint. Bakhtinian thinking is suitable to understand the processual complexity of OD conversations. The choice of this particular theory, which has inspired social constructionist thinking in organizational psychology, is intended to sharpen our understanding of the social constructionist perspective on OD. Instead of vaguely using the term "social constructionism", I present a specific stream of social constructionist thinking and link it to OD. As I explain this approach in detail in the next chapter, I subsequently indicate how linguistics and literature theory offer a rich range of concepts to understand OD conversations dynamically and processually.

Another move that I undertake in this research project is linking the concept of Dialogic OD to the notion of organizational reflection. The idea of changing organizations through changing conversations may provoke a simplified image of OD as an "easy change": one "simply" has to change conversations, and as a consequence one "reconstructs the organization". However, as the above quote from Grant and Marshak (2011, p.224) indicates, conversations could "challenge the status quo". Alternative discourses can have the power to challenge dominant ones (ibid.). The term "challenge" indicates that this process will not be without friction. Although "conversation" may convey an abstract tone, the concrete enactment of a conversation can include, for example, anger, frustration, fear, and disappointment. The challenging of an organization's status quo can be understood as an act of reflection. This is why, in this research project, I also turn to the literature of organizational reflection. This literature has the advantage of having a tradition of emphasizing the frictions and intensities connected to challenging assumptions. The notion of organizational reflection can thus add a dimension of depth to understanding conversational OD dynamics – conversations are not "flat", they are alive and dynamic, and have varying intensities. As this perspective is not apparent in current OD debates, this research project addresses this gap: an understanding of OD conversations as a reflective and potentially frictional process. I thus ask the following research question: How do OD

conversations evolve, and how is this evolvement mediated by organizational reflection?

In the next sections, I present the notion of organizational reflection in more detail. I start by discussing the idea of reflection in contemporary debates on Dialogic OD, followed by a presentation of contemporary concepts of organizational reflection. I conclude by indicating what this notion has to offer for our understanding of OD as conversation.

2.4 Including the field of organizational reflection

2.4.1 Reflection in Dialogic OD

The suggestion to differentiate between Diagnostic and Dialogic OD has gained acceptance in the scholarly OD community, to highlight the influence of social constructionism. Nonetheless, this differentiation has drawn criticism for creating a dichotomy that suggests a clear distinction between old and new approaches. As previously mentioned, Oswick (2013) overlooks the possibility of attending to problems through solution and future-oriented approaches: "'problems' (which are reflective) have a negative connotation while 'solutions' (which are projective) have a positive connotation" (p.375). Bartunek, Austin and Seo (2008) have a different understanding of reflection. For them, self-reflection is an important implementation driver for many OD approaches, in particular for the third generation: "both learning organizations and appreciative inquiry extend self-reflection in ways that incorporate the organization and the individual" (ibid. p.161). For them, the idea of self-reflection has changed over the course of OD's history, "from an open-ended focus on human potential, to developing leadership capacity in order to be able to lead transformation efforts, to shared reflection on significant organization events and their meanings" (ibid. p.162). Although they acknowledge that Appreciative Inquiry focuses only on the positive parts of an organization, they still frame this as a reflective step: "It does so by asking participants to talk about their stories and, on the basis of the material gathered, to reflect on their organization" (ibid. p.161). Similarly, World Café workshops have a reflexive quality, as Jorgenson and Steiner (2013) point out:

> For a group meeting in a Café for the first time, the facilitator often begins by posing the following question: "Remember a time when you had a genuinely good conversation, one that really made you think. What was it that made it a good conversation?" By inviting participants to identify the qualities they value, this beginning extends an invitation to self-organization by setting expectations about the nature of Café participation based on

> participants' own emergent criteria. In contrast to a conventional meeting format that tends to limit reflection about the meeting's conversational routines, the Café's opening question encourages participants to "go meta" – to think about the meeting context as a whole. (p. 394)

Apparently, even OD approaches that are inherently resource oriented can have a reflexive element. That reflection is not far from Dialogic OD approaches can also be seen in the "reflexive inquiry" (Oliver, 2004, 2005, 2010) approach. Bushe and Marshak (2015), as well as Bushe (2013) include this approach in their list of Dialogic OD methods. Reflexive inquiry frames itself as being inspired by social constructionism and seeks to offer "reflexive potential in drawing attention to the ways that we notice, interpret and decide on our choices, responses and actions in a communicative process" (Oliver, 2004, p.127).

Others focus on the reflexivity needed by change agents in a Dialogic OD: "reflexivity increases the efficacy of the discourses used by change agents and researchers" (Grant & Marshak, 2011, p.212). Furthermore, Grant and Marshak (2011) suggest that "change agents need to be sensitive to the emergence of discourses that are different from their own, and if necessary, respond to or even draw on and appropriate these alternative discourses in ways that benefit the change process" (ibid. p.218). A social constructionist OD thus needs a high degree of reflexivity: "Reflexivity on the part of the change agents extends to appreciating that discourses are co-constructed by those who author and introduce them and by the various interlocutors and readers who engage with them" (ibid. p.219).

Obviously, in social constructionist approaches to OD the role of reflection is viewed in different ways. While some scholars regard reflection as being absent, since only diagnostic, problem-centered approaches are truly reflective (Oswick, 2013), others view the conscious narrations from a certain perspective on the organization as a form of collective self-reflection (Bartunek, Austin & Seo, 2018). The latter viewpoints, therefore, regard the perception's awareness raising and the construction of the organizational world as a social constructionist and reflective intervention method (Oliver, 2010), or suggest that change agents are reflective of their own reaction to discourses and to the shaping of discourses to be effective (Grant & Marshak, 2011). However, what these deliberations do not include, is the conceptualization of OD conversations as having an implicit reflective quality. As mentioned earlier, the questioning of the organizational status quo through conversations can be framed as a reflective dynamic; the usual way of running things is problematized, and different perspectives may challenge the status quo. Reflection can thus be thought of as being

a conversational quality. To clarify this, I now turn to the notion of organizational reflection. The organizational reflection literature provides a rich history of theorizing reflection not only as an individual but also as a collective accomplishment, and of identifying the challenges involved in this approach.

2.4.2 The notion of organizational reflection

The psychologist John Dewey is, arguably, “the founding father of our modern conceptualization of reflection in management learning and his ideas continue to influence recent interpretations” (Vince & Reynolds, 2009). Dewey (2001 [1916], p. 151) emphasized the connection between thinking and action: “Thinking includes all of these steps – the sense of a problem, the observation of conditions, the formation and rational elaboration of a suggested conclusion, and the active experimental testing”. Similarly, the psychologist David Kolb (1984) emphasized the transformation of experience into knowledge through reflection. Later conceptualizations consciously reframed reflection, redirecting it from an individualized activity toward an organizational accomplishment. This is summed up by Nicolini and Scaratti (2015) in that

> (…) the contemporary debate on organizational reflection can broadly be described as an effort to develop a view of reflection as an active, social process as opposed to the traditional idea of “gazing at one’s own reflection” (as in the myth of Narcissus) or inner contemplation (as in the mystic tradition). (p. 1350)

Reflection is defined as “periodically stepping back to ponder the meaning of what has recently transpired to ourselves and to others in our immediate environment” (Raelin, 2001, p. 11). Stepping back is thus a way to develop and learn. “Putting experience at a distance enables us to make sense of it” explains Malinen (2000, p. 77). The shift to an organizational viewpoint on reflection has strongly been influenced by the idea of “critical reflection”. Critical reflection was inspired by socially critical approaches, such as critical psychology, critical pedagogy (and management education), and critical management and organization studies. Critical reflection demands going beyond instrumental problem solving (Mezirow, 1990), and instead reflecting on underlying and taken-for-granted assumptions (Reynolds, 1998). As Mezirow (1990, p.12) puts it: “While all reflection implies an element of critique, the term critical reflection will here be reserved to refer to challenging the validity of presuppositions in prior learning”. Organizations, as all collectives, tend to create their own, taken-for-granted realities. Communities “accumulate taken-for-granteds, beliefs and values reflecting the view of

the majority or those in power so pervasively that they have become unquestioned 'common sense'" (Reynolds, 1998, p. 189).

What distinguishes critical reflection from instrumental problem solving is not just the "assumptions hunting" (Hoyrup & Elkjaer, 2005), but also its inherently social orientation. Raelin (2001) includes this dimension in his concept of "public reflection" (and specifically applies this to project management). For him, reflection is public "when it is brought out in the company of others who are also committed to the experience in question" (ibid. p. 11). It is important to critically examine meaning and consequences, to use the contribution of others in order to change one's own thinking and acting, and to add information. For Raelin (2001), managers need to inspire reflection in changing environments. The social aspect is also important in Boud et al.'s (2006) concept of "productive reflection". Productive reflection aims at bringing "changes in work practice to enhance productivity together with changes to enhance personal engagement and meaning in work" (ibid. p. 5). The objective is to connect learning and work in a disruptive and complex world, so that both the organization and the workers can benefit. Cressey et al. (2006, pp. 19 ff.) identify six key elements of productive reflection: a collective orientation, a contextualization of reflection in work, an involvement of multiple stakeholders, a generative focus, a developmental character, and open-ended dynamics. "Organizing reflection" (Vince, 2002) is a third concept in this debate. It explicitly and intentionally introduces the political aspect of collective reflection: "reflection is inevitably attached to social and political issues that are mobilized through attempts to reflect within an organizational context" (Reynolds & Vince, 2004, p.12). What "organizing reflection" adds to the concepts of public and productive reflection is the thinking "that organizations are often environments where reflection is ignored or unwanted; where unexpressed and unconscious organizational dynamics are enacted to remove opportunities to reflect or to protect organizational members from the consequences of reflection" (Vince & Reynolds, 2009, p.100). Whereas OD stems from a tradition of organizational change, the concept of reflection originates in a tradition of organizational learning. However, Cressey et al. (2006) postulate that following the emphasis on the training of individuals until the 1990s, and the emphasis on organizational learning during the 1990s, the move to reflection in the 2000s constitutes a "reflexive turn" toward a "reflexive stance" (p.19): "That is, a consciousness about consciousness, an awareness about positioning, a turning back to look at oneself and events rather than simply proceeding with action" (ibid).

As can be seen, the move toward a collective conceptualization of reflection has the advantage of acknowledging the social embeddedness of reflection and of seeing it as an organizational accomplishment (or failure). As indicated, the concepts of collective reflection all emphasize the importance of questioning taken-for-granted assumptions. According to this viewpoint, Oswick (2013) is correct in his critique that reflection is problem centered, and that social constructionist OD is often future and solution oriented. However, he is not necessarily correct when he states: “A focus on problems and causes is somewhat inevitably a retrospective endeavor” (Oswick, 2013, p.374). As Raelin (2001) notes, reflection can also be contemporaneous or anticipatory. Contemporaneous reflection refers to reflecting in a certain moment in time about the situation, for example by changing a viewpoint on a current problem. Anticipatory reflection plays with different scenarios and imaginations of a situation. Accordingly, Dialogic OD and reflection do not exclude each other. On the contrary, changing conversations to change an organization can be seen as crucially reflective. The aim of Dialogic OD is that a “change to one or more core narratives takes place” (Bushe & Marshak, 2014, p.88). The argument is that “changing the existing dominant discourses will support or lead to organizational and behavioral change” (Grant & Marshak, 2011, p.213). Dominant discourses are seen as constituting the organizational reality, as they establish the “prevailing premises and schemas that guide how organizational actors interpret experience” (ibid.). This aligns with the establishment of taken-for-granted assumptions outlined in the reflection literature. Thus, changing a dominant discourse can be seen as questioning an organization’s status quo. The idea of Dialogic OD to change dominant discourses and narrations and the idea of organizational reflection to question an organization’s status quo hence go hand in hand. Moreover, the organizational reflection literature explicitly stresses the frictions and difficult emotions associated with “unsettling” assumptions (Reynolds, 1998, Rigg & Trehan, 2008; Cotter et al., 2016). This literature field thus provides insights from which the Dialogic OD field can profit.

2.4.3 Exploring the frictions and pluralism inherent in OD conversations

The idea of changing dominant discourses in order to change the organization, appears to be relatively easy. Although the literature acknowledges the role of power in the establishment and change of discourses (Grant & Marshak, 2011; Grant, Michelson, Oswick & Wailes, 2005), the political and emotional obstacles to this process are more comprehensively discussed in the organizational reflection literature.

The latter highlights the unsettling emotional consequences of the questioning of the status quo (Swan & Bailey, 2004). It “can be threatening unless accompanied by an environment which intellectually and emotionally supports individuals in their learning and development” (Raelin, 2001, p. 14). Hoyrup and Elkjaer warn that “the workplace is not an easy context for critical reflection” (2005, p. 36). Reflection could question values close to one’s self-concept and trigger defense mechanisms (Mezirow, 1990). Hammer and Stanton (1997, p. 296) point out that “assumption breaking is the most arduous of all the steps in the reflection process, because identifying and questioning assumptions goes against the organizational grain”. Assumptions emerge for important reasons: they provide security and coherence, and orientations of how to belong and develop (Vince, 2002). Questioning these assumptions can trigger anxieties and lead to avoidance: “our fears of being punished, humiliated, excluded, or hated are very real and they underpin our refusal to notice what we are noticing within or around us in the organization” (Vince, 2014, p. 417). Raelin (2001) speaks of “truths unpleasant to us” (p. 16) and the necessity to “accept some pain” (ibid.). In addition, people have to “have the courage to posit constructions that might not be accepted in their community” (ibid.). Thus, “organizing reflection (…) involves helping to build experience of managing the anxieties that learning and change inevitably throw up” (Vince, 2002, p. 68). Managers need to create containers for democratic dialogue. Argyris (1991) suggests that managers start by openly addressing a situation in a non-defensive way which “can be emotional – even painful" (p. 9). The metaphor of a container is often used. Following Bion’s (1985) concept of containment, “the ‘container’ absorbs, filters, or manages difficult or threatening emotions or ideas (the contained) so that they can be worked with” (Vince, 2002, p. 69). Such a “safe space” (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015) can help participants to take the risk of (self-)exploration. Support can be provided by “a workshop facilitator, coach, mentor or peer group” (Gray, 2007, p. 513). Despite these advantages, a container can be a rigid frame that reduces complexity (Vince, 2002). Dialogic OD approaches also often use the container metaphor as it is seen to enable open discussions and to serve as a safe space to do so (Corrigan, 2015). “In terms of change it is generally accepted that ‘psychological safety’ is needed for people to engage in what an individual or group might consider ‘risky behavior’ such as a new way of working or interfacing with another” (Marshak, 2016, p. 11). The concept of organizational reflection highlights the risk that is associated with challenging an organizational construction through conversations. Understanding OD conversational dynamics thus requires attuning to the frictions that are involved in questioning assumptions, and to not assume that this process is “smooth and easy”. On the

contrary, when different stakeholders with different interests and values encounter in OD projects, tension and conflict are likely: participants contest each other's views, and habitual assumptions may be scrutinized and discarded.

Interactional frictions are part of organizational life. Where people come together, different viewpoints continuously rub against each other: "Often (…) there may be a struggle among different actors and interests to establish a dominant meaning, such that discursive 'closure' is rarely complete leaving space for more latent, coexisting or 'counter' discourses to gain attention or even dominate" (Grant & Marshak, 2011, p.217). Organizations are thus not "fixed" social constructions; they are constantly "in the making". The "conversational background" (Shotter, 2008) and the "traditions of truth" (Gergen, 2009) that are created by language shape our view of what we believe and expect. This performative view on language is also part of the Bakhtinian framework that I use to guide the analysis: it is through language that reality is created. Language determines what becomes and feels "normal": "so powerful are our ways of talking that these may turn into 'taken for granted' assumptions" (Aguiar & Tonelli, 2018, p. 461). However, at the same time, language has the potential to question these taken-for-granted assumptions, and thus to trigger reflections: "as we live in multiple contexts, different traditions come into contact" (ibid.). As argued, "coming into contact" may not be as harmonious as it sounds. Taking these frictions seriously should be part of exploring the complexities of OD conversations.

Assuming that conversations are pluralistic and therefore sometimes tense brings another important aspect to the fore: if conversations continuously produce "counter discourses" and never find "total closure" as argued by Grant and Marshak (2011), they per se have an implicit reflective potential. In conversations, meaning is frequently contested; not by explicit intervention, but through their pluralistic nature that produces frictions and a regular "unsettling" of taken-for-granted assumptions:

> Building on the centrality of communication to the critical reflection process invokes two further observations: first, recognition of the role that language plays in constructing and making sense of experience; and second, acknowledgement of the significance of relationships as the conduit through which communication is mediated. (Ruch, 2016, p.27)

Two important questions emerge from considering conversations as potentially frictional and reflective. The first is: How are these frictions enacted and handled in OD conversations? The second is: How can the implicit processes of reflection in OD conversations be conceptualized and be made visible?

To summarize, the notion of organizational reflection can assist our understanding of conversational dynamics: it adds a dimension of depth. It highlights the tension involved in questioning an organization's status quo. As indicated, conversations are "places" where different discourses and perspectives meet that challenge each other and the dominance of habitual views – they thus have an implicit reflective potential. What is hence needed is a theoretical framework that is sensitive to OD conversations as dialogic, but also as potentially tense and "unsettling". I cater for this in my research project by using a Bakhtinian framework which is explained in detail in the next chapter (*chapter 3*). As the reflection literature usually focuses on reflection as an explicit intervention in organizations, and not as an implicit quality of conversations, it is necessary to outline how organizational reflection is understood as an implicit and relational process.

2.4.4 Toward an implicit and relational understanding of organizational reflection

Reflection has mostly been framed as an explicit and interventionist phenomenon. The organizational reflection literature is dominated by studies showing how explicit interventions in organizations aim at enhancing organizational reflection. These interventions mainly consist of lists of group methods (Vince, 2002; Gray, 2007), of action learning (Reynolds, 1998; Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Nicolini, Sher, Childerstone & Gorli, 2004; Rigg & Trehan, 2008; Gorli, Nicolini & Scaratti, 2015), of theater-based methods (Pässilä, Oikarinen & Vince, 2012; Pässilä, Oikarinen & Harmaakorpi, 2015), of whole OD projects (Hoyrup, 2004; Nicolini, Sher, Childerstone & Gorli, 2004; Gorli, Nicolini & Scaratti, 2015; Gutzan & Tuckermann, 2019), or of specific approaches to communication (Raelin, 2001). Vince (2002), for example, provides a list of tools intended to facilitate reflection. He lists peer consultancy groups (small group reflections on an issue), organizational role analysis, and role analysis groups (collective reflections on case-based connections between a person, a role, and an organization), communities of practice (reflections on the self-understanding of a professional community), and group relations conferences (to explore personal experiences in an organization) as methods to stimulate organizational reflection. For the same purpose, Gray (2007) lists storytelling (as a way to interpret meaning), reflective and reflexive conversations (with oneself on a situation), reflective dialogue (with others in a group), reflective metaphor (to be conscious of certain images), reflective journal (to write reflectively about something), critical incident analysis

(interpreting an event as significant and consciously analyzing it), repertory grids (to compare individuals' constructs), and concept mapping (to graphically depict cognitive frameworks). Several authors regard (critical) Action Learning as the key to organizational reflection (e.g. Reynolds, 1998; Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Nicolini, Sher, Childerstone & Gorli, 2004; Rigg & Trehan, 2008; Gorli, Nicolini & Scaratti, 2015). In Action Learning, participants collaborate in peer groups (so called Action Learning Sets) and support one another by sharing real work problems and providing exploratory questions and helpful ideas (Raelin, 2009). Some researchers also claim that theater-based interventions present a pathway to organizational reflection (e.g. Pässilä, Oikarinen & Vince, 2012; Pässilä, Oikarinen & Harmaakorpi, 2015). Studies also exist that show how organization development projects can enhance reflection. Hoyrup (2004), for example, reports on a factory that organizes an institutionalized yearly seminar involving representatives from different levels and departments, under guidance of an external facilitator. A particular focus of these workshops is to share experiences on whether everyone still supports the existing structures and principles of the organization (the factory). Another focus is to question participants on the addition of changes to this "constitution", which they would like to implement in their daily work, and to require them to report on their experiences of these experiments at the next workshop. Nicolini, Sher, Childerstone and Gorli (2004) present another example, based on their engagement with a United Kingdom health authority as consultants. This organization was undergoing many politically motivated changes, and middle management in particular was suffering from excessive demands. In order to support them, the facilitators combined elements of Critical Action Learning (e.g. Action Learning Sets) with elements of Organizational Development (e.g. Open Space Conferences). In this way, they tried to link individual reflections with organizational reflection. As the title of their chapter suggests, they were "in search of the 'structure that reflects'" (ibid. p.81). Another example is provided by Gutzan and Tuckermann (2019), concerning the establishment of what is known as lean production, in a hospital in Switzerland. They identified the existence of reflection activities when hospital staff were not treating patients, for example when in a strategy retreat, or when they, for example, were involved in daily exchanges with one another on their work situation or on how to coordinate teamwork. Finally, Gorli, Nicolini and Scaratti (2015) report on a large-scale reorganization initiative in an Italian health district. In this participatory action research project, the participants were asked to write about their jobs as if someone else was to "double" them for a day. Based on this, the researchers mapped out critical concepts concerning their professional work and connections. As a result,

the tacit aspects of work in particular became visible and available for reflection; a development which assisted the transformation process. Some authors are of the opinion that a certain style of communication leads to organizational reflection. For example, Raelin (2001, p.21) sees “the need for learning dialogues that encourage reflection”. He proposes that individuals should not only reflect privately on an emotional moment, but also do so in front of others. To enable them to do this, he proposes the acquisition of five skills of reflective practice, namely “being”, “speaking”, “disclosing”, “testing”, and “probing”. Being refers to being “present, inquisitive and vulnerable” (ibid. p.24); speaking to express oneself in order “to find and characterize our collective voice” (ibid.); disclosing to share doubts and passions; testing to “uncover new ways of thinking and behaving” (ibid. p.27) as a group; and probing to draw “out facts, assumptions, reasons, and consequences” (ibid. p.24).

This literature overview confirms that organizational reflection is mostly seen as a conscious intervention. Although only a few studies conceptualize reflection as an implicit endeavor, those that do see reflection as an institutionalized part of an organization (Brooks, 1999; Jordan, 2010; Keevers & Treleaven, 2011). Brooks (1999), for example, identified persons in an organization who are known to question the organization’s status quo. She concluded that they had experienced the organization from the vantage point of different roles and perspectives, had educational experiences in personal and organizational development – including the liberal arts, were encouraged to think independently through the freedom provided by open-ended assignments, had role models for critical reflection, were part of an organizational environment that welcomed critical comments, had received feedback in a constructive way, and were allowed to participate in the organization’s policymaking and implementation. Jordan (2010) provides another example by describing the case of an anesthesiology department where different institutionalized practices fostered reflection. These included the nurses seeing themselves as critical counterparts of the anesthetists, being critical of standard operating procedures, and engaging in monitoring regardless of the hierarchy. An additional practice was to familiarize novice nurses with alternative procedures by referring them to experienced colleagues or by rotating them through the subdepartments on a monthly basis, thus allowing them to experience a diversity of approaches and procedures. Similarly, Keevers and Treleaven (2011) studied the reflective practices of an Australian counselling center for sexual assault victims. These practices included supervision, evaluation, note-taking during conversations, and reviews with clients, as well as mindful engagements with one another.

These studies show the potential of understanding organizational reflection as an implicit process: as a quality that is part of the organizational culture and practices rather than a temporary and conscious intervention. This view of organizational reflection as an implicit process assists the understanding of the reflective side of OD conversations. Whereas in traditional OD approaches the reflection on organizational problems may be more explicit, in more recent OD approaches this explicit reflection on problems may be deemed less important However, if reflection is also conceptualized as an implicit process, it could well be part of any OD conversation. Thus, from a social constructionist perspective, the plurality inherent in social processes that continuously question dominant discourses and perspectives can be seen as constituting an implicit reflective process. As indicated previously, where there are dominant perspectives, there will also be marginal or alternative perspectives (Grant & Marshak, 2011); hence, some kind of implicit questioning will always be taking place. Such a conceptualization focusses our attention on how reflection is performed interactionally in conversations:

> This implies research designs that engage deliberately with the sense of critique that is implicit when people gather together in the acknowledgment of difference, rather than with indifference to the challenge of unsettling established ways of thinking, being or organizing. Research into complex organizational environments (is there an organization that is not complex?) using critically reflective inquiry is likely to generate data about the perplexed situations and emotional dynamics that are part of both maintaining stability and creating possibilities for change. (Cotter et al., 2016, p. 179)

The endeavor of exploring organizational reflection as an implicit quality of OD conversations is worthwhile for two reasons. First, it contributes to finding more examples of organizational reflection "at work", as Vince and Reynolds (2009) suggest. Second, it can assist in discovering existing forms of reflection. Often, the academic tone of the possibility of explicit organizational reflection is rather pessimistic: "(C)ritical reflection has been seen as 'just too difficult' to implement" (Pässilä & Vince, 2016, p. 49). Exploring organizational reflection as an implicit and relational accomplishment of OD thus enhances our understanding of organizational reflection. It counters the fact that "the theory and practice of critical reflection remain underdeveloped, especially in relation to a more collective emphasis on reflection" (ibid.).

2.5 Research gap and research question

As I indicated in the literature review, OD is increasingly approached from the perspective of social constructionist thinking. This thinking converges on enabling

conversations that change the dominant discourses of an organization. Organizations are "conversed" into being, and organizational change and development is enacted through conversations (Van Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010). This shift toward social constructionist perspectives was prominently coined by Bushe and Marshak (2009) as a shift from "Diagnostic" to "Dialogic" OD approaches. Although this dichotomy has been criticized, many contemporary OD studies still reference this distinction to acknowledge the impact of social constructionism on OD practice. As research is still behind practice, further research is required to explore social constructionist approaches to OD. For example, Bushe and Marshak (2009) claim: "The theoretical basis of Dialogic OD needs to be more finely enunciated," and therefore call for further empirical studies:

> Studies of the processes and impacts of Dialogic OD need to take place. There is only a handful of published studies of appreciative inquiry and even less of Open Space, World Café, the technology of participation, collaborative loops, reflexive consulting, various discursive change processes, or systemic sustainability. (p.363)

Similarly, Aguiar and Tonelli (2018) find that empirical studies are still rare: "But, even though Dialogic OD works on the assumption that realities are socially constructed, few empirical studies have explored the topic from a social constructionist perspective" (p. 458). We still know very little about the evolvement of OD conversations. The need to explore how OD conversations assist in challenging dominant organizational discourses is also expressed by Grant and Marshak (2011, p.224): "For example, how, specifically, do conversations construct and disseminate governing narratives?" This is the point of departure of this research project. By asking how OD conversations evolve, I choose a process-oriented exploration of OD from a social constructionist and conversationalist perspective. More specifically, I apply a Bakhtinian framework as it offers a rich understanding of social processes as dialogic, and, as I explain in the next chapter (*chapter 3*), as potentially reflective. What has not gained much attention to date in the Dialogic OD field are the struggles and frictions associated with the questioning of an organizational status quo through conversations. I address this gap by linking the exploration of OD conversations to the notion of organizational reflection.

The notion of reflection is only marginally used in the conceptualization of social constructionist approaches. Although some commentators see these approaches as unreflective (e.g. Oswick, 2013), others see them as specifically reflective as they frame the conscious narrating about an organization as a reflective endeavor (e.g. Bartunek, Austin & Seo, 2018; Oliver, 2010; Grant & Marshak, 2011). However, the notion of reflection – often implicitly used in different ways – has not gained much

attention in elaborating and practicing social constructionist OD approaches. This is unfortunate, as it provides OD with a deeper understanding of the tension involved when conversationally developing organizations, and with an idea about the direction of development toward an organization that is able to question itself and to endure the tension. The changing of dominant discourses through conversations (Grant & Marshak, 2011) can be understood as a questioning of the organization's status quo, which I intend to further elaborate on by focusing on concepts of organizational reflection. As indicated, a plurality of viewpoints is always inherent to social processes (Grant & Marshak, 2011; Van Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010; Aguiar & Tonelli, 2018). Reflection can thus be seen as an implicit conversational quality. The existing literature, however, predominantly favors the explicit elements of reflection, and then also from an interventionist point of view. My proposal is to see reflection not only as something that can be brought into being by a conscious intervention, but instead as something that emerges from the interplay of different dialogue partners.

Inevitably, this perspective also brings questions of power into play – OD conversations are not only peaceful places. On the contrary, the struggle over the future direction of an organization and competition over different discourses and perspectives are likely to come with power forces from different sides:

> Finally, given that power dynamics are involved in maintaining or "overthrowing" a dominant discourse, more inquiry into how political processes are involved in the way alternative discourses are defeated or deployed in change efforts would advance our understanding of plurivocality, power, and change. (Grant & Marshak, 2011, p. 225)

As becomes apparent, many questions remain on Dialogic OD. Whereas social constructionism has inspired OD practice to change and develop, social constructionist research on OD is still lacking. From a social constructionist perspective, organizing is conversing; and changing organizational conversations is to change the organization (Van Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010; Ford & Ford, 1995; Ford, 1999). In conversations, dominant discourses are challenged by alternative discourses (Grant & Marshak, 2011). The accomplishment of this can be framed as reflection, as it represents the questioning of an organization's status quo. However, what may appear easy in texts on social constructionist OD is likely to trigger tension and conflict in reality. In this research project, I thus address this gap by drawing on the notion of organizational reflection when studying OD conversations. This notion adds a dimension of depth. Whereas instrumental reflection is concerned with pragmatic problem solving, deeper forms of reflection instead problematize and unsettle taken-for-granted assumptions, often accompanied by uncomfortable emotions (Vince, 2004; Vince & Reynolds, 2009).

However, the organizational reflection literature has paid most attention to explicit forms of reflection. In this project, I aim to explore reflection as an implicit quality of OD conversations. In conversations there is always a plurality of perspectives, likely to implicitly question each other's taken-for-granted truths. I hence ask the following research question to explore the dialogicality of OD conversations: How do OD conversations evolve, and how is this evolvement mediated by organizational reflection? *Figure 2* depicts the literature review, the gap and the research question.

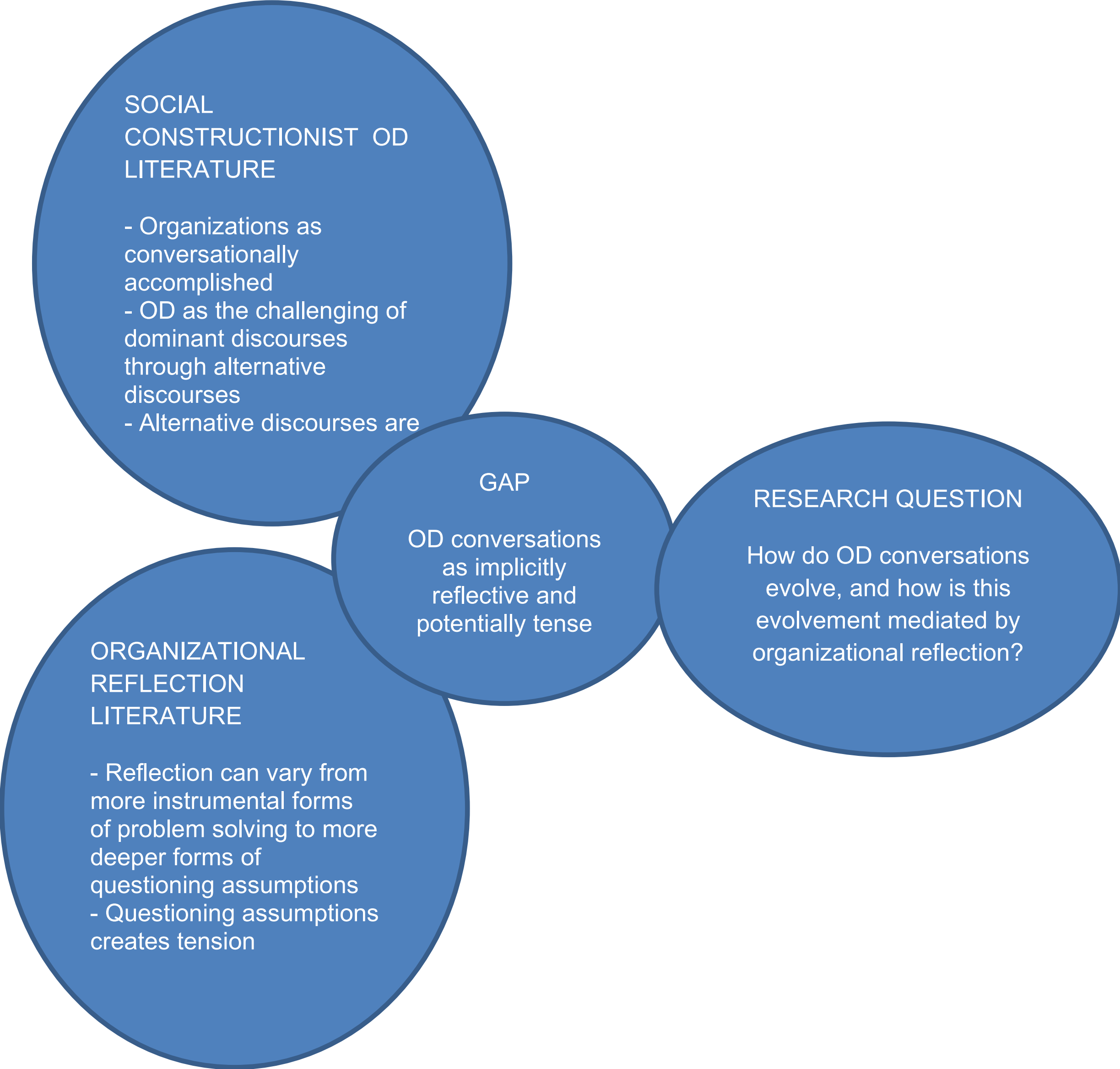

Figure 2: Literature review, gap and research question

I address the research question by applying a Bakhtinian framework to an empirical OD case. A Bakhtinian framework assumes a plurality of viewpoints in language as a social process, and is therefore suitable to explore the conversational and reflective dynamics of OD. It assumes that language is a living accomplishment of a diversity of voices and ideologies, and thus inherently dialogic: people and pluralistic worldviews encounter in language, and words are reactions to both previous words and anticipations of future words. Moreover, Bakhtin (1984a) assumes that these encounters can be frictional "battles", and that my dialogue partner always sees things which are invisible from my viewpoint. Hence, Bakhtinian thinking provides a precise lens to study the dialogic constitution of OD conversations, and their frictional and potential reflective quality.

Furthermore, I address the research question of the evolvement of OD conversations by presenting the data collected on an OD case study involving a large public theater. To study OD conversations "in action", I conducted a focused ethnography of the theater's OD events. I then proceeded with a dialogical analysis of my observations. By exploring how OD workshop genres mediate voice dynamics, and by exploring how moments of surprise are continuously unsettling the OD conversations, I show how dialogicality is accomplished in these conversations and how organizational reflection, as an implicit quality of these conversations, comes into play. As a consequence, this research project contributes to a more nuanced understanding of conversational dynamics in OD, and thus of OD from a social constructionist and a Bakhtinian perspective, in particular. In doing so, this research project intends to stimulate "reflection on OD" – a demand of the OD community, according to a Dutch Delphi survey (Korten, De Caluwé & Geurts, 2010). The authors of the survey report conclude: "By reflecting more on the approach, OD can maintain a critical stance" (p. 399), and they claim that reflection "would benefit the further development of the approach" (p. 401).

Having outlined the literature fields of Dialogic OD and organizational reflection and having formulating the gap and research question of this project, I subsequently explain the theoretical framework for my study in the next chapter. I show how linguistics and literature theory assist to conceptualize dialogic and reflective OD conversations. Bakhtinian thinking inspired much organizational research, even though a systematic study of OD from a Bakhtinian perspective is currently non-existent.

3. Theoretical Framework: A Bakhtinian Theory of Dialogue

> *So the new artistic position of the author with regard to the hero in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is a fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic position, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability and indeterminacy of the hero. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 63)*

3.1 Introduction

As a theoretical framework for this research project, I draw on Bakhtinian psychology. The psychologists Shotter and Billig (1998) characterize this approach, in the title of their paper on Bakhtin, as "From out of the heads of individuals and into the dialogue between them". The Russian literature philosopher and literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), dedicated his work – despite political efforts to silence him – to a dialogical theory of language (and life). By analyzing various literary genres and epochs, Bakhtin postulated the dialogicality of language: when engaging in language, we respond to others and we expect responses; we "borrow" words from others and form them anew; we enact a diversity of perspectives by speaking and writing, and we get in touch with many different ideologies; and as long as we are alive, we have the power to contest what is said, and hence language is never "fixed" but always in a state of becoming. For Bakhtin (1984a), life as such is dialogical[5]:

> The dialogic nature of human consciousness, the dialogic nature of human life itself. The single adequate form for *verbally expressing* authentic human life is the *open-ended dialogue*. Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. (p.293)

Many psychologists have adopted this dialogical approach and applied it to their respective fields. Their research includes studies on the self (e.g. Hurley, Sullivan & McCarthy, 2007; Cresswell, 2011; Cresswell & Baerveldt, 2011; Salgado & Clegg, 2011; De Oliveira, 2013; Ragatt, 2014), the mind (e.g. Wertsch, 1991; Fernyhough, 1996; Beals, 1998), the soul (e.g. Sullivan, 2007), the psyche (e.g. Shotter, 1993a), experience (e.g. Sullivan & McCarthy, 2005, 2009; Cresswell, 2012), agency (e.g. Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004; McCarthy, Sullivan & Wright, 2006; Cresswell & Baerveldt, 2006), development (e.g. Cresswell & Teucher, 2011; Bandlamudi, 2016), psychiatry

[5] Bakhtin's own life (1895 – 1975) was quite dynamic and turbulent: from (cultural-)political oppression and punishment to severe sickness, to academic admiration and exclusion, and to living through the many turbulences of 20th century Russia. Even after his life, missing manuscripts, lacking references and possible writings under friends' names kept the linguistic community in suspense (Sasse, 2010).

(e.g. Good, 2001), psychotherapy (e.g. Pollard, 2011, 2018), family therapy (e.g. Rober, 2005), learning and education (e.g. Lacasa et al., 2005; Ramsey, 2008; Matusov, 2004, 2007, 2011), sports (e.g. Tovares, 2010), and organizations (e.g. Cunliffe, Helin & Luhman, 2014; Belova, King & Sliwa, 2008). In empirical organizational research, a Bakhtinian framework has been used to conduct research on a diverse range of topics and settings, including family business succession in a Swedish coffee roasting company (Helin, 2011); collaborative conversations between a strategy scholar and the CEO of a medium-sized road transportation services company (Helin & Avenier, 2016); dealing with the conflict between economic and aesthetic logics within a design firm (Austin, Hjorth & Hessel, 2017); the perception of leadership of federal security directors (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011); the perception of teamwork in a large healthcare organization (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2008); team meetings in elderly care homes (Hujala & Rissanen, 2012); responsibility in mental health care teams (Smissaert, 2019); organizational learning processes at a graduate business school of a leading British university (Oswick et al., 2000); and international dockworkers strikes (Carter, Clegg, Hogan & Kornberger, 2003).

A Bakhtinian approach, for several reasons, is useful to study the evolvement of OD conversations and reflections. First, it postulates that language is “dynamic”. Bakhtin (1981) assumed that language is not stable (as written down in dictionaries), but performed, and subject to different forces (“centrifugal and centripetal forces”). Such a lens for dynamicality is suitable for studying the “evolvement” of conversations as a process in time. Second, Bakhtinian thinking postulates that different worldviews and ideologies meet in language. The world is thus constructed with words; we draw on opinions and address opinions, and our socialization in certain language patterns provides us with a certain worldview. This thinking runs parallel to a conversationalist OD approach which assumes that organizations are constructed with words, and that dominant discourses constitute the organization’s status quo. Third, Bakhtin’s (1984a) conceptualization of competing worldviews that battle and question each other’s truth claims can be framed as implicitly reflective; it thus provides a framework to explore reflective conversation dynamics. Bakhtinian thinking provides a solid theory to explore OD as a phenomenon that is socially constructed and conversationally enacted.

In the next sections, I first depict aspects of Bakhtin’s theory of dialogue and outline how the theory has been applied to the study of organizations. Next, I explain in more detail the Bakhtinian notions that I draw on in my analysis: voice, genre, plot, “eventness”, and centrifugal and centripetal forces. Furthermore, I explore how

Bakhtinian thinking contributes to the framing of organizational reflection as an implicit process. Finally, I show how I use this thinking as a framework for my analyses of OD conversations.

3.2 Dialogue from a Bakhtinian perspective

Bakhtinian thinking has inspired social constructionist theory in organizational psychology (Steyaert, 1995; 2005). Two prominent representatives of social constructionism, the psychologists John Shotter (1993a; 1993b; 1995) and Kenneth Gergen (1997; 1999; 2009), draw on Bakhtin to emphasize the dialogical and relational nature of human life[6]. Also, the former experimental psychologist and student of Henri Tajfel, Michael Billig (1996; Shotter & Billig, 1998), uses Bakhtin's theory to develop a rhetorical psychology. For Bakhtin (1984a), dialogue is not a mere communication tool, but the very essence of our being:

> *To be* means *to communicate* (…). To be means to be for another and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks *into the eyes of another* or *with the eyes of another*. (p.287)

Like social constructionist thinking, Bakhtin (1981, 1984a) postulates language as being formative of the way we experience the world (Cresswell & Baerveldt, 2006, 2011; Cresswell & Teucher, 2011). Bakhtin's work can thus be understood as being part of the "linguistic turn" in Western philosophy (Rorty, 1967), and his thinking contributed to introduce the linguistic turn in organizational psychology (Hoyer, Steyaert & Nentwich, 2016). Bakhtin's writing conveys a deeply dialogical view of language. For him, language is not a mere system of signs, but a living process. We engage in language, we actively use words and form them, and we relate to each other and the world by speaking and listening. In this formative view of language, language is "bigger" than the individual; it precedes and outlives the individual – individuals merely take part in broader language games. As Bakhtin (1986) puts it: "Just as the body is formed initially in the mother's womb (body), a person's consciousness awakens wrapped in another's consciousness" (p.138). Even in inner monologues, we still draw on conversations that take place outside our heads; our inner talking is still shaped by the viewpoints of others, and the words we use may secretly come with a

[6] Although Bakhtin's writing has clearly influenced social constructionist thinking in psychology, it seems to have been forgotten in conceptualizing 'Dialogic OD'. This research project thus also reintroduces Bakhtin's work to social constructionist thinking in psychology and OD.

history and tradition. As Reed (1999, pp.138-139) observes: "Thus Bakhtin's is a philosophy that has no place for a real personal other and therefore for a theory of obligation suitable for discussion of interpersonal relations or, for that matter, verbal communication between genuinely independent and separate consciousnesses". A psychology that acknowledges the social embeddedness of human thought and interaction is one that focuses on what happens between people and not within an individual person. It is a psychology that interprets the social context:

> Thus the move to the dialogical in psychology leads us more towards a focus on people's social practices, rather than on what is supposed to be occurring within their individual heads. Our attention is drawn both to the responses of others to what we do as well as to our own embodied responses to them and to our surroundings – that is, we are confronted once again with the question of whether it matters that we exist in the world as living bodies in a society with a culture and a history, rather than inanimate mechanisms. (Shotter & Billig, 1998, p. 2)

Despite this dominant role of language, the individual is of course not dispensable. Language is repeatedly shaped and reshaped by individuals taking part in language. Language is not "out there", in some objective and fixed dictionary system, but performed through speech acts and utterances: "Language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 183). The way we use language is also dialogical. We draw on language by using words that have been used by others before us. We shape the meaning of these words by using them in a specific way: "The following must be kept in mind: that the speech of another, once enclosed in context, is – no matter how accurately transmitted – always subject to certain semantic changes (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 340)". At the same time, we respond to others. Dialogue does not start on a blank page. We react to previous utterances, and we expect a reaction from those whom we address:

> The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented towards a future answer-word; it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation of any living dialogue. (ibid. p. 280)

Language must be enacted by individuals. They draw on the vocabulary and meaning shaped by users before them, and in enacting language situationally, they continuously transform the meaning of words. At the same time, individuals respond to previous words and expect reactions from others. Hence, the performance of language requires individuals but, at the same time, language is more than what merely goes on between two individuals:

> True, even in the novel heteroglossia is by and large always personified, incarnated in individual human figures, with the disagreements and oppositions individualized. But such

> oppositions of individual wills and minds are submerged in social heteroglossia, they are reconceptualized through it. Oppositions between individuals are only surface upheavals of the untamed elements of social heteroglossia, surface manifestations of those elements that play on such individual oppositions, make them contradictory, saturate their consciousness and discourses with a more fundamental speech diversity. (ibid. p. 326)

This quote points to another important dialogical principle of Bakhtin's conceptualization of language: "heteroglossia", meaning that language is pluralistic (from the Greek "hetero-" [different] and "glossa" [tongue, language]). The language we use is coined by history and the generations before us, by our socio-cultural embeddedness, and by our own personal styles of saying things. Hence, there cannot be "one" language – there is always a diversity of languages. This concept is like the concept of "polyphony". In conversations, different voices are heard; in a pluralistic world, there will never be a single voice only, but always a plurality of voices. This multitude of voices constitutes the "polyphony" that is inherent to life and social interactions. What is more, this plurality is one that displays a diversity of ideologies and worldviews. Language is not neutral; whenever we speak, we draw on belief systems, and we experience the truth contestations taking place in interactions. It is an ongoing dialogue of a plurality of opinions, evaluations, and sociocultural styles. As Bakhtin (1981, p.271) puts it: "We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion". Even though this plurality may fluctuate, and even if we may find ourselves involved in a monologue, a pure monologue is impossible as there will always be the possibility of contestation: "Monologism is, then, never an absolute: as the false consciousness of discourse it is both practically modified and theoretically exposed by the dialogism it vainly seeks to occlude" (Pechey, 1989, p.50). This aspect accompanies Bakhtin's assumption of an inherently pluralistic language. Despite all efforts to forcefully come to a final, uncontested meaning or worldview, there is always the possibility of contradiction – even if it is silently mumbled in a soliloquy. Such an intentional play with "finalizations" can also be seen in the tradition of the carnival – another term used by Bakhtin – where people dress differently, mock others, criticize power, and consequently overturn societal norms and hierarchy.

As will become apparent, Bakhtin's idea of dialogue differs notably from other prominent concepts of dialogue. In these, dialogue is frequently framed as a particular (good) way of communicating: for example, encountering the other as an end and not merely as a means (Buber, 2008), taking the stance that the other might know more about something than the self (Gadamer, 1998), creating equal power conditions and

seeking consensus (Habermas, 1981), or recognizing the assumptions and implications of what is said (Bohm, 1996). These orientations are supposed to lead to participation and learning (Realin, 2012). In contrast to these primarily ethical and epistemological concepts that focus on respectful relationships and the seeking of consensus, Bakhtin frames dialogue as the ontological reality that we live in. According to his theory, dialogue is not a choice, but a given condition of our engagement with the world and with others. For him, dialogue is not necessarily about seeking consensus, about enhancing understanding, or about encountering each other in a respectful way. By contrast, if one frames dialogue as the encountering of differing worldviews and truths, such encounters are likely to be "rough". This conflictual nature of language is mirrored by the words Bakhtin frequently uses to describe dialogic interactions, such as "collide", "clash", "battle", or "struggle". However, despite conceptualizing language and the world as inherently dialogic, Bakhtin (1981, 1984a) observes constant attempts to *treat* the world monologically (Sasse, 2010, p. 91): literature can depict a monologic world with a dominant worldview, and people can enforce a single perspective that suppresses others. So, his writing can largely be understood as describing the dialogic ontology of the world and how literature and social processes in general try to "overrun" it monologically at times.

The assumption that there is no uncontested meaning and that dialogue is an ongoing and ever-evolving part of human life, parallels Bakhtin's idea of "unfinalizability". Bakhtin famously phrased that "there is no final word": "Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the word has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.166). There is always a certain "unfinalizability" that envelops every word. Bakhtin (1984a) mentions Dostoevsky's skepticism toward a psychology trying to "finalize" people:

> Toward the psychology of his day (…) Dostoevsky had no sympathy at all. He saw in it a degrading reification of a person's soul, a discounting of its freedom and its unfinalisability, and of that peculiar indeterminacy and indefiniteness which in Dostoevsky constitute the main object of representation for in fact Dostoevsky always represents a person on the threshold of a final decision, at a moment of crisis, at an unfinalizable and unpredeterminable turning point for his soul.
>
> Dostoevsky constantly and severely criticized mechanistic psychology, both its pragmatic lines based on the concepts of natural law and utility, and even more its physiological line, which reduced psychology to physiology. He ridicules it in his novels as well. (p.61)

The "unfinalizability" of people or processes constitutes their livelihood. Dialogue is "alive", and so are conversations. They are ongoing, open-ended and a relational and

momentary accomplishment by various actors. This concept of language thus does justice to the study of the evolvement of conversations “in situ”.

In organizational research, Bakhtin’s notion of polyphony, in particular, has drawn attention. For example, Bate (1997, p. 1167) concludes that polyphony is “ideally suited to organizations, which are by their very nature pluralistic and multi-vocal, and made up of a rich diversity of intersecting dialects, idioms and professional jargons (the “heteroglossia”)”. Hazen (1993) sees the polyphonic organization as a postmodern development that opposes the previous bureaucratic organization. For her, polyphony contributes to minor voices being “a counterpoint and source of resistance to bureaucracy” (Hazen, 1993, p.21). However, the question of whether organizations are “naturally” polyphonic or not is in dispute. Some commentators make the point that “organizationally, polyphony is always present, even though it may be silenced by a dominant discourse” (Kornberger, Clegg & Carter, 2006, p. 4). Similarly, Jabri, Adrian and Boje (2008) argue that participation is always in place when it comes to change communication, as organizational members interpret and engage in dialogue even if not actively asked to do so. Others dispute this assumption of a given polyphony: “Bakhtin (…) did not treat polyphony as a naturally occurring phenomenon of the novel. For Bakhtin, polyphony was Dostoevsky’s achievement” (Ramsey, 2008, p. 546). Nevertheless, studying organizations from a Bakhtinian perspective requires that attention be given to the dialogicality of organizations:

> A dialogic approach involves finding alternative styles/plots/moral lessons in organizational discourse (the novel text over the epic text), finding marginalized voices (heteroglossia over monologic language), and looking for habits of thought combined with legitimizing objects and knowledge that create restricted visions. This means exploring the complexity in the relational nexus between participants, interpreters, and various texts in use, utterances, and the emergence of unpredictable discourse. (Cunliffe, Helin & Luhman, 2014, p. 343)

I adapt this stance to this research project by exploring conversations as pluralistic and open-ended. By exploring the evolvement of conversations and their implicit reflective potential, I acknowledge the living and dynamic nature of conversations. Instead of focusing on one narration or main discourse in an OD process, I turn to a multitude of voices audible in an OD process. Furthermore, I attune to the interplay of multiple voices in different situations, and do not assume a rigid order. In addition, I zoom into the momentary emergence of surprises; into the moments that stand out as “irregular” and disruptive instead of viewing the OD process as a static and frictionless. In the next sections, I provide detail on how I apply Bakhtin’s general idea of dialogicality to study OD conversations.

3.3 Selected notions and concepts for the analysis

Following this introduction to Bakhtin's idea of dialogue, a clarification is required of specific Bakhtinian notions that I draw on for my analysis, namely those of genre, voice, plot, "eventness", centripetal and centrifugal forces. In the next section, I explain these notions by staying close to Bakhtin's original texts to convey a sense of the spirit of his writing.

3.3.1 Genre and voice

Bakhtin developed most of his philosophy by analyzing literature. One of his central findings is that different literary genres evolve over time, involving different author positions. For example, in ancient epics, the author praises a certain hero and the protagonist features as the author depicts him. There is no critical distance between the author and the hero. However, this changed with the modern novel – or the "polyphonic" novel as Bakhtin (1984a) called it. This genre is characterized by including many different voices, not just the author's voice. As a result, different perspectives are evident in the polyphonic novel, without one (the author's) being superior. In a later essay, Bakhtin (1986) introduces the term "speech genre" and provides more concrete indications of what constitutes this type: "Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres*" (ibid. p. 60). Hence, speech genres are certain patterns of speaking (or writing). They are "typical forms of utterances" (ibid. p. 63). They are "relatively stable" as they fluctuate as much as language is fluctuating as a living phenomenon. However, there are particular standardized genres:

> (…) certain spheres of everyday life (questions that are purely factual and similarly factual responses to them, requests, orders, and so forth), in certain business circles, in the sphere of military and industrial commands and orders, that is, in those spheres where speech genres are maximally standard by nature and where the creative aspect is almost completely lacking. (ibid. p. 77)

Bakhtin links his observation of the modern – polyphonic – novel to the term "voice". As mentioned, in polyphonic novels there are no authoritative authors forcing their opinions on the novels; there are different protagonists representing different voices that may contradict each other, even the authors' voices. For Bakhtin, different

perspectives in a dialogue are accompanied by a certain belief system. According to this viewpoint, voice “is a manifestation of a particular ideology, or set of attitudes to reality” (Fernyhough, 1996, p. 49). In the opinion of Bakhtin (1984a), Dostoevsky was a master of letting different voices encounter through different characters in his novels:

> Dostoevsky – to speak paradoxically – thought not in thoughts but in points of view, consciousnesses, voices. He tried to perceive and formulate each thought in a way that a whole person was expressed and began to sound in it; this in condensed form, is his entire worldview, from alpha to omega. (p. 93)

What distinguishes Dostoevsky’s novels from the ancient epics, is the disappearance of the dominance of the author’s voice:

> Dostoevsky, like Goethe’s Prometheus, creates not voiceless slaves (as does Zeus), but free people, capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him and even of rebelling against him. (ibid. p.6)

There is no absolute truth in this conception; different worldviews and beliefs encounter each other. Words are not objective; they are used with interests and intentions in mind:

> And that is why the word does not merely designate an object as a present-on-hand entity, but also expresses by its intonation my valuative attitude toward the object, toward what is desirable or undesirable in it, and, in so doing sets in motion toward that which is yet-to-be-determined about it, turns it into a constituent moment of the living, ongoing event. Everything that is actually experienced is experienced as something given and as something-yet-to-be-determined, is intonated, has emotional-volitional tone, and enters into an effective relationship to me within the unity of the ongoing event encompassing us. (Bakhtin, 1993, pp. 32/33)

It is this emotional-volitional tone that gives meaning to the everyday usage of words:

> When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not a neutral word of language, not as a word free from the aspirations and evaluations of others, uninhabited by others’ voices. No, he receives the word from another’s voice and filled with that other voice. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.202)

Even ideologies which claim that objectivity is possible, form part of a battle of meaning:

> (…) even the driest and flattest positivism in these disciplines cannot treat the word neutrally, as if it were a thing, but is obliged to initiate talk not only about words, in order to penetrate their ideological meanings – which can only be grasped dialogically, and which include evaluation and response. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 352)

The emotional-volitional tone of voices is also something that we are familiar with in our personal becoming. Parents speak to children as do teachers or peers. In this manner, we socialize amidst different voices:

> The tendency to assimilate others' discourse takes on an even deeper and more basic significance in an individual's ideological becoming, in the most fundamental sense. Another's discourse performs here no longer as information, directions, rules, models and so forth – but strives rather to determine the very bases of our ideological interrelations with the world, the very basis of our behavior; it performs here as authoritative discourse, and an internally persuasive discourse. (ibid. p. 342)

The idea of internalized voices is at the basis of developmental psychological theories. As the psychologist William Stiles (1997) puts it:

> Each of us seems to carry many voices, representing people or ideas or events that we've encountered… Some voices such as belief systems or psychological theories may transcend individuals so that the same voice speaks within many of us. Psychological, intellectual, emotional, social and cultural development can be understood as conversations among such voices. (p. 154)

Throughout our lives we must deal with the voices surrounding us. At times, we may experience a difference between outer voices and our inner voices. What we believe is right is not necessarily what our environment tells us is right:

> (…) it happens more frequently that an individual's becoming, an ideological process, is characterized precisely by a sharp gap between these two categories: in one, the authoritative word (religious, political, moral; the word of a father, of adults and of teachers, etc.) that does not know internal persuasiveness, in the other internally persuasive word that is denied all privilege, backed up by no authority at all, and is frequently not even acknowledged in society (not by public opinion, nor by scholarly norms, nor by criticism), not even in the legal code. The struggle and dialogic interrelationship of these categories of ideological discourse are what usually determine the history of an individual ideological consciousness. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342)

Through voices, ideas are formulated and transmitted. Abstract ideas thus need the embodiment of an actual voice to find their ways into communication: "His form-shaping worldview does not know an impersonal truth, and in his works there are no detached, impersonal verities" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.96). Utterances come from a person with a body:

> (…) logical and semantically referential relationships, in order to become dialogic, must be embodied, that is, they must enter another sphere of existence: they must become discourse, that is, an utterance, and receive an author, that is, a creator of the given utterance whose position it expresses. (ibid. p. 184)

This is how an idea becomes "a living word" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 419). It is "not a dead material object" (ibid.):

> The idea lives not in one person's isolated individual consciousness – if it remains there only, it degenerates and dies. The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationships with other ideas, with the ideas of others. (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 87/88)

Although Dostoevsky, in his novels, creates individual characters with individual voices, they represent broader social patterns. Individual actions always have a “social significance” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 333):

> But such oppositions of individual wills and minds are submerged in social heteroglossia, they are reconceptualized through it. Oppositions between individuals are only surface upheavals of the untamed elements in social heteroglossia, surface manifestations of those elements that play on such individual oppositions, make them contradictory, saturate their consciousness and discourses with a more fundamental speech diversity. (ibid. p. 326)

Thus, a voice is not merely an individual property. We can enact different voices, ideologies, and worldviews. As Linell (2009, p. 117) puts it: “One perspective can be voiced by many persons, and one person can house several perspectives”. However, a voice is not just an abstract argument. It keeps its embodied tone. Kornberger et al. (2006, p.5) define the relationship between voices and discourses as follows: “different voices enact different discourses, whereas different discourses constitute different (potential) subjective positions (voices) from which people can speak and be heard”. A voice is thus an embodied expression of a discourse:

> Taken both in literal and metaphorical senses (voices having timbre, diapason, and tone, as well as embodying one’s worldview and individuality), the notion of voice attunes us to the embodied and experiential aspects of organizational life, and encourages explorations of organizational reality at the ethnographic and phenomenological level of detail (…) (Belova et al., 2008, p.496).

Voices can encounter other voices and produce polyphony: “Polyphony arises whenever a dominant voice tries to enact a particular worldview, either within organizations in general or when the voice is projected organizationally on to a wider world, and that voice is resisted” (Kornberger et al., 2006, p.9). In Dostoevsky’s novels, different voices meet and interact:

> In the novels, the major characters and their worlds are not self-enclosed and deaf to one another; they intersect and are interwoven in a multitude of ways. The characters do know about each other, they exchange their individual “truths”, they argue or agree, they carry on dialogues with one another (including dialogues on ultimate questions of worldview). (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.72)

Voices enter relationships with one another. Some can be dominant and loud, whereas others may be weak or suppressed:

> As an artist, Dostoevsky did not create his ideas in the same way philosophers or scholars create theirs – he created images of ideas found, heard, sometimes divined by him in reality itself, that is, ideas already living or entering life as idea-forces. Dostoevsky possessed an extraordinary gift for hearing the dialogue of his epoch, or, more precisely, for hearing his epoch as a great dialogue, for detecting in it not only individual voices, but precisely and predominantly the dialogic relationship among voices, their dialogic interaction. He heard both the loud, recognized, reigning voices of the epoch, that is, the reigning dominant ideas (official and unofficial), as well as voices still weak, ideas not yet fully emerged, latent ideas heard as yet by no one but himself, and ideas that were just beginning to ripen, embryos

> of future worldviews. “Reality in its entirety,” Dostoevsky himself wrote, “is not to be exhausted by what is immediately at hand, for an overwhelming part of this reality is contained in the form of a still latent, unuttered future word.” (ibid. p.90)

This encountering of voices thus produces “sounds”. As Hazen (1993, p. 24) puts it: “Polyphony and dialogue are metaphors for organizational change based on sound rather than sight”. She adds (p. 22): “When we listen to polyphonic organization, we hear harmony, dissonance, clash, counterpoint, silence, complex rhythms”.

In summary, for Bakhtin, speech genres are relatively stable patterns of speaking and writing. Despite all fluctuations of language, these patterns form typical communication formats. Moreover, in the genre of the polyphonic novel, Bakhtin observes the emergence of different voices as different worldviews contesting each other; instead of the author’s favorite truth, different truths are encountering “on eye level”. Hence, Bakhtin makes a direct link between genre and the possibility of a pluralistic encounter of voices. Applying this thinking to the context of OD, an interesting question that emerges is how OD genres mediate the encounter of OD participants – is there a plurality of perspectives meeting “on eye level”, or is there more of an authorial “top-down” approach without much opposition? The concepts of genre and voice thus enable me to study OD conversations dynamically: as places with changing genres and changing voice encounters. More specifically, I draw on these concepts to explore the effect of different OD workshop genres on voice dynamics. I do so by asking the following analytic question for the first analysis: How do OD workshop genres mediate voice dynamics? For the second analysis, I turn to the surprises created by polyphonic encounters, subsequently explained in more detail.

3.3.2 Plot and “eventness”

The invention of the polyphonic novel changed the relation between voice and plot:

> It follows that ordinary pragmatic links at the level of the plot (…) are insufficient in Dostoevsky’s world: such links presuppose, after all, that characters have become objects, fixed elements in the author’s design; such links bind and combine finalized images of people in the unity of a monologically perceived and understood world; there is no presumption of a plurality of equally-valid consciousnesses, each with its own world. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 7).

In a literary text consisting of different voices “on eye level” without the author’s voice dominating the text, these multiple voices and their encounters make the text –and not necessarily a certain plot – interesting. By contrast, the strict following of a certain idea or plot to “make a point”, as in ancient epics, would remove the relative independence

and uniqueness of theses voices. In the ancient epic, the hero is a hero due to living through multiple, astonishing adventures – the plot is central. In the polyphonic novel, the focus is much more on the momentary evolvement of dialogue and the encounter of different voices: “The unity of the whole in Dostoevsky is not a matter of plot nor of monologic idea, that is, not mono-ideational. It is a unity above plot and above idea” (ibid. p. 298). For a polyphonic novel, the author concentrates on crafting characters that will evolve their own dynamics during the novel, and not so much on enforcing a certain story. Instead, dialogue in the moment becomes important: “The idea is a live event, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses” (ibid. p. 88). This “eventness” is a term frequently found in Bakhtin’s work. For example, he (1993) warns against losing the “eventness” by aestheticization:

> Aesthetic activity as well is powerless to take possession of that moment of Being which is constituted by the transitiveness and open event-ness of Being. And the product of aesthetic activity is not, with respect to its meaning, actual Being in probes of becoming, and, with respect to its being, it enters into communion with Being through a historical act of effective aesthetic intuiting. Aesthetic intuition is unable to apprehend the actual event-ness of the once-occurrent event, for its images or configurations are objectified, that is, with respect to their content, they are placed outside actual once-occurrent becoming – they do not partake in it (they partake in it only as a constituent moment in the alive and living consciousness of a contemplator). (p.1)

Similarly, Bakhtin (1993) contrasts “eventness” with “theoretism”, as already indicated in the previous skeptical quote on psychology. Whereas theories and categories attempt to arrive at abstract generalizations and definitions, the quality of livingness is singular, unique, and historic – as such, lived life is “atheoretical”:

> The moment which discursive theoretical thinking (in the natural sciences and in philosophy), historical description-exposition, and aesthetic intuition have in common, and which is of particular important for our inquiry, is this: all these activities establish a fundamental split between the content or sense of a given act/activity and the historical actuality of its being, the actual and one-occurrent experiencing of it. And it is in consequence of this that the given act loses its valuableness and the unity of its actual becoming and self-determination. This act is truly real (it participates in once-occurrent Being-as-event) only in its entity. Only this whole act is alive, exists fully and inescapably – comes to be, is accomplished. It is an actual living participant in the ongoing event of Being: it is in communion with the unique unity of ongoing Being. (ibid. p. 1/2)

It is the momentary “eventness” that characterizes life – and that is taken away by “aestheticization” or “scientificization”. The same applies to practical psychology. As the psychiatrist Stevan Weine describes, clinically oriented assessments of potentially traumatized people differ from people’s more “vivid” testimonies of the event which “may be brimming with eventness” (2006, p. 135). This vitality of conversations contrasts with systematizations that assume “read-made” concepts of life: “The result is that nothing is ‘surprising’ because everything is ‘ready-made’” (Morson, 1991). Bakhtin rejects such an approach to (literature) analysis:

> An object is ready-made, the linguistic means for its depiction are ready-made, the artist himself is ready-made, and his world view is ready-made. And here with ready-made means, in light of a ready-made world view, the ready-made poet reflects a ready-made object. But in fact the object is created in the process of creativity, as are the poet himself, his world view, and his means of expression. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 120)

In the context of OD, my interest lies in exploring the "not-yet-ready-made" and "unplotted" moments occurring in OD workshops. OD is commonly defined as a "planned" process, as I indicated in the previous chapter (*chapter 2*). For example, Beckhard (1969) famously starts his definition of OD as "an effort (1) planned" (p.9). Much organizational work involves planning and the implementation of plans, and large OD events also need to be coordinated and "designed". The question thus arises how "eventness" counters these "OD plots". As Morson and Emerson (1990) claim, characters in the polyphonic novel have the power to surprise the author: "Single characters may always surprise their author as their potential dialogues and acts become concrete, and since the dialogues in which they engage may change them in unexpected ways, possible outcomes are continually outdated" (p. 247). For my second analysis, I thus attune to these surprising moments in OD workshops, and ask the second analytic question: How are surprise moments enacted in OD workshops?

The concept of voices provides us with a first idea of Bakhtin's focus on conversations as "alive": in conversations, different voices meet dynamically, and every abstract idea needs to be "voiced" to come into this world. The concept of "eventness" gives us a second indication of this livingness: every lived act is unique and potentially surprising, and it can only become generalized artificially by aesthetic or scientific "treatment". A third idea of how to think of conversations as "living" is Bakhtin's concept of "centrifugal and centripetal": perspectives are constantly widened and narrowed in language and there is never a fixed meaning. I explain these concepts in more detail, as they enhance the interpretation of implicit reflection in the two analyses.

3.3.3 Centripetal and centrifugal forces

In Bakhtin's theory of dialogue, language is always situated between forces pushing toward diversity and forces pushing toward unity – between "centrifugal" and "centripetal" forces, as he refers to them. Centripetal forces, for example, are represented in the linguistic canonization of language, in the search for universal truth. These forces pursue a standardized and unitary language: "Unitary language constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 270). These normalizing processes include

"verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization" (ibid. p. 271). The more authoritative language becomes, the more we feel its power. Thus, language loses its "playfulness":

> The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged in the past. It is a prior discourse. (ibid. p. 342)

Centrifugal forces, in contrast, strive toward diversity and decentralization. They question norms and play with language. They are, for example, represented in the different ways various social groups talk. In a novel, a single character can stratify language by introducing the own language. In diversifying language, centrifugal forces challenge centripetal forces: "this stratification and heteroglossia, once realized, is not only a static invariant of linguistic life, but also what insures its dynamics: stratification and heteroglossia widen and deepen as long as language is alive and developing" (ibid. p. 272). Both centripetal and centrifugal forces are simultaneously at work: "Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)" (ibid. p. 272). According to Bakhtin, by recognizing this simultaneity, justice is done to an analysis of utterances.

Although both forces are at work in conjunction, the one may be more present than the other. The forces thus create tension by working antagonistically and varying in their degree of dominance:

> A unitary language is not something given but is always in essence posited – and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. But at the same time it makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystalizing into a real, although still relative, unity – the unity of the reigning conversational (everyday) and literary language, "correct language". (ibid. p. 270)

What used to be part of language diversity may, over time, become part of a unitary language:

> But other aspects of heteroglossia (…) may, at the given moment, already have lost their flavor of "belonging to another language"; they may already have been canonized by literary language, and are consequently sensed by the author as no longer within the system of provincial patois or professional jargon but as belonging rather to the system of literary language. (ibid. p. 418)

As centripetal forces “operate in the midst of heteroglossia” (ibid. p. 272), and as centrifugal forces diversify unitary languages, language is continuously dynamized. It is this dialectical nature that makes any utterance “a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language” (ibid. p. 272). Helin and Avenier (2016), by using the example of consensus versus dissent, illustrate interactions inclined more toward a centripetal or more toward a centrifugal force:

> When someone is saying to the other: “I agree, let’s do like you suggest”, that is to communicate with a centripetal move. Since centripetal forces aim at centralizing and unifying meaning, they are needed for sharing social life. On the other hand, if someone says “that is not the case, I think we should do otherwise”, that is to bring centrifugal forces into the communication. Thus, the centrifugal forces incline towards multiplicity and fragmentation. (p. 144)

Jabri (2004) also provides a brief example of dissent:

> Centripetal: “The merger will help us all”.
>
> Centrifugal: “I don’t think it will. I just don’t see how”. (p.573)

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011, p.1436) examine their interviews with Federal Security Directors about leadership with reference to centripetal and centrifugal forces. They find centripetal forces in expressions such as: “This is our goal”, “How can we get the same results…”, and “How can we do it better?”. In these examples, unity is emphasized. By contrast, centrifugal forces stress diversity and differing views as can be seen in the following statements: “What do you like?”, “Talk about resistance… ice cold”, and “…including the union, City Hall, the police”. It is exactly this tension that also produces polyphony in the encounters of different voices. Pure harmony will not lead to polyphony: “A conversation that has multiple voices is not necessarily polyphonic; a dialogue of many voices with a focus on shared meaning, coherence, and consensus can be quite monologic” (Jabri et al. 2008, p.671).

To sum up, the concept of centrifugal and centripetal forces depicts the stratifying and unifying tendencies in language. These evolve in parallel, and thus even in dominant unity there will always be deviance and critical voices; as much as there will always be some sort of agreement on very diverse opinions. In organizational research, centrifugal and centripetal forces have mainly been operationalized as tendencies toward dissensus versus consensus. This concept is useful as it highlights the tension inherent in dialogue. Different voices do not necessarily co-exist peacefully; dissensus often produces friction and conflict. By applying this concept to the study of OD conversations, it helps me to explore their potentially tense dynamics. The polyphony in some OD workshop genres may be more conflictual and tense than in others; and

surprises may be perceived as “centrifugal moments” as they unsettle the “plot” of the workshop. What is more, the concepts of centrifugal and centripetal forces allow me to conceptualize organizational reflection as an implicit conversational quality. Therefore, I outline this idea in more detail.

3.4 Implicit reflection as a conversational quality

As my research question does not only concern the evolvement of OD conversations, but also the reflective dynamics thereof, I turn to the use of a Bakhtinian framework in organizational change studies to provide an understanding of organizational reflection as an implicit conversational process. Bakhtinian thinking inspired much organizational change research due to its inherent processual perspective of dialogue as an ever-evolving and pluralistic endeavor. For example, Jabri (2010, p.539) writes: “Change is (…) conditional on the existence of a polyphonic process of exchanging utterances, hence dependent on the unpacking of a complex unity of differences”. Dialogue constantly produces differences and a potential for change: “Dialogue is an ongoing, open process, is never finished, and always allows for loopholes and change” (Hazen, 1993, p.18). Even identity, often associated with stability, is from a Bakhtinian perspective an open-ended process. Identity ascriptions come from oneself as much as from others and change constantly. It is a “joint production” (Jabri, 2005, p. 88) and therefore it can only be unfinalizable. This has implications for change management:

> Such a re-evaluation offers an opportunity for both change agents and change participants to reflect on three important issues:
>
> (1) That change efforts need to position identity as contingent on the boundary between selfhood and otherness;
>
> (2) That boundary between selfhood and otherness provides focus and content for change as shifting identities to be achieved through utterances; and, most importantly,
>
> (3) It is only through otherness that selfhood can define change. (Jabri, 2004, p. 575)

It is this duality of an utterance which holds the potential for organizational learning processes (Jabri, Adrian & Boje, 2008). The self and the other “illuminate” each other and their differences result in a “surplus of meaning” (Jabri, 2005). Otherness can enter an organization through a change agent (Jabri, 2004), but also, for example, through newcomers and outsiders who participate in a strategy-making process (Kornberger et al., 2006). These voices do not yet subscribe to an organization’s orthodoxies and may “address relevant problems through the difference they raise” (ibid., p.10):

> The strategist is to become less focused on promoting a particular methodology and/or strategy, and to become increasingly directed to letting a variety of organizational stories surface and be legitimized, or juxtaposed one to the other. Multiple "readings" of an organization and its situation are to be promoted; the "text" is to become multi-authored. (Letiche, 2010, p.265)

Vaara (2010, p.40) points out that the coexistence of strategy narratives in an organization is "not arbitrary, but different strategy narratives give voices to different social actors and serve different social functions". Like Bakhtin who also wrote about the changed world during the carnival season, Hazen (1993, p.23) recommends adopting a carnivalesque approach to changing organizations: "In carnival, the world is topsy-turvy… Bakhtin would suggest that we take this attitude and these archetypes with us into the somber world of bureaucracy".

Like the debate on whether polyphony is naturally given in organizations, there are divergent viewpoints in the literature on whether or not polyphony necessarily results in change. For example, Hazen (1993) promotes a "change optimistic" view. For her, minor feminist voices have the potential to challenge the classic bureaucratic organization: "These discourses are sources of change, since they are different from the discourse of power" (Hazen, 1993, p.21). Carter et al. (2003, p. 295) agree with the assumption that change needs a voice that is different from the dominant voice: "To resist (…) means first being able to speak to power from outside of power. It means finding a space of discourse that is not already colonized – or marginalized – by the strategies that power uses". However, they criticize the idea that change comes naturally through polyphony: "polyphony does not necessarily lead to change" (Carter et al., 2003, p. 295; Kornberger et al., 2006, p.5). Instead, Kornberger et al. (2006, p. 15) promote active listening to usually silenced voices and advise: "learn to regard this very polyphony as creating space for voices not normally heard". Often, this is not done:

> Change processes rarely invite polyphone; as a result, many people see no point in engaging in the conversation. When that happens it is easier to express a consensus viewpoint and leave a meeting on good terms with everyone, rather than express uninvited views that are unwelcome. (Jabri, Adrian & Boje, 2008, p.673/674)

Kornberger et al. (2006, p.5) point out that "rather than provide strong leadership that silences dissent, organizations should use the polyphony they possess". They even go as far as to assume that a lack of polyphony can cause damage to organizations, as seen in well-known organizational disasters. For example, they refer to the Challenger explosion where engineers, who played a critical role, were excluded from the decision

to proceed with a risky launch. A similar exclusion of critical voices is also documented in the cases of Enron and Barings (Kornberger et al., 2006, p. 25).

Empirically, organizational change has also been documented from a Bakhtinian perspective. Among others, Helin and Jabri (2016) describe how the encountering of different family members in a family business' succession process led to a change of perception of what it means to be the owner of a firm: "during the conversations, some of the previously taken-for-granted "truths" were questioned and a new understanding started to evolve. It appears that their initial monologic way of thinking and talking in relation to these concepts was replaced by a more multi-voiced understanding in which different points of view were brought to the table" (Helin & Jabri, 2016, p.499; see also Helin, 2013, 2015). Similarly, Austin, Hjorth and Hessel (2017, p. 1512) attribute the success of a branding agency to its ability "to maintain multiple voices, including conflicting voices". The coming together of different voices is seen as having transformative potential, as Helin and Avenier (2016), in their study of collaborative conversations between an academic and a practitioner, also postulate: "(…) the centripetal and centrifugal forces that people can offer each other in their responses are of great importance. It is when these forces meet each other, rub against each other without ever being transformed into a single voice that movement can occur". They document how each meeting has a quality, depending on whether the two collaborators are able to stimulate each other with new views. The benefits of other views are also highlighted in the study of Oswick et al. (2000). They present the case of a development process in a business school unit, in which the facilitators used narrative methods ("dialogical scripting") to trigger organizational learning. A critical incident analyzed by the group included an incoming director with a different opinion on part-time versus fixed-term contracts for lecturers and who, as a result, caused friction in the business school unit. The new director was regarded as an "organizational villain" (ibid. p. 891), and he had "no voice of his own and, in consequence, a univocal, uncontested account of events is created" (ibid.). During the dialogical scripting process undertaken by the group, other perspectives of the director were included, resulting in a better understanding of the broader topic of academic freedom versus control. Such an incorporation of outside voices is also evident in a conclusion reached in Carter et al.'s (2003) study of an international dockworker strike. The internet evoked more and different voices, which supported the dockworkers of the Liverpool Dockers: "(…) we would argue that the organizing seen in the case of the Liverpool Dockers was polyphonic in that it drew in different voices, with different ideas, that ultimately were to lead to three highly successful actions that shook the shipping

world" (Carter et al., 2003, p. 302). The encouragement of polyphony is also supported by Sullivan and McCarthy's (2008) study of a change process in a large healthcare organization. They propose "bringing voices together that would not normally meet and allow them to collide, publishing these collisions, bringing the stakeholders outside of their ordinary organization in 'away-days'" (p. 539).

As can be inferred from the numerous organizational studies drawing on the Bakhtinian notions of dialogue, polyphony, voices, and centrifugal and centripetal forces, there are many ways to conceptualize change from a Bakhtinian perspective, and to identify pluralism and diversity as sources of change. At this point, I introduce the additional notion of organizational reflection (Vince, 2004; Vince & Reynolds, 2009) to this stream of thinking. Arguably, the cited studies identify the potential of a plurality of voices to question one another. A lone, single voice cannot question itself; it needs another voice to challenge it. For Bakhtin, each word has an emotional-volitional tone and each voice expresses a worldview; language itself is continuously contesting the various "truths out there". From a Bakhtinian perspective, this reflective questioning is an implicit quality of dialogue. Heteroglossia, polyphony, and centrifugalism all represent a diversity of truths implicitly questioning each other's taken-for-granted assumptions. Consequently, organizational reflection is not something that must only be intentionally accomplished; it is, already, an implicit quality of organizational conversations. Bakhtin considers the reflective potential of dialogue by postulating a "surplus of seeing" by humans that will always be "outsiders" to one another:

> When I contemplate a whole human being who is situated outside and over and against me, our concrete, actually experienced horizons do not coincide. For at each moment, regardless of the position and the proximity to me of this other human being who I am contemplating, I shall always see and know something that he, from his place outside me… cannot see for himself. (Bakhtin, 1990, pp. 22/23)

3.5 The adoption of Bakhtinian thinking for this study

I turn to Bakhtinian thinking to study the evolvement of conversations and reflection in OD. Bakhtinian thinking provides a rich theoretical understanding of language as a social process which is pluralistic and dialogic in nature. Furthermore, it provides an understanding of the tensions inherent in dialogue. In particular, I draw on the notions of voice, genre, plot, "eventness", centrifugal and centripetal forces. As shown in the previous section, Bakhtinian thinking also assists in conceptualizing organizational reflection as an implicit process – as a conversational quality. I will use these concepts

in the following way: in the first analysis, I explore how OD workshop genres mediate voice dynamics. That is, I apply Bakhtin's notion of literary genres to workshop formats. As different genres can be identified in literature – constituting particular patterns of literary texts – I turn to OD workshops to identify patterns of workshop enactments. In addition, I draw on Bakhtin's understanding of voice to explore how these workshop genres mediate the voicing dynamics. As "voice" is for Bakhtin the expression of a worldview through figures in a novel, I search for different "worldviews" audible in the OD workshops. By connecting genres and voices, I explore the effects that workshop genres have on the voices – for example on the plurality of voices or how they relate to each other. In this way I hope to come closer to understanding conversational dynamics in an OD process. As shown in the previous section, the encounter of different voices and "truths" can be framed as having a reflective quality; each worldview questions the truth claims of the other. Thus, because of the plurality of contradicting values and opinions, when centrifugal forces are at work, they pressurize truth claims and create tension. Hence, when exploring OD workshop genres and voices, I focus on the evolvement of centrifugal and centripetal forces within these genres. In my second analysis, I explore moments that interrupt the "plot" of the OD workshops. For this analysis, I consider surprise moments which reintroduce "eventness" into often very ritualistic OD workshops. It is in these moments that the ongoing and open-ended quality of dialogue becomes visible – conversations are "alive", they cannot be "defined" one-sidedly. They thus continuously produce surprises as they deviate from the expected development of things. By unsettling expectations, they also convey the implicit reflective quality of conversations. In summary, the guiding analytic question for the first analysis is: How do OD workshop genres mediate voice dynamics?; and for the second analysis: How are surprise moments enacted in OD workshops?

Bakhtin's thinking was inspired by the study of literature. However, he frequently takes notice of other life situations, and thus develops a more general theory of dialogue through the example of literature. One central literary motif which he identifies is the "meeting". A great deal of literature is organized around the encounters and meetings of protagonists. For example, in a Greek romance, suspense is created through the failure to meet: "they did not meet because they did not arrive at the given place at the same time, or at the same time they were in different places" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 97). By contrast, in an adventure genre, a hero may meet an adversary. Although Bakhtin (1981) focuses on the meeting motif in literature, he acknowledges the importance of meeting in everyday (organizational) life:

> The motif of meeting is one of the most universal motifs, not only in literature (it is difficult to find a work where this motif is completely absent) but also in other areas of culture and in various spheres of public and everyday life (…). A real-life chronotope of meeting is constantly present in organizations of social and governmental life. Everyone is familiar with organized social meetings of all possible sorts, and how important they are. In the life of the state, meetings are also very important. Let us mention here only diplomatic encounters, always strictly regulated, where the time, place and makeup of these encounters are dependent upon the rank of the person being met. And finally, everyone knows the importance of meetings (sometimes the entire fate of a man may depend on them) in life, and in the daily affairs of any individual. (pp. 98/99)

The study of OD workshops through a Bakhtinian lens is thus not “far-fetched”. By contrast, workshops also have their rituals, their recognizable genres, their representation of different voices, and their lively, interrupting dynamics.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the basic assumptions of a Bakhtinian dialogical theory. I situated this theory in the field of psychology and organizational research and identified the notions that I draw on for my analysis: genre, voice, plot, “eventness”, centrifugal and centripetal forces. In addition, I assessed the potential of Bakhtinian thinking to frame organizational reflection as an implicit quality of OD conversations. I ended by summarizing how I use a Bakhtinian framework to approach my analyses. How I implement the explained concepts methodologically in this research project is part of the next chapter: by turning to a focused ethnography of communication and a dialogical analysis. Studying language-in-use requires attuning to and experiencing context: “The interpretation of symbolic structures is forced into an infinity of symbolic contextual meanings and therefore it cannot be scientific the way precise sciences are scientific” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 160). Hence, a methodology is needed that does justice to OD conversations as “living”.

4. Methodology: Focused Ethnography of Communication and Dialogical Analysis

A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come in contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. We raise new questions for a foreign culture, one that did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to us by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7)

4.1 Introduction

As shown in the previous chapter, Bakhtinian thinking has been used to inspire organizational research in many ways. Not only was his thinking used to theorize organizations and to study them empirically, but also to conceptualize research processes. His focus on language influenced thinking on academic texts and writing (e.g. Cunliffe, Helin & Luhman, 2014; Letiche 2010; Belova, King & Sliwa, 2008); his assumption of language as pluralistic and conflictual, influenced deliberations on the researcher's positioning in the research field (e.g. De Cock & Jeanes, 2006); his ideas of voice and unfinalizability influenced reflections on research processes (e.g. Helin, 2015, 2019; Smissaert & Jalonen, 2018); and his attunement to utterances and polyphony influenced data collection and analysis (e.g. Sullivan, 2012). Hence, there is a rich tradition to draw on when engaging in organizational research from a Bakhtinian perspective. Nonetheless, as each research project is unique in what it studies and in how it is inspired by Bakhtinian thinking, it is necessary to provide a detailed explanation of the methodological procedure. This is the chapter's purpose. I do so by presenting my research process as detailed and transparent as possible. As this research project is embedded in a qualitative research paradigm, criteria such as objectivity, reliability, and validity do not apply to it in the same way as they would in quantitative studies. Instead of quantifying behavior, "qualitative psychology" (Smith, 2015) explores meaning making and includes the researcher as a meaning-constituting element (Döring & Bortz, 2016). Hence, criteria such as reflexivity, transparency, and trustworthiness are proposed to assess qualitative research projects (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2019; O'Reilly & Kiymba, 2015; Yardley, 2015). Accordingly, I not only depict the research elements in a logic order, but also embed them in the narration of how they emerged in the overall research process. Not entirely hiding behind abstract systems and rules also makes me, as a researcher, "answerable" in a Bakhtinian (1993) sense: "My own individually answerable act" (p.

3). Acknowledging the dynamic nature of a research design aligns with Bakhtinian thinking. As the psychologist Lakshami Bandlamudi (2016) points out: “from the time of conceptualizing an idea, a problem, to sketching a research design to framing questions to analyzing data to reporting the findings, there is an inevitable dialogic transition, and, according to Bakhtin, that would be the very nature of human sciences” (p. 118).

Bakhtin (1986) distances himself from the influential work of De Saussure (2011 [1906-1911]) and his conceptualization of language as a fixed, “out there” system: “Language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 183). Bakhtin conceptualizes language as alive, ideological, and infused by the meaning that people create situationally in utterances when using and shaping words: “it is not, after all, out of the dictionary that the speaker gets his words!” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). This social constructionist and performative conceptualization of language requires a research methodology attuned to language-in-use[7]. In my research project, this attunement to language-in-use involves a focused ethnography for data gathering, and a dialogical analysis for data interpretation. Both methodological approaches are outlined in this chapter. I start by depicting the emergence of the research question and an ethnographic approach, and then enter into the details of data collection. This is followed by outlining the cornerstones of a dialogical analysis, and a detailed explanation of the procedure, elements, and indicators used in the two analyses. Then I explain the thoughts behind the presentation of my data and conclude by reflecting on quality issues concerning the analysis.

4.2 Emergence of the research question

Initially, my research interest was inspired by my experience of working with OD facilitators. A major part of their work was to design and conduct workshops, which corresponds with the literature on Dialogic OD and the emphasis on enabling conversations. I became interested in facilitators’ design decisions and wrote my

[7] Although most (if not all) studies drawing on a Bakhtinian framework are conducted within a qualitative research paradigm, Bandlamudi (2016) points out that Bakhtin (1984a, p. 272) – despite his frequent criticism of science and decontextualization – praises Einstein’s physics approach of studying reality as multiplicity, and that Bakhtin (1981, p. 257) also briefly refers to the possibility of quantitative studies when demanding them to recognize the ‘semantics’ behind the numbers (although, one could argue, ‘semantics’ in his sense may refer to more than ‘validity’: e.g. context, culture, uniqueness, and the embeddedness of interpretation).

diploma thesis about the metaphors used to describe workshop facilitation (Laukamm, 2012). As that research project was interview based, for the current research project, I was interested in studying what OD facilitators “actually do” when facilitating workshops. I thus turned to practice-based approaches (Gherardi, 2008) which usually apply ethnographic observational methods as they explore the “doing” and situational accomplishments of organizing processes (Gherardi, 2019). Furthermore, when looking for an organizational research theme to link the workshop emphasis, I explored the topic of organizational reflection as it seemed to me that organizational workshops are usually places to leave the everyday organizational world, and to get together from different departments and reflect on broader organizational issues. What struck me when engaging with organizational reflection literature was the pessimistic depiction of the likelihood of organizational reflection. I asked myself whether more implicit ways of reflection are also possible or common. Such an implicit understanding of reflection supports an observational approach, as the implicitness of doing things becomes more visible when participating in a situation as an observer. When exploring the literature fields of social constructionist OD and organizational reflection, I discovered that the relation between the two notions was depicted very differently and contradictory, and that more systematic research in this direction was still missing. When I did ethnographic observations in an empirical OD case, the apparent plurality of perspectives and tensions motivated me to turn to a Bakhtinian approach as a dialogical approach, and to focus more on the verbal exchanges and data instead of the materiality involved, as a practice approach may do. Being interested in the conversational and reflective dynamics of the studied OD process, I finally formulated the research questions for this research project: How do OD conversations evolve, and how is this evolvement mediated by organizational reflection?

This iterative process of aligning research interest, research question, methodology and empirical setting over time is a characteristic of the openness of qualitative research approaches. As Gobo and Molle (2017) explain, in an ethnographic research design, the research topic is “initially nebulous at its best” (ibid. p. 77). In the subsequent research process, the topic is specified (“funnel”): “This is a strength, not a weakness, of qualitative research; an element of its flexibility and adaptive ability diametrically opposed to the rigidity of much quantitative research, which ‘bends’ the research topic to the requirements and constraints of the method” (ibid. p.78).

4.3 Ethnographic studies drawing on a Bakhtinian framework

Many studies using a Bakhtinian framework also adopt an ethnographic approach to data collection. For example, Oswick et al. (2000) accompanied a business school unit as consultants and recorded dialogues; Carter et al. (2002) observed internet communication; Helin (2002) made participant observations in a family-owned business and its succession; Helin and Avenier (2016) auto-ethnographically analyzed researcher-practitioner conversations; and Austin, Hjorth and Hessel (2017) made participant observations in a creative firm. In their study of OD facilitators, Aguiar and Tonelli (2018) do not draw on Bakhtinian thinking but nevertheless discuss their interview method as a limit to explore social constructionist OD and suggest the following for further studies: "An interesting opportunity would be to explore Dialogic OD using ethnography" (p. 474). Similarly, Cotter et al. (2016, p. 172) call for "'situated' data" to research organizational reflection.

Cunliffe, Helin and Luhman (2014, p. 345) justify an ethnographic approach to Bakhtinian-inspired research on organizations as follows: "Because of the diachronic and synchronic nature of a dialogic approach, the researcher must be immersed in organizational life (in the moment) and must therefore be an ethnographer". For Bakhtin (1984a), language is never finalized, but always in the making. With every utterance, words are shaped and reshaped. Since language is not something abstract that can be studied out of context, an ethnography is thus an appropriate approach to collect data "in situ", and to study how participants engage and shape OD conversations. It is in concrete situation that words have meaning:

> The words of language belong to nobody, but still we hear those words only in particular individual utterances, we read them in particular individual works, and in such cases the words already have not only a typical, but also (depending on the genre) a more or less clearly reflected individual expression, which is determined by the unrepeatable individual context of the utterance. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 88)

Furthermore, to understand the meaning of words also requires to be familiar with their context over a certain period. For example, to understand surprise requires knowing the bigger picture and history:

> Each image must be understood and evaluated on the level of great time. Analysis usually fusses about in the narrow space of small time, that is, in the space of the present day and the recent past and the imaginable – desired or frightening – future. Emotional-evaluative forms of anticipating the future in language-speech (order, desire, warning, incantation, and so forth), the trivially human attitude of evaluative nonpredetermination, unexpectedness, as it were, "surprisingness", absolute innovation, miracle and so forth. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 167)

The study of context by “being there” over time is part of ethnographic approaches. Ethnography stems from anthropological studies of human life in its “natural environment”.

> The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 465)

Ethnographic approaches have progressed from naturalist approaches to social constructionist approaches over time: “That is, culture being studied are viewed as skilled, informed and crafted constructions rather than as objective ‘truths’ about the world” (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2017, p.40). In psychology, some of the classic “studies have involved ethnographic and other observational methods” (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2017, p.40). Especially psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, and social psychology, not excluding organizational psychology, have drawn on ethnographic methods (Griffin & Bengry-Howell, 2017; Thomas, 2010).

Sociocultural approaches, such as a Bakhtinian framework, usually favor qualitative research methods to explore meaning and experience in an open-ended way (Kirschner & Martin, 2010). The importance of language in social processes is shared by Bakhtin and is emphasized by many qualitative research approaches: “This ‘turn-to-language’ placed center-stage the study of collective discursive practices and saw language as a way of creating the reality of the world we inhabit rather than as a way of reflecting outwards our inner psychological states” (Sullivan & Forrester, 2019, p.4). Understanding the meaning of phenomena requires engagement (Kluge, 2005). As a result, since individual action always happens in a “collective-we” (Shotter, 2009; 2010), sociocultural psychology does not separate individuals from their social embeddedness (Vygotsky, 1978). The emphasis is therefore on the sociocultural conditions of human experience and actions:

> This means that psychological processes are to be interpreted largely as the result of the management of meanings in accordance with the rules and conventions of the relevant practice. Intentionality (meaning) and normativity (conformity to rules and conventions), not cause and effect, need to be adopted as the framing concepts of psychological studies. This leads us back again to the root metaphor of cognition as conversation. (Kirschner & Martin, 2010, p. 35)

For this research project, I did not conduct a comprehensive ethnography of an organization. Instead, I focused on specific OD events of an organization undergoing an OD process. This specific focus on the conversational processes of a certain part

of an organization is framed as a focused ethnography (Knoblauch, 2005; Wall, 2015) of communication (Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015). I explain these terms later on.

4.4 Data collection

The data collection involved four research angles: preliminary interviews, preliminary observations, main observations, and supplementary interviews (*figure 3*). First, I conducted interviews with various OD facilitators and explored different aspects of their profession to familiarize myself with the field and professional practices. Second, I proceeded with preliminary observations of OD workshops held at an IT department in the automobile industry and in the central administration of a theater. Third, by specifically focusing on the theater's OD process, I continued with my main observations to generate the data that I draw mostly on in this research project. Finally, I conducted supplementary interviews with participants of the OD process and participated behind the scenes in one stage performance to further explore the context of my observations. The objectives and results of each phase are explained in the next section, when detailing my main observations.

Figure 3: Data collection angles

4.4.1 Preliminary interviews

The empirical research phase commenced by interviewing 15 independent facilitators and OD consultants. The purpose was to learn more about their work, allowing me to strengthen the link between the empirical and the literature parts of the research, and to gain field access for observations. These facilitators were identified via an internet research, for example on professional network sites. The interviews lasted an hour, on average. Usually, I would start by asking the interviewees how they became facilitators. This opening question served as a "warm-up question". I noted that most of them started as employees, became independent over time, and seemed successful by having sufficient clients and mandates. This gave me a sense of OD facilitation as a career and an economic sector. In addition, the interviews suggested that in this profession most facilitators were on recommendation asked to engage with the client organization, would usually start by facilitating a single workshop, and would then be hired for consecutive workshops. To gain an idea of their values and priorities, I also asked the interviewees to narrate a successful and an unsuccessful workshop. It was interesting that "successful" narrations usually entailed a description of a special, collective learning moment, accompanied by an atmospheric shift. "Unsuccessful" narrations would usually cover a description of how a manager tried to manipulate the democratic process. This valuing of democracy, even to the point where some facilitators would withdraw from a mandate if management became too manipulative, contrasted starkly with another priority: the interviews indicated that it was important to attune to and cater for as many of the clients' needs and wishes as possible. As facilitators, the interviewees would put effort into getting to know what the client wants and adjusted their design to new developments. My tentative hypothesis was that the need to facilitate the clients' wants not only formed part of the facilitators' stance but was also due to the facilitators' role as self-employed consultants and their dependency on being "booked again". In addition, managing animosity seemed to be equally important to the facilitators, and they made an effort to create an atmosphere conducive to conflict prevention. Finally, a significant element of their work was to facilitate group collaboration, for example by eliciting common goals and negotiating ways to achieve them. Based on the first research phase of preliminary interviews, I created the following table (*table 1*) to present the themes identified in the transcribed interviews, and to cluster the various coded subthemes into seven broader themes. To approach the practice perspective of "how to do a certain job", these themes were formulated as callings. This structuring of the interview resembles a thematic analysis

– that is, identifying and mapping themes with codes and hierarchical categories (Freeman & Sullivan, 2019; Terry et al., 2017; Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015).

Table 1: Themes from preliminary interviews with OD facilitators

Theme	Code
Be a (consulting) professional!	Academic background, classical first work experience, specialized further education, formal certification processes, no clear definition of facilitation, experience, philosophy, theorists, bad facilitators, self-employment, big events, networks, frequent traveling, attractive clients, variety of approaches/tools, being helpful, repeated business, good relationships, customer satisfaction, appreciative feedback, self-reflection, training/coaching, content expertise, process expertise, seeing more, plan, improvisation, customer conditions, societal changes, variety of clients, acceptance of facilitation
Appreciate the client!	Understand the client's needs, autonomy, appreciation
Facilitate collaboration in groups!	Small groups, constant exchange, efficient communication, energy, collaboratively defining clear purpose/role/context /product, rules, negotiations, consensus, preconditions, conflicts
Value democracy!	Participation, commitment and compliance, representative group, transparency, power, participative leadership
Manage (bad) feelings!	Avoidance of topics, hurtful truth, preparing for confrontation, trust/safe environment, icebreaking, physical activities, open/honest discussion, catharsis for bad feelings, perceiving emotional status quo of the group, face-to-face encounters
Organize learning!	Questions, sorting things out, touching encounters/emerging insights, changing the habitual, changing the pace

As a next step, I also conducted three interviews in the style of an "interview to the double" (Nicolini, 2009; Gherardi, 1995; Gorli, Nicolini & Scaratti, 2015), as well as an interview with a facilitator shortly after a workshop, thus bringing the total number of interviews to 19. The "interview to the double" is an interview technique used by practice-based scholars to elicit tacit workplace knowledge. The idea is that the interviewees explain their job to the interviewer in such a detailed way that "the interviewer could do the job the next day". My objectives with these interviews were to obtain more detail about the practicalities of facilitation, and to deepen the relationship with the interviewees to improve the likelihood of field access for observations. The "interviews to the double" sensitized me about two additional elements of the facilitators' work: their meticulous preparation of the material (the room, flipcharts, cards, etc.); and their incisive anticipation of different scenarios of how the workshop may develop and, therefore, the need to plan for alternative workshop developments.

Despite the importance of these preliminary interviews to obtain a sense of the OD facilitators' field and profession, they did not provide me access to observations. Building a trustful relationship with practitioners and convincing them to take a researcher along to their clients, proved to be more difficult than anticipated. Consequently, I relied on my personal network to arrange field observations.

4.4.2 Preliminary observations

As the interviews with the facilitators failed to yield observation opportunities, I sourced my personal network and contacted four professional facilitators by email, three of whom were willing – in principle – to allow me to be a participant observer. Two invited me to take part in their workshops. The first was an internal facilitator in the automobile industry. I accompanied him to a workshop of an IT department discussing strategic restructuring. This workshop impressed me due to the apparent willingness of the participants to openly discuss different scenarios, which I interpreted as an engagement in organizational reflection (questioning the status quo). I interviewed the facilitator prior to and after the workshop about his experiences of and reflections on it.

The second facilitator works for a public organization offering training, coaching, and facilitation to other public organizations such as ministries or cities. At the time, this facilitator was involved in an OD process in the central department of a theater ("THEATERORG") and she asked me whether this case would interest me. My affirmative response was met with a request for more detail and questions about my role as participant observant. She suggested that I attend the next larger workshop at THEATERORG. However, as the theater expressed reluctance at this point, I was introduced to a smaller workshop group two months later. I briefly presented my research focus and my procedure to the group (taking notes, audio-recording as a back-up, anonymity of participants, etc.). For the remainder of the workshop I sat at the back, taking notes of the discussions and interactions.

The field access to THEATERORG was easier than to the IT department. The facilitator from the automobile industry appeared apprehensive about an opportunity for further observations, whereas the facilitator consulting THEATERORG was more open to the possibility of observing several workshops. In addition, THEATERORG presented a more interesting research case, considering the need for research about OD in public and

arts organizations (Cummings & Worley, 2015). Therefore, I continued with my ethnographic visits to THEATERORG.

4.4.3 Main observations

The observation of OD workshops can be framed as "focused ethnography" and "ethnography of communication". In contrast to conventional ethnographies usually lasting a year, a focused ethnography concentrates on specific events, such as the OD workshops in my case (Knoblauch, 2005). Although these "mini-ethnographies" emphasize certain aspects, their intent of embracing the field is similar to those of conventional ethnographies (Wall, 2015). My focus on the workshops' meeting format and the evolvement of conversations also situates me in the tradition of the ethnography of communication approach. This approach considers the communicative features of a situation, for example its participants, norms, act sequences, and genres (Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015), and describes the various elements of a communication event.

During the observed workshops, I usually sat at the back of the room (steering group) or the table (coordination circle), taking hand-written fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) of the interactions and discussions, and activating a small audio recorder as a backup to my fieldnotes. Subsequently, I would transcribe the fieldnotes, using word processing computer software. The fieldnotes consisted of writing down – using a pen on a notepad – as much as possible of the conversations (who says what in which order), as well as of supplementary observations, including external noises, the atmospheric impression, and seating orders. Obviously, these notes were not as extensive as the audio recordings, but comparisons showed that I obtained the gist of most conversations and speech acts.

I visited different, often institutionalized OD workshops at THEATERORG: nine meetings of the coordination circle, consisting of six staff members who monitored the OD process and prepared the larger steering group workshops with the help of usually two facilitators; twelve workshops of the steering group, consisting of the mentioned staff members and 13 directors who discussed various OD topics and decided on the direction and measures of the OD process; two meetings of each of the four project groups in which ca. five directors and staff members planned and implemented different OD projects; two larger participation workshops in which members of the central department were invited to engage in discussions about various OD themes;

two information workshops in which employees were informed about certain OD topics; one quality management workshop; and one planning meeting of the three facilitators preparing a steering group workshop. The following table (*table 2*) provides an overview of my visits to THEATERORG for field observations.

Table 2: Overview of field visits to THEATERORG for observations

Observations of…
9 coordination circle meetings (six staff members plus external facilitators monitoring and coordinating the OD process) *March 2017 – January 2018*
12 steering group workshops (administration manager, 12 directors, six staff members, plus external facilitators discussing and deciding on OD topics) *May 2017 – November 2019*
2 x 4 project group meetings (four groups with ca. five members planning and implementing different measures) *Fall 2017*
2 participation workshops for a broader audience of employees (ca. 120 employees engaging in round table discussions on OD topics) *Summer/Fall 2017*
2 information workshops for a broader audience of employees (ca. 50 employees being informed about OD process and getting to ask questions) *Summer/Fall 2017*
1 quality management workshop (for a department group of ca. six employees) *Summer 2018*
1 planning meeting of the three facilitators (preparing a steering group workshop) *Summer 2017*

The field access to the OD process of THEATERORG had to be regularly reestablished and was thus a processual endeavor. The three groups of participants that I most often met with were the facilitators, the staff members, and the directors. Increasingly, I was accepted by them as an observer to their OD events. Nonetheless, not always being included in the invitation mails, I often had to specifically ask when and where the next workshop would take place. In addition, I was regularly asked when my observations would end, forcing me to justify further observations. In addition, for other OD formats such as participation workshops, information events, project group meetings, and quality management workshops, as well as for interviews, I had to proactively negotiate field access. My requests for observations were declined twice: once because a workshop group was regarded as potentially difficult, and once because it was held at an off-site retreat that was deemed too intimate for observations. Although becoming

more accepted as an observer, I continuously had to reestablish the field access. As mentioned by Thomas (2010, p.469), the challenge is to “get in and to keep in”.

I requested consensual approval for my research, in particular for notetaking and audio-recording, at the beginning of each new workshop format (e.g. coordination circle, steering group, project group etc.) and interview. However, this approval did not include the larger participation and information events, as not to disturb the flow of these events. Accordingly, although I attended these events, I abstained from making any audio recordings and only took notes – my presence was framed by the facilitators as being a guest from the University of St. Gallen, accompanying the OD process and taking general but not individual-related notes. Whenever a participant or facilitator changed in the steering group, I also requested their informed consent. In addition, I had to agree to the theater’s requirement of a research agreement and data-protection declaration. Although my initial contact outside the workshop was mainly through email with two external facilitators and two internal coordinators, the contact shifted over time from the facilitators to the internal coordinators.

4.4.4 Supplementary interviews

In addition to observing the OD workshops, I also interviewed most of the facilitators and workshop participants of the steering group and coordination circle and asked them how they experienced the OD process (*see table 3*). Furthermore, I regularly engaged in short informal conversations with the facilitators (and sometimes the participants) before and/or after a workshop. These supplementary interviews provided a better understanding of the setting and context, especially in relation to processes not included in my observations (Neyland, 2008). These interviews served two purposes. First, I gained a feeling of the participants’ view of the workshops and the OD process. This presented me an opportunity to further validate and contextualize my observations regarding, among others, the history of the OD process and its narration, the different formal and informal organizational groups and “coalitions”, their perceptions and attitudes toward the OD process, and what happened at the meetings I did not attend. Second, the interviews allowed me to personally interact with most of the participants of the coordination circle and steering group, and this individual trust-building supported my chance to observe the workshops on a continuous basis. I was also able to explain the research project in person and show, through my questions, that I had no hidden agenda. Indeed, I felt that the participants’ encounters with me

during the informal parts of the workshops (entering the room, breaks, leaving the room) became more amicable after the interviews. An interviewee even offered me the opportunity to participate "behind the scenes" in the organization of an evening's stage performance. I took part as an "intern" and visited four different areas surrounding the performance: the stage props team, the sound team, the lighting team, and the team in charge of coordinating the technique. Apart from this stage experience giving me a better feel of the bustling stage operations that were often discussed in the OD workshops, being sometimes in conflict with the OD process, it also provided me the opportunity to ask employees not part of the coordination circle or the steering group about their experiences of the OD process. Mainly, this gave me the impression that these employees may have heard about the OD process or individual activities, but that they did not have the "bigger picture" of the process or how it related to their daily activities.

Table 3: Overview of supplementary interviews

Interviews with…
2 facilitators *Spring 2017*
6 coordination circle members *Fall 2017*
1 manager and 10 directors *Mainly Winter 2017/2018*
Informal conversation with 1 younger HR employee *Fall 2017*
1 stage performance (behind the stage "internship") *Summer 2018*

4.5 Analysis steps

4.4.5 Emergence of the analysis

Parallel to the observations, I made tentative attempts to analyze the data. During several rounds I analyzed the first steering group workshop and coded it using an "initial coding process with an open mind" (Charmaz, 2014) to familiarize myself with the empirical material and emerging themes. In addition, I also coded the workshop in a more focused way in relation to facilitation practices and emotions. The reason for this was that the preliminary interviews showed the significance of atmospheric shifts, also considering the emphasis that organizational reflection literature places on the importance of emotions in reflective processes. As a result, I identified certain

unexpected moments in the data – moments of surprise – that formed the basis of the second analysis of this research project.

The first analysis was inspired by my participation in an academic conference. In order to advance the literature through the empirical data and to engage with other researchers, I attended the 2018 PROS conference (a conference organized by organizational process studies scholars) on the topic of “time and temporality”. Subsequently, I coded several workshops from a time and temporality perspective, for example the mentioning of temporal aspects like appointments, time conflicts, or urging the finishing of a discussion due to lapsed time. After several rounds of categorizing these different temporal logics, I came up with the concept of rhythm. Subsequently, I identified four rhythms in the OD process: the rhythm of the OD evolvement, a project managerial OD rhythm, a competing stage rhythm, and a rhythm of conflict.

However, the notion of rhythm did not sufficiently represent the material. Although the OD process of THEATERORG contained different temporal logics, the identified categories represented more general social interests and conflicts than temporal interests and conflicts. At this point the Bakhtinian framework and Bakhtin’s concept of dialogue as an encounter and potential battle of voices entered my research. Accordingly, I started to explore the different, potentially conflicting social forces in the OD process from a Bakhtinian voice perspective. I became interested in the plurality of voices encountering in the OD process, and in patterns of how they encountered. During the analysis process, it became apparent that these patterns of how voices encounter are associated with different patterns of workshop formats (e.g. discussion vs. presentation). Turning to the linguistic and Bakhtinian notion of “genre”, I framed these different workshop formats as different genres. As a consequence, I refined the analytic question for the first analysis as: How do OD workshop genres mediate voice dynamics?

The second analysis came into being by noticing moments that stood out for me during my observations and that made me think about them on the way home from a field visit or when transcribing the fieldnotes. I framed these moments as moments of surprise. I also presented these moments at the 2018 PROS conference. At the time, I framed them as interrupting the temporal flow and drawing the attention to the here and now. When the Bakhtinian framework entered my research project, I increasingly framed them as representing conversations as living and “unfinalizable”, and finally as constituting “eventness”. For the second analysis, I posed the second and final analytic question: How are surprise moments enacted in the OD workshops?

As becomes apparent, the emergence of the two analytic questions was embedded in my research interest in conversational dynamics and organizational reflection in OD, and by what appeared to me as striking when doing the fieldwork. Furthermore, my regular reflection on the fieldwork and analyses with colleagues from the research institute for organizational psychology at the University of St. Gallen, as well as my attendance of the 2018 PROS conference, shaped the approach to and focus of these two analyses. Bakhtin (1984a) stresses the potential to find “truth” by engaging in dialogue and exchange:

> It should be pointed out that the single and unified consciousness is by no means an inevitable consequence of the concept of a unified truth. It is quite possible to imagine to postulate a unified truth that requires a plurality of consciousnesses, one that cannot in principle be fitted into the bounds of a single consciousness, one that is, so to speak, by its very nature full of event potential and is born at a point of contact among various consciousnesses. (p. 81)

As Gobo and Molle (2017) describe, an iterative evolvement of the analysis is normal for ethnographic research designs. Consequently, drawing on Blumer (1991 [1969]), they suggest that analytic concepts and categories be treated as “sensitizing concepts” instead of “definitive concepts”. Accordingly, “(i)t is therefore important for the research design to be ‘cognitively open’: that is to say, configured so that ‘the unexpected is expected’” (ibid. p.79). In contrast to quantitative studies, this openness is intentional: “Sensitizing concepts help researchers to approach empirical reality by ensuring that they can always correct themselves” (ibid.). In the rest of the research process, the specification of the research topic takes the form of connecting concepts and attributes, indicators and variables: “It is not a prerogative of scientific reasoning. It is a formal property of common-sense reasoning. In other words, when social actors, researchers included, interpret behavior, they constantly connect together concepts and attributes, indicators and variables” (ibid. p.85). They suggest operationalization to ensure a consistent focus and to provide “rigor to the researcher’s interpretive activity” (ibid.). The operationalizations of the elements of the research and analytic questions (as suggested by Gobo & Molle, 2017) are indicated in the following table *(see table 4)*. In the next section, I explain the principles of a dialogical analysis (Sullivan, 2012).

Table 4: Operationalization of the research question and the two analytic questions

	Quantitative research (from: Gobo & Molle, 2017, p.90)	**Qualitative research** (from: Gobo & Molle, 2017, p.90)	**This research project**
Operational definition	"Something that must be completed before beginning the research" (ibid.)	"Activity rarely done before beginning research. More frequently it is performed during research at different times and includes a full review of the definitions, when the researcher has gained a better understanding of the phenomenon" (ibid.)	- OD as planned change, drawing on participation and focusing on the whole organization - Conversations as talk converged around a certain topic - Organizational reflection as interactional engagement in questioning the organizational assumptions - Mediation as indirect influence - Voice as a pattern of talk indicating a specific value priority in the OD process - Voice dynamics as the way voices respond to each other - Genres as distinctive workshop formats - Surprise moments as moments when something unusual happens in an OD workshop
Indicator	"Standardized conceptual device to design the understanding of a phenomenon" (ibid.)	"Situational conceptual device to better understand the relationship between evidence and the underlying pattern" (ibid.)	- Talk, behavior, material arrangements and experience in OD workshops
Variable	"Standardized operative device for measuring a phenomenon" (ibid.)	"The possibility of measurement is either rejected or limited in scope. Variables are situational operative	- Workshop agenda and conversational topics

		devices for improving the rigor of the researcher's interpretation" (ibid.)	- Who says what to whom in which order? - Hierarchy, formal and informal roles - Emotional and evaluative expressions - Noticeable para-verbal reactions and body language - My own inner/bodily reactions of tension and surprise - Materiality, such as clothes, rooms, seating arrangements, facilitation devices, minutes, etc. - Background knowledge drawn from interviews, prior meetings, documents etc.
Hypotheses	"Assertions to be tested through statistical analysis" (ibid.)	"Assertions to be verified or documented through rhetorical devices" (ibid.)	- Conversations evolve around pluralistic tensions - Reflection can be relational and implicit - Reflection mediates conversations

4.4.6 **Emergence of a dialogical analysis approach**

The turn of the research project to Bakhtinian thinking and its focus on conversations, genres, voices, and surprise moments constitute what I call, in accordance with Sullivan (2012), a dialogical analysis. Therefore, I explain the cornerstones of this approach, followed by their pragmatic implications and implementation in this research project. The psychologist Paul Sullivan (2012) outlines the cornerstones of a Bakhtin-inspired analytical approach. First, a dialogical analysis takes the self-other relationship seriously. Self and other are "anticipative of each other" (Sullivan, 2012,

p.14). The qualitative researcher brings attitudes of trust and suspicion to the analysis, and the participants do the same based on their experience. Hence, “there is more than one interpretation possible of text/data” (ibid.). A dialogical analysis is not seeking a singular, ultimate truth, but embraces ambiguity and difference. In my research project, this feature is mirrored by carving out how different voices encounter, potentially clash, and respond to each other, and by how surprise moments produce a sense of the entanglement of the self and others. In addition, the self-other relationship becomes visible in the encounter of the interpretation horizons of the OD participants, myself as a researcher, my research colleagues who assisted in interpreting the data, and the OD literature that frames both theory and practice.

Second, a dialogical analysis attunes to different truth claims. Sullivan (2012) refers to Bakhtin’s use of the Russian word “Pravda”, which is a truth that emphasizes a lived and morally accountable truth rather than an abstract scientific truth (Vasylchenko, 2014). Translated into methodology, this implies that “a focus on Pravda allows an examination of different ‘lived’ truths, with different levels of personal investment, in terms of how they shape self and other. As such, a focus on Pravda foregrounds the aesthetic dimension of discourse” (ibid.). This also includes examining the “genre” of a text, as a genre mediates authority and traditions. Bakhtin (1981) also differentiates between internally persuasive and outer truths, a distinction that requires attuning to how participants relate to different truths claims. In my research, this implication is evident in the examination of how different “truths” clash through the encounter of different voices (especially considering the mediating role of genres), and in outlining how surprise moments disturb the “truth of habit”. Moreover, this principle of a dialogical analysis becomes evident when doing a focused ethnography: by participating in OD workshops, and by noticing my own bodily responses to voices and surprises.

Third, Sullivan (2012) calls for the consideration of “otherness”. In talk, the vis-à-vis person is not only addressed, but also possible others, or mixes of different voices within a single speech act. Hence “there is an emphasis not only on the actual address and response to a real other (whether person or material) but a focus on the anticipated response of the other’s judgements and attitudes that reflexively interrupt and change the speech” (ibid. p. 16). Methodologically, this translates into being sensitive to the boundaries between the self and the other, as well as considering direct and indirect discourses as being equal. This implication finds its way into my analysis through the examination of how the different voices address each other, even if there is no direct

interaction (or no representative of a voice in the room), and by showing how surprise moments are always a relational, somehow unintended accomplishment, dependent on an unknown "otherness". Moreover, the principle of "otherness" is apparent therein that this research project also addresses an "anonymous" research community, with the effect of influencing the academic genre of this text with the intent to convince and to be taken seriously by a possible academic audience.

A fourth and additional implication that I propose is the consideration of the "unfinalizability" of dialogue. According to Bakhtin (1984a), there cannot be a "last word" in a polyphonic world. Neither can a person be finalized as there is no final self or other definition, nor will a dialogue ever "die" if pluralistic views compete. Translated into my research project, I show how the encounter of voices keeps the dialogue in the OD process "alive", and how surprise moments prevent the OD process from becoming habitually "finalized". In addition, this principle can also be seen therein that I make connections between various utterance in and moments of a series of workshops, thus patterning them and "re-arranging" the story of the workshops from an analytic and academic perspective. This could be picked up and altered by other researchers or OD practitioners.

With these general principles in mind and more pragmatically, Sullivan (2012) suggests to focus on the exploration of "key moments" or "key extracts" in the data (but emphasizes that a dialogical approach entails more than this). These moments correspond with what Bakhtin frames as "utterance" – a statement made by someone and directed at an audience. Correspondingly, as utterances can vary in length, key moments can also be of different lengths. "'Key moments' are an 'utterance' of significance. An utterance is a significant unit of meaning, different from the sentence of the line and is defined by its readiness for a reply/reaction. As a unit of meaning, it can be of variable length" (Sullivan, 2012, p.72). In addition, what defines a key moment differs from study to study. In a study involving medical students (Madill & Sullivan, 2010), an example of a content criterion for a key moment is "an anecdote around a difficult or interesting teaching or medical situation" (Sullivan, 2012, p.72). An example of a form criterion is "an anecdote relating to self or someone else who had an impact" (ibid. p.73). For the first analysis, I organized my data by focusing on the steering group workshops, and by identifying conversation topics, voices, response actions, and workshop formats ("genres"). For the second analysis, I also focused on the steering group workshops, and identified the three most surprising moments per workshop, categorizing them around conversational spheres and surprise actions. I

therefore organized the data along the key moments in which patterns of these various elements become visible. Accordingly, I explain the two analyses in more detail, starting with the first analysis.

4.4.7 Analysis I: workshops genres and voice dynamics

Regarding the "key moments" of the first analysis, and engaging in a preliminary thematic analysis (Freeman & Sullivan, 2019; Terry et al., 2017; Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015), I identified five conversation topics of the OD process: the overall OD process, the "project masterplan", the "participation formats", "dealing with the arts", and "management tools" (*see table 5*). The main question for this selection was: What are the main topics the participants would talk about in the OD workshops? As Bakhtin puts it, "(t)he topic of a speaking person has enormous importance in everyday life". The topic constitutes the "what" or the "message content" in an ethnography of communication approach (Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015). In the OD process of THEATERORG, the project masterplan, participation formats, and dealing with the arts were usually official agenda topics. Although there may be many subtopics, these are subsumed to be part of the main categories under which they thematically fall. Obviously overlaps exist. For example, the results of the implementation's participation formats gradually become part of the project masterplan. The overall OD process, being rather abstract and rarely part of the official agenda, is an indirect topic of the introduction speeches and of the later feedback rounds. Management tools is also a self-selected, rather abstract term to categorize expert inputs on project management and digitalization.

Table 5: Indicators of OD conversational topics

OD conversational topics ***Main topics of conversation in the OD workshops***	
Topic	*Expressed through …*
Overall OD process	Talk about the overall OD process
Project masterplan	Talk about the many OD measures and their project management
Participation formats	Talk about enabling a greater part of the central department to engage in the OD process
Dealing with the arts	Talk about how to deal with the high and stressful demands of the arts

Management tools	Talk about external expertise input on project management or digitalization
Informal conversations	Talk during breaks and shortly before and after workshops

In addition to identifying regular conversation topics, I explored the various voices involved in the OD process (the "participants" in an ethnography of communication [Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015], but extending this term in a Bakhtinian sense). Inspired by the prior rhythm analysis of distinguishing different social forces in the OD process, and following Bakhtin's (1984a, 1993) idea of voices as emotional-volitional and ideological, enacted by an individual but representing a social group, I eventually identified seven voices. I mainly focused on a differentiation along values and organizational groups. Bakhtin (1981, p. 276) emphasizes that our utterances are not neutral but driven by interests and thus evaluative: "any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value". Furthermore, individual utterances usually express the values of a social group: "True, even in the novel heteroglossia is by and large always personified, incarnated in individual human figures, with the disagreements and oppositions individualized. But such oppositions of individual wills and minds are submerged in social heteroglossia" (ibid. p. 326). When we speak, we draw on different voices stemming from different social influences to make a point – we are "ventriloquists" who enact a multitude of voices that serve our interests (Cooren & Sandler, 2014). Hence, voices always have a sociological component: "It could be said that Dostoevsky offers, in artistic form, something like a sociology of consciousnesses" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 32). By assessing the primary value a statement expresses (e.g. efficiency or participation), and by taking into account which organizational group (usually) makes the statement (e.g. administrative director or stage director), I allocated it to one of seven voices (*see table 6*): a managerial voice, a stage voice, a democratization voice, a public voice, an artistic voice, an employee's voice, and an everyday people's voice. Sometimes the identification of a voice was easy and, obviously, sometimes it was ambivalent, and sometimes a speech act was too short and unrevealing to allocate it to a particular voice. However, following several iterative rounds and exchanges with research colleagues, I concluded that the seven identified voices comprehensively represent the data material. They could be enacted in three different ways: either as a direct enactment, or indirectly by addressing a voice, or by speaking about a voice. When directly enacted, a statement is formulated as coming directly from the speaker. For example, a managerial voice valuing professionalism, effectiveness, and efficiency would be directly enacted in the following

statement: “We should take project management seriously and stick to deadlines”. Furthermore, it could indirectly enact a stage voice prioritizing the daily stage operations by addressing this stage voice indirectly: “I know we have three premieres coming, but our internal deadlines are just as important”. An indirect enactment could also be talking through or on behalf of a voice not represented in the workshop, for example by talking about a public voice prioritizing a beneficial output of public funding: “The public will notice an artistic performance better than our internal OD process, but in the long term we are also doing this for the excellency of the arts”. This example also demonstrates my identification of a “conflict” of voices whenever the values and representatives of voices are diverging. Sometimes, such a conflict can be very explicit and emotional; sometimes, it can be rather indirect and must be deduced from the relationship between voices on certain matters over time.

Table 6: Indicators of voices in OD workshops

Voices in OD workshops ***Statements expressing certain values in association with certain organizational groups***		
Voice	*Expressed through statements valuing …*	*Expressed mainly by … (“representatives”)*
Managerial	Professionalism, effectivity, and efficiency	Manager, administrative staff, and facilitators
Stage	Daily stage business and theater as a special, improvisational, and non-ordinary workplace	Stage directors
Public	Legality and sound investments of public money	Laws, ministries, audiences, and the press
Democratization	Democracy and participation	Facilitators
Employees	Work satisfaction	Employees
Artistic	Artistic freedom and excellence	Artists
Everyday people	Equality beside professional roles; personal and good relations, entertainment	Everyone in a workshop

For each of the five conversation topics, I explored the relationship of voices over time (the relational aspect of “participants” in an ethnography of communication; Kalou and Sadler-Smith, 2015). This required going through my reworked fieldnotes/transcripts for each workshop and considering those workshop episodes during which each of these topics was the conversational theme. Therefore, the workshop episodes are distinctive parts of the workshop procedure, such as the introduction, discussion on topic X or Y, breaks, etc. Usually, these parts align with the official agenda. This

allowed a comparison of the encountering of the different voices per topic over time, and a comparison of these different developments. An insight was that the topics produced very different voice encounters, for example with a high level of conflict for the topic of participation formats, and almost no conflict for the management tools topic. In addition, different voices occupying varying roles would be involved under each topic, for example being dominant or opposing.

In exploring the variety of relationality per topic, I noticed that the workshop format seemed to influence the relationship of voices even stronger than the broader workshop topic. Whereas in certain workshop formats there were frequent clashing, for example in discussions and votes, in other formats a peaceful mingling or juxtaposition of voices was evident, for example in workshop introductions or in expert inputs. These formats are referred to as "genres", as this term fits the Bakhtinian terminology and is well established in discursive approaches to psychology. Hence, "(t)o a perhaps greater extent than other approaches, dialogue brings an intense focus to the transformative effect of genres on experience" (Sullivan, 2012, p.15). The term "genre" stems from literature theory and includes a diversity of formats such as "poem, myth, tale, proverb, riddle, curse, lecture, commercial, etc.'' (Hymes, 1974, p. 61). Identifying genres is an important step in an ethnography of communication approach to make sense of the observations (Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015). For Bakhtin (1986), (speech) genres are relatively stable patterns of communication. I identified twelve relatively stable and frequently recurring workshop patterns at TheaterOrg (*see table 7*): prologues, presentations, examinations, reports, brainstorming, debates, votes, lectures, celebrations, breaks, feedbacks, and epilogue. These workshop genres were usually easily identifiable through the official and ritualistic workshop procedure. The workshops were thus structured along recognizable episodes: introduction ("prologue"), presentation, exploration of a topic in small groups ("examination"), discussion ("debate"), etc.

Table 7: Indicators of genres in OD workshops

Genres in OD workshops ***Distinctive workshop formats***	
Genre	*Expressed through …*
Prologue	Introductory talks by the manager and facilitator at the beginning of a workshop and sometimes before a new workshop episode
Presentation	Giving an overview of ideas, usually with the help of visualization (PowerPoint, flipchart)

Examination	Searching for facts and figures to solve a problem/task
Report	Giving updates on progress and the status quo in a matter-of-fact way
Brainstorming	Collecting ideas on an issue in a light-hearted manner
Debate	Discussing an issue in a contested way
Vote	Voting on a decision, looking for consensus
Lecture	Receiving external expert input on an issue with learning questions and exercises
Celebration	Celebratory toast, clinging of glasses filled with non-alcoholic sparkling wine
Break	Going to the toilet, buffet, engaging in business or private bilateral or small group conversations, standing alone
Feedback	Everyone makes a short statement about their opinion on the workshop
Epilogue	Short, final statement made by the facilitator, usually of an encouraging and humorous nature, marking the end of the workshop

Having enlisted and compared each distinguishable genre, I concluded that some genres provided a greater possibility for voice clashing and palpable tension than others. Further examination led me to the deliberation that the "opposability" (whether voices would conflict or not) of a genre depended on the possibility to openly reply and on the immediacy ("pragmatic and emotional relevance") of the issue (*see table 8*). I abductively came to these two criteria when analyzing the data and asking myself what certain genres have in common, which is that they are associated with different degrees of conflict and tension. The "possibility to reply" was apparent: there were genres in which there was mainly a monologue, and hence little opposition visible – e.g. in a presentation. However, there were also genres in which there was a lively exchange, but no real conflict or opposition – e.g. in lectures on project management. Further exploration led me to the assumption that the latter included cases in which the topic was too abstract, hypothetical and without immediate consequences for the participants, for any serious conflict to emerge. I call this criterion the "immediacy of the issue".

Table 8: Indicators of the opposability of genre

Opposability of genre ***Likelihood of a genre evoking voice clashing***	
Opposability feature	*Expressed through …*
Immediacy of issue	Issue treated through genre has high or low immediate consequences/relevance for participants
Possibility to reply	Exchange of opinions is influenced by the opportunity to say something (e.g. one-way communication vs. discussion) and by the focus (e.g. enumerating facts vs. exchanging opinions)

Furthermore, being interested in how the conversational encounter of voices was accomplished at the speakers' interactional level, I labeled these speech acts as "response actions" and coded different workshop episodes based on how these speech acts responded to prior acts and to the topic at hand (the "act sequence" in an ethnography of communication; Kalou and Sadler-Smith, 2015). Overall, I identified nine response actions *(see table 9)*: coordinating, deliberating, problematizing, re-problematizing, un-problematizing, making fun, solving, ignoring, and stepping out. Coordinating refers to the coordination (facilitation) of the workshop parts and speaker's turns, for example supporting communication by asking questions to promote understanding. Deliberating usually concerns pragmatic questions, for example how best to implement a certain measure. Problematizing, re-problematizing, un-problematizing, making fun, solving, and ignoring are response modes that are usually involved in a "battle" over problematizations. Is something a serious problem or not? Is it solvable or not? Problematizing refers to the framing of an issue as a bigger problem, whereas re-problematizing reinforces this in subsequent speech acts. Un-problematizing refers to the framing of an issue as a lesser problem and solving is the attempt to actively resolve a bigger problem. Making fun concerns the belittling of a standpoint through humor, and ignoring concerns not replying to a standpoint. Stepping out is a response action that switches from an official OD voice to an everyday people's voice, for example by making a (non-offensive) joke or by talking about personal issues. In all, the response actions resemble what others have labeled "discursive strategies" (Kwon, Clarke & Wodak, 2014) (in dealing with a workshop topic and related verbal statements, as in this case) which are part of the "discursive practice" (Gherardi, 2008) of a workshop conversation.

Table 9: Indicators of response actions

Response actions ***Speech acts toward a topic and/or previous speech acts***	
Response action	*Expressed through …*
Coordinating	Facilitating workshop procedure and communication
Deliberating	Expressing pragmatic reflections on an issue
Problematizing	Framing an issue as problematic
Re-problematizing	Repeating the framing of an issue as problematic
Un-problematizing	Framing an issue as not so problematic
Making fun	Ridiculing a position
Solving	Making suggestions to solve a problem
Ignoring	Not replying to a statement
Stepping out	Making jokes, engaging in personal talk

Finally, I analyzed the effects of genres on the voice dynamics. I considered genres with both a high and low immediacy and an open and restricted possibility to reply, and accordingly identified four effects of how voices relate to each other (*see table 10*): dulling, softening, bridling, and teasing.

Table 10: Indicators of voice dynamics

Voice dynamics ***The way voices relate to each other***	
Dynamic	*Expressed through…*
Dulling	A rather monotonous predomination of a voice
Softening	A rather peaceful interaction of voices
Bridling	A rather tense predomination of a voice
Teasing	A rather tense interaction of voices

In addition, I framed these effects as either mirroring a strong centripetal force – through expressions of open consensus or a lack of visible dissensus, or as mirroring a strong centrifugal force – through expressions of open dissensus *(see table 11)*.

Table 11: Indicators of centripetal and centrifugal forces

Centripetal and centrifugal forces ***The tendency of social interaction toward unity/consensus or diversity/dissensus***	
Force	*Expressed through…*
Centripetal	Consensus dominant
Centrifugal	Dissensus dominant

The following figure (*figure 4*) illustrates the five central elements of the first analysis: conversational topic, workshop genre, voices, response actions, and voice dynamics.

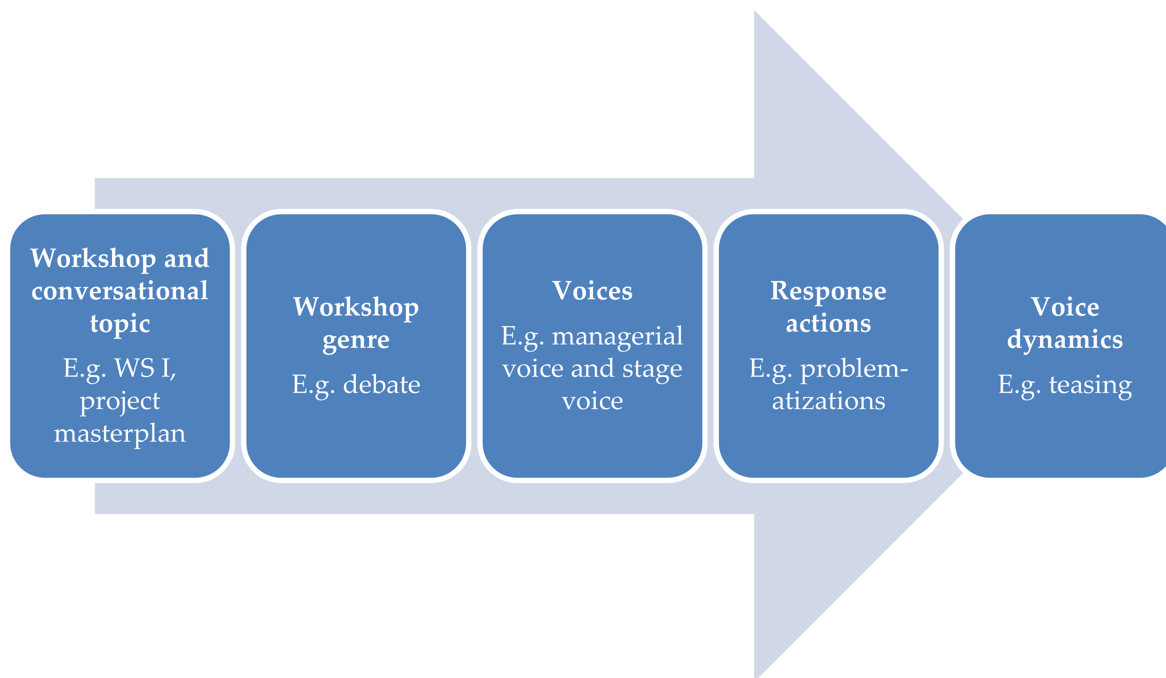

Figure 4: The five core elements of the first analysis

4.4.8 Analysis II: threshold moments and "eventness"

For the second analysis, I focused on the question of how "surprise moments" are enacted in the OD process. When engaging in the workshops and re-engaging with them in writing up the fieldnotes and first coding rounds, I noticed how certain moments evoked surprise in me. These moments constitute the "key moments" sensu Sullivan (2012) for the second analysis. Taking personal feelings and bodily reactions in field work seriously has a long tradition in ethnographic approaches (Gobo, 2017). Emotions can be understood as intuitive appraisals and therefore as having informational character (Boncori, 2018; Hordge-Freeman, 2018). Not only do I interpret these reactions as personal surprises, but as developing a sense of what is "normal" and "expected" in the ethnographic case – what are the implicit rules when conducting OD workshops at THEATERORG – and what is not? As Bakhtin (1986) points out, "personalization is never subjectivization" (p. 167) – from a dialogic viewpoint, personal experiences still happen within cultural frames. Attuning to communicative norms is an essential part of an ethnography of communication (Kalou & Sadler-Smith, 2015). I interpret surprises as indicators of organizational norms, as they play with expectations: surprises are events that happen unexpectedly, or that take an unexpected turn (Cunha, Clegg & Kamoche, 2006). Often, I found that these occasions do not seem to significantly influence the development of the OD process. Rather, they

have a momentary nature and seem to be the exception to the rule. Although aware that the experience of these moments may only be my personal impressions, it is plausible that other workshop participants could have experienced them as well. If not the same moments, it is also plausible to assume that they sometimes experience *these kinds of moments*: “Once-occurrent uniqueness or singularity cannot be thought of, it can only be participatively experienced or lived through” (Bakhtin, 1993, p.13). In a sense, my surprise experiences are describable as “affective witnessing”. As observers, we are constantly drawn to what we observe cognitively, but also bodily:

> Witnessing an event is an intensity of experience that is not only linked to proximity but insists on the relationality of the witness and the witnessed. To bear witness means not only giving an account of this experience and making the incident accessible to others, but also entails affecting and being affected (…). (Richardson & Schankweiler, 2019, p. 166)

Conceptualizing ethnographic observations as “affective witnessing” and focusing on unique moments does justice to Bakhtin’s idea of dialogue as alive and enacted moment by moment, as “eventness”, and as a process that is relational without the possibility of observing “outside” of dialogue:

> Indeed, any concrete discourse (utterance) finds the object at which it was directed already as it were overlain with qualifications, open to dispute, charged with value, already enveloped in an obscuring mist – or on the contrary, by the light of alien words that have already been spoken about it. It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgements and accents (…). The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance (…). (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276)

Consciously attuning to one’s bodily reaction during empirical fieldwork can be framed by what Helin (2013) calls “dialogic listening”. Often, listening is framed as something passive and attention is given primarily to the speaker. However, from a Bakhtinian viewpoint, listening becomes relational, active, polyphonic, and embodied. This perspective acknowledges the co-creating process of research and advocates a sensitivity to different voices in the field and in the researcher. It prevents getting carried away too easily by a “monologic way of listening” (Helin, 2013, p.228) and by one-sided perceptions of the field. In addition, it assists in taking seriously the “multi-sensory way of being in the field” (Heling, 2013, p.229), and in being responsive to what happens around oneself as a researcher in the field.

To translate this affective witnessing into my second analysis, I scanned each steering group workshop for these surprise moments and selected the three strongest of them per workshop. By limiting myself to three, I ensured that they were selected primarily based on bodily reactions and not by “overthinking” them. By choosing the three

strongest moments, a certain "clarity" of the intensity of the moment was ensured. As affect is a bodily experience of intensity (Slaby & Mülhoff, 2019), I wanted to stay as "close" to my bodily reactions as possible by focusing on the strongest surprise moments. Interpreting these moments as "surprise" is then understood as transforming them into an emotion of surprise; emotions being defined "as realizations and conceptualizations of affect" (Von Scheve & Slaby, 2019). In all, I identified 34 unique moments. For the second workshop I only selected two surprise moments, as this was a rather short workshop with fewer participants. For the 2018 PROS conference, I represented these moments as short vignettes. Vignettes are "snapshots or short descriptions of events or people that evoke the overall picture the ethnographer is trying to paint" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2013, p.269). By engaging with Bakhtin's work, I refer to these moments "threshold moments" as they can be said to extend what he (1981) understands as the threshold chronotope in literature: phases during which the fate of a hero is highly uncertain (in a crisis) and multiple outcomes are possible. Hence, I consider them to be suspenseful moments that express the high contingency of the situation.

As a next step, I explored how these surprise moments are interactionally created, and I identified four conversational spheres in which they occur. They either unsettle formal structures, informal structures, the framing of a process, or emotionality (*see table 12*). I came to these four categories abductively; resembling the procedure of a thematic analysis (Freeman & Sullivan, 2019; Terry et al., 2017; Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015). These categories proved to be sufficiently saturated, as I did not find any moments that I was unable to categorize. However, I did find some moments easier to allocate to a single enactment pattern than others. Sometimes, the categorization was evident and intuitive, whereas at times I could argue that an instance would fit into more than one category. However, I decided to only allocate a moment to a single category and, after some iterative rounds, was able to find the most fitting category for each instance.

Table 12: Indicators of threshold moments in conversational spheres

Threshold moments ***Temporarily, surprising moments of the workshop development***	
Conversational sphere	*Expressed through …*
Unsettling a formal structure	Surprise due to an unexpected change in the formal procedure
Unsettling an informal structure	Surprise due to an unexpected change in the informal procedure
Unsettling the framing of a process	Surprise due to an unexpected framing of an issue
Unsettling the emotionality	Surprise due to an unexpected emotion

Afterwards, I specified my exploration of these four spheres by asking myself how the surprise was enacted within each of them. For each of the four categories I identified three "surprise actions", thus coming up with twelve different surprise actions in total (*see table 13*). Allocating the 34 moments to one of these categories was a relatively smooth process although, of course, some surprise actions took longer to think about and categorize than others. In all, the surprise actions resemble "moves", "activities" and "doings" which constitute (and alter) the process of "practicing" (Nicolini, 2013).

Table 13: Indicators of surprise actions

Surprise actions ***Actions triggering the surprise moments***	
Conversational sphere	*Expressed through …*
Unsettling the formal structure	
Changing the OD setup	Changes in the bigger OD setup (task groups, hierarchical decisions, facilitators)
Changing the agenda ritual	Changes in the agenda procedure (agenda presentation, agenda following)
Changing the discussion ritual	Changes in the discussion procedure (answering questions, time management, turn taking, seating arrangement)
Unsettling an informal structure	
Confronting	Changes in confrontationality (use of sarcasm, feedback, private information)
Dismissing loyalty	Changes in loyalty (use of teasing, critique, task information, public frustration)

Changing informal roles	Changes in established roles (neutrality, silence, cooperation, opposition, skepticism)
Unsettling the framing of a process	
Changing the perception of an object	Changes in the handling of an object (range of propositions, urgency of implementation, progress)
Changing the perception of oneself	Changes in a group's self-image (equality, prestige, competence)
Changing the perception of others	Changes in the image of outsiders (knowledge, legitimacy)
Unsettling the emotionality	
Opposing emotions	Changes in emotional alliances (anger, humor)
Contrasting emotions	Changes in emotional description (appreciation of conflict, joking about conflict)
Switching emotional positions	Changes in emotional behavior (temper, sympathy)

As a next step, by focusing on their dialogic enactment, I explored the "eventness" momentum these surprise actions created. Their momentum-building effect can be described as "collectivizing attention", "countering the habitual", "relational responding", (often) "opening for negotiation/conflict", and "conveying a sense of contingency" (*see table 14*).

"Eventness" momentum-building effect ***Momentum enactment following surprise actions***	
Effect Feature	*Expressed through …*
Collectivizing attention	The happening taking place "center stage", most participants looking and "witnessing", my "automatic" attunement to the scene
Countering the habitual	My feeling of surprise, deviation from the usual workshop procedure/behavior
Relational responding	Multiple participants engaging and interacting in the development of the scene
(Often) opening for negotiation/conflict	Participants entangled in negotiations or conflicts in the scene
Conveying a sense of contingency	My inner reaction of "Look, this is also possible! Never expected that!", participants commenting on the "alternativity" of the happening

The following figure (*figure 5*) depicts the four core elements of the second analysis: the three most surprising moments per workshops, and their conversational sphere and triggering surprise action.

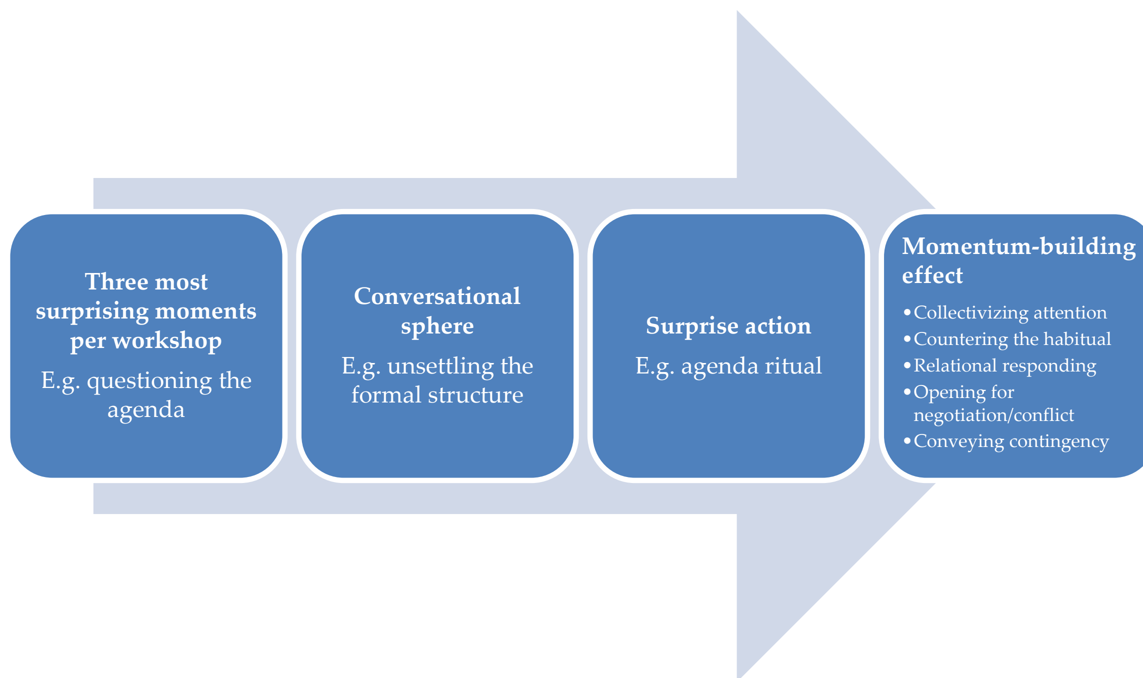

Figure 5: The four core elements of the second analysis

4.6 Presentation of the findings

For the presentation of the findings, I chose formats that do justice to the livingness of conversations. For the first analysis on genres and voice dynamics, the empirical material is presented in the form of a dialogue between workshop participants. With this form, I intend to show how different voices encounter in different workshop episodes (genres). For the second analysis, the empirical material is presented in the form of vignettes. As the understanding of surprise needs context, such "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1972) are chosen to intensify the grasping of the development and "eventness" of surprise moments. These two presentation modes correspond with Sullivan's (2012) suggestion to combine "bureaucratic" and "charismatic" approaches in a dialogical analysis. A bureaucratic approach requires the strict observance of rules, while a charismatic approach evokes creative deliberations in the analysis. For example, a bureaucratic approach consists of identifying patterns in the empirical data:

> One can identify: (1) the genre and the type of discourse; (2) the affect or the emotion; (3) the time-space that is being used (more technically – "the chronotope"); and (4) the context of where it is happening or what is being said. (Sullivan, 2012, p. 75)

A bureaucratic approach assists in creating a systematic analysis. In my analyses, I enacted this systematic procedure, first, by categorizing genres, voices, response actions and effects on voice dynamics and, second, by choosing the three strongest

surprise moments per workshop and by categorizing their enactment patterns. From my first analysis, I present a workshop dialogue for each of the four voice dynamics and, from my second analysis, I present one vignette per surprise action. Furthermore, I enlist and briefly explain the other identified surprise moments. As all these moments create a similar effect, I organize the presentation around the conversational spheres and surprise actions, which represents a greater variance.

In addition to approaching the data "bureaucratically", Sullivan (2012) suggests to approach them "charismatically". Especially when writing up the analysis, a charismatic approach assists in conveying some of the "liveliness" of the empirics and the analysis:

> In a dialogical approach, the strengths of both bureaucracy and charisma should intertwine. Bureaucratic procedures and the charismatic engagement with the data may wax and wane as the analysis proceeds. This is particularly so in the write-up. In the write-up, perhaps a vivid image may be useful here, a theoretical reflection there, a pointed comment somewhere else. The point, here, is that writing an analysis involves taking ownership of it through one's own style. In this way, the authority of the interpretation depends on more than just the capacity of the analyst to rigorously follow procedures. Rigor is important but it is not the only quality that is necessary in a qualitative analysis. Authority also lies in the charismatic capacity of the individual to actualize procedures. (Sullivan, 2012, p. 78)

I apply this charismatic style by presenting the empirical data as dialogue and vignettes. Both formats are intended to represent the liveliness of the conversations as I experienced them when being in the field. In ethnographic approaches, an evocative writing style is often advocated to "take the reader into the field" (Abdallah, 2018). By presenting the dialogues and vignettes in a "neutral observation style", I engage in what Van Maanen (2011) calls an ethnographic "realist tale". The ordering of the dialogues and vignettes along Bakhtinian-inspired categories can also be interpreted as having characteristics of what Van Maanen (2011) frames a "formal tale". Bringing in my own surprises in the vignettes has elements of a "confessional tale" (ibid.), as well. A dominantly realist approach aligns with Bakhtin's (1984a) assessment of Dostoevsky's work: "Dostoevsky it no psychologist. But at the same time Dostoevsky is objective, and has every right to call himself a realist" (p. 278).

The presented dialogues stem from my fieldnotes and audio recordings but are frequently shortened for readability. In these cases, I shortened individual statements or left statements out if they were redundant. In addition, sentences were edited to enhance readability, also considering that a spoken language differs from a written language. The wording and statements were kept as close as possible to my original transcripts. The same applies to the vignettes. In addition, the vignettes zoom into certain developments that the reader may need to know in order to understand the surprise, and they can shorten other developments for more clarity.

As a demonstration of rewriting a text charismatically, Sullivan (2012) refers to Bakhtin who uses the example of a character's (inner) monologue being rewritten as if it were a dialogue with "some other person":

> THE OTHER: One must know how to earn a lot of money. One shouldn't be a burden to anyone. But you are a burden to others.
>
> MAKAR DEVUSHKIN: I'm not a burden to anyone. I've got my own piece of bread.
>
> THE OTHER: But what a piece of bread it is! Today it's there, and tomorrow it's gone. And it's probably a dry one, at that!
>
> MAKAR DEVUSHKIN: It is true it is a plain crust of bread, at times a dry one, but there it is, earned by my toil and put to lawful and irreproachable use. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 210)

With this example, Bakhtin (1984a) shows that even inner monologues can be read as dialogues with "the other". For the first analysis, such a strong transformation was not necessary, as the interactional turn taking in a workshop already resembles the form of a dialogic script. However, the changes made for improved readability and the reduction of redundancies for better clarity can also be understood as a transformation to carve out the dialogicality of the scene. For the second analysis, such a transformation is evident when narrating the scene in a way that makes the surprising element understandable, so that it allows "affective co-witnessing" (Richardson & Schankweiler, 2019) and bring across the "eventness" of the observed scene (Bakhtin, 1984a, 1993). As Bakhtin (1984a) puts it in relation to his analysis of the polyphonic novel: "we must show the Dostoevsky in Dostoevsky" (p. 44, 177).

Apart from the bureaucratic and charismatic perspectives, an ethical perspective (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2017) is also necessary to present the empirical findings. A main concern was the anonymity of the participants. I implemented the anonymization by giving the participants "colors" (e.g. "STAGE DIRECTOR YELLOW") and by changing their gender. To further enhance anonymity, I changed the colors for each empirical illustration. In addition, I refrained from presenting statements that may reveal too much personal information or that could be interpreted unfavorably.

The translation of the dialogues into English, which is not my native language, was another element of anonymization. I shared the same native language with the participants in TheaterOrg's OD process. This assisted my ethnographic sense-making of the observations and interviews (Janssens and Steyaert, 2014). However, technical terms specific to the theater context were used at times, and I first had to familiarize myself with them. I did this either by asking the participants or consulting friends with a theater background, or by researching the terms and procedures through literature

and internet sources. I recorded the fieldnotes in the original language and translated them into English during the analytical process, not only to make them more accessible to the international research community, but also to increase the participants' anonymity. Whereas the advantage of this "alienation" is increased anonymity and the careful consideration of each word during the translation process, it is also problematic because some of the local meanings and connotations are inevitably lost in translation (Steyaert and Janssens, 2012). Furthermore, translation into a non-native language comes with the risk of incorrectly translating the dialogue and the technical terms (Krzywdzinski, 2017). I tried to minimize both disadvantages by regularly engaging in collegial discussions on translated data, including discussions on terms and phrases. In addition, an English language editor corrected the final presentation of the data, at times triggering further questions on the meaning of certain translations.

4.7 Quality considerations

Quality criteria in qualitative psychology have been addressed in terms such as reflexivity, transparency, and trustworthiness when acknowledging and assessing the subjective nature of qualitative research (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2019; O'Reilly & Kiymba, 2015; Yardley, 2015). I drew upon these criteria to understand and reflect on my analytical process, and to depict it as comprehensibly and transparently as possible. Furthermore, Williams and Morrow (2009) and Willig (2017) suggest achieving trustworthiness by paying attention to the integrity of the data, to the balance of reflexivity and subjectivity, and to the clear communication and application of findings. Concerning the integrity of my data, I conducted 15 preliminary and 20 supplementary interviews and observed and took fieldnotes of 35 OD events; I analyzed 12 steering group workshops systematically and in depth. Furthermore, by focusing on talk in workshops as highly communicative and interactional sites and analyzing them from a dialogic perspective, I aligned the data and analysis method. Concerning the balance between reflexivity (my interpretation) and subjectivity (participants' voices), I continuously and openly aligned my research interest in OD workshop dynamics and organizational reflection, the appearances in the field (e.g. conflicts, surprises), the theoretical framework (e.g. from practice to Bakhtinian theory), and my sense-making of the data – in close and regular critical exchange with ca. six research colleagues at the institute for organizational psychology at the University of St. Gallen to enhance the rigor of this research project. Concerning the clear

communication and application of my findings, I indicate the practical implications of this research project, in the last chapter (*chapter 8*) in particular, with the intention to make the results of this thesis publicly available and to provide feedback to the research participants. In addition to these more general quality criteria, project-specific criteria are often recommended for qualitative research due to the unique setup of qualitative research projects (Döring & Bortz, 2016). Hence, I turn to Sullivan's considerations of quality in a dialogical analysis.

Sullivan (2012) reflects on the causality attributions the researcher brings to research, considering that "(t)he different ways in which causes and effects are theorized have implications for the confidence researchers can have in their findings" (Sullivan, 2012, p.145). Drawing on Harré and Madden (1975), as well as on Slife and Williams (1995), he proposes the consideration of Aristotle's conceptualization of four different types of causality: "Aristotelian 'causality' refers to a broad understanding of 'cause', to mean the sets of relationships between events in different organizational arrangements of time and space" (Sullivan, 2012, p.145). The four Aristotelian types of causality are efficient causality, formal causality, final causality, and material causality. In efficient causality, cause precedes effect, and both are close in space. This contingency assumption forms the basis of a large portion of quantitative psychology. In formal causality, there is a simultaneous relationship of events ("being sociable and being in the pub may go together and the more one is in the pub, the more sociable one may become", ibid.). Structural models of identity, as in Freudianism, assume this simultaneity. In final causality, future events provoke events in the present ("getting paid as a future event 'causes' events in the present such as being at work", ibid.). For example, this teleological assumption is evident in, among others, Piagetian developmental models. Lastly, in material causality the properties of materials generate events ("a wood sculpture is partially 'caused' by the properties of wood", ibid.). Biological models tend toward material causality, for example research on grey matter. Research trajectories often simultaneously apply multiple causality assumptions. What complicates matters even more is the possibility of humans interacting with causal explanations.

For a dialogical approach, Sullivan (2012) suggests "polyphony" and "identifying features" as quality criteria. Polyphony is a formal causality as a polyphonic interpretation will contribute to the relative understanding of the data:

> From a dialogical point of view, a good intertextual product (analysis) strives to be "polyphonic". What this means is that distinct voices are put into contact with each other by the interpreting, authorial voice. Similar to contextual types of inquiry, there is a formal or

> reciprocal relationship between the quotations and the interpretation, the authorial voice and the reader, as they enter into dialogue with each other. The quoted text and the authorial voice are seen to simultaneously give meaning to each other in a type of "formal" causality. This is the first major type of space and time that forms the background to any evaluation. (Sullivan, 2012, p.151)

In this contextualist approach, the final analysis, the original data and quotations, and the reader form a simultaneous relationship which "(…) leads to ongoing, changing interpretations but is welcomed within the approach as having the potential to offer rich analytic descriptions of phenomena that change with the context" (Sullivan, 2012, p.247). To evaluate polyphony, Sullivan (2012) refers to the approaches of "checking" (Kvale, 1995) and "different analytic styles" (Madill et al., 2000). Checking refers to the ability to check tables and interpretations against data and key moments. In the case of polyphony, the criterion is "the level of interaction with participant voices" (Sullivan, 2012, p.152).

In addition, "different analytic styles" lead to complementary interpretations because "someone else may also arrive with different 'key moments' (…) that can complement as well as create a space to 'test' the first interpretation – through seeing the overlaps and working out the differences between different interpretations" (Sullivan, 2012, p.152). Throughout the development of this research project, I exchanged ideas with my colleagues at the research institute for organizational psychology at the university of St. Gallen. This led to the regular testing and enrichment of interpretations. Furthermore, I provide several empirical illustrations of the analysis on the basis of which a likely reader can "check" the findings.

Apart from polyphony, the other dialogic quality criterion Sullivan (2012) proposes is "identifying features". This criterium relates to the mirroring of dialogic features in the data and to "how well the interpretation is tethered to the material of the discourse" (ibid. p. 151). This is seen as material causality:

> "Discourse analysis" means analysis of the stuff of discourse. This is out of the theorized material properties of discourse in general (e.g., that it constructs a reality; that it expresses power relations; that it contains voices) that any particular interpretation is based (e.g., the identification of "extreme case formulation", "turn-taking", "institutional discourses", "dialogue"). (Sullivan, 2012, pp. 147/148)

In a dialogical analysis, the material properties of dialogue "cause" the textual interpretation:

> In this case, such material includes direct and indirect speech, ellipses, speech genres, intonation and the chronotope. From this material, the resultant interpretation draws attention to aspects of subjectivity such as transformative experience, doubt, uncertainty, distance and closeness to others, and wrestling with the other. The identification of what I consider to be general discursive features tied to subjectivity leads to the possibility of a

> "bureaucratic" approach, "key moments" and "summary tables." (Sullivan, 2012, pp. 151/152)

As outlined above, I interpreted the genres, voices, response actions, voice dynamics, surprise moments and surprise actions by keeping as closely as possible to the data material. I interpreted these features based on the texts of the workshop transcripts, among others on the content of statements, the roles of the speakers, the expressive tone of a sentence, the frequency of a pattern, and my own strongest feelings of surprise.

In addition to reflecting on causality, polyphony, and identifying features, Sullivan (2012) proposes the use of four questions to evaluate a dialogical analysis. These are:

1. How well has the researcher(s) established the research question?
2. What space is given to participant voices in the text?
3. How well does the analysis draw attention to the discursive organization of subjectivity?
4. How well does the author use syncrisis and anacrisis? (ibid. pp.153 ff.)

Regarding the establishment of the research question, it must be borne in mind that it legitimates the research, enables authorship, opens space for people's experiences, and assists in identifying "key moments" (ibid. pp.153/154). By formulating a research question that addresses the evolvement of conversations and the role of reflection in OD, I contribute to a current albeit prominent debate in the literature. By focusing on conversations, I provide space for a plurality of voices to become audible in the OD process: voices to be noticed and to become part of the research project. My focus also identifies and distinguishes between conversational "key moments" (workshop episodes, clashing, etc.).

The question of space for participant voices is inspired by Bakhtin's idea that in the modern novel, the "hero" differs from the author. In a dialogical analysis, this principle is achieved through intertextuality:

> Overall, in the evaluation of the intertextuality of the analysis, it is important to move continually between the interpretation and the quotation to check to see if there is continuity between them and a justifiable coherence in terms of the overall analytic framework. This is the main linchpin in terms of quality control. Sound bites and summary tables are particularly vulnerable to being taken out of context and manipulated by the author. So is the quotation, but at least it allows an evaluator to explicitly "defend" the quoted voice from this manipulation or to constructively suggest a helpful addition/deletion. The quotation also allows the evaluator to check the summary tables and sound bites against their own reading of the participants' lived experience. (Sullivan, 2012, p. 157)

Despite the need to keep the analysis readable and not to overload it with quotations, as much as possible is shown of the original data. This is done by using illustrations that are representative of other instances that are somehow “typical”, and by selecting illustrations that, when aggregated, provide a broader view of the OD process independent of my analytic questions. In addition, I not only provide summaries in tables, but also illustrate my findings with dialogue examples and vignettes.

The question of how well the analysis draws attention to the discursive organization of subjectivity “refers much more to the material relationship between features of the discourse in general (such as chronotope, genre, direct and indirect speech) and the interpretation around changing subjectivity that it gives rise to” (Sullivan, 2012, p.157). The systematic approach to interpret the data was discussed above.

Syncrisis and anacrisis are Bakhtinian terms to describe the peculiarity of Socratic dialogues: “‘Anacrisis’ is a process of getting others to express their point of view on a subject in terms of how it connects to their lived experience. ‘Syncrisis’ is a process of juxtaposing different points of view together” (Sullivan, 2012, p.159). Socrates supposedly mastered both processes. In a dialogic analysis approach these two processes should converge to create dialogue: “The entire dialogical project involves interpreting the assumptions, beliefs and viewpoints of the participants by means of reflecting on the data (bringing out their point of view through anacrisis) and juxtaposing different quotations against each other (syncrisis)” (ibid.). The question of syncrisis and anacrisis relates to a research question that focuses on dialogue, to an empirical setting where a plurality of viewpoints is visible, and to addressivity and relationality:

> It is difficult to evaluate the created dialogue. The dialogue needs to appear coherent and yet use the actual words of the participants. The goal is to foreground the addressivity of different participants to each other. It involves a constant evaluation in terms of coherence. The key test to evaluate this is the question: Does it sound as if the participants are replying to each other? Fillers are inserted to help this coherence.
>
> In terms of content, it is important to establish relations of agreement and disagreement with each other. This is important in terms of achieving syncrisis or juxtaposing different viewpoints against each other. It is also important in terms of achieving anacrisis or the expression of (or search of) a viewpoint against the anticipated judgements of others. In the created dialogue, this involves bringing indirect engagement with others through qualifications, jokes and allusions to a very direct, head-to-head dialogue. This will inevitably involve a lot of redrafting. (Sullivan, 2012, p. 160)

In the first analysis of this research project, I focus on the voice dynamics and, in the second analysis, on surprising moments. Attuning to the pluralistic and conflicting features of the empirical setting is therefore integral to the analysis. Moreover, I use

illustrations which emphasize this diversity and prepare them in a way that shows the "dialogicality" of the respective situations (e.g. shortening redundancies). I also describe the dialogic features of the respective illustrations.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter I outlined my methodological decisions and made this process as explicit and transparent as possible. I started by sketching the evolvement of the research question, and by explaining the ethnographic approach of my data collection. Thereafter, I described the dialogical analysis I chose to interpret the data, including the exploration of the genres and voice dynamics and the emergence of surprise moments. In addition, I explained the presentation formats of the findings. Finally, I reflected on the quality of the analytical process. My findings are presented and discussed in subsequent chapters. Before doing this, in the next chapter, I present the research case ("THEATERORG") and its background to familiarize the reader with the context of the analyses and to facilitate an understanding of their results.

5. The Empirical Setting: A Public Theater's OD Process

> *To study the word as such, ignoring the impulse that reaches out beyond it, is just as senseless as to study psychological experience outside the context of that real life toward which it was directed and by which it is determined. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 292)*

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explain the empirical setting of my study, namely a public theater[8]. I do this to contextualize the analysis and to provide information on the research participants, in order for the reader to understand the subsequent analysis. In addition, I outline the literature field of artistic organizations and OD in public organizations, to facilitate the interpretation of some of the research participants' dynamics against the background of the broader organizational and societal challenges that public theaters face. I start by situating this site in the field of arts and public organizations, and then provide detailed information on the OD process in question: the history of the process at the theater, its structural setup, and the five major conversation topics apparent during my observations.

5.2 Theaters today

The cultural industry in general and theaters in particular have, over time, undergone various changes. These specifically relate to their economic situation, ranging from being profitable in revenue terms, through being sponsored by the aristocracy or co-financed by the public, to the involvement of the private sector. In an increasingly competitive recreational and entertainment market (Mieze, 2010), and in a field of increasing labor costs but with limited possibilities to offset them through technology (Tajtáková, 2006), theaters find themselves in a precarious economic situation. In addition to increasing ticket prices, optimizing repertory systems, or intentionally staging popular performances ("box office repertory"), the theater offers more and more services: "It has increased from a single performance and restaurant offer to host events such as expositions, exhibitions, shops, poetry reading events, school projects, children's birthday parties, workshops etc." (Mieze, 2010, p.100). Economic pressures

[8] Interestingly, Bakhtin (1981, 1984a) finds drama (and poetry) to be monologic and not polyphonic – but I leave this debate to literature and arts studies in which, of course, this view is contested (Sasse, 2010).

have also changed theaters from within by increasing the importance of economic and managerial orientations. As a result, arts institutions have become places of managerialization: “Management, in this context, looks like the 'prince charming’ that could save the ‘sleeping beauty’ from the threat of financial ruin” (Trevisan, 2017, p.20). Since the 1990s, some of the world’s most famous theaters have undergone major changes – initiated either by public bodies or by the institutions from within (Tajtáková, 2006):

> The problematic relationship between artistic performance and economic stability is probably the main reason why many opera houses decided to undertake some kind of management reform in the 1990s. The changes in management implied a redefinition of mission, the implementation of new leadership styles, the employment of new planning and decision-making processes, the introduction of different fundraising patterns, the search for more effective marketing strategies and adopting a new role for an opera organization in the community context. Common features of these various transformation steps were efforts to make opera house management more effective and efficient, less dependent on government support and more flexible in facing changes in the external environment. (Tajtáková, 2006, pp. 366/367)

Organizational studies have responded to these unique challenges confronting the cultural industries. *Organization Science*, for example, published a special issue on “Cultural Industries: Learning from Evolving Organizational Practices” (2000), and the *Journal of Organizational Behavior* had an issue entitled “Paradoxes of creativity: Managerial and organizational challenges in the cultural economy” (2007). In these publications, the research focuses on the duality of or conflict between the artistic and the managerial aspects of arts organizations. The logic of the arts and management is frequently in opposition: “In contrast to the rationalism of management, manifested in its emphasis on calculation, routine, regularity, order and measurement, art is associated with such elements as sensitivity, imagination, uniqueness, autonomy, creativity and pleasure” (Daigle & Rouleau, 2010, p.13). This positions theater management in a challenging situation:

> One of the key features in management of theatres is dealing with a diverse set of intensive challenges – these include financing from different parties, effectively managing staff, nurturing the artistic mission, marketing performances, negotiating technical constraints and offering live performances to the audience. (Mieze, 2010, p. 101)

However, theaters cater for different interests and stakeholders. Regarding the strategic goals of opera houses, Tatjáková (2006) identified four main categories:

> Artistic goals concerning the core product decisions, economic goals dealing with different sources of funding and financial management, marketing goals implying building relationships with current and future audiences, and social goals enhancing access to and understanding of arts by different social groups. (p. 369)

In respect of the stakeholders in a German theater, Boerner and Jobst (2011) identified four stakeholder groups: the local government, the theater management, the audience, and artistic employees. When it comes to planning a season's performance program, the various stakeholders express different interests. First, while the local government demands productions that cater for a wide range of different audiences, representing the whole city, it also requires economic efficiency, resulting in expectations about the number of paying visitors and subscribers, and staying within the budgetary framework. In addition, the local government expects a certain level of artistic quality to sustain the theater's image. Second, the theater management wants to implement its own artistic vision. This favors the establishment of an overall seasonal theme, the staging of off-mainstream productions, or addressing socially relevant topics. Gaining the artistic recognition of peers and colleagues is another important interest of this stakeholder group. Third, the audience seeks entertainment and an educational experience, and the emotional arousal of being surprised. The audience also frequently wants a social event. Fourth, the artistic employees pursue challenging assignments and expect a fair distribution of roles.

As many of these different stakeholders' interests are conflictual, Boerner and Jobst (2011) sought ways to manage them. In their case study they identified four strategies, namely the setting of priorities, combining stakeholder interests, focusing on neutral goals, and developing the audience. Prioritizing usually leads to a favoring of the local community: "For example, more importance is attached to high attendance levels than to implementation of the management's artistic vision" (ibid. p.77). Combining stakeholder interests results, among others, in planning a program that includes a great variety of plays, but which mixes popular and lesser-known productions, or which presents easy to understand, lesser-known productions. Focusing on neutral goals, for example, can be achieved by adjusting the program to the rhythm of the city. This is done by starting with a popular production as a "kick-off" in autumn, by using the colder and rainy periods as "natural theater seasons", and by staging popular productions to occupy available leisure time over the competitive Christmas season, or in spring when the subscriptions open for the next season. A musical production may be favored for the darkest month of January, whereas either advertisement can help to attract visitors, or more experimental plays can be staged during the summer months when expecting a drop in attendance. Finally, developing the audience aims at resolving the conflict between artistic excellence and the desire for entertainment through educational and advertising activities.

According to Boerner and Jobst (2011), these stakeholder dynamics subsequently influence the development of the program and require decisions on a number of issues. These include the season theme (e.g. Russian theater or a city's historic event), plays (e.g. the genre and date of origin, the number of parts to be cast, and the play's popularity), stage directors (e.g. the director's popularity, style, and availability), the cast (e.g. ensuring a reasonable and equal workload, and acknowledging the performers' personal characteristics and labor contracts), and the chronological order of productions (e.g. regarding a subscription system, the alternation of plays, and the city's rhythm).

This plurality and diversity of interests makes the measurement of success and the performance level of arts organizations more difficult. Quantitative indicators used for this purpose include "access for audiences, attendance numbers, subscriber levels, number of performances, number of new productions, and value of earned income" (Mieze, 2010, p.91). Qualitative indicators include "critical reviews, the receiving of honours and awards, the reputation of the director or lead performers, and attributions of success such as sponsorship, grants or festival participation" (ibid. p. 92). Recent trends tend to involve critics and performers in the quality assessments (ibid.). However, "strategic planning in theatres still remains mainly a formal procedure" (ibid. p.100) and does not involve the activities of the larger organization. Consequently, regarding (Latvian) theaters, Mieze (2010) comments as follows on demands: "Therefore a systematic approach followed by communication, implementation and finally the control of the strategy implemented would be of crucial importance in order to adapt to changes and to improve performance results" (p.102).

In addition to these practical recommendations to address the strategic concerns of theaters, some authors emphasize the importance of conducting more research on the "how" of strategic processes in art organizations, since "insights into the nature of decision-making process in theatres are rare" (Boerner & Jobst, 2011, p.68):

> For example, this type of analysis could be enhanced by soliciting the vision of the stakeholders involved in the strategic planning process in order to identify and analyze the individual logics mobilized with regard to the dissemination and reading of the strategic plan. Other interesting paths of inquiry could include a study of the discursive logics that come into play during the production of strategic plans and of the level of appropriation of such plans as well as their effects on the organization's future courses of action. (…) It would also be interesting to shed further light on how the context and situations in which arts organizations typically operate influence the choice of words used to justify the strategic orientations they propose to pursue. (Daigle & Rouleau, 2010, p. 26)

By exploring how different voices interact in a strategic OD process, my research project addresses these questions of "individual logics", "discursive logics", and "choice

of words". In addition, I take note of Trevisan's (2017) suggestion to treat performing arts organizations and creative businesses as equals when it comes to studying organizations. What can be learned from them, for example, is how they deal with "risky productions" (ibid. p. 20), "unpredictable rehearsal processes" (ibid.), or living "composers" (ibid.). Although I focus more on the administrative sections of a performing arts organization, and less on the artistic processes, it is still worthwhile to see how a theater administration strategically positions itself in relation to the artistic sections.

5.3 OD in the public sector

Studies on OD in the public sector are rare: "Traditionally, the published material in OD has focused on applications in industrial organizations" (Cummings & Worley, 2015, p.725). This trend stems from reservations about the feasibility of OD in the public domain: "When it comes to planned change, most observers see public administration (PA) as determinedly stuck, and awkwardly so" (Golembiewski & Brewer, 2008, p.541). However, government agencies are "having to deal with changes in their external environments" (Burke, 2018, p.15). Quantitative studies comparing the public and private sector show that OD interventions in the public sector have similar success rates to those in the private sector (Patchett & Brown, 2015; Golembiewski & Brewer, 2008). The possibility of OD in the public sector also depends on the theoretical lens applied to public institutions:

> Different theoretical accounts of PA and public policy portray government agencies and public employees in radically different ways. In some instances, agencies are viewed as ineffective or obstructionist. In other cases, they are viewed narrowly instrumental, mere vehicles of elite or popular will. Other observers describe public employees as entrepreneurs, fixers, negotiators, bargainers, changers, or central nodes in complex interorganizational and intraorganizational networks. (Golembiewski & Brewer, 2008, p. 545)

In addition to these perspectives, there are also minority views that see administrative workers as "public-spirited people who are motivated to serve society, protect public interest, and increase the public weal" (ibid. pp.545/546). Golembiewski and Brewer (2008, p. 546) conclude that "clearly, all of these stereotypes cannot be correct – at least not all at once". The applicability of OD to a public organization thus also depends on the "image" (Morgan, 2006) that one has of this type of organization. In this regard, Patchett and Brown (2015) are optimistic about OD in the public sector:

> OD applications have proven to be effective in public-sector organizations. Faced with many of the same pressures as private industry and some that are unique to government, public organizations will continue to use OD applications and interventions to transform themselves into citizen- and customer-driven, more effective and responsive, results-oriented organizations. (p. 711)

In particular, Patchett and Brown (2015) outline four challenges faced by OD practitioners working with public institutions: an organization's mission in the public sector is set by law, and changes require legislative action; the public funding of OD interventions exerts pressure to document their success; the public visibility of OD interventions leads to particular stakeholder interests and behavior, for example career opportunism; and policy values may differ from OD values, for example when it comes to managing resources. Consequently, OD in the public sector is a complex and context-specific endeavor. As outlined above, theaters, in particular, are confronted by their own strategic challenges. Research in this field is still limited. My research project on a major OD process at a public theater thus provides a unique research opportunity; an opportunity that can facilitate a better understanding of this particular context.

5.4 Case description

5.4.1 The theater

The theater in question is a publicly owned, three ensemble, repertory theater, offering performances in drama, opera, and ballet. It employs approximately 1200 people. A central department, headed by an administrative manager, takes care of administrative issues such as HR, finance, communications and sales, and legal issues, as well as issues supporting the arts such as techniques, decorations, costumes, masques, music, and the ballet school. To reduce complexity, I label the former "administrative divisions" and the latter "stage divisions". Each of these subdivisions is headed by a (administrative or stage) director. Concerning temporality, seasons provide an important rhythm to the theater, with each season lasting from summer to summer. Major (public) issues, apart from the OD process, that the theater faced during my fieldwork were, among others, a pending general renovation, a major change of artistic managers, dealing with pressure exerted by far right-wing parties, and dealing with IT security. The OD process can be described as professionalizing the central department in different areas.

5.4.2 The emergence of OD

Changing structures. During the 1990s, the theater experienced financial and legal troubles, leading to a restructuring and empowerment of the central department. More recently, the administrative manager restructured the leadership system, installing a leadership level of directors for each of the subdivisions. In addition, the manager strengthened the social committee by transforming it from a preliminary, voluntary unit into a unit with two permanent members. The social committee initiated projects such as a daycare facility for children, communication training, and mediation for conflicting teams.

Reflecting on leadership. A few years before I started my study, the service was acquired of external psychodynamic consultants who focused on improving the leadership culture. In workshops, leadership principles were agreed on, followed by meetings and coaching sessions to facilitate the implementation of these principles. In addition, in the whole central department, annual talks were scheduled between employees and their respective supervisors, accompanied by specific training and feedback sheets.

The start of the official OD process. Although the administrative manager frames the preceding process – the restructuring, the training, the daycare facility, the leadership principles, etc. – as being part of the official OD process, the labeling of this process as OD was only introduced by the external facilitators of the OD process under study. During a transition phase, a public consultancy – including some of the later OD facilitators – assisted in the running of an appreciative inquiry project. Numerous employees were interviewed about their expectations of the theater's organization. Afterwards, the consultancy agency, employing the facilitators who were in place during my research period, took over the transformation process and labeled it OD.

The OD facilitators. The facilitators in place during my research period worked for a public agency that offers coaching, training, and consulting to public institutions. This involves, for example, leadership training for executives, OD projects in ministries, and the facilitation of public participation projects in cities. The three main facilitators involved in the theater's OD process had a pedagogical background. To facilitate large group events, use was made of an additional facilitator from the consultancy. During the OD process, due to the routinization of the OD procedures, the team of three facilitators was reduced to two. Then, toward the end of my fieldwork, one of the remaining two resigned from the agency and was replaced. Also, toward the end of my fieldwork, the theater's internal coordinators of the OD process started to facilitate an

increasing number of workshops or held meetings without the involvement of the external facilitators, explicitly having been encouraged to do so by them.

The OD process. After conducting the appreciative inquiry interviews, the facilitators assisted in the formulation of a mission statement. This mission statement specifically focuses on the excellency of the arts and the way in which the central department supports this objective. In addition, the directors and relevant staff members held an off-site retreat (before my field entry) to discuss priorities and to institute four “action fields” with strategic goals for the OD process, namely communications, personnel, processes, and perspectives (innovation and renovation). Within each action field a project group was formed, consisting of four to six members under a project group leader. These project groups develop measures to implement the strategic goals. A parallel workshop structure was established consisting of the steering group as a decision-making board, and the coordination circle as a preparation board. The steering group comprises the thirteen administrative and stage directors, the central department’s manager, the coordination circle, and the external facilitators. This board discusses OD topics in the plenum and in small groups, receives presentations on OD topics, and usually take consent-based decisions. Workshops, with a duration of approximately four hours, take place four times a year. The coordination circle consists of six staff members representing quality management, staff development, the social committee, the employee council, internal auditing, and the assistant to the manager respectively, and is also facilitated by the external consultants. Three of the staff members had lengthy work experience in stage divisions, such as choir, orchestra, and costumes. The coordination circle prepares the steering group workshops, discusses topics, plans the agenda and forms of facilitation, and shares impressions and experiences of the development of the OD process. It meets approximately every six weeks for two to three hours. During a later stage of my fieldwork, other sections of the organization were invited to participate in what was referred to as participation formats. Since a major change of artistic managers occurred at the time, which had a significant effect on the central department, another important agenda point emerged, namely, how to deal with the demands of the arts. At an even later stage, external experts were invited to lecture the group on project management and digitalization.

5.4.3 The five topics of the steering group

During my research, the following five topics were frequently discussed in the steering group:

a) The overall OD process

b) The project masterplan

c) Participation formats

d) How to deal with the arts

e) Management tools

In the next subsections, these topics are explained in more detail.

a) The overall OD process

The overall OD process was rarely an official agenda point during my observations. However, it was nonetheless a topic that was addressed at various times of the proceedings. In the introduction, it was usually referred to by the manager and/or the facilitator when commenting on current developments or framing the purpose of the day's workshop in order to align it with the previous workshops. Apart from occasional references to the overall OD process when other topics were discussed, it also came up at the end of the workshops during feedback rounds. Here, the facilitators would sometimes request each participant to briefly give feedback on a specific question, for example: "Is there a difference between the former and the current facilitators?", "How do you envisage the next season?", or "How do you currently see the Steering Group?" When general comments on the day's workshop were requested, the feedback also included references to the overall OD process. In addition, the overall OD process was an official agenda topic when, in workshop IV, the facilitators asked the participants to evaluate the OD process, to assess its progress, and to discuss the next steps; in workshop XI, when an overview on the schedule was provided; and in workshop XII, when the participants shared their opinions on the OD process. The following table (*table 14*) provides an overview of the topic during my observations of 12 steering group workshops.

Table 14: Overview of the topic of the "overall OD process"

WS (m/y)	***Topics***		
I 05/17	**Introduction** *Framing the importance of the OD process, also for the ministry and other theaters, and of the participation formats*	**Feedback** *How did you experience this afternoon? Are we making a difference through our facilitation?*	
II 07/17	**Introduction** *Highlighting the need to synchronize the OD projects*		
III 07/17	**Introduction** *Emphasizing first experiences with the blue participation format and the coordination of OD projects*	**Feedback** *Choose a picture that expresses best how you view the Steering Group. What do you desire for the next season?*	
IV 12/17	**Introduction** *Emphasizing uninterrupted workshop time, acknowledging the work situation due to the changing artistic management, and urging participants to maintain the "flight altitude of the OD progress, although without new destinations"*	**Feedback** *Asking if anyone has a brief comment on the day or on the preparations for the next steering group workshop*	
V 02/18	**Introduction** *Emphasizing the need for operative AND strategic work, commenting on the relaxed faces during the last workshop, and framing the topic "dealing with the arts" as being important and a "therapeutic self-help group"*	**Feedback** *Do the project reports work for you in this way? Do you have the impression you are well informed? Do you have the feeling you have enough time for your own topics?*	
VI 03/18	**Introduction** *Appreciating the opportunity to discuss the important topic of how to deal with the arts*		
VII 04/18	**Introduction** *Talking about the season's eclectic progress, and about a phase of revision and control, as well as about the importance of project management as a topic*	**Feedback** *One word per participant: How has it been for you today?*	
VIII 07/18	**Introduction** *Emphasizing the urgency of managing the general renovation, announcing a "gentle" OD program due to the "operative abyss", reporting*	**Feedback** *One card: What do you plan for the next season? Nobody needs to share – only*	

	on the large number of blue format workshops and their focus on control, and referring to balancing operative and strategic warning in order to document fire prevention training for legal reasons	*those who want to respond*	
IV 11/18	**Introduction** *Emphasizing the controlling and steering of the OD process and the need for the executives' support, indicating the importance of measuring goals and transforming them into operative work, and suggesting the postponement of the arts' involvement as there are not yet structures on the part of the arts*	**Feedback** *Please summarize the day's steering group workshop in two sentences. Today, for me, the Steering Group was dot, dot, dot… For the next season, I wish for…*	**Evaluation of the OD process** *Participants assess the progress and identify the next steps*
X 03/19	**Introduction** *Highlighting the importance of the OD steering group's rhythm, despite the absence of the facilitators, and highlighting the theater's maturity for self-facilitation; framing project management as a methodical competence and external input as an important model for learning; talking about the positive challenge of dealing with the arts; and mentioning the importance of binding standards and the need to convey to employees what happens in the steering group workshops*	**Feedback** *Please make a short statement on today's proceeding.*	
XI 07/19	**Introduction** *Showing images of the off-site retreat, collectively whistling a tune, and emphasizing the importance of digitalization.*	**Feedback** *Throwing a ball from person to person and answering two questions: Did I like today and why? What will energize me until the season's end?*	**Overview of the OD process** *The staff member provides a schedule of upcoming OD events*
XII 11/19	**Introduction** *Introduction of the new facilitator, sitting in a circle sharing opinions on: "In this season I was surprised by… and today I would like this to happen here…", and a review of the milestones of the OD process thus far*		**Assessment of the OD process** *Participants sharing opinions on how they personally, their division, and their employees benefit from the OD process*

b) The project masterplan

When I began my observations, the conversations on the OD projects were a major topic. The four project groups presented their formulation of strategic goals and how they intended to implement the measures. Most of the discussions revolved on the question of how to synchronize the various projects into an overarching masterplan. The masterplan was decided on, and in the following workshops each project group would report on their progress and respond to critical questions and comments. For example, the measures included the development of communication guidelines in the communications group, job descriptions in the personnel group, a handbook for changing artistic management teams in the processes group, and an innovation sheet in the perspective group. The following table (*table 15*) provides an overview of the strategic goals and measures of each project group.

Table 15: Overview of the four project groups

Project Group	Strategic Goal	Measures
Processes	To establish a quality management system in the central department	- Describing the processes - Rolling out the process management software - Promoting digitalization
	To make available a handbook for changing artistic managements	- Developing a handbook - Integrating the artistic management
Communication	To provide all employees with information relevant to them via suitable media and formats	- Developing and introducing communication concepts - Implementing a communication offensive - Improvising the network - Establishing employee surveys
Personnel	To be perceived, internally and externally, as an attractive employer	- Steering relevant data - Establishing employer branding
	To ensure that every employee and employer understand the theater processes where intersecting	- Improvising the onboarding procedure - Establishing and further developing yearly feedback talks - Developing executives
	To ensure that every employee is qualified for their job or task in the best way possible	- Developing and implementing a training concept - Developing job descriptions
	To have healthy and capable employees	- Completing an agreement on corporate health management - Implementing risk assessment

Perspective	To be prepared for the general renovation	- Creating a project organization - Developing usage requirements - Establishing an interim concept
	To recognize, evaluate, and enable innovation	- Networking externally - Establishing an evaluation matrix - Enabling exchanges on innovation

In addition to these project status reports, a group would also be allowed to expand in depth on and receive enough time to present a certain measure: for example, the process group presented the idea of process landscapes, the communication group a study on regular communication, the personnel group the tool of age structure analysis or a new conceptualization of executive training, the finance director the new logistics software, and the social committee the process of corporate integration management. The following table (*table 16*) outlines how this conversational topic was spread over some of the 12 workshops.

Table 16: Overview of the topic of the "project masterplan"

WS (m/y)	***Topics***		
I 05/17	**Project outlines** *Presenting projects, deciding on redefinitions*	**Project masterplan** *Visualizing the masterplan, discussing the masterplan, improving the visualization, discussing the prioritization criteria, adapting the masterplan, and voting on the masterplan*	
II 07/17			
III 07/17			**Process landscapes** *Presenting the idea of process management*
IV 12/17	**Project reports** *Updates on the status quo of the projects*	**Study on regular communication** *Presentation and discussions on improvement*	**New logistics software** *Implications of the new software*
V 02/18		**Age structure analysis** *Presenting the idea of age structure analysis*	
VI 03/18			
VII 04/18	**Project reports** *Updates on the status quo of the projects*	**Executive training** *Presenting the status quo of executive training*	
VIII 07/18		**Corporate integration management** *Presenting the University of Applied Sciences' study on theater*	
IV 11/18		**Executive training** *Presenting and discussing new ideas*	
X 03/19			

XI 07/19			
XII 11/19		**Project masterplan** *Discussion of its handling and utility*	

c) Participation formats

The implementation of participation formats was a topic that was hotly debated at the start of my fieldwork. Before the implementation of these participation formats, they were extensively discussed in the steering group. Over time, use was made of three different participation formats, labeled by the facilitators as green, blue, and yellow, respectively.

First, two workshops were held under the label of the “green format”. In the first workshop, the participants from the appreciative inquiry were invited to take part in small group discussions on two topics of their own choice. There were four tables, one for each of the four project group topics (communication, personnel, process, and perspective), as well as a table for the mission statement. Over three rounds, different groups of people participated. The project leaders briefly presented the focus and key measures of their groups (the mission statement in the case of the social committee), and the facilitators (accompanied by additional facilitators from their agency) supported the project group leaders in facilitating the discussion, and noted commentaries on a flipchart. At the beginning, the manager made a short speech on the importance of the OD process and everyone’s participation, and did so again at the end, and in addition asked the participants to advertise the event and instructed an internal videographer to obtain testimonials. Other steering group members also visited the event and listened to the different discussions. In the second workshop, the invitation to participate was extended to the whole central department.

Second, in the “blue format”, the manager, his assistant, and the staff developer (as facilitator) visited different units, presented the mission statement and the history of the OD process, and responded to the questions of the participants. After the presentation, the participants were granted the opportunity first to discuss its content with their seated neighbors, and then to pose questions in the plenum. Some of the questions were on the OD process and the overall development of the theater, while others were on totally different topics, for example the limited opportunity to see performances or rehearsals as an employee. To the same measure, these topics were also taken up by

the manager and discussed in the plenum. In all, there were about 20 of these events. The manager frequently shared his experiences with the blue format at the beginning of the steering group workshops, but also invited others to comment.

Third, more than a year later, the "yellow format" was implemented. In this format, executives were invited to discuss the mission statement with the manager and directors. As some issues emerged from this format, the steering group discussed them extensively in a subsequent workshop. The way in which the conversational topic of participation formats was dealt with in some of the 12 observed workshops is shown in the following table (*table 17*).

Table 17: Overview of the topic of the "participation formats"

WS (m/y)	***Topics***
I 05/17	**Presentations on the three participation formats** *The facilitator presents the participation formats, the small groups discuss them and provide feedback in plenum, followed by heated debates on their feasibility*
II 07/17	
III 07/17	**Instructions on the green participation format** *The facilitators give practical instructions to the directors on the green format, to be applied the next day*
IV 12/17	**Reports from the participation format** *Each "table host" reports on their experience of the two green participation workshops*
V 02/18	**Project reports with a particular focus on take-aways from green format** *Every project group leader introduces immediate measures in response to the feedback from the green formats*
VI 03/18	
VII 04/18	
VIII 07/18	
IV 11/18	**Exchanges on the yellow participation format** *The facilitators share their impressions, the small groups discuss the previous workshop, followed by a sharing of comments in the plenum*
X 03/19	**Project reports and a debate on information events** *The communications group leader criticizes the lack of engagement in the advertising of information events, followed by heated responses*
XI 07/19	**Overview of upcoming formats** *The staff member provides an overview of upcoming participation formats, followed by a discussion of their rationale and implementation*
XII 11/19	**Status quo overview** *The staff members present the "numbers" on the participations formats (e.g. their distribution per departments), followed by a discussion of improvements and the role of executives*

d) How to deal with the arts

A topic that emerged at some point during my observations was how to deal with the arts (also labeled as a "tension field"). The facilitators proactively introduced this topic. They did so by outlining the tense situation involving the change of artistic managers, directors, the general renovation and the intermediate stage, and the masterplan. By asking the directors how they felt about this situation, heated discussions followed on the overburden created by the exhaustive demands of the arts. Incoming, as well as departing artistic managers were seen to create too many large productions at the same time, leading to friction and the overburdening of the technical divisions, and the divisions that had to provide decorations, costumes, music, etc. A lot of experiences were shared. To deal with this problem, the approach was to implement formats to discuss and coordinate the workload with representatives of the arts. This, however, proved to be difficult – at least during my fieldwork period – for various reasons. These included institutional-political difficulties to approach the arts, difficulties of finding a suitable time for joint meetings as productions were usually planned long in advance, and as it was unclear whom of the new artistic teams were responsible for what, and therefore were approachable. The following table (*table 18*) summarizes the conversations on the topic of how to deal with the arts.

Table 18: Overview of the topic of "dealing with the arts"

WS (m/y)	**Topics**
I 05/17	**Masterplan synchronization** *A short discussion on the inclusion of the arts in the OD process*
II 07/17	
III 07/17	
IV 12/17	**Feelings about the current situation** *The facilitators ask the directors to share their views on the challenging organizational situation*
V 02/18	**Setting boundaries to the arts** *Heated small group and plenum discussions on the topic of boundary setting*
VI 03/18	**Exchange possibilities** *The stage directors discuss the commencement of communications with the arts on mutual expectations, with the Coordination Circle*
VII 04/18	**A discussion of project management** *A discussion, among others, of what project management means in respect of the management of artistic demands*
VIII	**Exchange formats**

07/18	*A discussion of which representatives of the administration should join the talks, and what the goals and stance thereof should be*
IV 11/18	**Feedback on the start of the season** *At the beginning of this workshop, each director briefly comments on how they experienced the start of the season*
X 03/19	**A discussion of project management** *In part, regarding cooperation with the arts*
XI 07/19	
XII 11/19	**Assessment of the OD process** *Some mention is made of the importance of including the arts in the OD process*

e) Management tools

Only much later during my fieldwork, workshop VII to be exact, the steering group invited external experts to present lectures on management topics such as project management and digitalization. The first lecture was brought about by a facilitator unable to attend a certain steering group meeting, due to personal reasons, and by the fact that the facilitator's agency had recently completed an internal workshop on project management to refresh their staff's knowledge and use of new tools. The agency thus recommended a trainer on this topic, who then provided the necessary input. In a subsequent steering group workshop, two staff members briefly shared their experiences and lessons learned from a pilot project (on moving a stage). Later, an external trainer was again invited to address certain steering group workshops on this topic. This trainer had previously presented seminars on this topic at the theater and had received positive feedback. Afterwards, for the next steering group workshop, another external trainer presented a lecture on the issue of digitalization. The following table (*table 19*) indicates how the topic of management tools was dealt with in the last six workshops.

Table 19: Overview of the topic of "management tools"

WS (m/y)	Topics
I to VI	
VII 04/18	**Input on project management** *The external trainer presents a lecture on project management*
VIII 07/18	**Announcement of a pilot project** *The announcement of the establishment of project management standards, a project circle, internal project management knowhow, and the application of project management principles to the pilot project of moving a stage*

IV 11/18	**Report on the pilot project** *The reporting of experiences with the pilot project of moving a stage*
X 03/19	**Input on project management** *The second external trainer presents a lecture on project management*
XI 07/19	**Input digitalization** *The external trainer presents a lecture on digitalization*
XII 11/19	**Agile organization** *Short input by the facilitator on agility*

5.5 Summary

As this chapter indicates, very little research is done on OD in public organizations, even less so on OD in artistic organizations. This is surprising, considering the context-specific and interesting circumstances and challenges facing public and, particularly, artistic organizations. Nonetheless, this is understandable, bearing in mind the often-precarious financial situation of, for example, theaters. A theater, for the most, does not have the financial resources to engage in OD. Therefore, being granted access to observe an OD process in a large theater is an exceptional and unique research opportunity. It sheds light on an under-researched area; an area confronted by very specific tensions as theaters oscillate between managerialization and the demands of artistic excellence. They also have to cater for a diverse range of stakeholders and have to come up with creative solutions to different and divergent demands and challenges. The OD process at THEATERORG is summarized as follows: First, due to financial problems, managerialization led to a restructuring of departments and leadership structures. The OD process, to a large extent, focused on professionalizing the operations of the central department. This involved and affected staff development, quality management, project management and digitalization, leadership principles, yearly talks, the mission statement, and the implementation and control of numerous measures and projects in the area of personnel, processes, innovation, and communication. At the same time, the OD process was intent on engaging as many staff members of the central department as possible. This was done by forming a steering group consisting of the administrative and stage directors, the central department's manager, the staff members, and the facilitators; by collaboratively formulating strategic goals and identifying areas for improvement; by rolling out an appreciative inquiry initiative and interviewing numerous organizational members about their perspectives; and by frequently discussing the OD process with the broader organization in participation formats. The emphasis on both improving the

organization’s professionalization and establishing participation practices represents a prototypical OD process focusing on both effectiveness and democratization (Cummings & Worley, 2015). In the next two chapters, I present the two analyses based on my observations of the steering group and its five OD conversations; on the overall OD process, the project masterplan, the participation formats, dealing with the arts, and management tools. The objective is to explain the evolvement of these conversations as a multi-voiced and an often surprising process.

6. Analysis I: Organizing Responsiveness – an Analysis of Workshop Genres and their Effect on Voice Dynamics

A genre possesses its own organic logic (…). But the logic of the genre is not an abstract logic. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 157)

6.1 Introduction

As indicated in chapter 2, social constructionist approaches to OD emphasize the importance of conversations. Organizations are made up of conversations, and thus organizational change occurs through changing conversations (Van Nistelrooij & Sminia, 2010; Ford & Ford, 1995; Ford, 1999). From this perspective, the role of OD is to provide conversations with the space to evolve differently than in a habitual way, and to challenge dominant organizational discourses (Grant & Marshak, 2011). I frame this conversational questioning of an organization's status quo as implicitly reflective. This research project is about the question of how OD conversations evolve, and how reflection mediates this evolvement. I choose a Bakhtinian framework to address the question. For Bakhtin (1984a), the modern polyphonic novel is a genre that allows different voices and worldviews to engage and compete, even with the author's voice. Centripetal and centrifugal forces, expressed as consensus and dissensus, respectively unify or diversify language. I translate this Bakhtinian notion of dialogue into a study of OD conversations: I assume that there are different voices competing and struggling, and that they are encountering through the consensus and dissensus representing centripetal and centrifugal forces. For Bakhtin (1984a; 1986), the (speech) genre plays a central role in how voices encounter and create polyphony. To better understand the evolvement of OD conversations, and the role of implicit reflection, I thus ask the following analytical question: How do OD workshop genres mediate voice dynamics? The question of genres and their effect enlightens how "responsiveness is organized" in OD workshops. Conversational approaches to OD postulate dialogue and pluralism, both of which need to be enacted. Dialogue in OD "lives on" responsiveness – on people engaging in the OD process and taking part in the dialogue. As the analysis will show, the willingness and possibility to participate and engage in a lively dialogue and to implicitly reflect vary with different genres. In this first analytic chapter, I indicate how genres can have different effects on voice dynamics and explore four effects: "dulling", "softening", "bridling", and "teasing". These effects relate to the different "spaces" that genres offer voices to encounter, and to clash or to peacefully mingle. I start by briefly recalling the methodical construction

of the analysis, and then present the findings along the four forms of responsiveness. Afterwards, I discuss these findings in relation to organizational reflection and dialogicality in OD: first, I show how the "battle over problematizations" in OD conversations can be understood as organizational reflection; second, I discuss how the interplay of genres and voices provides flesh to an understanding of OD conversations as "dialogic" and "dynamic"; third, I point out how certain voices have the power to trigger a "stepping out" of the official OD process; and fourth, I briefly discuss the practical implementation of this analysis, for example the need for OD practitioners to be aware of the consequences of chosen workshop formats.

6.2 Methodical steps: voices, response actions and genres

As outlined in chapter 4, the central Bakhtinian concepts for this analysis are voice and genre (*see figure 6*). When exploring the empirical data on how voices encounter, I identified different voices that are often audible in the OD process. For Bakhtin (1993), language is "emotional-volitional", and thus utterances express different values and worldviews. In a polyphonic novel, different voices that each represent a specific worldview, encounter one another. I operationalized Bakhtin's notion of language and voice by distinguishing voices in statements that express certain values, and that are frequently raised by a specific group. In all, I identified seven voices: a managerial voice valuing professionalism, effectiveness and efficiency; a stage voice valuing keeping up with daily stage business and the theater as a non-ordinary workplace; a democratization voice valuing broader participation; an employees' voice valuing work satisfaction; a public voice valuing a good investment of public money and the implementation of laws; an artistic voice valuing artistic freedom and excellency; and an everyday people's voice, valuing good informal relations, equality in information situations, and personal entertainment. These voices are either enacted directly – through statements expressing these values as part of the speakers' view, or indirectly – by addressing the values of another in the room or by talking about the values of another outside the room.

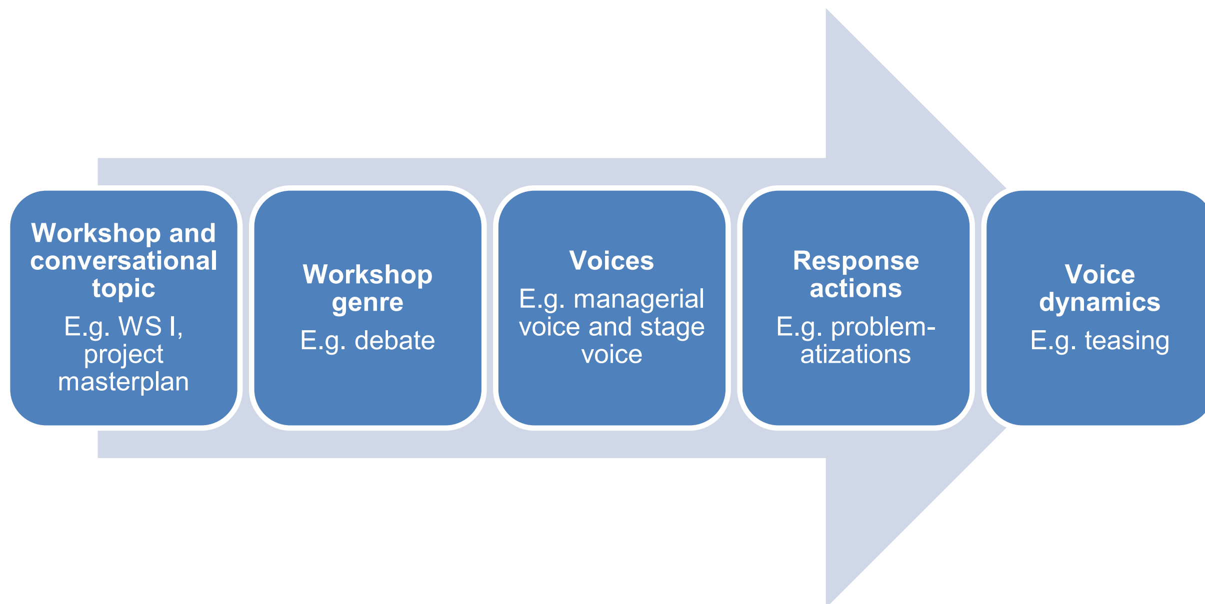

Figure 6: Reminder of the five core elements of the first analysis

A further exploration of the data guided me to identify different response actions through which the various participants in a workshop, positioned their responses toward an issue. The usual modes of responding in the OD workshops are either "coordinating" (e.g. who gets to speak, making sure that one understands something correctly, etc.), "deliberating" (e.g. inquiring into details and pragmatics in a matter-of-fact style), "stepping out" (e.g. leaving the professional role and joking or engaging in small talk), or "dealing with problematizations" (i.e. contestation over presenting or rejecting the framing of an issue as a serious problem). Response actions in the latter category include "problematizing" (framing something as a problem), "re-problematizing" (enforcing the framing as a problem), "un-problematizing" (downplaying the seriousness of a problem), "making fun" (ridiculing a problematization), "solving" (attempts to resolve a problem), and "ignoring" (not reacting to what someone said). These response actions increase the tension and conflict in a dialogue, whereas "coordinating" and "deliberating" are usually calmer forms of dialogue. "Stepping out" usually decreases tension and creates a good mood.

When I explored how voices interact and "encounter" in the observed OD workshops, I realized that they did so in different constellations and dynamics. Sometimes several voices would interact, whereas at other times, one voice would dominate the scene. Sometimes one voice would aggressively attack another voice, whereas at other times, they would mingle peacefully. As I proceeded with my analysis, I understood that different workshop formats could explain the various voice dynamics. Actually, I framed

these workshop formats as “genres”, corresponding with Bakhtin’s (1986) notion of speech genres as typical and relatively stable patterns of communication. In a next round of analysis, I identified twelve different genres used in the OD workshops of THEATERORG: prologues, epilogues, presentations, examinations, reports, brainstorming, debates, votes, lectures, celebrations, breaks, and feedback. Thereafter I investigated how different genres enable different voice constellations and dynamics by providing different possibilities for voices to interact. For example, in a debate, there seems to be much more conflictual encounters of voices than in a prologue, in which only a few voices dominate the conversation. I attribute these differences to the voices’ “possibility to reply”. For example, a clashing of voices would be more likely in a debate in which there is an open possibility for the voices to reply. By contrast, in a prologue, there is a limited possibility to reply as usually, only the manager and the facilitators will speak. However, in a debate, participants are expected to say something and express their opinions. Still, the possibility to reply seems to assist the understanding of only a part of the voice dynamics. Obviously, there are occasions when participants can speak freely, but they do so rather harmonically. For example, although the interactivity could be high during a lecture on project management, there may be fewer tense conflicts. I attribute these differences to the “immediacy of an issue”: a lecture relates the participants in a more abstract way to the topic of project management than would a debate on implementing concrete projects. As a result, a lecture creates a higher immediacy than a debate. I thus identified two dimensions that assist in understanding the difference between different genres and their voice relations: on the one hand, the possibility to reply and, on the other hand, the immediacy of an issue. The result is a two-by-two matrix, with the “possibility to reply” being either limited or open, and the “immediacy of an issue” being either low or high (*see table 20*).

Table 20: OD workshop genres, immediacy of the issue, and possibility to reply

	Limited possibility to reply	**Open possibility to reply**
Low immediacy of the issue	Presentation, epilogue	Lecture, brainstorming, celebration, break
High immediacy of the issue	Prologue, report, examination, feedback	Debate, vote

The four fields can be framed as representing different degrees of “opposability”: the possibility to reply provides various opportunities to oppose, and the immediacy of an

issue triggers opposition. Accordingly, the table can be read as denoting an increasing opposability from left to right, and from top to bottom. "Opposability" aligns with Bakhtin's (1984a) concept of the polyphonic novel: "everything in the novel is structured to make dialogic opposition inescapable. Not a single element of the work is structured from the point of view of a nonparticipating 'third person'" (p. 18).

Finally, I explored the different effects of the four genre types on the voice dynamics. I refer to the effect that genres with a low immediacy and a limited possibility to reply have on voice dynamics as "dulling": for example, in a presentation a single voice usually dominates without provoking any reactions from other voices. There is much deliberation, but a silent consensus on the topic. By contrast, in a genre with a low immediacy but an open possibility to reply, the effect is called "softening": for example, in a lecture many voices usually interact peacefully. There is a lot of deliberation, but also much more open consensus. The prologue is a genre with a restricted possibility to reply but a high immediacy. In the prologue only a few voices address topics that have immediate consequences for the participants. I call this effect "bridling", as the limited possibility to reply "bridles" opposing voices. There are many one-sided problematizations, leading to a silent dissensus. Lastly, genres with an open possibility to reply and a high immediacy of an issue produce a "teasing" effect: for example, in a debate both the immediacy and the possibility "tease" different voices to interact and "clash". There are open "battles" over problematizations, and thus visibly open dissensus.

Table 21: OD workshop genres and their effects on voice dynamics at THEATERORG

	Restricted possibility to reply	*Open possibility to reply*
Low immediacy of the issue	Presentation, epilogue ➔ **Dulling** *A rather monotonous domination of a voice; much deliberation; silent consensus*	Lecture, brainstorming, celebration, break ➔ **Softening** *A rather peaceful interaction of different voices; much deliberation; open consensus*
High immediacy of the issue	Prologue, report, examination, feedback ➔ **Bridling** *A rather tense domination of a voice or juxtaposition of voices; one-sided*	Debate, vote ➔ **Teasing** *A rather tense interaction of voices; "battles over problematizations"; open dissensus*

	problematization; silent dissensus	

Based on the aforesaid, I forthwith explain and present my findings in more detail. This is done by showing one dialogue sample per genre category and by indicating the response actions, followed by a description of the effect of the genre on the voice dynamics and the centrifugal and centripetal forces – thus the implicit reflective processes.

6.3 Presentation of the findings

6.3.1 Low immediacy of the issue, restricted possibility to reply: "dulling" in presentations and epilogues

"Epilogues" and "presentations" are genres that convey a low immediacy of an issue and a limited possibility to reply. Presentations, outlining suggestions and procedures, are a regular part of the workshops. Afterwards, suggestions and proposals are usually discussed and sometimes decided on. The following extract from workshop I shows the presentation made by the leader of the project group on communication. In this workshop part, all four project groups presented their different projects and measures, and their allocation on a timeline to the whole group. The overall idea, in this way, was to "synchronize" the four project fields and their respective measures.

a) Dialogue I: Project group presentation *(WS I)*

FACILITATOR BLUE: Okay, I shall simply start up-front with the project group of communication. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN, will you briefly indicate how you prioritized your measures and planned them time-wise.

Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

Coordinating: how to best organize the presentation.

STAFF MEMBER YELLOW: Uhm.

FACILITATOR BLUE: Yes.

STAFF MEMBER YELLOW: Would you like me to hand out the project matrix right away?

Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN: You could do that, yes.

STAFF MEMBER YELLOW: Yes? I will just pass them around. Please take two pages each.

Coordinating: how to best organize the presentation.

Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN *(leader of the project group on communication)*: In summary and first of all, we have three levels, in the area of the measures and also within the indicators. One level is the concretely timed measures; very concretely timed goals that we have determined, while others are postponed for a while. Next, we have matters on which we still need a mandate from the steering group, if we come to that today. Partly these are matters that are still evolving. Third, as a legacy of the last two workshops, the still ongoing matters. Things where we need a little flexibility. The migration of interfaces, for example, is now confronting the work groups, and we must adapt to new developments. As a first topic, I start with the things that are concretely determined, such as the topic of regular communication. We have given it a three-step structure. First, we start with an analysis of the status quo on regular communication practices. What do we have in place, and what do we need? Second, we develop first conceptions, first formats. We are talking about the communication guide; we are currently collecting feedback – how is regular communication structurally done in the different directories? Uhm, the deadline is tomorrow. We already have two thirds of the feedback, and we are still waiting for the last ones, still hoping to get them by tomorrow evening *(slight laughter)*. *(Humorously)* I simply ignore the head shaking. Uhm, yes, and third, to develop from that, a communications guide. We could do this until the end of year. Uhm, the second major topic that we also have in the big round again and again is the topic of standards. What does a model for documents look like? Which communication ways do we use for different areas? We intend… we will do this until the end of the season. We develop a communications guideline in several part steps, till the end of the 17/18 season. We do not want to write a finished paper in a

Addressing stage voice: valuing stage operations

working group. For us, the proceedings are a bit of an iterative process, looking for exchange, also in this group. To discuss the levels of possibilities and directions. I think it is not so much goal focused if we lock ourselves into the silent chamber and say: "that's how it is, this is the model and now do it like that". Relatively speaking, a process of exchange needs much time, until 2018. It goes into the 17/18 season.	Addressing democratization voice: valuing participation
Third, a concretely timed topic is the field of communication offensives. This is an additional topic that we would like to have feedback on later today if we still manage to come to that. The communication offensive met with wide approval in this circle, and we really intend to finish it by the year 2017. We have tested the first offensive, we know how it's going, which topics work, and what we can learn from it. These are the timed things for the moment. Uhm, later I will come back to the not yet timed things, like employer surveys. Not timed are also very concrete measures such as employee magazine, newsletter, lightning events, network events…	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency
Deliberating: how to best implement communication projects Making fun: joking about the missing survey feedbacks	
FACILITATOR BLUE *(in a low voice)*: Okay. So far at this point. Thank you very much. Processes, STAFF MEMBER BROWN… *(mumbling, people moving)*	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency
Coordinating: calling the next presenter.	

a) Response actions: "deliberating" and "coordinating"

As this workshop extract shows, there is a restricted possibility to reply. The administrative director presents facts and figures and makes suggestions, while the other participants listen patiently. The immediacy of the issue is also low because the presentation has no direct impact on the other participants in the room. The director also announces issues to which he will return; later on, he will propose measures still requiring group consensus. This will increase the immediacy of the issue and could elicit more opposition. Presently, the opposability is rather low. The main response actions are "deliberating" and "coordinating": the director mostly engages in sharing reflections on practical steps and issues. He does not outline a major or even unsolvable problem. The facilitator and the staff members are mainly concerned about the practical coordination of the workshop. Only when the director jokes about the low return rate of the survey on regular communication, does he engage in "making fun".

"Deliberating" and "coordinating" are also the main modes of the three presentations that immediately follow the foregoing workshop extract. The head of the

communications group's presentation is followed by that of the head of the processes group. He outlines the measures of his group, including the evolvement of the handbook for changing artistic managers and the procedure of implementing a quality management system. Next, the head of the innovation group presents his group's projects, including how to approach the topic of innovation management and the status quo of the general renovation. Finally, the staff developer speaks on behalf of the personnel group. She outlines several measures, as this is the group with the most measures. She starts with a joke on the little time left, and then talks about issues such as incorporation, personnel marketing, and corporate health management. Another group member, at one point, specifies a measure. Overall, the tone of the presentations made by the four project groups is calm, concentrated, and matter-of-factly. Apart from these monologues, the main interaction is with the facilitators who assist in correcting the timeline on the pinboards. Hence, "deliberating" on the different projects' measures and "coordinating" the flow of the presentations are the dominant response actions. Presentations are a genre that frequently appears in the OD process of THEATERORG. In particular, the conversation on the project masterplan is often enacted in the form of presentations, for example on the introduction of new software, on new training, or on the study of corporate integration management.

b) Effect on voice dynamics: "dulling"

This genre's effect can be described as "dulling". Dulling refers to a rather monotonous dominance of a single voice. There is no opposition, and thus there is "silent consensus". In the foregoing workshop extract, the managerial voice is audible most of the time, enumerating logical steps and procedures, and suggesting how to effectively manage the different measures. The interaction is mainly peaceful, and the tension does not increase. The whole episode is rather uneventful. Only at one point was slight tension noticeable, namely when the director joked about the missing survey feedback: "Uhm, the deadline is tomorrow. We have already two thirds of the feedback, and we are still waiting for the last ones, still hoping to get them by tomorrow evening *(slight laughter)*. *(Humorously)* I simply ignore the head shaking". This can be interpreted as a slight clashing between the managerial voice – demanding a punctual return and the professionalization of the regular communication, and the stage voice – prioritizing busy stage operations before engaging in a return of the surveys. Later, the democratization voice becomes involved when he addresses the participative way of creating the communication guideline: "I think it is not so much goal focused if we lock

ourselves into the silent chamber and say: that's how it is, this is the model and now do it like that". This statement can be read as the managerial voice addressing the democratization voice and anticipating and preventing any objections.

However, despite these minor instances of engaging with other voices, no broader disagreement is visible. A silent consensus is apparent. The consensus is not tested, and the group behaves as if in full accord. This can be framed as a strong centripetal force coming through with the assistance of this genre. However, at the same time, the extract shows that the centrifugal forces find a way of presenting themselves: for example, in the minor clash between the managerial and the stage voices at the moment of joking about the feedback survey.

c) Similar genre: "epilogue"

Epilogues take place at the end of the steering group workshops. Usually, the facilitator says some concluding words, makes a humorous comment, or announces subsequent practical steps. The main response actions are therefore "deliberating", "coordinating", and "stepping out". There is no additional room for interactions ("restricted possibility to reply"), and the concluding remarks of the facilitator is rather polite and abstract ("low immediacy of an issue"). As a result, the effect on voice dynamics is usually "dulling": the managerial or the democratization voice expresses some general comments that do not provide a cause for opposition or intervention.

6.3.2 Low immediacy of the issue, open possibility to reply: "softening" in lectures, brainstorming, celebrations, and breaks

A genre can convey a low immediacy of an issue, but also an open possibility to reply. This is usually the case in the genres of lecture, brainstorming, celebration, and break. As a result, opposability is low in these genres. In a "lecture" an external expert usually provides introductory training on an issue, such as project management or digitalization. The possibility to reply is open, as participants can openly raise their voices to respond to each other's comments, and to the statements of the external trainer. However, the immediacy is low, as the training does not result in binding applications of the training content. The following workshop extract depicts a "lecture". In this workshop episode, an external trainer provides an introduction to project management by explaining different terms and models related to project management.

Participants ask and answer questions, and they try to link their input to the work they do at the theater.

a) Dialogue II: Training on project management *(WS VII)*

An external project management expert ("TRAINER AZURE") is invited to provide an input on this topic. TRAINER introduces himself and outlines his experiences in project management in the automobile industry. He then asks the group to come forward and indicate, on a scale from 0 to *100, how motivated they are on the topic. Afterwards, he begins his presentation: he defines project management, and speaks about project overviews, stakeholder analysis, risk analysis, project organization, process planning, and milestones.*	
TRAINER AZURE: A stage set needs to be ready by the milestone. If not, we need to cancel the performance.	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency
Deliberating: Idea of milestones	
He continues to talk about a project structure plan, work packages, flowcharts and network maps, time schedules, and resource planning.	
TRAINER AZURE: How many actors do I need when? How many hours do I need the carpenter? Now you may say: "Oh, that is a lot of work of planning!" But if you enclose yourself with two other persons for a day, then you can have it done within a day. Thereafter, you can go to your manager.	Addressing stage voice: valuing stage operations
STAFF MEMBER BLUE: What if it is exactly the other way around: you have a budget and a certain amount of time.	Stage voice: valuing stage operations
TRAINER AZURE: Is there a possibility to get more money?	
STAFF MEMBER BLUE: No, we need to see where we can make sacrifices.	
TRAINER AZURE: There is the magical triangle of performance, appointments, and costs. These aspects contribute to the quality. In the automobile industry, there is a lot of claim management to get these things right.	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency
Deliberating: Idea of a magical triangle	
He continues to talk about project controlling, the project planning cycle, the client, project leader, and project part leader, and about delegating and demanding.	
TRAINER AZURE: Steering committee? Do you have something like this here?	

Staff Member Green: We are not consciously working with a project management norm; these wordings are not alive here.

> Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

Administrative director Yellow: In our software project, we have a steering committee.

Deliberating: Concept of a steering committee

Trainer Azure explains a project management office.

Administrative director Pink: What is the difference between a steering committee and a project management office?

> Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

Trainer Azure: The project management office develops standards, for example in your case, the innovation sheet. It is installed permanently with, for example, four people. A steering committee then becomes the decision-making board.

Deliberating: concept of a project management office

Administrative director Pink: We have a lot of experience with project management at the theater. Every production is principally a project. Which institution is taking the role of the steering committee when it comes to the production of performances? The curtain goes up at a certain time. The pressure is high: the project takes place.

> Stage voice: valuing stage operations

Administrative director White: We cannot cancel a project because there is the public. But we can postpone an appointment of a premiere. *(He speaks of a production that increased costs, with the result that others had smaller budgets.)* Luckily, the public does not get to know about quality reduction. The reviewers do not know what requirements a production started with. With a car it would stand out, but you cannot objectify a theater production in the same way. I have a question though. For example, when they install a new workshop in the automobile industry, what usually leads to catastrophes that make it to the public? Construction projects, where costs and time schedule were not met. What are your experiences?

> Addressing public voice: valuing public expectations

> Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

Trainer Azure: Usually, the goals are not described as detailed. There is a buffer. And then there is constant modification management.

Administrative director White: So, it is not as much about planning, but about controlling.

Trainer: At the beginning planning, but later steering becomes more important.

Stage director Grey: The specification sheet is important – to precisely describe the output.

Administrative director White: We not only have good experiences with claim management.

> Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

TRAINER AZURE: You can do it by defining cold and warm.

STAGE DIRECTOR GREY: You cannot invite tenders for things that are not possible.

TRAINER AZURE: For a bidding, you need to know exactly what you want. You need to fix everything in a written form. Write emails and do not delete them.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR WHITE: So public and private projects are similar, but one does not always hear from private failures?

TRAINER AZURE: Exactly.

> Deliberating: comparing public and private business, concept of claim management

The discussion continues on procurement directives in the automobile industry, milestone trend analysis (TRAINER AZURE: "I was missing this a bit in your projects, to be honest"), and how to make human resource efforts (working hours per project) visible.

STAFF MEMBER BLACK: Modification management is a big topic in productions. There are the artistic demands. We need more resources than planned. Modification management was until now usually a gut decision. The costumes department makes a Gannt chart and shifts visible.

Addressing artistic voice: valuing artistic freedom and excellency

> Deliberating: concept of modification management

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR PINK: The people are always working on projects. We have the operative business, and then projects are somehow still running as well. We are not used to count the operative, too. I am not enthusiastic about putting everything in work packages: how are we weighing this? I did this as a consultant. Now it is like the operative is also still existing!

Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR YELLOW: I am the supervisor of many people. People need to go to the project leaders and talk to them in order to get the freedom to develop a concept.

The discussion continues, among others, on topics such as overwork and the balancing of daily business and projects.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR WHITE: The workshops have their operative business. The clarity may be greater when it comes to finances. The workshops still have their operative business.

Stage voice: valuing stage operations

STAFF MEMBER BLACK: In the costumes department, they are already doing it. Each unit documents which project it is working on.

TRAINER AZURE, as an example, makes a calculation for a carpenter on the flipchart, to estimate the employee's time spent on projects.

Administrative director White: What many externals underestimate: planning processes. In the working processes, many ideas come up. Suddenly, the arts want everything painted in black. The artists further develop the product during the working process.

Addressing artistic voice: valuing artistic freedom and excellency

Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

Trainer azure: One could pick an exemplary project and see: how was it there? Is there a certain factor that we can use to calculate future projects? Just as an idea.

Staff Member Blue: The artistic inspiration is part of risk management. There are artists who are more punctual or artistic than others.

Stage director Grey: For budget planning, I need to know the artist.

<u>Deliberating</u>: concept of project resources

trainer azure continues to speak about status reports, and a discussion ensues on the honesty of traffic light systems.

Administrative director White: Project leader of building the new ballet school. There are personal, entrepreneurial, and legal criteria. The traffic lights must show that, in the end, there are no compensation claims.

Trainer azure: I would not as creatively use a traffic light system in a construction project. But change management is different.

<u>Deliberating</u>: concept of traffic lights

The discussion then turns to managing people who are involved in several projects, to requirement specifications, to how to do network mapping, to project management standards at the central department, and to transparency created through explicit project management.

Administrative director White: On a meta level. Two stage directors are not there, unfortunately. They often get frustrated. The magical triangle – we have to be conscious of it and think about how to solve it. We develop quality ourselves. The result is sold as interpretation. Costs are our systemic adjusting of the screw. An insight from today: This is normal.

Addressing stage voice: valuing stage operations

Facilitator brown: The magic triangle is present.

<u>Deliberating</u>: the idea of a magical triangle

Administrative director Orange: The discourse is different. The arts are above everything and there is no reduction when it comes to quality.

Addressing artistic voice: valuing artistic freedom and excellency

<u>Problematizing</u>: the demands of the arts

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR WHITE: This is what some claim. Un-problematizing: framing the demands as a subjective impression	Addressing stage voice: valuing stage operations
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR ORANGE: We need to be clear when people say this. The artists' self-conception is totally different. Re-Problematizing: Framing differing impressions as a problem	Stage voice: valuing stage operations
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR WHITE: We must be clear: what is eternally binding us is the time schedule. We cannot deviate from it. Quality is a thing of interpretation. The budgets increase rapidly. This is a balance we need to find with other projects. Deliberating: the magical triangle at the theater	Public voice: valuing public expectations
They then discuss the pursuit of best practices at other institutions.	
STAGE DIRECTOR GREY: We are already doing project management, but the wording is different. Deliberating: project management is already part of theater	Stage voice: valuing stage operations
STAFF MEMBER BLUE: I would partly object. Problematizing: the need for further project management	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency
STAGE DIRECTOR GREY: Of course. Making fun: ironic comment	
STAFF MEMBER BLUE: I think we do not need to invent it anew, but there are still standards and tools from which we can learn. Re-problematizing: the need for further project management	
STAGE DIRECTOR GREY: This is not exclusive. Un-problematizing: project management already partly exists	
STAFF MEMBER BLUE: But the last 120 minutes were not for nothing. Re-problematizing: the need for further project management	
STAGE DIRECTOR GREY: It wasn't meant like this. Facilitating: specifying oneself	
FACILITATOR BROWN: Unfortunately, we are at the end. Thank you very much. Questions, questions for transfer did not end. This	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

was also the idea of project management. We are also doing it as a reflection on the work.

Deliberating: the importance of the session

TRAINER AZURE: Thank you. *(The participants clap their hands)*.

A short break is allowed, after which the workshop continues with other agenda points.

b) Response actions: "deliberating", little "dealing with problematizations"

As can be seen in this extract, the interactions are animated but mostly peaceful. Administrative directors, as well as stage directors and staff members participate in the discussion of project management. The main response actions point to "deliberating". The participants discuss in a matter-of-fact way, different project management aspects to better understand the management approach, in the process increasing the problematization. Also, during my observation of two additional lectures while attending the OD process (workshops X and XI), with more stage directors present, the atmosphere was more casual and relaxed. Indeed, as an observer, I was surprised by how interested everyone seemed to be, and how several, usually calm or reluctant participants enthusiastically engaged in the lecture. The lively interaction indicates a high possibility of responding. However, I assume that the low immediacy of the issue makes the situation agreeable: the abstract input does not immediately affect the participants' work lives. Only at the end, when a staff member and a stage director debated whether the theater required more (binding) project management, did they engage in a minor conflict. Accordingly, the response actions are problematizing, un-problematizing, re-problematizing, and making fun. The interactions are no longer about matter-of-fact elaborations but turn into a mode of attacking each other's perspectives. The immediacy of the issue of more project management at the theater seems to increase opposability. The minor conflict shows that genres are seldom "pure": eventually, the lecture temporarily turns into a short debate.

c) Effect on voice dynamics: "softening"

The effect of this genre on the voice dynamics can be framed as "softening". Softening refers to the more peaceful interaction of different voices. In contrast to "dulling", where

there is almost no exchange and thus a silent consensus, in “softening” there is a lively exchange of different voices. This can be interpreted as an open consensus; the different voices generally agree and there are no major conflicts. The high interaction does not “dull” the low immediacy, but “softens” it. The main audible voices in the aforesaid workshop extract are the managerial voice and the stage voice. They mingle rather peacefully. The managerial voice is expressed through its preoccupation with effective and efficient project management. The stage voice relates the project management approach to the stage operations and rhythms. Interestingly, in the extract, the stage voice is frequently enacted by administrative directors and staff members, and the managerial voice also by stage directors. Typical voice differences and conflict lines seem to disappear, to some extent. The atmosphere is “softened”.

The public voice and the artistic voice are also addressed in this extract; for example, the public voice when talking about the end result the public will see without an awareness of the compromises made, and the artistic voice when referring to the creative and flexible space the arts need when developing productions. In all, the peaceful mingling of voices appears to be due to the “softening” effect of the lecture genre. Different voices and protagonists can openly interact without attacking each other’s values and priorities. They are “mild” and “soft” to each other.

The “soft” encounter of voices forms a broad and open consensus: different voices engage in a peaceful discussion of project management. There are no major conflicts. Consequently, I frame this as denoting a strong centripetal force. Nonetheless, glimpses of centrifugal moments are evident at times, for example in the brief debate on the arts’ demands, and on whether there is a need for further project management.

d) Similar genres: “brainstorming”, “celebration”, and “break”

In “brainstorming” there is usually a high level of exchange, but since the ideas are “only ideas” (and brainstorming sessions tend not to evaluate ideas), the immediacy is low. The usual response actions are “deliberating” and “stepping out”. As a result, there is a “softening” effect on the voice dynamics since the different voices mingle rather peacefully. The mood is also more light-hearted.

“Celebrations” are those occasions when the facilitators distribute non-alcoholic sparkling wine, for example to toast the masterplan’s adoption or the end of the season. After a short speech, the participants usually engage in small talk or check their

phones, as in a break. During a “break”, participants usually take refreshments, go to the restrooms, and talk about business related topics or personal issues. In both genres, the interaction is high, but the topics are not collectively debated – there is no common topic. Thus, the immediacy is low. Usual response actions are “deliberating”, “stepping out”, and “problematizing”. The effect on the voice dynamics is “softening”: to a large extent, the different voices mingle peacefully.

6.3.3 High immediacy of the issue, restricted possibility to reply: “bridling” in prologues, reports, examinations, and feedback

Another group of genres contains a high immediacy of an issue, but only a limited possibility to reply. In the OD process at THEATERORG, these genres are prologue, report, examination, and evaluation. “Prologues” usually form the beginning of a workshop. In these introductions, the facilitators and an administrative director situate the workshop in the overall OD process, frame its importance and intentions, and address additional topics that are important to them. They address an immediate issue – the current OD process – but the possibility to reply is highly restricted; only the facilitators and the manager talk. The following workshop extract covers the start of workshop IV. In this introduction, the administrative director welcomes the participants and uses the opportunity to emphasize the importance of taking yearly talks seriously. Afterwards, the facilitator presents the workshop agenda.

a) Dialogue III: Introduction by the director and facilitator *(WS IV)*

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR ORANGE: You have received today’s agenda in advance. We are now undisturbed from 9 to 1pm. We are confronted by the task to draw a bow over the season. What can be realistically done?	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency
There are many strains. There are three changes of artistic managers, we are looking for an interim stage, and there are political games. These are add-ons in the normal theater business.	Addressing stage voice: valuing stage operations
There are three artistic managers who want to be let into liberty, and who make big fireworks on beforehand.	Addressing artistic voice: valuing artistic freedom and excellency
The OD process in which we find ourselves has already taken root. I would like to seize the opportunity and calm you a bit. We are in consensus, also with FACILITATOR GREEN, to maintain the altitude of travel, but to not aim at new destinations of travel. But I also do not want us to fall behind in our efforts. We need to stabilize the existing projects in the project groups. I want to draw particular attention to the feedback culture. We have many	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

participation formats, and we know where the real problem lies. It feels like having 85 single appointments. On a weekly basis I find myself in two to three departments, where I explain the OD process and individual projects. My experience is consistently good. Whether stage technique or workshops – there is a great openness and readiness. All notice: something is going on, and not only since yesterday. The second major participation format is the green format[9] which you have experienced. There is almost playful feedback. I do not get the impression that there are inhibitions or anxieties. But there is a constructive spirit. These formats also show how the OD process is arriving in the theater. They have a certain relevance and validity. They are a sample. We get exact feedback on how the projects are diffusing into the theater. In this theater, yearly talks are standard. There is a high obligation and, overall, this format is not questioned. However, there are examples of disrupted appraisal interviews. The reason is that they were conducted at a place with a lot of disturbances, or that they were interrupted or even abandoned. These are killer situations. They endanger this format. Feedback is a systematic method, but we do not yet have a system to secure its implementation. This season, I would like to focus on this.

Addressing employees' voice: valuing work satisfaction

Problematizing: add-ons in normal theater business
Un-problematizing: no new "destinations to travel"
Problematizing: the seriousness of yearly talks

FACILITATOR GREEN: *(making a personal announcement)*

Everyday people's voice: valuing personal relations and entertainment

FACILITATOR WHITE: The coordination circle has planned that there will be a report from every project group. This is not new. But this report will now include the process' progress. In each workshop, there will also be one or two spotlight topics. To get in-depth, focused feedback. So, we will start with the status reports of the project groups. What is planned for this season? And to check progress. Then the project group communication will inform us about the issue of regular communication. They will give the big picture, and there is a need for exchange and discussion of this. Then the project group processes will present a new software. Then you will have earned a break. During the second part, we will not only discuss the green participation formats, but also the blue ones. *STAFF MEMBER YELLOW* will inform you of their composition. This is helpful for future formats and assessments. There is a tension field that you perceive: the arts and setting borders. The coordination circle has proposed going into an exchange with you. This is a special season, as

Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

[9] As explained in chapter 5, THEATERORG labeled the three different participation formats as follows: green formats involve the broader organization, blue formats are the manager's presentation of the OD process to individual departments, and yellow formats are specifically for executives. These colors quickly became part of THEATERORG'S language. This is also an interesting example of how language shapes organizational reality and change (see also Cornelissen, Holt and Zundel, 2011).

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR ORANGE has said. Last season was characterized by planning, this season by implementation. So far the overview.

Deliberating: a good procedure to continue with the OD process

FACILITATOR WHITE then speaks about indicators and aims, and the workshop continues with the status reports.

b) Response actions: "deliberating", "problematizing", and "un-problematizing"

In the foregoing workshop extract of a "prologue", I classify the opposability as limited. Although the immediacy of the issue is high – it is about the trajectory of the OD process – the possibility to reply is very limited: the only people who talk are the manager and the facilitators. They are also in a certain position of power regarding the workshop interactions. The facilitator's overview of the day's workshop contains mainly "deliberations": explaining the procedure of the workshop and the thoughts behind it. The administrative director's introduction engages in "problematizing" and "un-problematizing". On the one hand, he acknowledges the current complex and strained work situation. On the other hand, he announces that no extra projects will emerge from the OD process. However, he urges the group to sustain the OD efforts, and particularly to take the yearly talks seriously. The noticeable urgency in the administrative director's talk creates a measure of tension and reflects the "immediacy" of the issue.

In the OD process of THEATERORG, the facilitators usually introduce the agenda. However, the administrative director also frequently uses the prologue to make statements on what is important for the theater and to what the participants must pay attention. In workshop I, he speaks about the enthusiastic reaction he received from the ministry and opera colleagues to the OD process, and about the importance of participation formats. The administrative director is absent in workshop II as only the project group leaders and the coordination circle attend; here, the facilitators only present the agenda. In workshop III, the administrative director highlights the importance of coordinating the different measures and produces a roadmap. He also shares his first impressions of the blue participation format. As depicted in the extract, in workshop IV he urges the group to "keep the altitude of flying" and, as a warning,

uses the example of disrupted yearly talks received from a participation format. In workshop V, and aimed at a new director, he emphasizes the need to engage both in operative and strategic work. However, he also makes fun of the topic of “dealing with the arts” by asking his colleagues to use the “therapeutic chance today”. In workshop VI, the administrative director briefly excuses the absentees and speaks of varying progress. In workshop VII, he dramatically narrates a spontaneous encounter on his way to the workshop that has consequences for general renovation, and he announces a “gentle OD program this season due to looking into the operative abyss”. He implores a balance of operative and strategic work and supports the importance of the OD process by quoting the comments of employees. Furthermore, because of a previous insurance case, he uses the opportunity to caution protocolling fire-security training. In workshop VIII, he refers to the importance of measuring goals, of indicators and standards, and the need to ensure the conversion of the OD process into the operative work. In addition, he declares that it is not the right time to systematically engage with colleagues from the arts about the workload. Because of the difficulty to arrange an appointment, Workshop IX takes place without the facilitators. However, the administrative director emphasizes the importance of maintaining the rhythm, and also frames the fact that two staff members will facilitate the workshop as a sign of the OD process’ maturity. He also stresses the importance that the steering group sets an example of learning when engaging in external input on project management and emphasizes the importance of binding standards. In addition, he implores the directors to talk about the OD process to subordinate executives, as he frequently receives feedback that these subordinates do not really know what they are doing in the steering group workshops. As this enumeration of prologues typifies, they either entail numerous “deliberations” and “coordination” when the facilitators present the agenda, or many moments of “problematizing” or “un-problematizing” (or “making fun”) by the manager. However, these encounters tend to be one sided, as there is no opportunity for the group to respond to the problematizations. Instead, the group sits silently and listens to the facilitators and manager’s words without any chance to reply.

c) Effect on voice dynamics: “bridling”

The effect on the voice dynamics can be described as “bridling”. Bridling refers to a situation in which there is a tense domination of a voice, or a juxtaposition of different voices. Opposition is likely but limited – thus “bridled”. The dissensus is less vocal. In the foregoing extract the only voice speaking is the managerial voice. This voice

outlines effective and efficient workshop proceedings ("We are now undisturbed from 9 to 1pm. We are confronted by the task to draw a bow over the season"), urges everyone to maintain the efforts of the OD process ("I also do not want us to fall behind in our efforts", "We need to stabilize the existing projects in the project groups"), and implores everyone to conduct the yearly talks in a professional manner ("In this theater, yearly talks are standard", "There is a high obligation", "there are examples of disrupted appraisal interviews"). Other voices are audible only through the managerial voice that addresses them. For example, the managerial voice addresses the artistic voice by speaking about the change of artistic managers and their desire to make a "big firework"; and it addresses the stage voice by acknowledging the add-ons to the normal theater business caused by the current situation of changing managers and general renovation. The managerial voice concedes not coming up with "new travel destinations" and urges everyone to "maintain the altitude of travel". Moreover, it implores everyone to take the yearly talks seriously and to allow no interruptions – this is probably a reference to the interruption of stage operations. Although the managerial voice addresses and prompts the stage voice on several occasions, the stage voice has no space to reply; there is no designated space for this in a prologue. As a result, the managerial voice occupies a prominent position and, without any interference, exerts pressure on the stage voice. Other voices are "bridled"; they must listen, but they cannot respond.

This workshop extract represents "silent dissensus". From the history of the OD workshops, it is evident that there could be a lot of opposition. The projects generated by the OD process and added to the daily operations, especially in a time of changing artistic managers, were highly contested during previous workshops. Therefore, although the immediacy of the issue is high, there is no space to discuss it – in a prologue, only the facilitators and the manager speaks, and the OD process is not open to (new) negotiations. The scene thus mirrors a strong centripetal force. Nonetheless, at times centrifugality comes through, evidenced by addressing potential or actual conflict between the managerial and the stage voices. However, due to the lack of an opportunity to reply, the pressure is increased in a one-directional way. Consequently, in this situation centripetality is high.

d) Similar genres: “report”, “examination”, and “feedback”

In a “report” the workshop participants present, for example, the development of OD projects. The emphasis is on adjusting certain measures or controlling progress. There is not much freedom to question the agreed upon projects, although there could be opposition, especially when the projects are seen by some as adding too much to daily work. The genre has a “bridling” effect on the voices: there is no open dissensus, but only silent dissensus.

The dynamics are similar in an “examination”. The focus is usually on finding facts or the best ways of coping with an issue. As the focus is limited, other voices have no real space to openly “reply”, although opposition to the overall OD approach is likely. However, examinations do not allow general questioning. Although previous workshops have shown that the overall topic was contested, only answers on the level of fact-oriented “examining” were allowed. This constitutes “bridling”.

“Feedbacks” usually take place at the end of a workshop. Workshop participants get the chance to share their impressions on the workshop or the general OD process. However, the possibility of saying something is often limited. Among others, these limitations can take the form of formulating a single word response only, of presenting feedback in a vague way by selecting a picture, or of answering a specific feedback question. In addition, there is no further exchange on individual statements – they are “juxtaposed”, even though the possibility exists of open conflict. Therefore, the genre has a “bridling” effect on the voice dynamics, resulting in a silent dissensus.

6.3.4 High immediacy of the issue, open possibility to reply: “teasing” in debates and votes

The loudest clashing of voices happens when the genre conveys a high immediacy of an issue, and an open possibility to reply. In the observed workshops, this happened during debates or votes. These two genres are usually linked. A debate is usually followed by a vote, and a vote usually evokes a debate. During a “debate”, the participants engage in the discussion of a certain issue. The facilitators structure the discussion with summaries and questions. The following workshop extract presents a debate on the topic of participation formats.

a) Dialogue IV: Discussion of participation formats *(WS I)*

In workshop I, the facilitators present the suggestions of three different participation formats to discuss the OD process with a broader segment of the organization (a blue format addressing all employees in a world café-like setting, a blue format to discuss the mission statement with individual units and departments, and a yellow format to specifically address executives). After a PowerPoint presentation outlining the three formats, three groups are formed (the three sides of a u-formed table arrangement) to discuss the proposition. Then, the facilitator asks each group to present their discussion results in the plenum.

STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN: Well … from the content all propositions are certainly good. Yes? But when I just said something about appointments, I do not mean it as a critique, but I am saying that we have problems with appointments. Yes. We simply have them. And we have, I see, I see difficulties in managing this. We know how much time we need for certain processes, especially in the shift operations. Workshops areas are a little easier, administrative areas certainly too, but shift operations in which there are early, late, and night shifts – there it is extremely difficult. Principally I see this yellow format –

Democratization voice: valuing participation

Stage voice: valuing stage operations

FACILITATOR WHITE: the workshops for the executives.

STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN: Concrete. I like it when it is graspable. But I think that three hours are not, even though they may be justified from the content, they bring us to the edge, I would see one and a half to two hours as possible.

Problematizing: participation formats incompatible with stage schedule

STAGE DIRECTOR BLUE: Please integrate me. No, totally impracticable for me. Because I have no idea who is, or who thinks of himself, as an executive in my area. It is null and void for me.

Stage voice: valuing stage operations

Re-problematizing: leadership structure incompatible with orchestra

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR AMBER: Orchestra is a special zone.

Un-problematizing: orchestra is an exception

STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN: The green format corresponds with what we were planning anyway. I think we already have appointments there. The blue format – the big directory is really in pain then timewise. We still have appointments from the project areas and a very, a very ambitious plan. Additional appointments will still come from there. I see a lot of implementation problems, when I look at the criteria of reaching 50 per cent of employees by the end of this year. I see myself already fail there, and the goal cannot be that we intend something to fail.

Re-problematizing: participation formats incompatible with stage schedule

STAGE DIRECTOR YELLOW: That is right. I think the blue format is right in respect of the main idea as it is about approaching the employees directly, in small groups, in order to talk to them directly. It is not just about talking to the unit leader and leaving it to him how he has understood the matter. I find this important. But at the same time, I am aware of the difficulty that we already have in order to send employees to yearly talk trainings, and to other trainings. To find time slots in our dispositions at all is difficult, even for internal meetings. It is difficult to say that we will not have a lighting technician or a prop man on the stage for two hours. To simply have an internal meeting for operative issues is already difficult. That is why there is a big question mark behind the feasibility because of the time of the disposition.

Democratization voice: valuing participation

Stage voice: valuing stage operations

Re-problematizing: participation formats incompatible with stage schedule

STAGE DIRECTOR BLUE: Starting the first appointments especially with the people from the appreciative inquiry, that I believe is the right start. To see then how the ones approach it who have already been open towards the whole once. To evaluate it and to see how to adapt it for a second round.

Democratization voice: valuing participation

FACILITATOR WHITE: Exactly. That is the idea behind it. Is this all from your group? Thank you very much. Then we simply continue with you. The front side, the second front side.

Coordinating: organizing group feedback

STAFF MEMBER PURPLE: *(humorously)* I was appointed group speaker.

Everyday people's voice: valuing personal relations and entertainment

Stepping out: making a joke on role

FACILITATOR WHITE: Very well!

STAFF MEMBER PURPLE: Appreciative Inquiry, we consistently rated the blue format affirmatively. For us, there are two important points. The first is to proceed specifically to the directories and units when making the concrete arrangement, to see when exactly it should take place – should its duration be one hour or maybe one and a half; and to plan this with the individual directors. The second is the topic of obligation; to simply define whether all executives should be there, whether it should be obligatory, and what this means for the implementation process. And then there is also the feedback demanding that these events should have an activating character. Because it is really about moving the employees to participation, to feedback. They are coming from different production operations into an event, and they get a presentation. So, to really think from the beginning how to activate and involve them. We all rated the other format positively. Starting with the group of the appreciative inquiry. No

Democratization voice: valuing participation

Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

Democratization voice: valuing participation

critical remarks. Sparing the employees for two hours is also not a problem. The third format: there was the feedback to make it interdivisional for purposes of networking. And to look at the composition of the groups, and to consider the leadership spans and the areas where they are coming from. We also calculated, to ensure a good discussion, that we have 180 executives. This means, roughly, ten to 12 events that would take place. This means we need to look at the time horizon. But these interdivisional formats were rated very positively by the executives in the past.

Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency

Deliberating: how to optimize the participation formats

STAFF MEMBER BLACK: I would like to supplement that one does not look at the same leadership level when composing the groups, but at bringing together similar leadership spans. Some people at the third leadership level have ten employees, some 40.

Deliberating: how to best plan the formats

FACILITATOR WHITE: Further supplements? Thank you very much. Yes?

Coordinating: organizing group feedback

ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR VIOLET: When we are talking about the exchange of information. It is important to say that it is critical to not press it into an hour, when we want to open something, so that every employee has the impression: okay, well, now we have ex cathedra teaching.

Democratization voice: valuing participation

Addressing employees' voice: valuing work satisfaction

FACILITATOR: To ensure room for exchange.

Coordinating: ensuring understanding

In the subsequent discussion, the same stage directors repeatedly express their concerns regarding the feasibility of the participation formats. The facilitators make it clear that a minimum amount of time must be allocated to participation workshops, for them to be meaningful. Some scathing comments are made (stage director: "I do not share your relaxation, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR AMBER", "Our goal cannot be to fail!"), and at one point, the facilitator asks whether it is impossible or just difficult to implement the formats. A stage director then explains the difficulty of creating overlapping free time in a three-shift work organization, and the facilitator frames the short time window in the middle of the week as a possible solution. The conflict escalates when the facilitator asks the opposing stage director to stay a bit longer after the workshop to discuss the issue individually, and when a staff member refers to different levels of maturity in different departments. Throughout the overall discussion, the facilitators express time concerns and indicate that they would like to move to the next topic. After a heated debate, there is a short break. Thereafter, the masterplan is discussed.

b) Response actions: “deliberating” and “dealing with problematizations”

As this workshop extract shows, there is both a high immediacy of the issue and an open possibility to reply. The question whether to implement participation formats or not is highly relevant to the participants, as it has an immediate impact on their daily work. Participants also openly respond to each other’s statements. Hence, this genre evokes high opposability. The main response actions are “deliberating” and “dealing with problematizations”, including “problematizing”, “un-problematizing”, and “re-problematizing”. Problematizing refers to the framing of something as deeply problematic, un-problematizing opposes this, and re-problematizing increases the issue of problematization. Together, the latter response actions create a “battle over problematizations”. Some problematize and re-problematize, whereas others oppose by un-problematizing. This leads to pressure and controversy.

The most controversial debates in the OD process during my observations, apart from the issue of implementing the participation formats depicted above, evolved around the issues of voting on the auditing of communication standards; voting on the masterplan; and discussing, in several workshops, how to deal with the arts. In all these debates, the whole spectrum of “dealing with problematizations” is center stage. In particular, the three workshops on “how to deal with the arts” depict an escalation of the discussion. In workshop IV, there are emotional problematizations, and a forceful attempt by the manager to un-problematize. In workshop V, further controversy arises on the issue of who should be in charge of engaging the arts in the discussion. Afterwards, in workshop VI, the facilitators have nearly no chance of successfully “coordinating” and “solving” the problems, as the response actions of “problematizing”, “re-problematizing” and “ignoring” are so strong. In particular, these response actions create high tension and heat the atmosphere.

c) Effect on voice dynamics: “teasing”

The effect of this genre on the voice dynamics is one of “teasing”. Teasing refers to a more tense interaction and battling of voices. There is open dissensus and different voices audibly clash. In the foregoing extract, the democratization voice favors engaging the employees, while the managerial voice is occupied with planning and implementing the participation formats in the best possible way. The stage voice, however, raises strong objections. The stage voice, very audibly, presents repeated

and at times angry counterarguments to the implementation of extended participation formats, including counterarguments regarding unbearable extra work, the difficulty of exempting employees from stage obligations or, in order to find common time, the need to coordinate three shifts. By contrast, the managerial voice engages in a discussion of the number of events and participants, or in other practical concerns such as the coordination of different formats.

The voice dynamic in this workshop extract is highly centrifugal. The clashing of different voices is clearly audible and there is open dissensus. The dissensus takes place “in the open” and is not merely momentary but lasts throughout the whole workshop episode. Several times the facilitator attempts to end the discussion. However, the participants repeatedly raise new points. Nevertheless, centripetal moments are evident. For example, there is high agreement on the appreciation of employee engagement, as well as on starting with the employees who have previously participated in the appreciative inquiry initiative. As noted earlier, this aligns with Bakhtin’s (1981) idea that centrifugal and centripetal forces are at work simultaneously, although one force may be stronger or more clearly visible at a specific time: “Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear” (p. 272).

6.4 Discussion

As the analysis indicates, the genres used in a workshop are an important element of how voices can encounter each other. They influence the possibility of opposability that results in how “eager” voices confront each other, and how “inviting” the space is for so doing. Thus, in the OD process, “responsiveness” is dynamic, and it varies with different kind of genres. Each workshop situation evokes responses, and the genre mediates these responses and their effects. Response actions range from “coordinating”, through “deliberating” and “dealing with problematizations”, to “stepping out”. When a genre’s immediacy is low and the possibility to reply is limited – as seen in the presentation genre – the effect on the voices is “dulling”: a single voice dominates the room without any graspable tension, there is silent consensus, and centripetal forces prevail. When the immediacy is low but the possibility to reply is limited – as seen in the lecture genre – the effect on the voice dynamics is framed as “softening”: different voices mingle, but in a rather peaceful and relaxed way; there is open consensus, so that centripetal forces prevail. When the immediacy is high but the

possibility to reply is low – as seen in the prologue genre – the effect on the voice dynamics is called "bridling": the opposition of others to the dominantly speaking voices is tangible, but there is no opportunity for them to effectively do so in this genre; there is silent dissensus and, although centrifugality is noticeable, the centripetal forces prevail. In contrast to the previous three genre types, a strong centrifugal force is mirrored by the effects of genres with high opposability. When the immediacy is high and the possibility to reply is open, as seen in the debate genre, it has a "teasing" effect on the voice dynamics. It provokes a clash of voices, an open dissensus, and an increase in centrifugality. However, as shown in the analysis, even though centrifugal or centripetal forces may prevail, there could still be moments when opposing forces clash. This aligns with Bakhtin's (1981) idea that both forces are at play simultaneously, even if the analysis reveals how genres mediate the "balance" between centrifugal and centripetal forces.

The analysis assists our understanding of how responsiveness is dynamically organized in the OD process of THEATERORG, and how this affects organizational reflection and continuous dialogue. The findings provide insights into organizational reflection as an implicit process: in the OD workshops, there is an implicit questioning of and by different voices, most noticeable in the response actions of "dealing with problematizations". In the quarrel of problematizing, un-problematizing, etc. voices contest each other's "truths". This struggle is very much mediated by the genres at play; they influence how the voices could encounter, and they have an impact on the plurality of voices at play. I explain these points in more detail in the next sections.

6.4.1 Problematizing as implicit organizational reflection

First, the analysis shows that organizational reflection is not an entity that is "there or not there" but that it emerges as a more fluid and interactional accomplishment. If organizational reflection is understood as different voices implicitly questioning each other's assumptions, the genre analysis indicates that the degree of reflexivity varies with each genre. Accordingly, debates and votes are genres with strong centrifugal and reflective potential whereas, in this regard, presentations or epilogues are weaker genres when it comes to the possibilities for reflection. However, the centripetal forces are important as well. For example, after the debate on the participation formats, these formats are implemented and their results are reported in the steering group workshops; there is a change in genres from debates and votes to reports, decreasing

the opposability over time. Although more centrifugal genres may emerge with increased implicit organizational reflexivity, more centripetal genres ensure their translation into implementation.

Moreover, the analysis shows that centrifugal and centripetal forces are not exclusive. Actually, centripetal genres can be "disturbed" by centrifugal moments, and vice versa. Voices can still clash indirectly in centripetal genres, for example by being addressed or through short interactions. And centrifugal genres can still show moments of consensus. For example, when the administrative director presents the measures and planning of the communication project group, his monologue can be interpreted as a strong centripetal force: he enumerates and explains measures, and the other participants sit there and listen without further interaction. The main audibly voice is the managerial voice with its focus on effective and efficient planning. However, for short moments, other voices also appear and conflict: for example, when he humorously reminds the participants to return the survey feedback, the managerial voice briefly criticizes the stage voice for prioritizing the daily stage business and not returning this survey aimed at professionalization. Later, the democratization voice also briefly appears when the director assures the group that a communications guideline will be created in a participative manner. Thus, despite the prevailing centripetal force, centrifugal moments are also visible. This also applies to the contrary situation: for example, in the heated debate on the participation formats, in particular the stage voice, the managerial voice, and the democratization voice are struggling against each other. However, despite this strong centrifugal momentum, centripetal forces still appear; for example, there is a consensus on designing participation formats, which makes the OD process, for the employees, as concrete and graspable as possible. Implicit organizational reflection is thus not something static, but a more processual quality of organizational life, including OD processes. Centripetal and centrifugal forces tear at the OD process, and they increase and decrease like the ebb and flow of the ocean (Steyaert, 2004).

The analysis also shows how "problematizations" enforce implicit reflection. Problematizations increase the pressure on other voices. They vociferously attack the assumptions of other voices in an implicit way. Usually, centrifugality is framed as "dissensus" (e.g. Jabri, 2004; Helin & Avenier, 2016). The analysis deepens this understanding by exploring, in a more fine-grained way, the different facets of dissensus. "Dealing with problematizations" provokes a deeper form of dissensus than "deliberating" different options or viewpoints. In a lecture, such as the aforementioned

on project management training, different aspects on project management can arise through continuous deliberations. However, in a debate such as the one on the participation format, the “battle over problematizations” leads to a deep and detailed questioning of each other’s views. This empirical differentiation mirrors well how the organizational reflection literature distinguishes between more instrumental forms of reflection and deeper, more critical, and assumption-questioning forms of reflection. Several scholars see more value in the latter forms of reflection, as they “problematize” taken-for-granted premises (Mezirow, 1990; Reynolds, 1998; Hoyrup & Elkjaer, 2005). Like the Dialogic OD literature, the organizational reflection literature lacks empirical studies on the “how” of these deeper forms of reflection. Although the “problematizations” in my research project may not represent an explicit questioning of the underlying assumptions of an issue, they nevertheless provide insights into the enactment of problematizations: they include framing something as “problematic”, repeating the problematization through “re-problematizing”, and facing attempts of “un-problematizing”, “solving”, “making fun”, or “ignoring”. The analysis hence provides substance to the enactment of problematizations. Schön (1983) referred to the importance of problems as a social process:

> In real-world practice, problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as givens. They must be constructed from the materials of problematic situations which are puzzling, troubling, and uncertain. In order to convert a problematic situation to a problem, a practitioner must do a certain kind of work. (p. 40)

Accordingly, Schön (1983) conceptualizes reflection as an interaction with a situation, in which something is framed as a problem. For him, “problem setting is a process in which, interactively, we name the things to which we will attend and frame the context in which we will attend to them” (ibid.). The analysis supplements this viewpoint by showing that problematizing and thus reflecting on something is also an act of forcing a problem into the focus of a group, and of negotiating the framing of this problem within this group. From the ways of responding we can thus learn how these problematizations take place interactionally, and how this affects the conversational and reflective dynamics. For instance, the facilitators actively bring the topic of participation formats to the table; many of the stage directors problematize the feasibility of these formats, and many of the managerial staff and directors problematize their concrete implementation. It is this active and collective problem setting that turns the participation formats into such a heated topic, gaining the group’s full and intense attention and leading to the questioning and exploration of this issue from many perspectives.

Problematizing often accompanies tension and conflictual emotions, as becomes evident in the heated debate on participation formats. By contrast, “coordinating” aims to pragmatically “manage” the communication in the OD process, and “deliberating” refers to more instrumental reflections. These responses usually go along with a calmer and more matter-of-fact atmosphere, as seen in the example of the project management lecture. This corresponds with most of the organizational reflection literature that frames reflection as a potentially emotionally tense and unsettling process (Swan & Bailey, 2004; Vince, 2002; Raelin, 2001). Vince (2002) postulates that participants in reflective processes must learn to sustain these emotions. The analysis indicates that the pressure and the tense atmosphere increase depending on the extent to which participants “battle” problematizations. It thus shows that by switching between modes of problematization and modes of deliberation, it is possible to balance conflictual atmospheres. It could be that OD facilitators try to moderate these tensions by balancing genres that are likely to increase problematizations and genres that increase deliberations.

Altogether, the analysis contributes to “conceptualizing critical reflection as a reflexive space of appearance in which plurality is not merely tolerated or coped with, but recognized as a constitutive element of the process itself” (Cotter et al., 2016, p. 175): centrifugal forces increase the plurality of voices and thus the possibility of reflection; although this may come with tension, the reflective potential of a pluralistic encounter of voices assists in “unsettling” assumptions that would be taken for granted if there were no problematizations. It is through these tense problematizations that organizational issues are addressed and contested. It is this “threshold momentum” that organizations seek when engaging in OD: “In Dostoevsky, the participants in the act stand on the threshold (on the threshold of life and death, falsehood and truth, sanity and insanity). And they are presented here as voices, ringing out, speaking out ‘before earth and heaven’” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 147).

6.4.2 Dialogicality of OD conversations: responding within workshop genres

Second, the analysis provides insights into how “dialogicality” is accomplished in OD. Although OD scholars have proposed a shift from more Diagnostic to more Dialogic approaches to OD, relatively little research has been done on how dialogicality is enacted. This analysis shows how both a Bakhtinian approach to dialogue and the consideration of genres can improve our understanding of Dialogic OD. A Bakhtinian

understanding of dialogue as an encounter and potential clashing of different voices provides a generative framework for an advanced understanding of the dynamics of OD conversations. The analysis demonstrates how the encounter of different voices stimulates and characterizes the different OD conversations. Although OD scholars propose that OD changes dominant organizational discourses and conversations, they are still looking for answers on to "how" to do this (Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Grant & Marshak, 2011). The analysis contributes to this discussion by showing that different voices can question each other, and that they can change the direction of a conversation. The analysis highlights that genres mediate the way in which voices encounter. Some genres broaden the space for voices to "battle" each other, whereas others limit this space, often considerably. For example, voices encounter differently in a prologue than in a debate, and differently in a lecture than in a presentation. Not only is consensus different from dissensus, but silent consensus is also different from open consensus, and silent dissensus different from open dissensus. Dialogue thus "wanders" from more "dulling" spaces to more "bridling" spaces, and from more "teasing" spaces to more "softening" spaces. Even though an episode may seem rather monologic, as in the above example of the prologue, it does not mean that it is relatively tense: the administrative director and the facilitator speak of important topics, and there is no opportunity to oppose – however, participants can still be "silently" or "delayed" responsive:

> Of course, an utterance is not always followed immediately by an articulated response. An actively responsive understanding of what is heard (a command, for example) can be directly realized in action (the execution of an order or command that has been understood and accepted for execution), or it can remain, for the time being, silent responsive understanding (certain speech genres are intended exclusively for this kind of responsive understanding, for example, lyrical genres), but this is, so to speak, responsive understanding with a delayed action. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 68/69)

This is how the "bridling" effect is created. Although other participants may have a lot to say on the topic, they cannot; still, the "dialogue continues" – although silently, in people's heads, or in later commentaries or occasions where open dispute is possible. Dialogicality thus exists with or without open responses. The administrative director and the facilitators are aware of this dialogic situation. They speak of topics knowing the other will listen, and they hope to evoke certain (silent) reactions of them:

> And the speaker himself is oriented precisely toward such an actively responsive understanding. He does not expect passive understanding that, so to speak, only duplicates his own idea in someone else's mind. Rather, he expects response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth (various speech genres presuppose various integral orientations and speech plans on the part of the speakers or writers). (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69)

So, although “there is always dialogicality”, the concrete enactment of dialogicality varies along genres. Choosing a certain genre is part of “designing” a workshop. The people who prepare the workshop, especially the OD facilitators, thus occupy an influential position in the reflective and dialogic space of OD processes: “The speaker’s speech will is manifested primarily in the choice of a particular speech genre” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 78). However, this does not mean that a genre always plays out as planned. For example, there are instances in the OD process when the facilitators had planned a prologue, but it turned into a debate; or they had planned an examination, but it turned into a break. What is more, the voice dynamics depend on the concrete enactment of different responding styles during a workshop. For example, for voices to clash, there needs to be response actions like “problematizing” and “battles over problematizations”. There must be many “deliberations” for voices to mingle peacefully. How people respond and how people accept the suggestion of a genre are partly up to themselves: “A genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 106).

The term “response” is one that expresses both a reaction and an action; participants respond to prior utterances and within the possibilities and limits of a genre. However, they do not do so passively (although sometimes “bodily forced” to reply in battles over problematizations) and their responses are active addresses directed at others to convince them of certain “truths” and perspectives. The call of OD scholars to explore how dialogue is enacted, can therefore be answered by framing the dialogicality of OD conversations as “responsiveness”. In OD workshops, responses follow each other dynamically. Bakhtin (1986) points out that we continuously respond to each other in dialogue: to prior utterances, to possible future utterances, to bystanders. Dialogue is per definition relational. Through dialogue, we respond to others and we elicit responses from them:

> Any understanding of live speech, a live utterance, is inherently responsive… Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another… sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener. (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 68/69)

Responding is what keeps the dialogue “alive”:

> Each utterance must be regarded as primarily a response to previous utterances of the given sphere… Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements and relies upon the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account… Therefore, each kind of utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances… (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 91)

The analysis indicates how responsiveness is organized in the OD process of THEATERORG: the four effects of dulling, softening, bridling, and teasing have different consequences on the voice dynamics and participants' responsiveness. Whereas in "dulling" the atmosphere is rather calm and monotonous, in "softening" it is lively but gentle. However, in "bridling" there is contained tension and in "teasing" there is open tension and conflict. Hence, the "responsiveness" varies along the opposability generated by genres; dialogue in an OD process is not just a chance product – how facilitators, managers and preparation groups design the workshop will affect their responses during the workshop. The choice of topics and formats and the relational stance toward participants will likely affect the voice dynamics and overall responsiveness that develops. This, of course, is not a one-directional route. Equally, OD practitioners have to work with the responses "that are there", respond to them, and relate to them. Shedding light on the role that workshop genres play in these dynamics can thus assist in arriving at a more conscious reflection on the responsiveness dynamics taking place, and at a more considerate choice of genres, process planning and intervention.

The issue of chance versus design regarding OD workshops is also a topic in Jorgenson and Steier's (2013) study of World Café workshops at the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa, Florida. In one of these workshops, mothers of young children are invited to co-design a children's gallery. In one of their vignettes, the authors describe how these mothers sit at café-like tables during the workshop, with the playground and their children in view. However, a lively and engaged discussion does not develop until, at a point in time, the children join their mothers. Jorgenson and Steier (2013) attribute this conversational shift to the shift in the informal atmosphere: the room has already been designed to convey an informal atmosphere, but the mothers' separation from their children was still perceived as artificial. From a Bakhtinian perspective, one can argue that the children brought another voice to the table, which shifted the conversational dynamics, and that the "accidental" change of the interactional setting also shifted the genre. Although initially "designed" as an informal café talk, other genres may have been enacted previously: for example, supervising the children, an official customer feedback survey, or taking part in an observed experiment. It is Jorgenson and Steier's (2013) interpretation that the World Café approach works with informal café-like conversations that do not always create the atmosphere intended by the design. This interpretation can be supplemented by the insight that even a café-like setting can be a space to enact a plurality of genres; that OD practitioners may need to attune to the "genres-in-action" and not only to the

“one-genre-as-designed”; and that they need to be aware that this is a complex process full of centripetal and centrifugal dynamics and not a linear process. OD conversations are “alive”, and thus not only products designed a priori. And attempts to perfectly design dialogue could fail:

> In dramatic dialogue or dramatized dialogue introduced into the author’s context, these relationships link together represented, objectified utterances and therefore are themselves objectified. This it not a clash of two ultimate semantic authorities, but rather an objectified (plotted) clash of two represented positions, subordinated wholly to the higher, ultimate authority of the author. The monologic context, under these circumstances, is neither broken nor weakened. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 188)

There are additional studies that focus on the relationship between workshop formats and conversational dynamics. Most of these studies originate in strategy research. Regular strategy workshops are common in many organizations (Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson & Schwarz, 2006). Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) studied the effect of different discussion practices in strategy workshops on the stabilization or destabilization of an existing strategic orientation. They differentiate between free discussion (the chair suspends authority over turn-taking leading), restricted free discussion (the attendees can open an issue for discussion, but the chair retains authority in the background), restricted discussion (the chair explicitly invites participants to speak in turn), and administrated discussion (the participants deal with the administration of previously agreed on topics). Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) find that free discussions have the biggest potential to destabilize existing strategic orientations. The self-organizing character of free discussions “allows participants to step out of existing discursive and cognitive structures and routines and experiment with tentative new ideas that may challenge the existing orientations” (ibid. p. 1405). The spontaneous interaction “encouraged participants to voice even tentative ideas about the proposed variation” (ibid. p. 1406).

This study supports the idea that genres can enhance the variety of voices and assist in challenging each other’s views. What Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) call “free discussions” resemble, in parallel, the “debate” genre: here, there is a high possibility of open interaction and a high engagement of different voices. “Restricted free discussions” resemble the genre of an “examination”. For example, there may still be exchanges but their focus is very limited (e.g. the examining of certain aspects of the OD process such as comparing initial goals and factual progress), and principal decisions have already been made (e.g. on certain OD measures that are being examined). A “restricted discussion” aligns with the genre of a “presentation”, for example when the staff developer presents the status quo of the age-structure

analysis, and other participants briefly share their positive experiences of it. An "administered discussion" comes close to the genre of a "report", for example when different participants report the status quo of a project. In addition, the range between "administered discussions" and "free discussions" mirrors the range between "coordinating" and "deliberating" and "dealing with problematizations". However, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) do not consider these response actions. A lecture could include free discussion but the proportion of "problematizations" may be low, as in the case of THEATERORG. Furthermore, Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) do not consider the "immediacy" of the issue as it was already a "given" in their case. In addition, they focus on the presence and the reluctance of the "chair" in workshops. In my analysis, the chair has a role (e.g. in the prologues) but the "dominance of a voice" is not only enacted through the manager, but also through previous decisions (e.g. presentations and reports that provide space to say something, but not to fundamentally criticize a measure). Moreover, a Bakhtinian framework sensitizes the condition that a discussion is neither totally free nor unfree. As the foregoing analysis shows, even in more restricted forms, such as a prologue, there is an encounter of voices (e.g. the addressing of the stage voice by a managerial voice), and even more centripetal genres could have centrifugal moments. A Bakhtinian framework provides a nuanced view of the "freedom" of voices to encounter, and of the tentative potential that is inherent in any communicative situation – even in more restricted modes[10].

Other studies on strategy workshops emphasize the importance of these workshops being different than the everyday work setting: Workshops are per definition non-ordinary meetings (Nielsen, 2012). An even greater difference can be made by a change in place, structure, or materiality (Hendry & Seidl, 2003; Johnson, Prashantham, Floyd & Bourque, 2010; Statler & Oliver, 2008; Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004; Jacobs & Statler, 2006; Statler, Jabobs & Heracleous, 2011)[11]:

> (…) a distinctive feature of many such methods is the way in which they attempt to create a contrast with more conventional meeting formats. By reconfiguring seating arrangements, altering the usual rules and structures of participation, and even introducing opportunities for choreographed physical movement, the goal is to challenge participants' expectations and thereby change the shape of the conversation. (Jorgenson & Steier, 2013, p. 389)

This perspective positions the workshop relative to the "everyday organization" and introduces centrifugality by changing the setting. In my analysis, centrifugality is the

[10] I propose that the labeling of genres, similar to literary analysis, assists in conveying a more vivid picture of the experience of these workshop formats.

[11] Many of these studies do not differentiate between a variety of formats within a workshop, and frequently assume a certain a priori effect instead of identifying genre(s) a posteriori. A genre analysis can thus assist in attuning to the enactment of genres as they unfold, independent of design intentions.

product of the encounter of different voices. According to this viewpoint, OD workshops enable an encounter of voices that differs from everyday encounters. In the case of the OD workshops of THEATERORG, the managerial voice and the stage voice frequently clash. Their "representatives", namely the managerial staff and the stage directors, usually sit in different buildings and undertake different tasks. The steering group workshops present the opportunity for both voices to encounter and "clash" (and thus also to produce implicit reflections that may otherwise be impossible). They also provide an opportunity for the democratization voice to "enter" the conversations, and to promote participation and bottom-up approaches. These are all voice encounters that differ from the everyday way of doing things at THEATERORG, and that change the organization through the conversations taking place during the OD workshops. For example, the conversations taking place at the steering group workshops lead to the implementation of participation formats, professionalization measures, and exchanges with the arts to moderate the pressure on the stage staff.

Jarzabkowski and Seidl (2008) point out that the "difference to the everyday" could privilege certain groups (e.g. top management) before the workshop even starts. For example, the participants involved in agenda setting may be privileged, as well as the participants who work at the location of the workshop (e.g. headquarters). In the case of THEATERORG, the manager is involved in final decisions on the workshop agenda, although the agenda is prepared by the coordination circle consisting of managerial and stage staff. In addition, the facilitators "coach" the manager on certain topics, emphasizing the importance of certain issues, and advance specific topics, such as "dealing with the arts", despite the manager's initial reluctance. Still, many OD topics are content-wise "closer" to the managerial staff, for example the project masterplan and the management tools, as well as leadership and participation. It is assumed that this also affects the power dynamics of the voices.

Apart from these studies that promote differences "to the everyday" and thus centrifugality in strategy workshops, there are studies that emphasize the importance of a certain momentum that constitutes centripetality. For example, MacIntosh, MacLean and Seidl (2010) compared unsuccessful and successful strategy workshops. They concluded that successful strategy workshops are frequently part of a series of workshops over at least a year, with a moderate to high frequency and high participant seniority. The long duration, high frequency, and high seniority of participants mirror centripetal forces. Apparently, a certain (power) momentum is needed to translate workshop conversations into the broader organization, and thus to

be “successful”. In the case of THEATERORG, this becomes visible at the conversation topic of participation formats. In workshop I, for the first time, the facilitators propose concrete participation formats. This results in heated discussions, accompanied by a clash of the democratization, managerial, and stage voices. The democratization voice and the managerial voice push the implementation of the participation formats through despite strong initial opposition from the stage voice. In workshops IV the participants share their impressions, and in workshops V they report which suggestions coming from the participation formats are selected for implementation. These then become part of the regular status reports of every steering group workshop. After a year, new participation formats are in place, leading to new suggestions and adjustments of the OD process. Consequently, on a regular basis, the employees’ voice is also heard in the steering group workshops and in the overall OD process. This transformation of the process from a debate with high opposability to reports with rather low opposability represents a switch from centrifugal to centripetal forces. By contrast, the re-introduction of a participation format represents a switch to centrifugal forces. This dynamic ensures the generation of both open conversations and output-driven implementations. The forcing through of two voices (with the facilitators strongly favoring the implementation of the participation formats) despite the strong opposition of a third voice, along with the switch from debates to reports, express centripetal forces and ensure these formats’ implementation and the participation of the employees’ voice. The change potential of conversations requires both centrifugal and centripetal forces, thus generating different perspectives and new ideas, as well as securing the implementation of certain ideas.

Other literature emphasizes the role of dialogue in strategy workshops. In these studies, dialogue is usually framed as good quality communication (dialogue as “better conversation” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 19)). For example, the studies of Duffy and O’Rourke (2014), Jacobs and Heracleous (2005), and Ferdig and Ludema (2005) revealed an exceptional conversational mode leading to strategic shifts. Although these studies also value dissent and critical inquiry, they emphasize the importance of mutual comprehension and respect. For example, Duffy and O’Rourke (2014) speak of “mutual acknowledgment”, Jacobs and Heracleous (2005) of “mutual understanding”, and Ferdig and Ludema (2005) of “a spirit of inclusion”. Neither do these qualities describe the heated discussions that characterize the “debates” and “votes” of THEATERORG’S OD workshops, nor are they explicit features of the Bakhtinian concept of dialogue. In a Bakhtinian conceptualization, dialogue comprises friction and contestation between voices; he does not theorize mutually respectful relationships as

a precondition for “successful” dialogue. Although it could be argued that these qualities would be beneficial to an OD process, the benefit of a Bakhtinian perspective is that it acknowledges the diversity and dissensus to be a constitutional part of life; his work is therefore primarily oriented to dialogue as an ontological quality – instead of to a pragmatic or ethical quality. For Bakhtin, our thoughts, our inner voices, our utterances, our exchanges with concrete others and with imagined others are through and through pluralistic and dialogic, and often display dissensus, confrontation, friction, and “battle”. By linking Bakhtinian thinking to an implicit understanding of organizational reflection, the analysis reveals reflexive tendencies in conversations that do not necessarily take place in a calm and explorative manner. As a result, what this study adds to existing strategy literature on dialogue is seeing dialogue as part of language, and not just as part of a particularly “good” use of language. It assists in valuing dissensus and frictional reflection even if it is not accompanied by an amicable relationship or atmosphere. A Bakhtinian perspective on OD can teach us “to not be afraid” of pluralism and confrontation. It normalizes the dialogic and potentially frictional “nature” of life. Studies which frame dialogue as a particular “good” form of communication, and which emphasize the need for certain relational and emotional conditions assist in dealing with emerging tension and friction. I will, however, return to this point in *chapter 8*, in which I further differentiate this aspect.

6.4.3 The carnivalesque potential of the everyday people’s voice to “step out”

A particular role plays the “everyday people’s voice” in the OD conversations at THEATERORG. As this voice was not really evident in the previous empirical examples, I return to a brief discussion of its role. On the level of small talk during workshop breaks, and during the episodes before and after the official workshop, the everyday people’s voice has an implicit reflective potential in assisting the distancing of the participants’ bodies and minds from the official workshop developments. Jokes and exchange on a personal level usually lighten the mood and provide a space that is, in some ways, separated from the official workshop. Furthermore, during official workshop episodes, the enactment of the everyday people’s voice – usually through jokes and “stepping out” – immediately creates a reflective distance to what is currently happening in the workshop. For example, at the end of workshop IV, the facilitator and a stage director engage in enacting an everyday people’s voice and in “stepping out”.

Dialogue V: Ending the workshop *(WS IV)*

After a heated debate on how to deal with the arts, FACILITATOR YELLOW initiates the closing of the workshop and invites participants to say something about the day's workshop.	
FACILITATOR YELLOW: Voices to today. There is a lot running. Even a little innovation *(smirking)*. Stepping out: teasing a project group's progress	Everyday people's voice: valuing personal relations and entertainment
STAGE DIRECTOR BLUE: *(humorously)* Perspective, let's put it like that. Stepping out: playing along with a joke, mocking oneself a little	
FACILITATOR YELLOW: Is there the need to say something? Coordinating: asking for further comments	Democratization voice: valuing participation
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN starts raising his voice.	
FACILITATOR YELLOW *(grinning)*: Of course. Making fun / stepping out: mocking someone for again wanting to say something	Everyday people's voice: valuing personal relations and entertainment
ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN: You remember when we had the off-site back then. What was our biggest challenge? The changing artistic management of play. There was irritation, incomprehension, an unwillingness to adjust to our way of working. It did not change until today *(laughter)*. But how we are dealing with it has become more professional. Take this as a success: now you have three times the challenge *(laughter).* I am not cynical *(laughter)*. Un-problematizing: depicting a situation as manageable	Managerial voice: valuing effectivity and efficiency
FACILITATOR YELLOW: I wish you all merry Christmas *(laughter)*. Oh yes, that's also still happening. Stepping out: joking about the burden of Christmas.	Everyday people's voice: valuing personal relations and entertainment
The workshop ends, and the participants pack and engage in small group conversations or leave the room.	

These jokes on the process and "stepping out" actions seem to form a meta comment that immediately creates a distance to the workshop proceedings (e.g. through jokes on progress, typical roles, or typical perceptions of the workload). They help to overcome the usual divisions between the official OD voices, for example the stage

voice and the managerial voice, by providing a common-voice space that is in a different sphere – and from which one can safely look at the current conversation. Bakhtin (1984b) wrote a lot about the role of carnival in societies and literature, and this notion has also been taken up by organizational scholars to theorize resistance and renewal (Cunliffe, Helin & Luhman, 2014). Carnival is a festivity that plays with norms, hierarchies and roles, and that provides "common people" the opportunity to mock institutions: "Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed" (Bakhtin, 1984b, p.10). The everyday people's voice can be seen as a carnivalesque change of roles. The official professional roles are suspended for a moment or some time, the process is made fun of, and the equality of everyone beyond the official workshop happening is emphasized: "It is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 23). Organizations usually establish many different roles over time. However, they are usually part of the official and professional sphere. In this sense, "everyday people" are continuously playing a role in organizations. By returning to their "everyday people's voice", they can immediately create a reflective distance relative to the official sphere. In this sense, organizations always have an implicit reflective potential when employees bring their "everyday people" to work, which remain a certain distance away from their professional work and roles and which can be enacted through conversations. Genres are, as they are language-in-use, not "fixed"; in particular, humor and the everyday people's voice seem to have a special power to "shake up" the potential divisiveness of professional organizing:

> But even here it is generally possible to re-accentuate genres. This is typical of speech communication: thus, for example, the generic form of a greeting can move from the official sphere into the sphere of familiar communication, that is, it can be used with parodic-ironic re-accentuation. To a similar end, one can deliberately mix genres from various spheres. (Bakhtin, 1986, pp. 79/80)

6.4.5 Encountering genres

The choice of genres has a major impact on dialogicality. It not only comes with "stabilizing" and "destabilizing" (centrifugal and centripetal) consequences, but it also has power consequences. At the same time, genres can never "switch off" the livingness of conversations: they are still "irritable" and changeable; albeit by raising an "everyday people's voice" and "stepping out", or by "problematizing" when no "problematizations" are asked for. For example, in the next chapter (*chapter 7*), I show

how raising one's voice can interrupt the monologue of the agenda presentation. However, at present, I want to point out that workshop genres are an important OD element, and that OD practitioners need to be aware of this. OD, emanating from humanist and democratic ideals, needs an awareness of the consequences of genres for voice dynamics and the constraint of events in OD: "Speech genres provide a good example of this relative degree of freedom: the better we know possible variants of the genres that are appropriate to a given situation, the more choice we have among them" (Emerson & Holquist, 1986, xix). This awareness of the consequences of genres also includes paying attention to their potential routinization and "rigidity". OD, as a "developmental" process, could provoke creativity and innovation. But organizational life is often highly routinized:

> This exhaustiveness can be almost complete in certain spheres of everyday life (questions that are purely factual and similarly factual responses to them, requests, orders, and so forth), in certain business circles, in the sphere of the military and industrial commands and orders, that is, in those spheres where speech genres are maximally standard by nature and where the creative aspect is almost completely lacking. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 77)

If Dialogic OD wants to "challenge" dominant organizational conversations, playing with genres and actively "disturbing" them can become an important intervention. This is where the aforementioned research on OD workshops and changes in their places, structures, and materiality enters. For example, the research on "serious play" provides interesting ideas on how organizations can use playful material to stimulate discussion and reflection on the organization's status quo (e.g. Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004; Jacobs & Statler, 2006; Statler & Oliver, 2008; Statler, Heracleous & Jacobs, 2011). Serious-play approaches play with the sharing of images and fantasies about an organization. The playful materiality is supposed to produce new and unusual insights: "The life seen in the dream makes ordinary life seem strange, forces one to understand and evaluate ordinary life in a new way (in the light of another glimpsed possibility)" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 147).

6.5 Summary

In summary, this first analysis provides valuable insights into how implicit reflection and dialogicality are performed in OD. It explores the effect of genres on voice dynamics, and thereby diversifies our understanding of dialogue in OD: from genres provoking a lot of "opposability" to genres limiting it, workshop formats to a significant extent influence the conversational dynamics of OD processes. This is important for two

reasons. First, assuming that the questioning among voices is a mutually reflective performance, the reflective potential of OD conversations fluctuates along the chosen genres. Second, recognizing the humanist and democratic aspirations of OD and its pursuit of creativity and innovation, it is likely that OD practitioners want to pay attention to the genres' mediation of pluralism and creativity. However, as discussed, genres are not "fixed": they are continuously torn between centrifugal and centripetal forces, and participants have the power to "irritate" genres. The everyday people's voice and its ability to "step out" of the official workshop proceedings, in particular, seems to be a resource of meta reflection and dealing with tension. In addition to the effect of genres on voice dynamics, the next chapter addresses the equally important aspect of surprises in OD workshops. Whereas the interaction of different voices keeps the OD conversations alive and lively, moments of surprise also contribute to the vividness and the "eventness" of OD processes. These "threshold moments" are thus the focus of the second analysis.

7. Analysis II: Organizing "Eventness" – an Analysis of the Enactment of Surprise Moments

The real connections begin where ordinary plot ends, having fulfilled its service function. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 277)

7.1 Introduction

During my observations at THEATERORG, I regularly came across moments that surprised me as they somehow stood out. They were instances when something happened unexpectedly, most often on a small scale without any broader consequences for the overall OD process. They also often surprised the participants and caused a different, temporary change in the mood or feeling of the meeting. They were passing moments that, for a while, interrupted the flow of the workshop in a certain way and indicated that there are more ways of doing things than the habitual way. When experimenting with a Bakhtinian framework, I framed these surprising instances as expressions of the "liveliness" of OD conversations. Conversations cannot be totally controlled, managed or "tamed', but they are regularly shaken by unexpected developments. This corresponds with Bakhtin's (1984a, 1993) idea of "eventness"; livingness is expressed through the unscripted and unsystematic momentary experience. In the polyphonic novel, it is created by crafting unique and "independent" voices that encounter without the author completely being able to anticipate where this encounter leads to. Morson (1991) and Morson and Emerson (1990) frame this as the creative "surprise" potential of life and the polyphonic novel. Instead of monologically determining the "plot", dialogic encounters come to the forefront and shift the attention to the momentary unfolding of processes.

As depicted in the literature review, there is a need to understand the dynamics of OD conversations and their implicit reflective potential. If OD is understood as conversational and dialogic, there is a need to attune to the moment-by-moment development of conversations. As I discuss in this chapter, OD conversations are frequently "unsettled" (Reynolds, 1998, Rigg & Trehan, 2008; Cotter et al., 2016) by momentary dynamics interrupting their habitual performance. By zooming into moments that surprise, I show how "eventness" continuously "revitalizes" OD conversations and prevents the dialogue from becoming monotonous or flat. I identified four spheres in which these moments occur: in the formal structure, in the informal structure, in the framing of processes, and in the emotionality of processes.

Furthermore, I identified three ways per sphere that enact these surprising moments. These surprise actions assist our understanding of how OD conversations evolve in unexpected ways, and how surprise can be seen as having an implicit reflective potential.

The chapter is structured as follows: First, I briefly recall my methodical procedure. Then, I present the four spheres to which I allocated the surprise moments, and the twelve surprise actions that trigger these moments. By using three vignettes per sphere, I explain how these moments “unsettle” the habitual flow of the conversation: how they affectively and relationally interrupt the expected structure. Following this, I explore the momentum generating features in light of Bakhtin’s (1984a, 1993) idea of “eventness”. Then, I discuss my findings in terms of their reflective potential, as well as in relation to the “unfinalizability” of OD conversations. I explain how the unsettling of the habitual by these moments are framed as an implicit questioning of the organizational status quo, and how this unsettling continuously “revitalizes” the OD process in ways that cannot be controlled. I conclude by discussing how keeping an open mind about these surprises may be the most practical way of coping with these unsettling moments.

7.2 Methodical steps: surprise moments, surprise actions, and momentum building

For this analysis, I selected what to me were the three most surprising moments of each workshop. By limiting myself to these three moments, I ensured that the selection is based primarily on bodily instead of cognitive reactions. The exception was workshop II. Being a relatively short workshop with fewer participants, I only selected a single surprise moment from it. Posing the analytic question of how these surprise moments are enacted, I identified four conversational spheres in which these moments occur: in the formal structure, in the informal structure, in the framing of a process, and in the emotionality of a process. The term “sphere” aligns with Bakhtin’s (1986) postulation of different communicative spheres (e.g. business, industry, the military, etc.). However, I used this term to distinguish particular aspects of the OD conversations. In addition, I explored the actions that create these surprises, coming up with three surprise actions per sphere (*see table 22*). These are, for the sphere of the formal structure, changing the OD setup, the agenda ritual, and the discussion ritual; for the sphere of the informal structure, confronting, dismissing loyalty, and

changing informal roles; for the sphere of the framing of the process, the changing of the perception of an object, of oneself, and of others; and for the sphere of the emotionality of the process, the action patterns of opposing emotions, contrasting emotions, and switching emotional positions.

Table 22: Conversational spheres and their surprise actions

Unsettling formality	**Unsettling informality**
- Changing the OD setup - Changing the agenda ritual - Changing the discussion ritual	- Confronting - Dismissing loyalty - Shifting roles
Unsettling framings	**Unsettling emotions**
- Changing the perception of an object - Changing the perception of oneself - Changing the perception of others	- Opposing emotions - Contrasting emotions - Switching emotional positions

Furthermore, I explored the momentum building initiated by the surprise actions and identified five essential elements for the generation of momentum: collectivizing attention, countering the habitual, relational responding, (often) opening for conflict or negotiation, and conveying contingency (*see figure 7*).

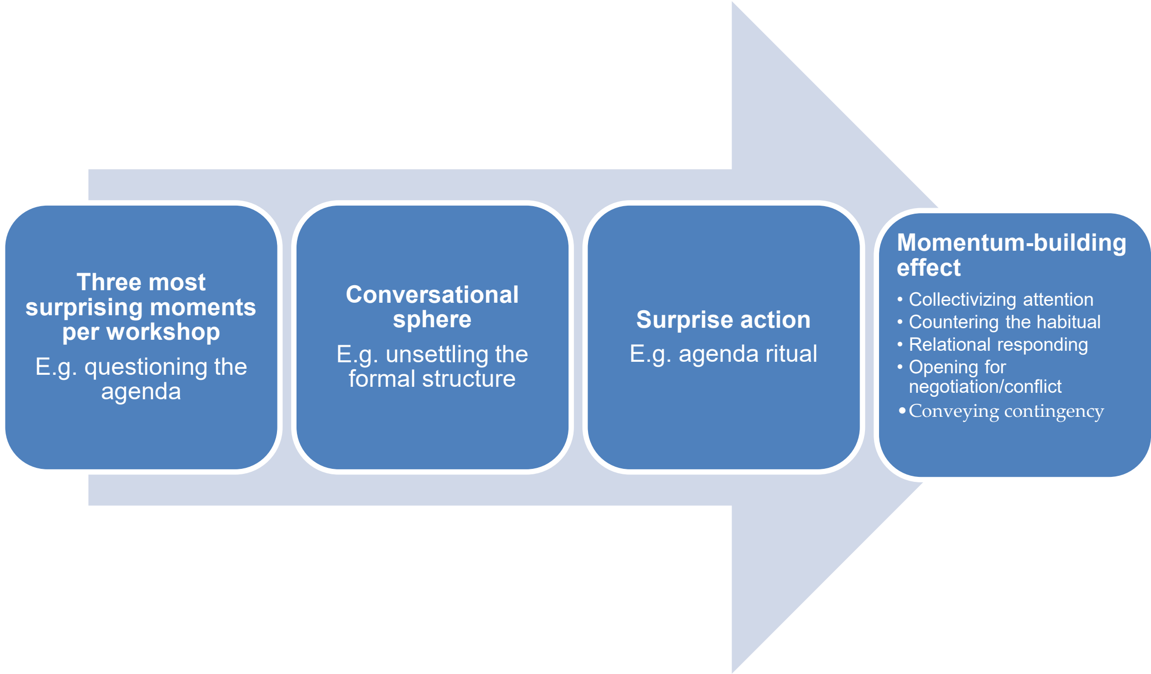

Figure 7: Reminder of the five core elements of the second analysis

In the next section, I present the twelve surprise actions and depict their momentum-building dynamics. Thereafter, I summarize the momentum-generating features with reference to Bakhtin's (1984a, 1993) idea of "eventness".

7.3 Presentation of the findings

7.1.1 Creating "eventness" by unsettling formality

A conversational sphere that is regularly unsettled by surprise moments is the formal structure of the OD process and its workshops. Surprise actions from this sphere include changing the OD setup, changing the agenda ritual, and changing the discussion ritual. These actions address OD elements that are formally recognizable: for example, different formal OD groups, agenda procedures, or how a discussion evolves around the interplay of question and answer between facilitator and participants. As the three different vignettes illustrate, the surprise actions change these formal structures: in the first case, a formal OD group is opened to others; in the second, an official agenda is contested; and in the third, participants repeatedly refuse to formally answer the facilitator's questions. These instances remain exceptions to the formal rules; thus, when the moments pass, the OD formality is "back to business as usual". However, there is still a momentary unsettling, a sensing of the contingency of the formal OD structure, and thus the creation of "eventness".

a) Surprise action: changing the OD setup

Vignette I: Opening a group to others *(WS V)*

After a discussion of how to deal with the arts, FACILITATOR RED asks how to continue with the topic. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN jokes that the emotional proximity of this topic is so close that the running temperature is quickly reached. They further joke about a place for a meeting with the arts ("sanatorium") and seriously discuss who to include ("we would need people from the workshops"). STAFF MEMBER BLUE proposes a task force, whereas STAGE DIRECTOR BLACK opines leaving the topic as part of the OD process. STAFF MEMBER ORANGE suggests that the coordination circle should accept ownership of this topic and proposes a date for a meeting. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR YELLOW suggests discussing this topic in the steering group, while STAFF MEMBER GREY objects to the need of a smaller group. STAFF MEMBER ORANGE again proposes that the coordination circle accepts ownership ("I would put it past it to discuss this"). However, STAFF MEMBER WHITE says that it should not be an exclusive circle, and that whoever wants to join should be allowed to join ("I don't see a problem there"). STAFF MEMBER VIOLET says that that the

coordination circle should be responsible, otherwise it will be half a steering group. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN *opposes this: "This is a one-time thing. There is a need to feed back. It would be very unfortunate if the message could not be fed back". The facilitator then proposes a date for a meeting where people who want to join can join.*

During this workshop episode, certain staff members try to take ownership of organizing the topic of how to deal with the arts. However, another staff member and an administrative director intervene by saying that such a meeting should not be exclusive but open to anyone interested. Whereas some argue that this would result in a too large group, the proponents of opening the coordination circle to anyone interested in the topic prevail. As the coordination circle usually plays the leading role in making process-design suggestions, this formal role is openly questioned during this episode. There is a temporary unsettling of the formal setup of the tasks and of the members of the steering group versus those of the coordination circle. After utilizing the enlarged coordination circle on this topic, the coordination circle and the steering group return to their initial structures. The alternative reality that is enacted for a moment involves the possibility of a different division of powers and responsibilities in the OD process.

Other instances of changing the formal OD setup are found in workshop VI and X. In workshop VI, after some heated discussion, the facilitators raise the idea to include the artistic management in a meeting, which was originally rejected by a hierarchically higher member, drawing perplexed reactions from some of the participants. By siding with the participants, they shake the formal OD setup of accepting hierarchical decisions. Similarly, in workshop X, the formal OD setup is changed when staff members facilitate the steering group instead of the facilitators, due to problems with the scheduling of an appointment, resulting in an administrative director's praise of the theater's maturity.

b) Surprise action: changing the agenda ritual

Vignette II: Questioning the agenda *(WS I)*

After the welcoming words of FACILITATOR BLACK *and* ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR RED, FACILITATOR BROWN *presents the agenda. Step-by-step, each agenda point is explained in a calm and clear manner. When finished,* FACILITATOR BROWN *moves to the first topic of the day: the proposal of participation formats. In the same clear and explicit manner, she starts presenting the thinking behind these participation formats. However,* STAGE DIRECTOR YELLOW *interrupts her, saying: "I have a question. Will we not talk about yesterday?", referring to the low participation in an event of the previous day. "No",*

FACILITATOR BLACK quickly says, allowing her colleague to continue with the presentation of the participation formats. STAGE DIRECTOR YELLOW interrupts again, explaining why the topic is important. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR RED comments on the low participation, and a discussion ensues. Following a brief discussion among themselves, the three facilitators announce that they will allow, at that point in time, a short discussion on the topic of low participation. After the exchange of opinions on the topic, FACILITATOR BLACK summarizes the different positions, followed by FACILITATOR BROWN who continues with the presentation of the participation formats.

What surprised me about this instance is that a participant queried the agenda and started a discussion, despite the facilitators initially saying “no”. The more formalistic atmosphere of the steering group workshops – the u-shaped arrangement of seats and tables, the narration of the importance of the OD process’ external image, and the ordered and explicit instructions – seemed to clash with the spontaneous discussion initiated by a hierarchically lower group member. Although being my first observed workshop, the tension between the formalistic introduction and the spontaneous request to discuss a matter was palpable. In addition, the emphatic “no” of the facilitators appeared to be rather strict. What is more, in the subsequent workshops the agenda was never questioned again. Undoubtedly, the depicted situation was unique and “out-of-the-normal”. Clearly, it questioned the formalistic, official, and hierarchical order of the workshop proceedings, and unsettled the formal agenda ritual. For a moment, an alternative reality was enacted: the possibility of questioning the formalistic and hierarchical way of dealing with the agenda and the workshop proceedings, and the possibility to do this in a different and potentially more participative manner.

Another instance of changing the agenda ritual is found in workshop IV. In this workshop, there is a dilemma between keeping to the agenda as planned and postponing a topic due to the questions arising from a presentation. A staff member strongly emphasizes the need to keep to the agenda, while the facilitators suggest a discussion and postponement of the topic – despite previous tension between these two parties on how “customer oriented” the facilitators should proceed. The facilitators overrule the objection and the next topic is postponed; the staff member is visibly frustrated, and a stage director makes an ironic comment on how the discussion on postponing the topic consumes time. Hence, the agenda ritual of getting through all the planned topics is changed for a moment.

c) Surprise action: changing the discussion ritual

Vignette III: Refusing to answer a question *(WS VI)*

In workshop VI, the coordination circle meets with the stage directors to discuss the planning of an exchange format to address the topic of how to deal with the arts and manage the tense situation. FACILITATOR GREEN appreciates the realization of the meeting, and summarizes the discussion points of the previous workshop. FACILITATOR BLUE asks the group to share what moves them about the topic. STAGE DIRECTOR YELLOW explains his current concerns with a production budget that becomes four times bigger than planned, and FACILITATOR GREEN asks him what is central for him when scheduling a meeting on this topic. He points out the importance to fix budgets and the inability to do so, as he wants to enable and not hinder the arts. STAGE DIRECTOR PINK starts to say something, but FACILITATOR GREEN interrupts and repeats her question about what is central for him when planning such a meeting – "I don't know", he answers. DIRECTOR PINK interjects and says that the budget decision is to the responsibility of the artistic manager, who is not aware of the consequences. When asked to answer what is central for him, he answers that he has no central question, but that the season is already running, and they cannot change it. FACILITATOR BLUE counters by saying that the arts are familiar with fixed limits, e.g. premiere dates. In addition, she reads aloud the discussion points from the last workshop to use this as a point of departure for the day's meeting. DIRECTOR YELLOW objects by saying that the budget will never set a fixed limit, but DIRECTOR WHITE says that in another theater she is familiar with, they at least distinguish between big and small productions. FACILITATOR GREEN frames this as "A solution approach". However, DIRECTOR WHITE believes that the arts will always come up with reasons to blow budgets, and that a stage set can always be built in a workshop-friendly way or in a stage-friendly way – her colleagues laugh at this comment. FACILITATOR GREEN asks her what her viewpoint is, and she answers, confused: "What is what?" FACILITATOR GREEN specifies: "Your wishes concerning a meeting on this topic". DIRECTOR WHITE reacts angrily: "One could talk for hours about it. I have been 14 hours at the theater yesterday, this is my limit. Today's meeting is only possible because I left early. Who is scheduling these appointments with who? When and how are we meeting?" FACILITATOR GREEN corrects her, saying: "We are talking about future meetings", but DIRECTOR WHITE continues describing her distress with the current situation.

FACILITATOR GREEN repeats her question about what would be central for an exchange format, and how they could start. However, a discussion evolves around the impossibility to schedule any exchange format soon, as the upcoming seasons are already planned. FACILITATOR GREEN summarizes the common ground of the discussion ground thus far, e.g. scheduling an exchange format in the following year and jointly approaching the artistic managers. DIRECTOR WHITE opposes: "It is not about that; we are already good at that". STAFF MEMBER GREY intervenes: "The topic of dealing with the arts is not something that we came up with". She shares her observation that stage directors get production information at different points, and a discussion arises about this procedure. FACILITATOR BLUE critically looks at her watch and then says: "This is not an appointment for simply having an appointment". She goes to the flipchart and summarizes the idea of the day's meeting according to the last steering group workshop, and the first suggestions that were made at the time. A discussion arises on the need for artistic staff to be involved in an

exchange format. "They need to be there. We cannot define from the outside and demand", DIRECTOR WHITE insists. FACILITATOR BLUE asks who from the arts need to be there, but the DIRECTOR WHITE says: "I don't know. One would need to think about the group size of that meeting". FACILITATOR BLUE encourages her to answer, "just freely", but she refuses to name artistic staff and instead asks: "Can someone else answer please?" DIRECTOR PINK problematizes the timing again, but the facilitator intervenes and says that they will find a time that works for everyone.

A discussion arises about how a production schedule is created, and the problem of having different premieres at the same time. Then the issue of knowledge management is discussed, and some directors reject the idea that it would work. STAFF MEMBER BROWN points out that they would rather know the tasks of the new teams very early, but not who has which competence. STAGE DIRECTOR RED says that they sometimes do not even know that today. DIRECTOR WHITE points out how sensitive and tense the forming of new artistic teams is: "I put my ears on the ground every day". FACILITATOR GREEN points again to the goal of the exchange format they are supposed to be planning, and then asks if this is actually a relevant topic to them. However, the discussion again turns to how political the whole issue is, and to the critical role of trust and transparency.

At some point, FACILITATOR GREEN praises: "There is a lot of mutual understanding going on here right now". She asks whether all agree that such an exchange format will not fit into the present season, and the stage directors agree. She then asks whether it will fit into the next season, but DIRECTOR WHITE says it will never work, it is too political to sit together. The discussion continues about separate meetings, and the need for regular exchanges, as well as the importance for the top management to talk to each other. There is some laughter about a joint Christmas message, and FACILITATOR GREEN summarizes the discussed points. DIRECTOR WHITE criticizes the number of required planning meetings, and asks whether they could shorten this process. FACILITATOR GREEN asks her what her suggestion is, but DIRECTOR WHITE replies: "I don't have any". After some further discussion on the timing, FACILITATOR BLUE summarizes: "Starting with the new exchange format in January with the play division. Is this consensus?" DIRECTOR YELLOW says: "For me it's okay", and FACILITATOR BLUE observes: "Tentative approval". FACILITATOR GREEN objects: "If it is not okay, then say it now". "Hypothetical", says DIRECTOR WHITE. "Not hypothetical", FACILITATOR GREEN answers. They discuss a few more details and then the meeting ends.

The directors leave, and after a short break, the coordination circle continues their meeting. Most staff members have been silent during the previous discussion, but now share their irritation about the pushback they just experienced.

In this workshop, there is a heated debate on how to deal with the arts. The facilitators' attempts to come up with ideas and solutions for an exchange format that addresses this issue are frequently left unanswered. Instead, new problems concerning the issue are mentioned, or other problems are repeated. The facilitators repeatedly remind the directors of the goal of the day's meeting. Questions concerning suggestions or propositions for solutions are often ignored by the participants. Answers such as "I

don't know", "Can someone else answer please", "It is not about that, we are already good at that", or "Hypothetical" underline the participants' regular refusal to answer the facilitators' questions, and to cooperate. Such a blatant refusal comes as a surprise as it runs against the habit of following the facilitators' structuring of the discussion. The facilitators regularly react frustrated, referring to previous agreements and saying: "This is not an appointment for simply having an appointment". A staff member also frustratedly reacts, saying: "The topic of dealing with the arts is not something that we came up with". After the workshop, many staff members express their surprise about how the meeting went, and about the negativity they had to face. This vignette thus indicates the formal discussion ritual of the facilitators asking questions and the participants providing aligned answers. By refusing to cooperatively answer the facilitators' questions, the participants enact an alternative reality by playing a different conversational game than that of the solution-oriented facilitators.

Further examples of changing the discussion ritual are visible in workshops IX and XII. In workshop IX, the discussion ritual is shaken when the facilitators put a big clock in front of the group. They ask the directors to share their impressions on the start of the season and request them to keep it short. This symbolic statement stresses the time aspect of the discussion and puts pressure on the directors to comply; the setting-up of the clock draws curious glances from the participants. In workshop XII, the facilitators change the usual seating arrangement around tables, and instead arrange the group to sit in a circle. Later, they also circulate a talking stick that anyone who wishes to say something, takes. This notably contrasts, with the usual conference-like arrangement and some jokes and tension develop over the talking stick and speaking rights.

Surprise moments in the sphere of formality

As becomes evident, the surprise actions of changing the OD setup, the agenda ritual, and the discussion ritual momentarily unsettle the formal OD structure. The formal structure – including tasks, group membership, hierarchical decision making, external facilitator roles, agenda setting and agenda following, formal discussion language games, speaking and seating arrangements – creates expectations of what is formally to come. Any deviation from this results in surprise. As shown, the interruptive momentum of the surprise actions is not merely cognitive – often, it is emotional and bodily. The debate about opening the coordination circle, once, for directors is

vociferously debated, and there is palpable tension. The questioning of the agenda also elicits a tense debate. Moreover, the refusal to formally answer the facilitators' questions results in expressed anger and frustrations from many sides. Hence, it is hard to "be not drawn to and into these moments"; they have a way of catching the whole bodily attention, and to make the body responsive to the developments. Although these moments may be unique and pass, they still provide a sense of the contingency of the formal structure. For example, it is possible to divide tasks, responsibilities, and memberships differently; to engage participants in the agenda setting; and to play a different language game, rather than to provide satisfactory answers to the facilitators' questions (*see table 23*).

Table 23: Surprise moments unsettling the formal sphere of OD conversations

Surprise moment	**Interruptive momentum; visible affects and emotions**	**Sensed contingency**
	Shaking the OD setup	
Opening a group to non-members (WS V)	Interrupting the group constellation; conflict and discussion	It is possible to have a different division of powers and responsibilities
Reversing a position on the acceptance of a hierarchical decision (WS VI)	Interrupting the power hierarchy; perplexed query	It is possible not to adhere to the hierarchical order and prescribed structure
Facilitating the workshop as internals (WS X)	Interrupting the OD roles; enthusiastic praise	It is possible that the theater assumes full responsibility for its own processes
	Shaking the agenda ritual	
Questioning the agenda (WS I)	Interrupting the flow of the workshop introduction; conflict and engaged discussion	It is possible to engage in the agenda setting as a workshop participant
Postponing an official topic (WS IV)	Interrupting the customer-oriented relationship; conflict and ironic comments	It is possible to prioritize the immediate need for a discussion on working through a predetermined agenda
	Shaking the discussion ritual	
Refusing to answer a question (WS VI)	Interrupting a cooperative culture; tension	It is possible to play a different conversational game to that proposed by the facilitators
Putting a big clock in front of the group (WS IX)	Interrupting a loose discussion culture; curiosity	It is possible to pressurize the group by confronting them with a tighter time regime

Forming a circle and passing around a talking stick (WS XII)	Interrupting a conference-like discussion culture; humor and tension	It is possible to discuss things in a more personal and mindful way

7.1.2 Creating "eventness" by unsettling informality

Another conversational sphere identified in which surprise moments occur is the informal structure. Surprise actions in this sphere are confronting, dismissing loyalty, and shifting informal roles. Examples include to unexpectedly, sarcastically reply to another's sarcasm (confronting), to criticize and ingroup member (dismissing loyalty), and the defense of the project masterplan by a subgroup who previously would often criticize the same masterplan (shifting informal roles). Sarcastic thrusts and subgroup behaviors are elements that are not as formally recognizable as those of the previous section, but belong to the informal habits of doing OD workshops at THEATERORG. They relate to relationships and informal expectations. Surprise actions in this sphere thus unsettle these informal habits for a moment, creating a sense of the contingency of these habits and producing "eventness".

a) Surprise action: confronting

Vignette IV: Replying with sarcasm to another's sarcasm *(WS V)*

In workshop V, the group discusses how to deal with the arts. Small groups are formed to discuss this topic, and each small group raises their discussion points, respectively. FACILITATOR RED requests a wish list regarding the arts. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR BLACK says that borders need to be movable but, as a prerequisite, they must first be defined. She speaks about different metaphors for a border, in the process referring to a rubber band, a guardrail, and the realization conditions. STAFF MEMBER YELLOW agrees with this and continues by saying that one would then be able to identify any border crossing. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR BLUE mentions that they are already holding budget meetings and calculating overtime hours. STAGE DIRECTOR WHITE counters: "It is not about paying off overtime hours. At the moment it is not like: is there ever a month in which we could do less once? The arts are saying: it is not our staff. They don't have to deal with it. We have to hold them accountable". ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR BLUE jokes: "Soviet working methods". STAGE DIRECTOR WHITE replies: "Right. We are now North Korea".

In this scene, during an animated debate, conflict emerges over the demands of the arts. Whereas a stage director complains of overtime hours and holding the arts to account, an administrative director jokes about these "Soviet working methods". The stage director counters by jokingly confirming that they are now "North Korea". What

is surprising about this situation is that the participants do not engage in the administrative director's often ironic exaggerations. However, the stage director plays along and even further exaggerates the image. The surprise factor increases due to the fact that, regarding the content of the debate, she is on a different side than the administrative director. Here, the briefly enacted alternative reality is that the administrative director does not have a monopoly on irony, but that others can actually play along and expand the exaggeration. As a result, the informal habit that only the administrative manager makes jokes, is challenged. However, although the old habit is reinstated in the subsequent workshops, for a moment the alternative reality is enacted that it is acceptable for all levels to make ironic comments.

Further examples of the surprise action of "confronting" can be found in workshops VII and VIII. In workshop VII, an external trainer on project management explains the concept of milestone trend analysis. He blatantly says that it was missing in the status reports. As the input on project management is usually handled in a rather abstract way – without immediate consequences for the daily practices of the participants – this assessment and evaluation from the external trainer comes across as a confrontation. At the end of workshop VIII, the facilitators ask the participants to choose a card that represents "what I am taking up for the next season". The facilitators emphasize the voluntariness of this exercise. However, after most participants spoke, a staff member asks an administrative director: "Would you not like to reveal what you have chosen?". He shows a picture of an old church, representing the long-term character of the development of THEATERORG, but also for a private occasion. This direct question from the staff member to someone higher up in the hierarchy, as well as the personal answer, come as a surprise and interrupt the habit of treating hierarchy with respect and not to disclose personal information.

b) Surprise action: dismissing loyalty

Vignette V: Criticizing an ingroup member *(WS V)*

The project groups are asked to report on the status quo of their projects. The focus is on implementing ideas emerging from the participation formats. On behalf of the communications group, STAFF MEMBER GREEN reports on a format enabling employees to visit other units, on exploring locations for additional intranet terminals, and on organizing guided tours through the house. She further reports on regular communication and a communications concept, and on the launch of a communications offensive, which evokes some group discussions. STAFF MEMBER BLUE, reporting on behalf of the processes group, talks about the documentation of processes and standard documents, different

software projects, the handbook for changing artistic management teams, and knowledge transfer. FACILITATOR LEMON asks clarifying questions on content and keeping appointments. Next, STAGE DIRECTOR ORANGE reports on behalf of the perspective group. He reads a document on his smartphone, and speaks about external networking, a room structure program that keeps him busy, a room demand analysis, an employees' suggestion system, and an innovation sheet that still needs some rethinking. He then goes into further details by talking about external networks and general renovation. When he announces that, next, he will talk to the second page of his sheet, FACILITATOR LEMON interrupts him: "Each measure in two sentences please". DIRECTOR ORANGE asks: "Am I already running out of time?" FACILITATOR LEMON replies: "We have to watch the time". DIRECTOR ORANGE goes into further detail about the innovation sheet. After concluding, FACILITATOR LEMON thanks him and jokes about one of the points in his report. Representing the last group (personnel), STAFF MEMBER WHITE reports and speaks about rooms for employees, ambassadors for yearly talks, corporate health management, psychological and physical risk assessment, age structure analysis, an onboarding concept, training, and job descriptions.

The workshop continues with other topics and at its end FACILITATOR LEMON asks for a feedback on the day's workshop. Most address the project reports. STAFF MEMBER VIOLET suggests tightening the project reports, otherwise they become tiring and he stops listening. "Aha", STAGE DIRECTOR ORANGE ironically responds, and the group laughs. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREY says he understands the sleepiness and proposes the circulation of status reports before the next workshop. STAFF MEMBER PURPLE suggests making the reports as "compact as possible", but opines that control is still important. STAGE DIRECTOR BROWN says that although the day's reports were acceptable, there would be repetitions in future, hence he pleads for their shortening. STAFF MEMBER RED claims that nobody will read the reports if circulated earlier, and she pleads for reporting the status quo instead of going to epic lengths. STAGE DIRECTOR CORAL refers to reaching a slight low point in the reporting part. She would not exclude it but says that everyone knows what the measures are about. Other participants also propose tightening the reports. STAGE DIRECTOR PINK says that she found the report of the perspective group a little tiring, but still regards the workshop discussion of the progress as important. Someone proposes the provision of project report handouts, and STAFF MEMBER PEACH responds by saying that she needs to receive them earlier if she has to print them out for everyone. To this comment, STAGE DIRECTOR ORANGE self-ironically replies with "hm". Further feedback comments include that an arduous route is often worthwhile and that although the project reports may be tiring, they are still necessary. Afterwards, and in conclusion, the facilitators wish the group a nice afternoon.

What is surprising about this scene is that a lot of the workshop feedback revolves around the status reports, particularly that of the stage director. Until then, the stage director was frequently supported for opposing the OD process. However, during this episode, he is indirectly and directly criticized for his lengthy and repetitive presentation of the project progress, also by participants who usually support him. For a moment, the enacted alternative reality is that ingroup solidarity can be compromised by taking efficiency and project progress (and the overall OD process) seriously. Momentarily,

the usual informal habit is suspended, and an alternative reality is enacted of valuing the effectiveness of the OD process over ingroup solidarity.

Dismissing loyalty is a surprise action that is also visible in workshops II, VII and X. In workshop II, a small group finishes its work early, and the facilitator asks them to work on a second task. A director in this group repeatedly teases a colleague from another group by saying that his group had done a better job, thus engaging in a teasing that oscillates between humor and tension and playing by putting competition above collegiality. In workshop VII, a staff member explains the details of state regulations concerning employee suggestion systems in public institutions – important information that lies in the competency field of the perspective project group, but which has not been raised by this group. The staff member thus exposes the project group by sharing this information in public, and she chooses OD progress over saving face. In workshop X, a recently appointed administrative director vehemently criticizes the information policy of some of his colleagues, which elicits strong protest from them. The director thus confronts his colleagues in a direct manner, leading to conflict and anger.

c) Surprise action: shifting roles

Vignette VI: Defending as frequent opponents the masterplan *(WS XII)*

FACILITATOR YELLOW asks: "How do we proceed with the cockpit? This would actually be the part of ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR PINK who is in another meeting now". STAFF MEMBER GREY distributes a copy of the "cockpit", which is a more accessible version of the masterplan, and the participants engage in concentrated reading. FACILITATOR YELLOW then asks how they are doing when looking at the cockpit. STAGE DIRECTOR BLUE answers: "I am doing well. I started this season to work well with it". FACILITATOR YELLOW asks if the cockpit is still valid, or whether something else is needed. STAGE DIRECTOR RED says: "For it suffices as a base. It works for me and my employees. And I use it daily". STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN raises his voice: "I am seeing it the same. At this point I would not change the map. We recognize our daily business in here. Only the artistic operations, our core business, is not depicted". STAGE DIRECTOR WHITE adds to this: "I think content-wise it is good, what is missing here is the time axis. It would force us to think how much time we want to invest into it. The daily theater operations at night are prioritized". ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR BLACK says that she finds the cockpit confusing, and it does not show what they have accomplished. STAGE DIRECTOR WHITE continues: "We should discuss these things in the project groups: is it realistic or not?" STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN raises his voice again: "We should discuss this in the steering group. We are working in these rhythms. At the beginning I had stomach aches. But we should come to good results. There are not a lot of theaters doing these things". "No other theater", STAFF MEMBER BROWN intervenes, which draws light laughter. "We are starting this", STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN specifies. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR ORANGE pleads for a time axis and

a resource overview: “If something progresses it is because staff development and quality management are doing it, because they are drivers and have resources for these things. What can we cut out of the operative business? Who has the time to take care of innovative topics?” FACILITATOR YELLOW picks up on this: “There is the important topic of time”. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR ORANGE continues: “We have major topics. How is the map connected to these major topics?” Next, STAFF MEMBER VIOLET raises his voice: “The cockpit is clear, but there are many unprecise points. In the long term I do not think that the project groups are working. We should form teams that are specific to measures. The project areas are good, but the project groups are dead”. His comments draws some sarcastic laughter. STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN opposes: “I cannot relate to that”. And STAGE DIRECTOR RED says cross-armed, looking down: “May I stamp my foot? I cannot relate to that either”. There is a discussion on the flexibility of project group, and of the need for a timeline. STAFF MEMBER CORAL interjects that one has to see whether strategic goals and measures are still fitting, and ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR MAGENTA suggests prioritizing certain measures. STAGE DIRECTOR RED objects: “I am on the contrary position. It needs to run in parallel as different measures determine each other. When we stop something, we need to make sure that it does not result in blockages on other goals. We once discussed whether we want to go so broadly into the organization. Now it slowly is infiltrating. Internal drivers are difficult, because in my department, internal drivers are a 100% involved in the daily operations. The cockpit is an identification tool. It needs time so comprehend and to live and to implement. I think it would be counterproductive to sort out measures”. STAFF MEMBER VIOLET feels misinterpreted (“I did not say all of this”) and pleads for a dynamic focus on certain measures to deliver more interim results more quickly. STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN objects: “We do not see interim results because we do not take the time to point them out”. A discussion on biorhythm, time and agility arises, and FACILITATOR YELLOW urges the group to move to the next topic. “What is the result?”, STAFF MEMBER OLIVE asks. FACILITATOR YELLOW answers: “There is approval of the cockpit, I just hear different opinions on the handling of it. Now, let’s move on to the status reports. Where was concrete progress?”

The surprising element is the change of opinions on the project masterplan. In previous workshops, many stage directors regularly opposed the masterplan and criticized it for being too much, “set up to fail”, unrealistic to handle in addition to the daily work, and too ambitious regarding its timeline. Now, several stage directors insist on the utility of the masterplan (respectively, the version called “cockpit”) for orientation (“I use it daily”) and argue not to cut certain measures because they interact. In addition, a director claims that there are interim results that are easily overlooked. This strong defense of the masterplan by the stage directors surprised me, and the discussion was emotional (“May I stamp my foot?”, “I did not say all of this”). By defending the masterplan so vigorously, the stage directors shift their informal role from being opponents of the masterplan to being its defenders. They interrupt their habitual role. In doing so, they enact the alternative reality of changing a subgroup’s identity.

The surprise action of “shifting roles” is also evident in workshops IX, X and XII. In workshop IX, the facilitators share their impressions of a recent participation format with executives. In a serious tone, they indicate where the OD process was going into a favorable direction, and where they would recommend improvements. As the facilitators are usually reluctant to make evaluations and provide clear recommendations to the directors, this change in the role comes as a surprise, and afterwards small groups engagingly discussed their views of the matter. Also, in workshop IX, two staff members who usually do not closely cooperate, present their joint experiences of project management. This change of roles – from being independent staff members to trying out something together – is a change of the informal group structure, and their humorous way of presenting their insights underlines the newness of the occasion. In workshop X, a surprise moment is created by the clear appreciation of the second external input on project management. Whereas some stage directors reacted reluctantly to the first input, they express their appreciation of the second one. They thus change their role of being habitually skeptical about managerial tools to being receptive to these approaches. Similarly, in workshop XII, a stage director who is frequently absent from the workshops, and who usually remains silent, suddenly makes various clear and personal comments on the OD process. It is unusual to hear his voice, and for him to make strong, personal statements. He thus changes his own role as a workshop participant.

Surprise moments in the sphere of informality

Surprise actions frequently unsettle the informal sphere of OD conversations. For example, this can happen through sarcasm, teasing, showing anger, appreciating, making recommendations, providing feedback, criticizing, defending, asking personal questions, sharing knowledge, speaking out, and forming new collaborations. The surprise actions of confronting, dismissing loyalty, and shifting informal roles interrupt the informal habits for a moment and thus unsettle this sphere temporarily. Similar to the unsettling of the formal sphere, these informal interruptions gain momentum through bodily-emotional reactions that draw the collective “group body” into the event and catch the collective attention. For example, the sarcastic response, which intervenes in the relationship between the administrative director and other directors and unfolds in front of the eyes of the group, is unusual and comes across as a power play that creates a tense moment; the criticizing of a group member is concentrated and dense, breaking the taboo of not commenting on a colleague’s performance, and

the humorous comments of the addressed director display the tension he attempts to ease; and the defense of the masterplan by many stage directors, despite their previous critical stance, comes with expressions of anger and attempts to defend positions *(see table 24)*. It is thus hard to ignore these moments as they happen, or to be lost in other thoughts.

Table 24: Surprise moments unsettling the informal sphere of OD conversations

Surprise moment	Interruptive momentum; visible affects and emotions	Sensed contingency
	Confronting	
Replying with sarcasm to another's sarcasm (WS V)	Interrupting the informal hierarchy; sarcasm and tension	It is possible for all hierarchy levels to react with sarcasm
Clearly indicating where the group went wrong (WS VII)	Interrupting the evaluative abstinence from outsiders; serious atmosphere	It is possible to put the fingers into the performance wounds
Asking a personal question (WS VIII)	Interrupting the clear personal/professional distinction; curiosity and interest	It is possible to share personal information in a professional setting
	Dismissing loyalty	
Teasing the accomplishments of other groups (WS II)	Interrupting the collegial laissez-faire; irony and slight tension	It is possible to boast about performance and to openly compete
Criticizing an ingroup member (WS V)	Interrupting the collegial support; frustration and humor	It is possible to value the effectiveness of the OD process over ingroup solidarity
Explaining something from the outgroup that the ingroup should have known (WS VII)	Interrupting the collegial noninterference; serious atmosphere	It is possible to put an overall learning above face saving
Giving an "angry talk" to the colleagues (WS X)	Interrupting the informal hierarchy; anger and tension	It is possible to openly criticize the more established colleagues
	Changing informal roles	
Making strong recommendations from the side of the facilitators (WS- IX)	Interrupting the facilitators' silence on content matters; serious atmosphere, engaged discussion	It is possible that the facilitators also evaluate the OD process as experts
Working in tandem in a new subgroup (WS IX)	Interrupting the separation of spheres of the staff members; humor and laughter	It is possible to establish new subgroups

Appreciating an input despite expressing prior reluctance (WS X)	Interrupting the skeptical stance; engagement and appreciation	It is possible to change the stance as a subgroup
Repeatedly providing strong statements as a usually silent participant (WS XII)	Interrupting the individual silence; engagement and seriousness	It is possible to change one's individual identity, and one's relationship with the group
Defending, as frequent opponents, the progress and necessity of the OD masterplan (WS XII)	Interrupting the opposition; tension	It is possible to change a subgroup's identity

7.1.3 Creating "eventness" by unsettling framings

A third conversational sphere relates to the framing of a process. Framing means to perceive something in a certain way. Changing this perception can thus be source for surprise. The three surprise actions related to this sphere are changing the perception of an object, changing the perception of oneself as an organization, and changing the perception of others. Changing the perception of an object refers to ideas. For example, the first vignette shows how a discussion on participation formats was shaken by introducing an unusual idea, broadening the horizon of the suggestions made thus far. Changing the perception of oneself as an organization refers to the collective self-image; the second vignette displays an appreciative comparison of the administration and the arts, thus, for a moment, upgrading the administration's sometimes self-depreciative image. Changing the perception of others refers to the image of others: for example, the third vignette narrates how an external trainer surprisingly receives engaged appreciation despite usual skepticism toward external trainers and consultants. These are all instances which create surprise by changing a framing, resulting in the experience of the contingency of established framings and in the development of "eventness".

a) Surprise action: changing the perception of an object

Vignette VII: Making a radical proposition *(WS I)*

FACILITATOR BLUE asks for feedback from each "mumbling" group that just sits together, to discuss the proposal of participation formats. STAGE DIRECTOR VIOLET says that they cannot hold workshops with a duration longer than two hours, due to the dense work schedule of the technical staff. STAGE DIRECTOR BLACK agrees and problematizes the shift work that makes the meeting of all nearly impossible. After further discussions,

FACILITATOR BLUE returns to the problem of shift work and asks if it affects everyone. STAGE DIRECTOR VIOLET again outlines the severity of the problem. Then, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR YELLOW suggests that if it is impossible to schedule the workshop, they must prepare in advance to conduct the workshop spontaneously if a performance is suddenly cancelled – as happened the previous season. This proposal evokes some laughter. FACILITATOR BLUE simply comments: "A proposition for a solution".

What is surprising about this scene is the somewhat radical suggestion to plan a participation format in the event of the spontaneous cancellation of a performance. Some react with laughter – seemingly not taking the suggestion seriously – but the facilitator frames this matter-of-factly as "a proposition for a solution". Here, for a moment, the alternative enacted reality is one of thinking "out of the box" and making an unusual proposition. Momentarily, this creates a sense that a totally different approach to how the problem is addressed, is possible.

Two further instances of the surprise action "changing the perception of an object" occurred in workshop III. First, after a long discussion on how to adjust the masterplan, the facilitators suddenly ask the group to vote on it. This causes some opposition on the readiness to vote due to implementation questions concerning the masterplan, and to counterarguments ("This is fine-tuning", "it is not carved in stone", "you need a plan to deviate from it"), leading to an administrative director saying that the masterplan will be binding and that any change will need justification. The facilitators change their question from raising hands if participants are in favor of the masterplan to whether anyone is against the plan (nobody raises their hands). Afterwards, the facilitators distribute non-alcoholic sparkling wine to toast the masterplan. The atmosphere is rather reluctant, with people being silent or commenting in a serious tone on the amount of work that the masterplan implies, or in an ironic tone on the not so euphoric atmosphere. The sudden voting changes the perception of the OD process, especially of the masterplan, switching the mode from long abstract discussions to actually committing to it and accepting the responsibility to implement it. Second, there is a surprise moment when, towards the end, participants choose pictures expressing where they currently see themselves as a steering group and what they wish for in the next season. Most participants take this exercise rather lightly and playfully and relate it to their personal views. However, an administrative director explains his "no standing at any time" picture in a rather forceful manner: "This is a call for a mind-set. This is the work assignment for us now if we take the 'learning theater' seriously. Nobody must mentally stand still. This does not mean that moments of contemplation, of reflection, are not possible. But standstill is setback. We have to learn in order to strive for excellence". Afterwards, the facilitators still mention this particular picture during their

internal debriefing. So instead of wrapping up the meeting in a light way, the director's statement denotes a "serious" urge to move ahead. It reframes these exercises from being playful and personal related to being serious and progress related.

b) Surprise action: changing the organizational self-perception

Vignette VIII: Comparing an administrative accomplishment to an artistic award *(WS VIII)*

In the round in which every project group presents its status reports, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR YELLOW presents, on behalf of the personnel group, measures such as the onboarding process and training. Then, STAFF MEMBER GREEN from this project group briefly sketches a study recently done by a university of applied sciences on the theater's corporate integration management. He speaks of indicators, making it practical, and the use of this pilot study for employer marketing. He thanks the management for enabling this project, and adds: "Although it may look small, it is a big project, staff wise and financially". They have already implemented the results in different projects, and the results will also be presented at a conference abroad. Again he stresses the use of the study as an instrument for staff retention. Next, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREY raises his voice: "I would like to supplement. When we think about where we come from. More than ten years ago we were thinking about how to deal with corporate integration management. Our answer is: we are taking it very seriously. We do not just take care of the operational business. The social committee was created, and then the corporate health management. The corporate integration management is at its very heart. STAFF MEMBER GREEN and I have sort of a theological dispute on whether the OD process is a subsection of the corporate health management, or – which is rather my perspective – that the corporate health management is a subsection of corporate health management. Anyway, the corporate health management is a nucleus. And now it has been academically reviewed. Indicators for success were established. Prologues were written by ministers. We have a very unique standing in the public eye. It is enormous for our reputation. We see that with the opera house of the year awards – not matter how great we are, it makes a difference when others are certifying it: you are excellent. This is high praise. This is at least equal to the opera house of the year award". After this announcement, participants briefly applaud and knock on their tables. FACILITATOR BLACK adds: "It is important to also communicate this achievement internally in the broader organization".

Surprising about this moment is the administrative director's earnest appraisal of the corporate integration management study, comparing it to "at least" the prestigious opera house of the year award. Usually, the artists at the theater receive public attention and recognition, whereas the administration sees its mission as enabling excellence in the arts. Hence, the administration is much more in the taken-for-granted background. The administration sometimes finds it difficult to recruit competent employees willing to work in the theater and not in the private sector. When it comes

to the theater as a public institution, most exciting news seem to be produced by the arts. By comparing this pilot study with the “excellent arts” thus changes the self-perception for a moment. There is visible pride coming from the staff member and the administrative director, supported by the applause of the group.

Two further instances of changing the organizational self-perception appear in workshops VII and XI. In workshop VII, an administrative director concludes from an external trainer’s assessment that there is no difference between failed projects in the often-praised private sector and in the frequently media-covered public sector, thus shaking the self-image, as a public institution, of being less skilled. In workshop XI, a staff member narrates that she bought the theater’s first computer 30 years ago for accounting tasks, personally visiting a shop and afterwards assembling it. This narration unsettles the self-image of the administration as notoriously lacking innovation and is received attentively by the other participants along with a trainer expressing his amazement about this story.

c) Surprise action: changing the perception of others

Vignette IX: Witnessing an outsider with insider knowledge *(WS XI)*

TRAINER ORANGE starts his presentation on digitalization. He claims that this is a personally important topic, and he explains the structure of his presentation. He announces that the presentation will become concrete in the second part after a first, more contextual part, and that he will take care to only use a few expert terms. Then, he introduces himself and the IT consultancy he works with. He mentions that he studied languages, drama, and management, and that his drama background provides him with a connection to the theater. Next, he asks every participant to briefly introduce themselves and explain the role of digitalization in their division. Afterwards, he explains some digitalization terms and presents paradigm shifts and the history of digitalization at the workplace. Administrative directors, stage directors and staff members frequently participate and pose questions or make statements, e.g. on the necessity of online services as opposed to being pure “decoration”, the role of digitalization of the administration versus artistic performances, and the necessity of the theater to keep up with trends instead of being avant-garde as do other organizations. At some point, TRAINER ORANGE NARRATES how digitalization enabled whole new theater business models, e.g. two theaters mixing their performances digitally, using robots on stage, or live-streaming performances to watch from home. The further presentation and discussion turn to the differentiation of core processes versus supportive processes, customer interfaces, and administrative theater software. Next, TRAINER ORANGE presents different digitalization steps of THEATERORG, from the introduction of online card sales to dealing with massive hacker attacks. In addition, he presents what he perceives as the status quo of digitalization of THEATERORG and as possible challenges to and demands for further

digitalization, including the need for a stance on a digitalization strategy. During his talk, he emphasizes the need to reflect on the usefulness of different digital changes, and not to follow blindly certain trends. An engaged discussion arises on the benefits of different digitalization possibilities, and the radical changes that may still lie ahead. "Somehow depressing", STAGE DIRECTOR BLUE sighs, and TRAINER ORANGE objects: "I did not want to depress you". STAGE DIRECTOR BLUE insists: "But you did", and some participants slightly laugh. TRAINER ORANGE tries to reassure by saying that they are already well-positioned as THEATERORG but have to pay attention to certain aspects. Afterwards, he summarizes his presentation points and ends with the words regarding THEATERORG'S digitalization that "we are not off early, but it is also not too late". In the following feedback round, many participants express their gratitude for this presentation and make thoughtful comments on what it means to them. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR BLACK thanks the external trainer and says that he "was very happy about the vivid participation, there was clearly emotional involvement", adding how important this event was to increase awareness.

The vignette displays an external trainer's presentation on digitalization, resulting in a surprisingly engaged discussion, the expression of appreciation by the participants, and emotional and thoughtful comments. Usually, external trainers are met with a certain measure of skepticism, along with a number of participants emphasizing the unique context of the theater world, emphatically explaining it to the external trainers. In this expert session, similar comments are missing. Instead of using examples from the automobile industry or the general hypothesis on artistic production processes, as the project management experts tend to do, TRAINER ORANGE nonchalantly mentions his drama background, expresses a hands-on approach to digitalization, and refers to the digitalization projects in both the theater world and at THEATERORG. He thus challenges the image of external trainers and consultants "having no clue" of the real world that THEATERORG is situated in. For a moment, the alternative reality is enacted of outsiders having insightful knowledge and being able to provide "real advice".

Surprise moments in the sphere of framing

Surprise actions unsettling the framing include unusual propositions, sudden moves to vote, urges to move forward, unusual comparisons, and witnessing new stories and people. These actions surprise by changing the perception of objects, collective selves, and others. As discussed with reference to the previous two conversational spheres, they tend to draw the collective attention cognitively, emotionally and bodily to the unfolding moment. The radical proposition of the administrative director to plan participation formats during the occasion of a cancelled performance, provokes laughter and a defense from a facilitator framing it as a valid suggestion. When an

administrative award is put “at least” on the same level as a prestigious opera house of the year award, there is visible pride in the speeches of the staff members and the director, reinforced by the clapping and knocking applaud of the group. The external trainer on digitalization does not only prove his insider-knowledge of the theater, but he is also appreciated through engaged discussions and testimonials that he has touched and moved the group. The interruptive momentum of these surprising frames is emotionally palpable and tend to catch the collective attention. In addition, despite their momentary character, they hint at the contingency of framings. They show that it is possible to think (more) outside the box when addressing organizational problems; to perceive the administration as prestigious; and to value and apply an outsider’s expert knowledge (*see table 25*).

Table 25: Surprise moments unsettling the framing sphere of OD conversations

Surprise moment	**Interruptive momentum; visible affects and emotions**	**Sensed contingency**
Changing the perception of an object		
Making a radical proposition (WS I)	Interrupting the belief that the rigid theater rhythm is dominant; laughter	It is possible to think “out of the box”
Subjecting something to a vote (WS III)	Interrupting the belief that it is all just talk; tension	It is possible to take responsibility and move into action
Urging the group to move forward (WS III)	Interrupting the belief that it is all a playful exercise; serious atmosphere	It is possible to take the OD process very seriously
Changing the perception of oneself		
Comparing the financial failures of the private and public sectors (VII)	Interrupting the belief that private sectors are managerially more competent; curiosity	It is possible that there is no evaluative difference between private and public sectors
Comparing an administrative accomplishment and an artistic award (VIII)	Interrupting the belief that the arts are more prestigious; pride	It is possible that administrative work can be as “excellent” as artistic work
Witnessing a group member who had introduced a whole new technology many years ago (XI)	Interrupting the belief that the theater is slow and old-fashioned; curiosity	It is possible that “paradigm shifts” are also part of the theater’s history and future
Changing the perception of others		
Witnessing an outsider with insider knowledge (XI)	Interrupting the belief that outsiders are too unfamiliar with the theater’s context	It is possible that outsiders can provide real advice for insiders

7.1.4 Creating "eventness" by unsettling emotionality

The fourth conversational sphere is the sphere of emotions: it relates to the unsettling of dominant emotions, for example through the surprise actions of opposing emotions, contrasting emotions, and switching emotional positions. Opposing emotions is displayed in encountering a dominant emotion with another emotion, such as encountering reassurance with anger. Contrasting emotions is displayed in talking about a dominating emotion from a different emotional perspective, for example by appreciating a heated discussion. Switching emotional positions can be seen in the change of an emotional attitude, among others by a mingling of people who would usually keep their distance. In these instances, the surprise is created by a surprising emotionality that unsettles a dominant emotion, leading to the experiencing of the contingency of established emotions and to "eventness".

a) Surprise action: opposing emotions

Vignette X: Reacting with slight anger to an attempt to ridicule concerns *(WS IV)*

The last discussion point of the day is introduced by FACILITATOR PURPLE with the question: "How do you experience this madness season?" She draws a mind map on the flip chart: she puts "masterplan" in the center, surrounded by four interdependent themes, namely "new artistic managers", "ongoing productions", "move/interim stage", and "change of directors". Different stage directors raise their concerns and depict quite a dramatic picture of the current situation: fights over budgets, operative business overrunning them, new trust that has to be built, imminent burnout of employees as the departing artistic managers are "knocking out everything they can" to imprint their legacy. ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN wants to say something but FACILITATOR PURPLE interrupts him by first requesting the feedback of the stage directors. When ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN finally gets to say something, he starts with: "We are now at a point where the Steering Group is turning into a self-help group". He describes the new artistic managers in a comical way and says that there is now a feeling of approaching a situation they have been long aware of, and that he is also confronted with the situation of three outgoing and three incoming managers. He adds that it is the job of the directors, now and then, to say no!. He then explains, in more detail, who replaces the departing communications director, and how they will deal with the departure of the technical director of play. FACILITATOR PURPLE does not react to his statements and announcements, and instead asks for comments on the agenda of the next steering group workshop. After two participants briefly say something, FACILITATOR PURPLE asks: "Anything else?" ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN raises his voice and FACILITATOR PURPLE smilingly comments: "Of course". ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR GREEN speaks of the breakaway day they had the

previous year, and how the changeover of the artistic manager of play was the biggest challenge at that time. He reminds the group of how big the irritation and reluctance were with this. He jokes: "We are facing some of this with the manager still today". He states that they have become more professional in dealing with it. He adds: "Back then, we have thought that this situation cannot increase, and today it has increased. The mood was the same back then, and now it is also running rampant. You should see it as a success: Now you have three times the challenge". The group laughs. "I am not cynical", he defends himself, but the group laughs again. When he finishes, FACILITATOR PURPLE wish everyone "a Merry Christmas", and the group reacts again with laughter. "Oh yes", FACILITATOR PURPLE jokes, "that is also still happening". After the workshop, a spontaneous coordination circle meeting is held. Certain staff members voice their anger about the administrative director's attempt to intervene, while others express their sympathy for the directors who made their feelings clear.

What makes this scene surprising is the group's refusal to play along with the administrative manager's positive framing of the situation and, instead, to react with cynical laughter. There are several expressions of frustration and anger in response to the demands of the arts. The facilitator prevents the administrative manager from saying something and allows the (frustrated) stage directors to speak first. When he finally gets a chance to speak, the administrative manager ridicules the expressed frustrations as a "self-help group" and enters into a longer monologue about the character of the various artistic managers and how to manage them, and how they intend approaching different changes. The facilitator does not react to his speech but ends the discussion and the workshop by asking for comments on the agenda of the next workshop. The administrative director immediately raises his voice again and frames the situation as manageable and a positive challenge. The group laughs at him a couple of times, which is unprecedented. The facilitator makes a few ironic comments ("Of course" and "Merry Christmas"). Here, the enacted alternative reality is that the group can collectively refuse to follow the administrative directors' often sophisticated and sense-giving comments. Instead, it keeps to its own definition of the situation and its own emotional reaction to it.

Such an emotional "opposing" is also visible in workshop VI, where a stage director continuously refuses to "play along" with the solution-oriented questions of the facilitators (see "unsettling the formal structure") and becomes angry. Despite the confrontational atmosphere, a staff member nevertheless makes a joke that involves a word play connecting a metaphor she had just used and her professional role. The staff member thus opposes the dominant emotions of frustration and anger and unsettles the habit of avoiding a playful joke in a heated atmosphere.

b) Surprise action: contrasting emotions

Vignette XI: Appreciating conflictual discussion *(WS I)*

Workshop I, for the most, was rather conflictual and fraught with tension. Not only were there heated debates about the topic of participation formats, but the idea of discussing the synchronization of the masterplan in the absence of some of the relevant stakeholders was rejected outright, and the suggestion to audit communication standards evoked strong opposition. Also, on a personal level, a staff member framed the ability to take part in broader participation formats as being dependent on the department's maturity – a term that offended several of the participants. Particularly, a line of conflict was drawn between the stage and the administrative staff, as well as between the group and the facilitators. However, at the end of the workshop when the facilitators initiated a feedback round, it was evident that the conflictual discussions were viewed by some in a positive light. Although several participants still express their concerns about the feasibility of the participation formats or the huge impending workload, some also voice their appreciation of the heated debate: "What has been done today was important and relevant", STAGE DIRECTOR GREY says. STAFF MEMBER BLUE adds: "There is a lot going on in the coordination circle and in the project groups. It is very nice to see the diversity and to find out in discussions about difficulties". STAGE DIRECTOR GREEN comments: "I found the presentation from your group on communication very helpful, to get to know what you are occupied with. I would hope to get to know also the other groups better". ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR YELLOW confirms this: "The meeting today was very constructive, very dense, very fruitful", to which ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR YELLOW adds: "It was efficient today and it makes me look forward to continue to work on it". ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR WHITE says: "To discuss these things and to talk about these irritations and to not just go over them – that was important, and it went really well".

The surprising element of this scene is the emergence of appreciative comments during the feedback round after a rather exhausting and conflict-ridden workshop. Despite the obvious tension, not only are the comments appreciative, but the feedback clearly indicates that the tension was deemed fruitful. Here, the enacted alternative reality is that of a positive framing of conflict, and of "stepping out" of the controversial conversations to relate to conflict in a different way.

Such a "contrasting" of emotions is visible in workshops III and VIII. In workshop III, there is disagreement between a facilitator and an administrative director on whether to use the mission statement (the facilitator's opinion) or the strategic goals (the director's opinion) to prioritize project measures. Both sides present their views, and the director calls the bottom-up approach of using the mission statement "Waldorf pedagogy". The matter remains unresolved, and the director and the facilitator continue to talk about this during a small-group exercise. Later, before they toast the masterplan with non-alcoholic sparkling wine, the director taps his glass and jokingly says that the facilitator is "going to make a baptismal motto". She grinningly raises her

glass “to the Waldorf pedagogy” and praises the group’s achievement. The director then jokes about jolting with “unripe fruits”. So clearly, they joke about their previous conflict and contrast the previous frustration and anger with their present humor. In workshop VIII, a stage director bids the group goodbye as she is leaving the theater. She was a frequent critic of the OD process but now expresses her gratitude for the process – she admits that she has often been critical of it but still values it, especially now that she is leaving. She thus contrasts her outspoken skepticism with appreciation and disturbs the emotional habit of fueling skepticism with further criticism.

c) Surprise action: switching emotional positions

Vignette XII: Mingling of people who usually do not mingle *(WS XI)*

Workshop XI, again, takes place at a conference center situated in a massive building in the financial district. Long staircases, columns, and strong grey walls with small windows and light resembling ancient temples. It takes me some minutes to climb the chairs and walk the floors to come to the designated conference room. I greet the internal coordinators and set up a chair for myself at the end of the room, next to a window with a view on a similar “heavy” building. I unpack my pens and writing pads, my audio recorder, and my bottle of water. I stay there, interacting with my smartphone and politely saying hello to the participants coming in individually or in small groups. They say hello to each other, grab something to drink, go out again to go to the restrooms, or discuss issues bilaterally. STAFF MEMBER WHITE puts on a presentation, showing the switching pictures of an off-site retreat that took place between the last steering group workshop and the present one, albeit with a different facilitator. The pictures display scenes of participants sitting outside on chairs in circles or going for a walk. Most faces in these pictures look rather serious and tired. The participants entering the room do not pay much attention to them. Against the wall opposite to me, a small group of participants is forming: STAFF MEMBERS YELLOW and PINK, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTORS ORANGE and RED, and STAGE DIRECTORS BROWN and BLUE are loudly laughing and joking, and other participants are joining the frolicking interaction when saying hello or attempting to move past this group. I cannot understand what they are joking about, but everybody seems to be in a rather good mood. “Funny”, I say to myself looking at this diverse and joyful group, “considering that the pictures look a bit boring; some team development must have happened at that off-site retreat”.

What struck me about this scene is the formation of this unusual group. I could not recall the formation of such a diverse group, voluntarily engaging in chitchat and playfully joking, in any of the previous workshops. Usually, at the beginning, participants would politely say hello or engage in smaller groups in small talk, often keeping to their stage or administrative colleagues. A larger group consisting of staff members and stage and administrative directors, and their jolly interaction was for me

a new experience. For a moment, the habitual intergroup relations and atmospheres were interrupted. The participants switched their emotional positions they were having in relation to each other, resulting in new group formations with new intergroup emotions. For a moment, the alternative reality was enacted of, together, being a fun and trustful group.

The surprise action of "switching emotional positions" is also evident in workshop IV. Here, one of the usually calm and constructive-minded stage directors suddenly sketches a very dramatic situation of dealing with the arts. The depiction coming from a usually more matter-of-fact-oriented director makes it sound even more dramatic. Thereby she unsettles the emotional habit of being constructive and businesslike.

Surprise moments in the sphere of emotionality

As the vignettes and the further examples indicate, surprise actions can also occur when addressing the dominant emotionality in the workshop. This is accomplished by confronting reassurance with anger, joking about a frustrated person, appreciating conflict, joint joking about a conflict, mixing skepticism with appreciation, being dramatic, and joyfully mingling as an unlikely subgroup. This emotional unsettling is often used to garner the group's attention. The disagreement between the administrative director and other participants on how to deal with the current situation is tense. The group collectively laughs at another framing of the director and, by switching the power setup, lets him know it is enough. The group does not do this through counterarguments but overrules him using the intensity of laughter. The appreciative remarks on the workshop express an emotional counterpoint to how a tiring and conflictual workshop was experienced, and thus stand out. And the diverse and frolicsome meeting before the workshop displays intense fun, and a scene that is a "first" during my observations. In parallel to gaining emotional momentum, these moments provide a sense that an alternative emotional reality could actually be possible: a reality of not playing along with the director's frequent leading on of emotional framing; a reality valuing conflict and disagreement; and a reality of together being a fun and trustful group (*see table 26*).

Table 26: Surprise moments unsettling the emotional sphere of OD conversations

Surprise moment	Interruptive momentum; visible affects and emotions	Sensed contingency
	Opposing emotions	
Reacting with anger to an attempt to ridicule concerns (WS IV)	Interrupting the portrayed "easiness"; anger, sarcasm	It is possible to "outpower" the director's emotional framing
Joking with someone who is frustrated (VI)	Interrupting the dominant frustration; humor	It is possible to be playful during a heated exchange
	Contrasting emotions	
Appreciating a conflictual discussion (WS I)	Interrupting the tension; appreciation	It is possible to value conflict
Jointly joking about a conflict (WS III)	Interrupting the tension; humor	It is possible to agree and disagree at the same time
Expressing appreciation despite a history of criticism (VIII)	Interrupting the pessimism; appreciation	It is possible to criticize and appreciate a process
	Switching emotional positions	
While usually calm, losing one's temper and presenting a dramatic depiction of a situation (WS IV)	Interrupting the calmness; concerns	It is possible to switch one's emotional standing
Mingling of people that usually do not mingle (XI)	Interrupting the mistrust; bonding, joy	It is possible to have fun and be a trustful group

7.1.5 Unsettling the "plot": creating "eventness" through building surprise momentum

Throughout the presentation of the four conversational spheres and 12 surprise actions, I indicated the intensity created by these surprise moments. I now summarize and sharpen these findings on how these moments create an interruptive momentum and thus "eventness". Their momentum-building effect can be summarized as "collectivizing attention", "countering the habitual", "relational responding", (often) "opening for negotiation/conflict" and "conveying a sense of contingency", henceforth explained in more detail with reference to Bakhtin's (1984a, 1993) concept of "eventness".

Collectivizing attention. As was shown, the surprises often evoke emotional reactions that attune the cognitive and bodily attention to the unfolding of these moments. It is hard to elude them. As an observer, these workshop moments "automatically" captured my attention, and it was only afterwards that I could reflect on them. During these

moments I was fully attuned to them: I “had” to watch how the internals were opening the workshop as new facilitators; I “had” to look where the little sarcastic powerplay between the administrative and the stage director was going; I “had” to focus on how the external trainer would answer the question concerning project failures in the private sector compared to the public sector; and I “had” to observe the new group of participants which was forming right before the beginning of the workshop as if “I couldn’t trust my own eyes”. Although this is only my perspective, it is imaginable that some or many other may have similarly experienced it. In fact, most of these moments happened “center-stage” – in front of the whole group – and often involved many participants in an engaged and interactive way, most likely catching the attention of most people. However, what makes them special is the arousal connected to them – at least as I “witnessed” them – thus making them “stand out” of from other workshop proceedings. Bakhtin (1981) describes the “proximity” (and thus “eventness”) created by the polyphonic novel by using the example of laughter:

> Of special significance in this process of demolishing distance is the comical origin of these genres: they derive from folklore (popular laughter). It is precisely laughter that destroy the epic, and in general destroys and hierarchical (distancing and valorized) distance. As a distanced image a subject cannot be comical; to be made comical, it must be brought close. Everything that makes us laugh is close at hand, all comical creativity works in a zone of maximal proximity. (p. 23)

Not only laughter can create “eventness”, but also encounters: “(…) we mentioned the chronotope of encounter; in such a chronotope the temporal element predominates, and it is marked by a higher degree of intensity in emotions and values” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 243). Surprise moments are thus moments that gain our attention and attunement; they happen “close” to us as we are immersed in their unfolding, and as we experience the “eventness” of life. This is how suspense is created in the polyphonic novel according to Bakhtin (1984a), who quotes the literary critic Kaus: “Dostoevsky is like a host who gets on marvelously with the most motley guests, who is able to command the attention of the most ill-assorted company and can hold all in an equal state of suspense” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 18).

Countering the habitual. As shown, the surprise actions counter the habitual workshop proceedings. This is how these actions gain their surprising effect, and thus contribute to generating momentum. Noticeably, it is not the habitual proceeding of the OD process at THEATERORG to open a group to others; for two staff members to form an informal pioneering team on project management; to present radical propositions to make something work; or to jointly joke about a previous conflict. Morson and Emerson (1990) compare habits experienced in life with literary plots: “It is important to recognize

that even in life, habits and obsessions may produce repetitions that could appear as parallel plotted in advance if we did not know better" (p. 251). Although they use this as an argument against the assumption of life as a plot, it can be seen as an argument for organized life as a plot: habits, routines, planned, engineered and controlled behavior are well known in organizational life. Ideas of the bureaucratic organization with its roots in Scientific Management (Morgan, 2006) and psychological and sociological theories emphasizing the influence of culture, norms and habits (Neil, Wood & Quinn, 2006; Sparrow & Hutchinson, 2013), clearly remind us that life in general, and organizational life in particular can be highly planned and habitual. The same applies to OD as "planned change" (Beckhard, 1969; Burke, 2008). The momentum is built by "going against the plot of habits and planned change" and thus it creates "eventness".

Relational responding. As evident in the vignettes, the surprise momentum is built relationally: although an individual person may initiate the moment, it gains its surprise quality through what happened before and how people react to this. For example, when the agenda was questioned, it required the stage director to raise her voice and ask a question about the agenda, but it also required the facilitators to reject this discussion and other participants to "jump in" and start a discussion. The unfolding of these moments and the momentum building is relational: someone moves forward, takes unusual action, and other participants respond to this move by countering it, by enforcing it, or reacting to it, thereby contributing to the momentum and "eventness": "The idea is a *live event*, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 88).

(Often) opening for negotiation/conflict. In many of the surprise moments a certain tension visible. Usually, these moments are accompanied by conflict and negotiation: the question on whether a group will be opened to non-regular group members; the question whether the cockpit (masterplan) is still valid is contested; the proposition on planning participation formats when there is a spontaneous cancellation of a performance is met with laughter but defended as a serious suggestion; there is an "emotional negotiation" between the reassurance of the administrative director, relativizing the precariousness of the current situation, and his colleagues who laugh at him on account of this. It is this "tug of war" in opposite directions that creates momentum. For Bakhtin (1984a), plot in the polyphonic novel is only there to bring characters into dialogic contact: "Its goal is to place a person in various situations that expose and provoke him, to bring people together and make them collide in conflict –

in such a way, however, that they do not remain within this area of plot-related contact but exceed its bounds" (p. 276/277). Although the surprise moments do not always accompany conflict and negotiation, they certainly contribute to "eventness" when they occur.

Conveying a sense of contingency. What is more, as these surprise moments temporarily deviate from the habitual workshop proceedings, they provide a sense of the "contingency" of the workshop "plot". For a moment, they show that another reality is possible; even if the moment passes by, it still indicates a potential for change. The refusal to answer the facilitators' questions adequality is not repeated in the subsequent workshop, but the possibility to do so has been enacted and "will always be there". The sarcastic response to a sarcastic comment is a singular occurrence – but this little powerplay has been witnessed by the whole group and "cannot be undone"; the uplifting comparison of a pioneering study with an artistic award is unique – still, the comparison has been made and this "truth" has been spoken; and conflict was never again framed as being fruitful as had been the case in workshop I – however, as it has been lived, the possibility to do so "is out there". During these moments I was often thinking: "Ah, this is also possible", followed by a "One could also just not answer a question", "A stage director is now also doing sarcasm!", "Interesting, I've never thought about the integration management study as a prestigious artistic award", or "Look, not all was negative today, some praise the fruitfulness of today's conflicts". However, I was not the only one commenting in my mind, since others would also sometimes comment. For example, when the administrative director makes an "out of the box" suggestion for the implementation of participation formats, some laugh, and a facilitator defends this proposal as a legitimate one; the laughter and the defensive comment show that other participants also framed this as an alternative reality. Also, when the internal coordinators facilitate a steering group workshop and an administrative director explicitly praises them afterwards, stressing the maturity of the theater, it signifies the change of the OD setup as (positively) exceptional. Similarly, when the departing stage director expresses her appreciation of the OD process despite her regular opposition to it, she comments: "I never thought I would say this". The surprise moments thus convey a sense of the contingency of the organizational status quo – they unsettle the "plot". Sensing the contingency of the plot is an integral part of the polyphonic novel:

> As Bakhtin also puts the point, the plot that happens to have developed is conceived as only one of many possible plots that could have developed. We are invited to draw "dotted lines" to other possible plots that could have developed out of the same initial dialogic material. Plot by itself is merely a "Procrustean bed" that characters escape in

> quintessential moments of dialogic exchange beyond all plot – and beyond all structure of any kind. Structure would require the kind of "essential surplus" that the polyphonic novel abjures. Like the dialogic sense of truth, the polyphonic novel is not made up of elements united in a system but of voices full of event potential. (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 251)

The contingency that is sensed during these moments contribute to the experience that "something exceptional is going on", and this helps build momentum. These moments are a vital part of creating "eventness". As Bakhtin (1984a) writes about not-polyphonic novels: they have features which form "the stable all-determining basis for all plot-connections; contingency has no place here" (p. 104).

To sum up, "eventness" in OD workshops is created by surprise moments unsettling the formal, informal, framing, and emotional spheres of conversations. They intervene in the "plot" of the proceeding, "revitalizing" the OD conversation. They build momentum by collectivizing attention, countering the habitual, relational responding, (often) opening for conflict or negotiation, and conveying a sense of contingency. Acknowledging this serves as an introduction to the subsequent discussion of the possible meaning of these moments in relation to organizational reflection and the "unfinalizability" of OD conversations.

7.2 Discussion

As shown above, I identified four conversational spheres of surprise moments and 12 surprise actions: unsettling the formal structure includes changing the OD setup, changing the agenda ritual, and changing the discussion ritual; unsettling the informal structure includes confronting, dismissing loyalty, and changing informal roles; unsettling the framing of a process includes changing the perception of an object, of oneself and of others; and unsettling emotions includes opposing emotions, contrasting emotions, and switching emotional positions. These surprise moments create "eventness" by collectivizing attention, countering the habitual, relational responding, (often) opening for conflict or negotiation, and conveying a sense of contingency. In the next sections, I discuss the meaning of these moments by referring to their implicit reflective potential, to how they cater for the "unfinalizability" of OD, and to how they can be "handled" practically.

7.2.1 Surprise moments as implicitly reflective "threshold moments"

As indicated, the surprise moments create a certain sense of "contingency". Contingency refers to a situation where something is possible but not certain (Bunnin & Yu, 2004)[12]. This is exactly the characteristic of the depicted situations: an agenda is unexpectedly questioned, someone unexpectedly replies with sarcasm, a radical proposition is unexpectedly made, or a conflictual discussion is unexpectedly appreciated. These are alternatives to the habitual and expected way of doing things: to silently accept the agenda, to silently "swallow" a sarcastic comment, to stay within the meeting routines of the theater, or to be appalled by a conflictual discussion.

Through these surprising moments, the contingency of the situation becomes tangible: how we anticipate things, or how things are usually done, is no longer the only way. The usual way of doing things conveys a sense of normality and create expectations, thus becoming a habit (Styhre, 2016). The surprise moments "unsettle" this normality: suddenly, the possibility of a different reality becomes tangible. Therefore I frame these surprise moments as "threshold" moments. "Threshold" is a term that Bakhtin (1981) uses to describe a specific "time-space" configuration in literature ("chronotope" - from the Greek "chrónos" [time] and "tópos" [space]). The analysis of different literature genres in different epochs led Bakhtin to conclusion that each literary work uses its own temporal and spatial configurations to narrate a story. For example, the obstacles of time and space are quite different in an ancient romantic drama than in an ancient adventure drama. Whether lovers merely fail to meet at the same time in the same space is a different configuration of time and space than when a hero stumbles from one adventure to another.

> We will give the name chronotope (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term (space time) is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. The special meaning it has in relativity theory is not important for our purposes; we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor (time as the fourth dimension of space)… In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 84)

[12] A mass-collective sensing of contingency was observable in the year of finishing this thesis: the 2020 Corona pandemic revealed to many the contingency of "normal" and "daily" life. Suddenly, people are wearing hygiene masks in public, doing homeschooling and work from home, keeping to social distancing, missing going to the theater or sports events, missing restaurants and travelling, and worrying about the economic, cultural and health-related future. Even if this virus may be almost forgotten one day, even after (hopefully) "returning to normality" – it is assumed that it will change the perception of many for a long time due to their experience of the contingency of taken-for-granted habits.

A chronotope that Bakhtin describes, among others, is that of the “threshold”. This chronotope interrupts the normal flow of life, and it intensifies a moment of crisis in which more than one option of how to proceed becomes visible. In this or similar moments, the contingency of life becomes palpable:

> We will mention one more chronotope, highly charged with emotion and value, the chronotope of threshold; it can be combined with the motif of encounter, but its most fundamental instance is as the chronotope of crisis and break in a life. The word “threshold” itself already has a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage (together with its literal meaning), and is connected with the breaking point of life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold). In literature, the chronotope of the threshold is always metaphorical and symbolic, sometimes openly but more often implicitly. In Dostoevsky, for example, the threshold and related chronotopes (…) are the main places of action in his works, places where crisis events occur, the falls, resurrections, renewals, epiphanies, decisions that determine the whole life of a man. In this chronotope, time is essentially instantaneous; it has no duration and falls out of the normal course of biographical time. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 248)

I thus frame these surprise moments as “threshold moments” as they convey a certain momentary uncertainty about how the future direction unfolds; moments that stand out in the temporal flow, as something happens and the OD participants, as an “audience”, do not know where these developments will end – the process is in crisis, and it could go the one way or the other. The “eventness” captures the collective attention to the here-and-now and the “instantaneous”, as Bakhtin refers to it in the previous quote. These moments create a sense that more than the habitual way of doing things is possible, although an alternative way of doing things has not (yet) become the new habit – the workshop group is still “at a threshold”. Forming a circle and passing around a talking stick has not yet become a habit, but it is enacted; the same applies to other instances like asking a personal question, subjecting a major project to vote, or joking about someone who is frustrated, etc. With surprises entering the habitual organization of OD conversations, centrifugal forces become visible: the surprise actions diversify the otherwise habitual actions.

Similar to “plot”, another important term Bakhtin uses is the “author”. In the polyphonic novel, the author is “dethroned” as the dominant voice, and multiple, competing voices interact instead. The threshold moments have the potential to “un-author” the dominance of habits (or to “weaken the plot”). In the social sciences, the “structure vs. agency” debate focuses on the question whether social structures determine behavior or whether individual actions are independent (Wilcox, 2015). Practice theories attempt to overcome this dualism by postulating that there is a mutual constitution of individual actions and social structures (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). According to their viewpoint, social practices – such as “doing” an OD workshop – are “constantly

recreated by the same means whereby they express themselves" (Gherardi 2006, p. 31). Individual actions shape social structures to the same extent that social structures shape individual actions. Participation in practices, therefore, shapes our expectations of what is normal and how things are expected to unfold: "Heroes as heroes are born of the plot itself. The plot is not merely their clothing, it is their body and their soul" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 104). However, as the psychologist Ole Dreier (2008) postulates, there is a certain element of choice. As participants in social practices, people can either change or reproduce the social practice they are participating in. The surprising moments of contingency seem like a window of opportunity to do this. They create a "threshold". For a short period, it is unclear whether change occurs or whether things will return to "normal". In these moments, both options are possible: standing at the threshold, it is possible to take the direction of change or to take the direction of habits. For example, it is possible to flexibly handle the agenda, or to rigidly stick to it; to criticize ingroup members to put collegial loyalty first; to use picture exercises as playful and personal exercises, or to use them to level serious comments on the OD process; to jointly joke about disagreements or to frustratedly continue with them. The effect of surprise increases the arousal level of witnesses, and thus creates a "sense of contingency": a momentary feeling that the habitual way may not be the only way of doing things. When habits reign, agency is invisible. However, the threshold moments can temporarily shift the agency of the whole process in favor of the participants' viewpoint. This equals a shift from authorship to authoring (Gorli, Nicolini & Scaratti, 2015). Gorli et al. (2015) define authorship as a process whereby "organizational members contribute to the reproduction of organizational realities" (p. 1347), whereas authoring is the process whereby "authorship is brought to critical consciousness" (ibid.). Authorship is thus the shaping of reality through actions and authoring the reflective awareness of these actions. The surprise moments can be seen as regularly interrupting the habitual patterning of the OD conversations, and thus as raising an awareness of these habits: "When one's beliefs and opinions can be called into question and contradicted, it indeed means that participants are ready to see and listen to what a situation might surprisingly dictate" (Cooren, 2020, p. 188). By enacting temporary alternatives, the habitual way of doing things comes stronger into view, and a decision is needed on how to proceed – returning to the habitual way or enacting more of the alternative. Threshold moments have thus the potential to trigger authoring in an implicit way.

It is through this potentially collective sensing of contingency that I frame these moments as reflective. They question the status quo of doing things: "Regardless of

the particular perspective a critical approach is based on, it will emphasize the value of “unsettling” existing structures and practices” (Pässilä & Vince, 2016, p.50). However, they do not necessarily do so in an explicit way – by talking about and discussing a certain issue – but, by performing the questioning in a manner of acting unexpectedly. Organizational reflection thus occurs in an implicit and relational way. Taken-for-granted assumptions are not explicitly reflected upon, but implicitly questioned by unexpected behavior. Previously, Schön (1983) emphasized the role of surprise in triggering reflection:

> Much reflection-in-action hinges on the experience of surprise. When intuitive, spontaneous performance yields nothing more than the results expected for it, then we tend not to think about it. But when intuitive performance leads to surprises, pleasing and promising or unwanted, we may respond by reflection-in-action. (p. 56)

Organizational reflection literature has paid scant attention to surprise as an effect that can trigger collective reflection. This is an unfortunate gap, as surprise also has “collectivizing” potential since it focuses and intensifies the collective attention. The existence of an organization or a group does not necessarily mean that people are willing to participate in collective forms of reflection, unless they are collectively engaged to do so. Surprise has the ability to create collective momentum. As shown, the threshold moments create a certain tension that is difficult to not bodily attune to. It is difficult not to be astonished about the facilitators’ distance from a hierarchical decision in the moment; by a personal question directed toward a hierarchically higher person; by a participant’s story of how she bought the theater’s first computer; or by a participant losing her calm.

The psychologist John Shotter has dedicated many publications to the topic of special moments in interactions and the role of attunement. He refers to these moments as “joint action” (1980), “interactive moments” (1993), or “living moments” (Shotter & Katz, 1999). These are moments expressing a special form of “relational understanding” (ibid. p.5). They have a poetic quality, are sensed by a responsive body, and also focus on the conversation process, especially on the latter’s rhythm, energy, and interruption. Attuning to these moments assists in finding spots where conversations make a difference. This attunement or “selective sensitivity” (ibid. p. 4) is especially expressed in *listening*:

> (…) instead of hoping to hear immediately what a person is saying, a slowly developing process of listening and hearing takes place, a process which can result in both speakers and listeners coming to share a set of determining surroundings for their utterances, and thus not to talk with each other at cross-purposes. (Shotter, 2009, p. 39)

Shotter frequently refers to a Bakhtinian conceptualization of dialogue to express the relationality of these moments, and the need to deal with “otherness” in conversations. Jenny Helin is another scholar who draws on Bakhtin and Shotter’s work. She also refers to “living moments” (2011) and highlights the role of listening (Helin, 2013). For example, Helin and Avenier (2016), describe the emergence of “arresting moments” and conclude with the significance of listening: “One suggestion is to remember the importance of listening” (p.148). They continue: “For us to be able to touch each other, we have to tune in to the otherness offered to us to be able to respond from within the on-going conversation (…). This is the kind of response that makes people feel they have been heard” (ibid.). Such a viewpoint aligns with the approaches to dialogue and reflection as particularly good forms of communication (e.g. Duffy & O’Rourke, 2014; Jacobs & Heracleous, 2005; Ferdig & Ludema, 2005).

The threshold moments as depicted in the analysis share similarities with the moments referred to by Shotter and Helin. They also have a way of attuning the focus to the momentary happening, and they often do so in an emotional way, affecting the bodies of the participants. They have a way of interrupting the habitual modus of interaction, and thus stand out. They effect the attention in the room, and they evoke curiosity and tension over the development of the situation. For example, they create curiosity about how participants will accept the new big clock as a time structure, how the administrative director will react to the stage director’s counter use of sarcasm, how the external trainer will respond to a question comparing the private and the public sector, or how new group mingling will evolve. However, despite these similarities between the conceptualization of “living moments” sensu Shotter and Helin and the “threshold moments” depicted in this analysis, there are also differences: similar to the previous chapter’s discussion (Chapter 6) on dialogue as a particular good form of communication, Shotter and Helin emphasize the importance of mindfully attuning to these moments to create them, and of listening in a particular way. I interpret the threshold moments more as “involuntary” catching of the participants’ attention.. The threshold moments do not describe a special moment of two people carefully attuning to each other, but more of a group “stumbling” upon an unexpected development. They are not created by a special form of listening, but more by a relationally enacted confrontation between a habitual way of doing things and a deviation from it. The participants are more likely to be “involuntary” attuning to the big clock, the sarcasm, the question about the private-public comparison, and the new group formation. These moments are not created through mindful listening, but through surprised and tense attunement evoked by their intuitive bodily reaction to the unfolding of these moments.

Another difference between the threshold moments and “living moments” sensu Shotter and Helin concerns their effect. For Shotter and Helin, living moments serve as a turning point in conversations. They turn them into a learning situation or a situation with desirable and constructive outcomes. These living moments enable “reflecting on practices in practice” (Shotter & Katz, 1999, p.6). The threshold moments, as depicted, do not necessarily have this effect. They are unique and the exception to the rule. They point to a possible alternative without necessarily establishing this alternative in the long run. They are not immediate “teachable moments” (Havighurst, 1952) or crucial “turning points” that determine a long-term change of the conversation. They are not defined by their usefulness to the conversation in terms of their outcome. Instead, in my interpretation, the quality of the threshold moments lies in regularly presenting a little variance to the “organizational status quo” (Vince, 2002). The reflection produced by these moments is thus not a conscious, deeper understanding. Instead, through the deviation from the expected, the habitual is implicitly questioned. These moments convey a sense of the contingency of the situation, and of the possible alternative realities: of the alternatives to the formal, informal, framing-related, or emotional habits and structures. They offer glimpses of these alternative realities by enacting them temporarily. The moments “revitalize” OD conversations by interrupting the habitual way of conversing, and by “involuntarily” gaining the attention of the participants. They convey a sense of the contingency of the situation, but not only in a pure cognitive way: by enacting these moments, the contingency is performed, lived, and experienced. Through these moments, the authoring of the OD process becomes palpable, and the ownership of the process leans for a moment toward the participants creating it. The enactment of participating in the agenda setting, of openly competing with other groups, of accepting outsider knowledge as relevant and applicable, or of overall appreciating a process which one has often opposed, raises awareness of the possibility to shape, in an active manner, the course of the OD process and to not just be shaped by its established structure. These moments thus put the OD conversations on a “threshold”, and contribute to their “unfinalizability”, as I explain in the next section.

7.2.2 Unfinalizability and OD

A concept which is linked to “eventness” but more frequently used by Bakhtin, is the one of “unfinalizability”. Unfinalizability refers to the condition that there cannot be a final meaning in a dialogue: “Nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the

ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p.166). Language is pluralistic, no one owns it, and no one can provide a final definition – even if they try, there would always be others who may question a word or use it differently. Language is therefore vivid and played by usage. This resembles the characteristic of "eventness" as not being tamed by rules or systems, and as being expressions of the vitality of life. The identified threshold moments are expressions of such an unfinalizability: every habit can be unsettled occasionally, and even a prepared and planned OD process has moments of ambiguity in how it evolves. For example, the habit of agenda setting is suddenly "opened", the taboo of ingroup critique is suddenly "untied", endless masterplan discussions are suddenly "on thin ice", and calm reactions are suddenly "unfrozen". What could have been perceived as a "finalized way of doing things" is suddenly shaken and again opened up.

Even though these moments may be temporary, they still convey a sense of contingency and of the unfinalizability of the process. Jorgenson and Steier (2013) observe in their study on designing conversational processes:

> Our analysis of two World Café conversations suggests that even a meeting context with an expressed agenda may be full of chance discoveries as participants respond to the moment. In this sense, the World Café as a designed conversational process has elements of improvisatory joint performances described by Mary Catherine Bateson (1994), in which each person inventively participates in concert with the other without necessarily having a clear script or plan. (p. 401)

Furthermore, Jorgenson and Steier (2013) refer to the family therapist James Coyne (1985) who notes:

> It can even be the case that participants could not proceed if they had such an explicit grasp of what is unfolding. [for example] many couples would never have gotten together if either partner had framed their first encounter as "initiating a long-term-relationship". (p. 339)

The possibility of designing conversational processes in OD is thus limited. In the polyphonic novel, the author's voice becomes one among many. The threshold moments regularly interrupt the original workshop design. They collide with OD as "planned change". They demonstrate that the official "authors" and the official "plots" of the OD process are not the only ones influencing the process: "Plot is no longer the sequence characters are ordained to follow, but the result of what they happen to say or do" (Morson & Emerson, 1990, p. 247). A lot happens through unplannable interactional dynamics: for example, through the refusal to answer a question, through a personal comment, through making a radical proposition, or through reacting with

anger toward a reassurance. Hence, the threshold moments provide an additional answer to the question of how OD conversations evolve: regularly unsettled and "unfinalized" by surprising moments. As a result, in addition to how I expressed the contribution of the first analysis, this second analysis contributes to the question of what constitutes the "dialogicality" in Dialogic OD. Obviously, dialogue in OD can result in more than just questioning the dominant discourses of an organization. OD scholars claim that the characteristics of Dialogic OD are that conversations are open-ended, and that change agents are hosts rather than facilitators (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). They claim that one needs to "go with the flow" and that one can never be certain about the direction of a conversation. Change agents are responsible for the "environment" of the process, thus for the "container" and not its content (Corrigan, 2015). There is a strong emphasis on change agents' responsibility for the "form" of the process that allows the unfolding of change conversations, whereas the content of the process is the responsibility of the participants. This suggests that the change agents are in control of the "form" of the workshops. However, as this analysis shows, control is always limited, also with regard to the form. The practice of OD workshops will always produce variances and surprises. Threshold moments will always emerge. Dialogicality thus does not only refer to the open-endedness of the content of conversations, but to the open-endedness of the form of conversations: to the formality, informality, framing and emotions of the conversations. Through the encounter of different voices, the habits, and formal and informal rules of conducting the workshops are on a regular basis as equally unsettled as the content of the conversation. Dialogue does not stop at the content of a conversation. Dialogue also leads to conversations that unsettle the habits of these very conversations. Threshold moments keep the dialogue "alive" and prevent it from "dying" or becoming "flat". They create "vividness" and "eventness".

7.2.3 Encountering threshold moments

The analysis indicates how "revitalizing" OD conversations can be enacted: by changing the OD setup, the agenda ritual and the discussion ritual; by confronting, dismissing loyalty, and changing informal roles; by changing the perception of an object, of oneself and of others; and by opposing emotions, contrasting emotions, and switching emotional positions. This is a rich arsenal of engaging in surprises and unsettling the "plot" and structure. Moreover, the threshold moments can teach us to "attune" to such appearances of "eventness" – to value them and understand their relation to the sometimes heavy character of habits. For example, Jordan (2010)

speaks of “learning to be surprised” as a constitution for organizational reflection, Bére of “willing to be surprised”, and Cooren (2020) of “surprisability”:

> This is exactly where the communicative constitution of good organizational actorhood resides. Not in a series of principles and values that would a priori guide our actions, but through a disposition by which we collectively accept to be surprised by what a situation dictates, which is, I would say, the essence of a pragmatist stance. Pragmatism—or ventriloquism, as these two positions are, I think, compatible—does not gives us the recipe to make good decisions, but it at least predisposes us to welcome elements that can make a situation potentially more complex than expected. In other words, it creates the conditions of a certain form of undecidability that any true decision must experience (…). (p. 188)

Surprises can trigger reflection on the contingency of the organizational situation. Some scholars suggest to actively seize such moments for meta-communication. For example, the critical reflection scholar Stephen Brookfield (2016) uses surprise as a source to collectively reflect on power and conversational dynamics:

> One specific way I have tried to accomplish this, when in a position of authority myself, is through the use of a Critical Incident Questionnaire (CIQ). This is a five-question instrument I distribute after every meeting I chair, every class I teach, and every workshop or training I conduct, and then commit to sharing the responses with the group the next time we meet. The questions ask participants when they were most engaged and most distant, which actions that anyone took were most helpful or puzzling, and what surprised them most during the event. The responses are collected, summarized, and then reported back to the whole group. Sometimes I take responsibility for analyzing and sharing the responses. At other times (particularly when the group mistrusts me) I never see any of the completed forms, and different members of the group take turns in collecting and reporting on people’s responses. (p. 20)

The threshold moments have the potential to evoke such explicit reflection, for example on the questions: “How do we come to power distributions?”, “How do we speak and relate to each other in regard to hierarchy?”, “What do we preferably think here?”, or “How do we come to problematizations?” The following table (*table 27)* lists suggestions for possible questions, based on the depicted vignettes, respectively.

Table 27: Threshold moments and their potential for explicit reflection

Threshold moment	**Potential questions for explicit reflections**
Unsettling formality	
Opening the group to others	How do we come to power distributions?
Questioning the agenda	How do we create the agenda in this OD process?
Refusing to answer a question	How do we define the facilitator-participant relationship?
Unsettling informality	
Replying with sarcasm to another’s sarcasm	How do we speak and relate to each other within a hierarchy?
Criticizing an ingroup member	How do we arrive at our work ethics?
Defending the masterplan	How do we establish subgroup identities?

Unsettling the framing	
Making a radical proposition	How do we preferably think here?
Framing a pilot study as equal to an artistic award	How do we create our self-image?
Witnessing an outsider with insider knowledge	How do we create our image of others?
Unsettling emotions	
Reacting with anger to an attempt to ridicule concerns	How do we arrive at problematizations?
Appreciating a conflictual discussion	How do we react to conflict?
Mingling of people that usually do not mingle	How do we perform our inner-group relationships?

There are creative ways of engaging with threshold moments for the purpose of OD: from attempting to initiate them, to appreciate them, and to seize them as opportunities for explicit reflection. However, any attempt to overly plan and control threshold moments will probably fail: their relational complexity makes them unusable for linear steering attempts, as the "eventness" of encounters "mixes up" any well-structured "plot". Instead, we regularly "end up" in threshold situations, when threshold moments "press themselves upon us", and force us to somehow "respond" as they unfold. An open mind, similar to Bakhtin's (1984a) concept of an author who is open to how the dialogue between independent voices will evolve, could be the most suitable way of "handling" them – whether we actively seek them, passively endure them, or whether we seize them as opportunities for explicit reflection.

7.3 Summary

This second analysis explored the question of how surprise moments are enacted in the OD process. They emerge by unsettling the formal structure, by unsettling the informal structure, by framing a process, and by reversing emotions. Consequently, they create a "sense of contingency", as they temporarily enact an alternative reality that is the exception to a rule. I therefore call them "threshold moments". This clashing of the habitual and the surprise can be framed as an implicit reflective moment. In addition, the threshold moments can be framed as producing "unfinalizability" – keeping the OD conversations "alive". Hence, threshold moments create "eventness" and disturb the habitual plot of OD workshops. Therefore, dialogicality not only refers to the content of conversations, but also to the dynamic evolvement of the habits of

these conversations. As a result, threshold moments force participants to “adapt” to them, and an open mind can help to encounter them in constructive ways. Having presented my two analyses, I now turn to the concluding part of this thesis.

8 Concluding Discussion: the “Comfortable Discomfort” of Lively OD Conversations?

A thought that, like a fish in an aquarium, knocks against the bottom and the sides and cannot swim farther or deeper. Dogmatic thoughts. (Bakhtin, 1986, p.162)

8.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters offered insights into the dialogical and reflective processes of THEATERORG'S OD process. In this chapter, I discuss these findings more generally, in relation to dialogicality and organizational reflection, drawing a bow back to the starting point of this thesis, namely the literature fields of Dialogic OD and organizational reflection and the overall research question: How do OD conversations evolve, and how is this evolvement mediated by organizational reflection?? In conclusion, this chapter outlines the anticipated contributions of this research project, namely a better understanding of the complexity and dynamicality of OD conversations; a better understanding of OD as a social constructionist process; an alternative conceptualization of organizational reflection as an implicit process; specifying the meaning of “development” in OD; inspiring a dialogic “mindset”; and shedding light on the under-researched area of OD in a public theater.

This chapter is sequentially structured: First, following a summary of the analyses' findings, I discuss how this research project assists in understanding the complexity and dynamicality of OD conversations – OD conversations evolve between centripetal and centrifugal forces, and from an interplay of genres, voices, and surprise moments. Second, I indicate how this research project sheds light on the creation of organizational reality through OD conversations: problematizations pressure others to respond, and so do surprise moments. Third, I discuss organizational reflection as an implicit process: in OD conversations, voices question each other and surprise moments question the habitual way of doing things, thus putting taken-for-granted assumptions “on a threshold”. Four, I turn to the term “development” in OD: how it can profit from conceptualizing OD as dialogic and reflective. Five, I discuss the notion of a “dialogic mindset”: inspired by this research project, this notion could be defined as an attunement to polyphony, genres, responses and “eventness”, and to the implicit questioning processes. After all, “(t)here is nothing so practical as a good theory” (Lewin, 1952 [1943-44], p. 169). Six and in the final instance, I indicate the research

project's benefit for public theaters: I argue that public theaters are opportune places for OD interventions.

After discussing these contributions, I indicate possibilities of reading Bakhtin's work in a more pragmatic and normative way. Furthermore, I discuss limiting factors of this research project, and I make suggestions for future research. I conclude by reflecting on the research process and by inviting further dialogue on the research theme.

8.2 Summary: OD conversations as threshold-conversations

The central question of this research project is how OD conversations evolve, and how this evolvement is mediated by reflection. As the two analyses show, on the one hand, OD conversations evolve along centripetal and centrifugal forces, depending on the "space of encounter" that the workshop genres provide. On the other hand, OD conversations evolve as they are regularly interrupted by threshold moments that question the habitual way of doing things. More specifically, OD conversations are enacted through response actions that either lean more toward pragmatic coordination and deliberation, or more toward a tension-creating "battle over problematizations" – or even toward "stepping out", namely the carnivalesque possibility of stepping out of a professional role in an organizational context to ease the tensions stemming from this role and to uplift the general mood. The possibility to reply, as well as the immediacy of an issue resulted in a two-by-two scheme (see *chapter 6*) in which either consensus or dissensus prevails, either in an open or in a silent way. The more open the dissensus is, the stronger are the battles over problematizations, and the more the voices clash; this effect on the voice dynamic being framed as "teasing". In a more silent dissensus, problematizations are more one sided, as there is no real possibility to reply. A certain tension is palpable, but the opposition and the open conflict are controlled; thus I call this effect "bridling". In an open consensus, there is interactive "deliberating" and a peaceful mingling of voices, hence the effect is characterized as "softening". Seen differently, in silent consensus, there is a more monotonous "deliberating" of a few voices with a "dulling" effect. Tendencies toward dissensus can be framed as originating in centrifugal forces, and thus are implicitly reflective as different voices implicitly question each other's assumptions. Tendencies toward consensus can be framed as emerging from centripetal forces. Furthermore, as we have seen in the analysis, no genre purely consists of consensus or dissensus. Centrifugal and centripetal forces make themselves audible in any genre. There is a

livingness in dialogue that cannot be controlled or silenced. However, how voices encounter and the power of their questioning also depends on the genre in use, which can be actively considered when designing an OD workshop.

The second analysis points to another aspect of the livingness of OD conversations, namely the capacity of OD conversations to frequently break with habits and to surprise, and thus to create "eventness". Despite all intentional design decisions and despite all habituation, threshold moments constantly occur by unsettling a formal or informal structure, the framing of a process, or the dominant emotions. The 12 identified surprise actions in these conversational spheres, respectively, include: changing the OD setup, the agenda ritual, or the discussion ritual; confronting, dismissing loyalty, or changing informal roles; changing the perception of an object, of oneself, or of others; and opposing emotions, contrasting emotions, or switching emotional positions. The threshold moments have a relational and implicit reflective potential as they are enacted through interaction and create a temporary, collective momentum: they collectivize attention, counter the habitual, are enacted relationally, are often accompanied by conflict or negotiations, and convey a sense of contingency.

Together, the two analyses indicate how OD conversations are frequently put "on a threshold" – a single voice questions another and surprise moments question the habitual way of doing OD workshops. The interaction of a plurality of voices and the emergence of surprise moments constitute a sense of alternative possibilities – contingencies – and the need to look further and to go further. An OD process is unfinalizable, and conversations on a threshold point to the possibility and emergence of change.

8.3 Contributing to the field of OD, organizational reflection, and public theaters

8.3.1 The complex dynamicality of OD conversations

Only a limited number of contemporary academic articles do not refer to the debate on the emergence of Dialogic OD. However, empirical studies on the unfolding of OD from a social constructionist viewpoint and elaborated theories of OD as dialogue are still rare (Aguiar & Tonelli, 2018; Bushe & Marshak, 2009; Grant & Marshak, 2011). Therefore: What constitutes dialogicality, and how is it accomplished in practice? This research project contributes to such a theoretical and empirical exploration by adopting

Bakhtinian thinking to conceptualize OD conversations as a polyphonic and unfinalizable process. The assumption of centrifugal and centripetal forces, of OD as a multi-voiced process, as well as of the idea of dialogue as "alive" and subject to many authors, can serve as a conceptualization of dialogue that enhances our understanding of the dialogicality in OD in a rewarding way. As argued, in OD, voices constantly encounter and challenge each other's premises, and surprising moments continuously keep the dialogue "breathing" and prevent it becoming flat or monotonous.

As the first analysis indicated, conversations in OD provide varying spaces for voices to encounter. Hence, there is not a singular dialogicality, but an ever-evolving dialogicality with different effects: it can be dulling, softening, bridling, or teasing. The second analysis suggests that the dialogicality of OD conversations is frequently "refreshed" by threshold moments; moments that challenge the habitual way of doing things and that create "eventness". Dialogue is vivid and cannot be "fixed". Consequently, the two analyses postulate a dynamic understanding of OD conversations. Conversations are usually framed as "dynamic". But what does "dynamic" mean? This research project provides a possible entry into understanding conversational dynamicality in OD processes: OD conversations continuously evolve between centrifugal and centripetal forces and between habits and "eventness". The understanding of OD conversations as ever-evolving, as being in a state of constant tension between different poles, and as coming in waves of tensions and relaxations and of expectations and surprises, assists us in grasping the living nature of OD. OD conversations are unfinalizable, with varying spaces for voice encounters and the establishment of habitual patterns.

By applying Bakhtinian thinking to OD, this research project provides a systematic theoretical framework to understand OD as dialogue. The concepts of centrifugal and centripetal forces, a pluralism of voices addressing each other, and of "eventness" and "unfinalizability", assist very well in exploring the livingness of OD conversations, the tensions and conflicts audible at THEATERORG, and the dynamics of "somehow proceeding in a messy organizational process". Alternative discourses challenging dominant discourses, as proposed by conversational approaches to OD (Barrett, 2015; Grant & Marshak, 2011; Marshak & Grant, 2008), do not represent a "clinically clean" and simple process. On the contrary, OD conversations are complex, tense, and messy. As I quoted Cotter et al. (2016) in *chapter 2*, "using critically reflective inquiry is likely to generate data about the perplexed situations and emotional dynamics that are part of both maintaining stability and creating possibilities for change" (p. 179). This

research project reveals how some of this complexity, these tensions and this messiness unfold in a concrete OD case. It thus broadens our understanding of OD conversations and sets a path for further process-oriented OD research. Thus far, research conceptualizing OD as conversation has emphasized that alternative discourses challenge dominant discourses, and that new narrations and wordings change the organizational reality. However, what is missing in these concepts are the relational and emotional complexities of “challenging” discourses and introducing new narrations: for example, the conflict evoked when employee participation is proposed, or when a project masterplan is framed as binding. As seen in the case of THEATERORG, this can lead to heated and long discussions, interrupting the whole workshop schedule. Dialogue is not always a harmonious and mindful endeavor; it can be tense, frictional, and full of surprises. This research project thus sheds some light on the complexity of OD conversations by showing how centrifugal and centripetal forces constantly “tear at conversations”, how genres affect the encounter of voices, and how moments of surprise continuously come and go. As indicated, there is much debate on the relationship between Diagnostic and Dialogic OD approaches. Some scholars propose not to use these approaches exclusively but contingently, depending on whether more divergent or convergent OD phases are currently called for (Oswick, 2009; Marshak & Bushe, 2009). From this research project I deduce that this is not a mere question of choice: centrifugal and centripetal forces are continuously, in parallel at work; they are part of a polyphonic conversational OD rhythm.

The “threshold” proposed in this research project is partly intentionally accomplished and partly subject to chance. The bringing together of different voices may be planned. However, how these voices relate to one another, encounter, and evolve depend on the relational and situational dynamics. Hence, OD conversations cannot be totally controlled or “tamed”. Much of the literature situates contemporary OD approaches in both social constructionism and complexity theory (Bushe & Marshak, 2015). The limited control over OD conversations, their unfinalizability, and their eventness align very well with complexity theory-inspired OD (Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Bushe & Marshak, 2014). Zooming into the unfolding of conversational moments assists an understanding of the dynamics of organizational phenomena (Sklaveniti, 2020). As the second analysis indicates, surprise moments evolve relationally. They do not only question the “content” of the OD conversations, but also their form by unsettling formal and informal structures, framings, and emotions. Collectively, this forces the agency of intentional interventions into a rather weak position; “plot” is partly a fantasy and “it makes sense to refer to the ontological becoming of the world in terms of Bakhtin’s

‘eventness’ (…). Rather than conceiving the world as structured in fixed space-time frames, the world is conceived as ‘eventness’ in open time and fluid space” (Svane, 2019, p. 159). OD practitioners are not “outside” complex OD conversations, outside a safe “container” in which complex and pluralist OD conversations take place; they are in the middle of them, and have to respond to the process as much as they may wish to “steer” it. They have to be “responsive” and willing to be surprised. OD conversations do not only challenge the organizational status quo “content-related”, but also “form-related”. The Bakhtinian notions of “eventness” and “unfinalizability” thus fit the contemporary conceptualization of OD as non-linear, future-oriented, and unpredictable.

By indicating some of the complex dynamics of OD conversations, this research project also contributes to a temporal perspective of OD. Bartunek and Woodman (2015) point out the need to give more consideration to temporality in OD research. Calling for concepts that go beyond Lewin’s (1952 [1947]) unfreeze-move-freeze model, these authors suggest turning to temporal dimensions that can assist in overcoming Lewin’s linear and simplistic model. They call for a consideration of sequence, timing, pacing, rhythm, monophony, and polyphony to produce more nuanced perspectives of change and OD. This research project contributes to this differentiation.

The first analysis reveals how important workshop genres are in the mediation of OD processes. The four effects on voice dynamics – dulling, softening, bridling and teasing – surely have a temporal dimension: a presentation probably feels “longer” than a heated debate (to some point – but a heated debate may also feel “endless” and exhausting). The use of genres is hence a way to accelerate and decelerate processes in OD and to mediate the experience of time. Moreover, there is a relatively clear “sequencing” and “rhythm” visible at TheaterOrg: from prologues to epilogues, from presentations to debates and to reports, etc. The consideration of workshops genres thus sheds some light on the temporal, that is on the sequential dynamics of OD processes: the “unfreezing” of the form of debates happens regularly, as does “moving” in the form of examinations and votes, and “freezing” in the form of reports.

The second analysis equally contributes to a more differentiated understanding of temporality in OD: the threshold moments radically change the temporal experience by evocating the collective attention to attune to the moment. They change the pace of interactions and interrupt the rhythm of habit. Threshold moments can be understood as “immediate unfreezing”, “unfreezing on the spot”: unintended in a way and playing with the “freezing” of habits. What is more, conversations on temporality are evident in

the workshops at THEATERORG: whether an administrative director forbids "standing still" and calls for progress; whether the facilitators surprise the group by a sudden move to vote on the masterplan, resulting in rejections of the "readability" to vote; whether a staff member protests against deviating from the agenda; whether there are heated debates on the feasibility of participation formats or on the overburden brought about by a simultaneous change of several artistic teams, temporality is frequently a conversational topic, leading to what I interpret as a collective negotiation of "unfreezing", "moving", and "refreezing". It shows how complex these processes are; much more complex than suggested by simplified depictions in OD textbooks. This is certainly an area worth of further process research (Langley et al., 2013). Therefore, this research project can be seen as unveiling some of the temporal complexity of OD processes.

8.3.2 Dialogically creating reality

As depicted in the literature review, social constructionist-inspired scholars postulate that organizational reality is created through language and conversations: organizations are "conversed" into being (Ford & Ford, 1995; Ford, 1999); they are "meta-narrations" shaping the reality of the participants engaging in organizational processes (Robichaud et al., 2004). Organizations are "ongoing and precarious accomplishments realized, experienced, and identified primarily – if not exclusively – *in* communication processes" (Cooren et. al, 2011, p. 1150). Accordingly, organizational change happens by changing organizational discourses and narrations (Grant & Marshak, 2011; Barrett, 2015). But how exactly can we imagine this conversational "reality production"? Cooren and Sandler (2014), drawing on Bakhtinian thinking, postulate that it is through voices and voicing that we create facts. They argue that we voice reality in a certain way, and that we hope to convince others by voicing reality in that way; and even if others disagree, they are still affected by what has been voiced and they have to position themselves to it. My research project shows exactly this: problematizing is framing something as a problem, triggering others to respond to it – by un-problematizing or making fun or re-problematizing, etc. Some scholars claim that without problematizing, there will be no problem (Schön, 1983): "battling" over problematizations forces the importance of an issue onto an organization, even if people position themselves to relativize or neglect a problem. What this research project adds to Cooren and Sandler's (2014) argument is that conversational reality construction is also an emotional and affective accomplishment: problematizations put

pressure on a collective, and others feel pressured to respond and to position themselves. At THEATERORG, topics such as participation formats, the project masterplan, or dealing with the arts were heatedly discussed. The same applies, of course, to more harmonious exchanges. For example, when it came to management tools such as project management, reality was constructed by participants deciding to mainly deliberate and not to problematize the topic. This accounts for the different effects on the shaping of the OD process at THEATERORG. Whereas some issues were discussed with high intensity and were marked as potentially problematic, other issues were treated more lightly and with less mutual pressure to position those involved or to change their positions. The framing of an issue – and thus how it will be treated by the participants – is not just cognitive; it is also a framing that varies extensively in bodily intensity and engagement.

Not only does the first analysis serve as an example of how conversational reality construction can take place, but the second analysis also serves as an example of how surprise actions can trigger other participants to respond to them – to express their opinion on an agenda topic; to reveal personal information in a feedback round; or to consider “outside the box” suggestions. The surprises create intensity and draw attention, and thus stimulate reactions. Bakhtinian thinking provides a very specific lens to understand organizing processes from a social constructionist perspective. It highlights how worldviews are enacted through voices; voices “put” worldviews “out there”, the stimulus for responses lies in the encounter of voices and their relational dynamics and makes this process “unfinalizable”; and this process is often frictional. This research project empirically specifies a Bakhtinian social constructionist perspective: in an OD process, different voices encounter and challenge each other’s views in a more problematizing manner, thereby increasing tension and pressure to change positions, or in a more deliberating or coordinative and thus a harmonious and relaxed way. Moreover, in an OD process, surprise moments frequently “shuffle up” the habitual reality enacted, triggering new configurations and new ways to encounter and proceed, thus “revitalizing” and “unfinalizing” the OD process. Hence there is also an important affective dimension in “socially constructing organizational reality”. Correspondingly, this research project supplements discursive conceptualizations on Dialogic OD (Barrett, 2015; Grant & Marshak, 2011). OD processes do not only trigger change by introducing new and alternative narrations and discourses, but OD processes also trigger change by creating intensities, varied encountering possibilities, and frequent surprises.

Furthermore, the analyses indicate the importance of OD conversations in creating organizational reality, also regarding decision making: the enacted voices in the steering group are a selection of voices; a selection deriving from who is invited to the steering group workshops (e.g. administrative and stage staff, and facilitators who strongly value participation). The decisions made in the steering group are expected to be implemented so that they affect the whole organization. The enactment of certain voices and voice dynamics thus has possible consequences for the reality of the whole organization. These are not mere "abstract" processes; the steering group conversations take place in a physical room with real people. The affective dynamics, such as surprise moments, shape decisions, attitudes and moods, which in turn could trigger a broader effect than only the effects on the steering group.

These theoretical deliberations also have practical implications. The transition from positivistic to social constructionist-inspired forms of OD is widely discussed in and embraced by the literature. However, some scholars already anticipate a "third wave" of OD emerging: Oswick et al. (2015) postulate that after "scientific" (Diagnostic) and "discursive" (Dialogic) OD approaches, a "democratic" OD is currently evolving. This form is different than the other two since it initiates change and development in a "bottom-up" manner. Thereby, "(t)he role of the employee becomes one of a non-hierarchical change agent – a move from 'change for employee'" (Diagnostic OD) and 'change with employees' (Dialogic OD) to a process of 'change by employees' (Democratic OD)" (ibid. p. 9). To illustrate this, the authors (2015) present the case of the British National Health Service in which various forms of democratic OD are visible:

> In the case of "living well in Cornwall" the change agents (or heretics, or activists) were older members of the community and the change was then enabled through a network of volunteers and care agencies. The "student grass-roots initiative" to address pressure ulcers started with a single student (a change agent/activist) who enlisted the involvement of other students, a university and local health care agencies. The "Hubbies" are a voluntary self-organizing network of change advocates who co-opted support and pledges from a variety of NHS stakeholders. And, "The School for Health and Care Radicals" is an open, non-hierarchical network of staff interested in improving and changing the NHS. (p. 14)

Although this research project focused on a more classical and institutionalized OD case, its insights are nevertheless valid for these "bottom-up" and "outside-in" OD approaches (Oswick, 2013). On the one hand, the findings can be read as encouraging people to engage in "voicing": as indicated, voicing "creates reality" and it triggers other people to react and respond. "Problematizing" puts pressure on others to position themselves. One voice can invite other voices to speak. On the other hand, the findings can be read as encouraging people to engage in all kinds of hierarchical and institutional positions: as the threshold moments indicate, surprise actions can be

initiated from different hierarchical levels and professional roles. Although their development cannot be linearly controlled, these moments could produce collective intensity and attention, and other organizational members may feel the urge to respond to them.

8.3.3 OD conversations as implicitly reflective

At the same time, the analyses show that the concepts of organizational reflection and Dialogic OD can be joined if reflection is conceptualized as an implicit process. This research project enhances our understanding of organizational reflection, and contributes by exploring critical reflection "at work" (Vince & Reynolds, 2009, p.101). Traditionally, the literature depicts organizational reflection as challenging and unlikely (Pässilä & Vince, 2016). This framing of reflection as an implicit process emphasizes its hidden potential, and its occurrence beyond explicit interventions. For example, in the first analysis, reflection is depicted as the effect of the clashing of different voices (centrifugal forces). In the second analysis, reflection is depicted as moments that question the habitual way of doing things. In both analyses, reflection is an implicit quality of conversational dynamics. It varies along the plurality of voices involved, and along the patterning of habits and surprises. Both analyses draw attention to "reflective frictions". This framing sheds light on reflective processes that may be overlooked from the viewpoint of an explicit and interventionalist understanding of reflection. It is thus a much more optimistic conceptualization: collective reflection takes place "naturally" in organizations, it is part of the dynamics of social interaction. In particular in OD processes, where explicitly different organizational groups join and discuss the status quo and the direction of the organization, this diversity can provide an even greater opportunity for implicit reflection:

> "Plurality is a condition of human existence and part of what constitutes critical reflection as a space of critique, where people gather together both in similarity and difference. To put this another way, we are similar in that we are different: difference is what we share even though we may, or may not, come to agree on things. Thus the notion of the space of critique acknowledges the fact that people may come together to critically reflect as "multiple stakeholders" (…) with potentially diverse interests, which may or may not be reconcilable". (Cotter et al., 2016, p.175)

However, implicit reflection cannot be "controlled". It is possible to purposely establish genres that allow an openness to reply and an immediacy of a topic, or regularly come up with surprises. But the emergence of reflective conversations also depends on the momentum that a conversation may or may not develop. Still, an attempt to practice "inner readiness" for engaging in reflective conversations is possible: to appreciate the

clashing of voices, to actively question the assumptions behind positions, and to attune and learn from surprises. Such a stance "seizes" the emergent and implicit reflective processes and turns them into more explicit processes.

The organizational reflection literature provides a wide range of ideas on how to explicitly reflect collectively. For example, Vince (2002) defines organizational reflection as being concerned with questioning assumptions, focusing on social processes, paying attention to power processes, and emphasizing democracy. In response to these proposals, this research project specifically outlines conversational possibilities for reflection. For example, active inquiries about the deeper assumptions behind conflicting voices or about which taken-for-granted norm makes a moment so surprising; about the interaction of voices or about how surprise moments unfold (and vanish) interactionally; about the power positions of different voices or about the power dynamics that produce and interrupt surprises; and about how the interaction of voices could become more democratic or how democratically surprises are enacted. These enquiries can lead to reflections on agenda setting, group composition, genre enactment, and the establishment of norms and habits. They can make an OD process more self-reflective, and at the same time enhance the participants' capability to actively reflect and question the organizing processes behind an OD endeavor. However, such interventions are inclined to seize the "naturally occurring" conversational dynamics, and to be less concerned with installing structural interventions, for example establishing critical-action learning sets (Raelin, 2009). Whatever form these interventions take, they would seize the implicit reflective potential of OD conversations and sensitize them. It is about using the "threshold momentum" inherent in OD conversations.

Reflection, learning, change, and development are concepts with a long tradition in organizational psychology. Studies of group decision making, "groupthink" and creativity often conclude that a certain level of pluralism is needed to enhance the quality of organizational processes and accomplishments (Stumpf & Thomas, 2003). In her developmental psychological reading of Bakhtin, Bandlamudi (2016) takes this tradition on by referring to the popular book "*Wiser*" by Sunstein and Hastie (2015) and relates this to Bakhtin's writing on pluralism:

> The takeaways of this study on institutions for our individual psychological concerns are many: agreement and absence of dissent leads not to the correction of errors, but amplification of errors and subsequent acceptance of errors. Second, it promotes a herd mentality rather than a freethinking individual. Third, intra-psychic dialogue of competing viewpoints and a pluralistic society with myriad philosophies is the best bet against militancy, fundamentalism, and violence. Last, for the mind to grow, new information and

> new insight are needed, and that can come only from exposure to competing ideas and theories and by lending your ears to multiple voices in society. (Bandlamudi, 2015, p. 127)

A Bakhtinian approach can contribute to valuing the reflective potential of multi-voicedness and surprise. It can assist in developing individuals, groups, organizations, and societies by actively attuning to difference and dissensus and benefiting from it. This brings me to the next aspect of “development” in OD.

8.3.4 The developmental potential of reflective conversations

As depicted in the literature review, Dialogic OD is criticized by Oswick (2013) as not being reflective because of its often future and solution-oriented approach. However, as I have argued and shown in the two analyses, OD conversations can also be conceptualized as having an implicit reflective potential. Bringing the notion of organizational reflection to the field of (Dialogic) OD offers valuable insights. As indicated, it adds a dimension of “depth” to OD conversations by differentiating between more instrumental and more assumption questioning reflections, and by acknowledging the tension inherent in questioning an organizational status quo. In addition, this concept has another benefit for (Dialogic) OD that I want to point out: although OD clearly carries the term “development”, it is often unclear what this term exactly entails. This concerns Dialogic as well as Diagnostic OD: what “both forms of OD share, [is] an interest in development, though what it means to develop an organization is perhaps the least developed aspect of OD theory” (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, p.358). OD developmental models are fueled by models of human growth and development, as well as by group development theory (Bushe & Marshak, 2009). These approaches have three common themes:

> First, a person, group, organization, or network is more developed the greater awareness it has of itself – it can talk to itself about itself. In an organization, this means that members can talk freely to each other about their perceptions of the organization. The less a person, group, or organization can talk to itself about itself the less awareness there is or the more defenses there are to self-awareness, and this is indicative of a less developed state. This characteristic of development appears in modern psychology starting with Freud and continues to this day. (…) Secondly, in a more developed system, emotional, reactive behavior decreases and rational, goal-directed behavior increases. (…) Third, the more developed a system, the better able it is to actualize its potential. (Bushe & Marshak, 2009, p. 359)

The first aspect – the free exchange of perceptions of the organization – already aligns with social constructionist thinking. A more developed organization can thus be an organization that encourages and endures a diversity of discourses: “some commentators have suggested that dominant discourses define, constrain, and impose

too much closure on organizations" (Grant & Marshak, 2011, p.218). In more developed organizations, more use can be made of a diversity of discourses: "where leaders of change identify, acknowledge, and sponsor the plurivocality (…) and heteroglossia (…) that alternative discourses represent, a greater opportunity for more innovative and radical change is provided" (ibid.). In considering the questioning of a discourse as a potential reflective moment, the questioning momentum can be seen as a reflective development. A more developed organization would thus be an organization that is enriched by this reflective capacity – with conversations that embrace plurality and that implicitly challenge an organization's status quo. Such a development would not only be one toward a "structure that reflects" (Nicolini et al., 2004), but also toward "a culture that reflects": "A reflective culture is one that makes it possible for people to constantly challenge things without fear of retaliation (…) An assumption-breaking culture is one that deliberately keeps itself off-center" (Raelin, 2001, p. 22). Implicit and explicit reflection can be understood as "developing" an organization; the more capable an organization is to self-reflect, the more developed it is assumed to be. Such a critical self-awareness can have an explicit as well as an implicit and performative character: through problematizing and surprising, monologues and habits are questioned and "unsettled". Therefore, in one respect, this research project can be read as an encouragement to look for the explicit and "grand" insights and organizational learnings – as a big "effect" of OD leading to radical paradigm shifts and strategic renewals. In another respect, it can instead encourage a consideration of the more local, interactional, and enacted forms of developmental tendencies: the moments when diverse voices encounter and battle over "truth", or the moments when small surprises occur. Framing the term "development" in relation to such a moment-to-moment unfolding of questioning assumptions can lead to an appreciation of their occurrences, and to the practicing of a "structure" or "culture" that reflects. In such a conceptualization, the journey metaphor of OD as developing organizations from status A to status B – as apparent in traditional OD approaches (Oswick & Marshak, 2012) – becomes less important than the question whether organizations increase their reflective capacity while "traveling": if they are "maintaining the ability to be unsettled" (Béres, 2017, p. 280).

However, OD that does not consider "destination" can become one sided and eventually insignificant (Bushe & Marshak, 2018). The question thus remains how OD can be reflective and dialogical in process, and still balance this with having a "direction". As Raelin (2001) suggests in the above quote, a reflective organization "keeps itself off-center" (p. 22). This can be interpreted as keeping a critical distance

from oneself. However, it can also be interpreted as not only caring about itself as an organization. Critical reflection as the inspiration for organizational reflection clearly emphasizes the need and value to care about societal issues. Baughen, Oswick and Oswick (2020) give an indication of how organizations can do this. They call for an OD that focuses as much on the organization as on society: "what can the organization do in terms of change to address wider social issues and societal challenges (e.g. poverty, health, education, sustainability and food security)?" (ibid. p.3). They label interventions that focus as much on the internal organization gain as on the external society gain as "soulful interventions": "For example, where a corporation builds a road to help to connect rural communities in Africa and, in doing so, also improves its own transportation infrastructure in the region" (ibid. pp.7/8). In turn, improving on a societal level can also improve an employee's perception of an organization, and therefore also work motivation and a commitment to change (Amir et al., 2013). A concern with society aligns with the foundation of organizational concepts in critical reflection. Critical reflection "digs deeper" than mere instrumental reflection and questions societal assumptions and power relations. As mentioned in the literature review, a concept of a critical and organizational form of reflection is "productive reflection" (Boud et al., 2006). This concept stresses the idea of simultaneously improving both working conditions and productivity through reflection. Through mutual reflection, it aims at employee wellbeing as much as at efficiency and effectivity.

By combining these different concepts with OD, it is possible to call for an OD that aims at improving the organizational capacity to reflect on employee satisfaction, productivity, and societal improvement – and that does so by simultaneously increasing the reflective capacity of organizations. What may sound very demanding, could become more tangible if one starts with the implicit and situational forms of reflection taking place in OD processes. Attuning to the local, momentary and relational performing of organizational reflection can be a way of catering to a "good process" – attuning to productivity, wellbeing and society can be a way of catering to "good content"; while both "process" and "content" are rooted in concepts of organizational reflection. Indeed, Bushe and Marshak (2018) also demand OD to be more than "just" the facilitating of dialogue:

> Nowadays many OD practitioners are asked to provide a particular change intervention (a means) like creating and facilitating containers for temporary moments of engagement and inquiry (e.g. future search, open space, world café, etc.), ignoring how to create great organizations where engagement and inquiry are the day to day experience. (p. 6)

As I attempted to show throughout this research project, the notion of organizational reflection has a lot to offer for concepts of Dialogic OD – in respect of both theoretical and practical implications. However, this is not a one-sided relationship. The reflection literature can equally profit from the Dialogic OD field. For example, by providing elaborating intervention concepts, the Dialogic OD literature can assist in finding interventions that "trigger organizational reflection": from Appreciative Inquiry to the Art of Hosting – the literature on Dialogic OD has rich descriptions of tools and considerations to practically implement interventions, and to facilitate organizational processes.

The idea to "attune" to the emergence of reflective and dialogical moments as a way of "developing" organizations requires a certain sensitivity and "mindset". Previously, I briefly explained calls for a dialogical mindset in the literature review. In the next section, I indicate how this research project can contribute to such a stance.

8.3.5 Toward a Bakhtinian inspired dialogic mindset

As described in the previous sections, the analyses provide a better understanding of OD conversational dynamics, and how it is possible to conceptualize the notions of dialogue and organizational reflection in the context of OD conversations. I also hinted at practical implications – thus enduring or actively attuning to these dynamics. However, in order to do so, OD practitioners need to develop a certain "mindset". Bushe and Marshak (2014; 2016; 2020) accentuate the importance of conducting Dialogic OD interventions not just technically, but also from a specific mindset: "The results from using any change method depend more on the mindset of those using it than on following prescribed steps and guidelines" (Bushe & Marshak, forthcoming). For them, a dialogic mindset embraces the social construction through conversations, the interdependence in organizations, the limited control over others, the uniqueness of any organizational situation, the focus on consequences rather than intentions, the irrational and emotional dimensions of organizational life, and the uncertainty about how the future unfolds (ibid.). The organizational communication scholar Linda Putnam goes in a similar direction by calling for "cultivating a dialectical sensibility". In an interview with Grant and Cox (2017) about her academic contributions to the field, she claims:

> I think that we need to develop dialectical sensibility. This term refers to becoming aware of contradictions and oppositional tensions, but also having a sense of reflective practice. One in which tensions are acknowledged, explored, and used as stimulus to raise

> awareness of options, multiple voices, and alternative meanings. I know that managers and leaders could use paradoxes in manipulative ways by claiming that "everything is a paradox". This excuse of inaction or particular indecision, however, needs to be challenged. Because paradox does not mean that organizational members should not address the issues. Dialectical sensitivity embraces paradox as an opportunity and a way to foster creativity and inclusion of multiple voices in understanding organizational problems. (Putnam, in Grant & Cox, 2017, p. 197)

Aguiar and Tonelli (2018) conducted an empirical, interview-based study on the mindsets of Brazilian OD practitioners. The authors emphasize the importance of organizational sponsors, facilitators, and OD participants to practice a dialogical mindset when engaging in OD. It makes a difference whether one approaches OD conversations as "revealing the truth about the organization" (a more diagnostic mindset) or as "places where multiple truths encounter and stimulate the development of the organization" (a more dialogic mindset). Aguair and Tonelli (2018) call this an either stronger or weaker subject-object dualism. Social constructionist-inspired mindsets assume a weaker dualism and do so by proposing a relational ontology, dealing with circumstances moment by moment, expecting unpredictability, and using metaphors such as "way of being", "flow" or "seed" to describe OD interventions (ibid.). Such a weak subject-object dualism corresponds with Bakhtin's (1981, 1984a) ideas of polyphony, eventness, and unfinalizability; there is no determining author, and there are many competing truths and voices. Hence, the analyses provide a sensitizing perspective on how to weaken a subject-object dualism: by allowing opposability, by listening to the multitude of voices directly and indirectly enacted and addressed, by explicitly questioning the use of certain genres, or by attuning to the surprising deviances from expected developments. If the intention is to enhance such a dialogic mindset or dialectical sensibility, and based on Baughen, Oswick and Oswick's (2020) call for an OD that targets both organizational and societal improvement, their idea of a "generative mindset" is recommended: "When viewed with a generative mindset, the imperative for OD interventions is no longer simply about organizations interests (…) Instead, OD is stretched to become a process in which there is scope for mutual gain which concurrently encompasses adding societal value and organizational value" (ibid. p.7).

So, by providing a Bakhtinian interpretation of an OD process, this research project can be read as a contribution to a dialogic mindset or dialectic sensibility. An understanding of genres, polyphony, "eventness", and centrifugal and centripetal forces can certainly enrich the involvement in organizational change and development conversations: it assists in being aware of the potential effects of OD genres and to carefully observe them; it assists in developing an "ear" for the different voices

appearing in an OD process and to actively organize plurality; it assists in appreciating being surprised and in experiencing "eventness"; it assists in considering both centrifugal and centripetal dynamics and to balance them; and it assists in sensing the implicit reflective potential of conversations, expressed both in the encounter of different voices and in the appearance of surprise. Furthermore, it assists in "normalizing" conflict and confrontation. In short, what this research project offers OD practitioners is a stimulus to cultivate their sensibility regarding "opposability" and "surprisability" (Cooren, 2020).

As the two analyses indicated, OD conversations are not without tension; they produce "reflective frictions". A dialogic mindset should hence also conceptualize dealing with conflict. Many scholars in the field of Dialogic OD and of organizational reflection stress the importance of psychological safety (Edmondson & Lei, 2014) when challenging an organization's status quo (Marshak, 2016; Gray, 2007; Swan & Bailey, 2004; Vince, 2002; Raelin, 2001; Mezirow, 1990). A widespread metaphor is that of a "container" (Corrigan, 2015) – also expressed in the psychodynamic concept of "containment" (Bion, 1985) – and that of a "safe space" (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015). From Bakhtin's (1981) viewpoint, language and social processes are inherently pluralistic and potentially conflictual. Tension is not a condition that can be avoided – it is part of how the world is. Such a viewpoint normalizes conflict resulting from a plurality of perspectives. It expects conflicts, values the benefits of conflict, and "lives with it". What a Bakhtinian perspective can contribute to concepts of safe spaces and containers is the normalization of conflict and collision; it is this normalization that can serve as a safe space. As Ruch (2016, p.24) puts it: "What critical reflection seeks to achieve: comfortable discomfort".

"Comfortable discomfort" can also be seen in the two analyses: voice dynamics may be tense and conflictual; but they still take place in the relatively safe space of an OD process supported by facilitators with a pedagogical background, by a professional OD setup and rhythm that makes the process transparent and predictable, and by the knowledge that the participants are still running the familiar daily operations into which they can "escape". The same applies to the threshold moments: the surprises may be unsettling and intense; but they still take place in the supporting environment of a habitual and routinized OD process. So, despite all the "reflective frictions" that I pointed out in this research project – voices questioning each other and surprises questioning the habitual way of doing things – there was also a lot of stability, trust, and optimism. Indeed, it is the "dialectical" nature of conversational processes – as

referred to in the above quote by Putnam – that can unite comfort and discomfort: indicating that conflict is normal and that surprises come and go. A Bakhtinian-inspired dialogic mindset could hence be one that de-dramatizes tension, conflict, and surprise – in short, “livingness” – and that finds comfort in the fluidity and unfinalizability of conversations.

Of course, the “discomfort” experienced by unsettling OD conversations can be too much too bear, and even endanger the cooperation within the whole OD process. It would be helpful to consider studies on how to stay cooperative despite tension. For example, Hovelynck et al. (2020) illustrate this by using the empirical example of multi-actor collaboration addressing sustainable drinking water in the Andes. Similar to what I called “battles of problematization” in the first analysis, the authors acknowledge: “As every problem frame implies some solutions and excludes others from being considered, disagreement in problem-setting is unavoidable” (ibid. p. 263). They explore three practices that assist the collaboration, despite difficulties: connecting, confronting, and committing. “Connecting” refers to the initiatives of attuning stakeholders to each other’s interdependence of decision-making procedures: “the multi-actor initiative requires joint sense-making before focusing on decision-making” (ibid.). At THEATERORG, such a connection was observable when, in workshop XI, participants who would usually not mingle stood together and had fun after an off-site retreat. “Confronting” refers to addressing differences; “staying connected” helps to do so, and sometimes requires an external mediator. At THEATERORG, the participants quite often openly addressed their differences by expressing their point of views in the steering group workshops. The facilitators, however, would also openly point out differences between participants in a matter-of-fact way, even if some participants did not acknowledge them. For example, in workshop I, after an administrative director had presented proposals to standardize communication procedures and auditing and spoke of consensus, a facilitator pointed out that not all agreed, and humorously pointed to a “Gallic village” in the right-center row when the director did not know whom she meant. “Committing” refers to the joint effort to implement; it needs trust in the other parties and is facilitated by clear structures and evidence of progress. For example, at THEATERORG, the fragility of the commitment was seen in workshop XII. Whereas some administrative staff members expressed their mistrust in all project groups implementing the masterplan, several stage directors opposed this by stressing how they had “internalized” the masterplan and that they would suggest a celebration of the intermediate successes. So, although the participants of the OD process at THEATERORG were all part of a single organization in contrast to the multi-actor

collaboration in the study of Hovelynck et al. (2020), the practices presented by these authors seem to offer valuable insights, also for OD processes, on how to collaborate despite differences. Therefore, a dialogic mindset may need to also attune to how to actively sustain collaboration in difficult conversations.

An additional question of interest is how to "acquire" a dialogical mindset. As Bushe (2013) points out, practitioners seeking to engage in dialogic OD frequently draw on particular OD methods:

> (…) an increasing number of practitioners are identified by the technique(s) they specialize in and therefore employed by organizations in fragmented ways (…). Rather than hiring an OD consultant to aid in long term change processes, they hire Open Space practitioners, or World Café facilitators, and so on, for specific events of limited duration. (p. 1)

A vast range of these different techniques are available on the educational market. However, Bushe (2013) criticizes this technique orientation because "[p]ractitioners become less able to influence the overall design and execution of an organization's change strategy" (ibid.). For him, technique knowledge alone does not suffice for effective OD practice. What is also needed is theory knowledge: "Having an overarching theory of change (…) positions us differently with leaders and clients" (ibid.). A Bakhtinian-inspired approach to changing conversations in organizations can be understood as such an "overarching theory of change". Becoming a dialogic OD practitioner therefore requires an engagement with theory, e.g. with theory on the linguistic turn in Western philosophy, on social constructionism, on organizations as communication and conversations, and on Bakhtinian thinking. So apart from technically learning to intervene conversationally, engaging in an understanding of theory assists the facilitator in becoming a dialogic OD practitioner:

> (…) without underlying theory, it's hard to learn why dialogic interventions succeed or fail, and as a consequence no way to accumulate a body of knowledge. (…) An adequate theory of Dialogic OD practice will give us an organizing framework for all the dialogical change approaches of the past 25 or so years, and it will enable us as individuals, and as a profession, to learn and grow. (ibid.)

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, traditionally, there used to be a close relation between OD as a field of practice and OD as an academic field (Bunker et al., 2004). Currently, as indicated, the need for dialogic OD practitioners to engage in understanding dialogic OD theories emphasizes the need for such a relationship. These practical considerations bring me to the final contribution of this research project: enlightening the field of OD in public theaters.

8.3.6 Theaters as polyphonic places

This research project contributes not only to a better understanding of OD conversations and implicit reflective processes, but also to a better understanding of OD in public and arts organizations. To my knowledge, there are no other studies on OD in theaters. This research project thus sheds light on an under-researched domain and, in the academic context, gives public theaters a voice. I would like to share three observations. First, the OD process at THEATERORG appeared to be rather prototypical. The introduction of narrower leadership spans, employee wellbeing initiatives, communication training, leadership principles, an appreciative inquiry survey, a mission statement, yearly talks, a coordination circle and a steering group, specific project groups, participation formats, etc. aligns closely with classical OD textbook designs (Cummings & Worley, 2015). From this it is possible to conclude that public institutions are not more or less suitable for OD processes, just as Golembiewski and Brewer (2008) remind us that our image of public organizations very much determines our image of the OD process in public institutions. Second, as most literature on theaters as organizations stress the managerialization of contemporary theaters (Trevisan, 2017; Mieze, 2010; Tajtáková, 2006), this was also evident at THEATERORG. The managerial voice was often one of the strongest, pushing the professionalization of the central department. Here, “managerial” does not refer to monetary aspects only. It also refers to other management practices: quality management, staff development, project management, training, conflict resolution, age structure analysis, employer branding, employee communication, psychological and physical health, reintegration management, digitalization, etc. Some of the literature on theaters or other arts organization tends to focus on the monetary aspect of managerialism. However, the professionalization discourse that comes with it can also be a source of taking care of employee wellbeing, for example through social initiatives, yearly talks, or preventive measures against sexual assaults. These human relations aspects of “new public management” (Diefenbach, 2009) seem to be easily overlooked. In addition, the managerialization trend is frequently contrasted with the more liberal needs of the arts (Trevisan, 2017; Boerner & Jobst, 2011). However, artistic liberty can also come with unnoticed extra hours, precarious work contracts, and conflicted work relations. A professionalization discourse does not only remove artistic liberty but can also assist in protecting workers and in increasing their wellbeing. Furthermore, the more administrative departments of a theater are more often than not as prestigiously perceived as the artistic departments. In the case of THEATERORG, it was evident that the OD process – despite all controversies expressed in the steering group workshops

– was also a source of pride, and of a new self-image of the central department within the theater, in particular when comparing it to other public institutions or the private sector. In short, as public institutions cannot be reduced in a black-or-white manner, the consequences of managerialism in theaters may be more complex than sometimes depicted. Third, as apparent in the first analysis and related to these points, the managerial voice was only one voice among several other voices. There is a multitude of voices encountering at a theater and they cannot be reduced to "the arts vs. the management". The different voices represent different ideologies and traditions, and not only for certain groups of people. There is a diversity of ideas and a pluralism of perspectives. Bakhtinian thinking can assist in appreciating and accepting this diversity, and in intentionally bringing together this diversity in OD initiatives. An insight that theaters and OD practitioners in the cultural industries could gain from this study is that very different voices are likely to encounter – frequently conflicted and tense – but that these tensions can be mediated along different genres, and that conflicts and surprises may have a reflective and developmental potential. Bringing in a democratization voice can enable voices so diverse as managerial voices, stage voices, artistic voices, public voices, and employees' voices to be heard, to be acknowledged, to encounter each other, and to jointly develop an organization. Bringing in the everyday people's voice releases tension; being aware that a professional role on stage is a very specific portrayal of behavior and character is an obvious insight into theater professionals. From such a perspective, public theaters with their immense inner diversity and their competency for staging performances are very suitable organizations to engage in OD processes.

Interestingly, the OD process at THEATERORG also emerged due to many conflicts at the theater. The implementation of standardized communication and leadership training, as well as the implementation of a social committee mediating conflicts and advancing additional but partial OD projects, were reactions to the many daily conflicts. The overall and official OD process that came into being years later, but which resulted from these early beginnings, can thus also be seen as a way of learning to deal with conflict, and to seize conflict as a productive force. Bakhtinian thinking can assist theaters in talking about conflict and in conceptualizing conflict as a source of development, and in acknowledging the value of pluralism, surprise, and unfinalizability. Speaking of such terms not only in a descriptive but also in an evaluative manner, brings me to the question of the possibility of normatively interpreting Bakhtin's work. I dedicate the next section to this question.

8.4 Tentative steps toward interpreting Bakhtinian dialogue practically

During this research project, I frequently wondered what Bakhtinian thinking offered for pragmatic or normative theories on dialogue (on what "good dialogue" could be). Although his writing is clearly used by various researchers to value polyphony in organizations and society, to point out the power of dissensus, to normalize difference, and to propose reflection and learning from dialogue, Bakhtin does not explain in his main works "how to dialogue"; at least not in an explicit and systematic manner. There is only one short passage in his work on the pragmatics of individual understanding. For Bakhtin (1986), understanding requires:

> 1. Psychophysiologically perceiving a physical sign (word, color, spatial form). 2. Recognizing it (as familiar or unfamiliar). 3. Understanding its significance in the given context (immediate and more remote). 4. Active-dialogic understanding (disagreement/agreement). Inclusion in the dialogic context. The evaluative aspect of understanding and the degree of its depth and universality. (p. 159)

On the level of mutual understanding, Bakhtin (1981) writes in equally descriptive terms:

> What we have in mind here is not an abstract linguistic minimum of a common language, in the sense of a system of elementary forms (linguistic symbols) guaranteeing a minimum level of comprehension in practical communication. We are talking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life. (p. 271)

However, these brief paragraphs do not say anything about "good dialogue". Still, organizational researchers frequently interpret his dialogue theory in a normative and pragmatic way, for example by valuing diversity and difference or by proposing learning through dialogue. In this research project, I framed "responsiveness" and "eventness" as opportunities for organizational reflection and development; and I proposed that Bakhtin's dialogue theory can be an inspiration to normalize dissensus and frictions. Now, toward the end of this thesis, I want to more explicitly discuss how I read Bakhtin's work in a more pragmatic or normative manner. It is a personal reading and by no means do I propose that Bakhtin intended such a reading. However, Bakhtin's writing can be very evocative, in the sense that his theorizing on the inadequacy of monologic, suppressive forms in a dialogic world, or on abstract principles for a unique and lived life evokes associations of liberation and freedom. I assume it is also because of this that his work has become so popular in so many disciplines, including psychology and

organizational research. Although he is first and foremost occupied with the depiction of a dialogic ontology of the world, it is hard to not be inspired by his thoughts, also on how to *relate* to the world on a daily basis and in a practical way. His writing conveys a passion (if not an "obsession") with dialogue, and it is hard not to be infected by it: "When dialogue ends, everything ends. Thus dialogue, by its very essence, cannot and must not come to an end" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 252). At least I sometimes felt moved by his writing, and therefore I would like to share some suggestions on "how to dialogue" emerge as an inspiration from his work. To my knowledge, there are only few papers which explicitly deal with such a pragmatic or normative theory: for example, Tiupa (2008) cites Bakhtin, but indirectly from a Russian source which is not accessible to me. She claims Bakhtin's valuing of agreement and complementary understanding, developing the stance of an apprentice, and his depreciation of argument, polemic, and parody. Others base their normative-pragmatic reading of Bakhtin's writing on his more well-known, main publications. For example, Koczanowicz (2011), in the field of political theory, discusses dialogical consensus from a Bakhtinian perspective. These articles are valuable starting points for research on the reading of Bakhtin's work in a pragmatic and normative way. In the following, I share my own inspirations to interpret Bakhtinian thinking in this regard, from a more psychological perspective.

Embrace dialogue. First and foremost, what I take from Bakhtin's writing is to be honest, direct, and outspoken. Bakhtin's occupation with language as pluralistic and frictional can be read as a call to "throw yourself into the game": to have the courage to raise your voice; to be less concerned about appearance or perception than with engaging in dialogue and seeing where it takes one. As Bakhtin (1984a, p. 286) puts it: "True dialogic relations are possible only in relation to a hero who is a carrier of his own truth, who occupies a signifying (ideological) position". A call "to be true" and to "have an opinion" aligns with humanist psychological values such as authenticity and participation (Hutterer, 2013). Research on self-disclosure points to the difficulties people may have with "throwing themselves into the game" (Ignatius & Kokkonen, 2007). Humanist communication approaches often suggest engaging in self-exploration before addressing others (e.g. Schulz von Thun, 1998; Thomann & Schulz von Thun, 2007): What is it that I really want to say? What are my needs? Such self-exploration can help increase the authenticity by getting clarity about one's motives and needs, and to avoid getting carried away by emotional interactions. The next step, after self-exploration is often suggested to express these needs in a considerate way – considerate in relation to the relationship of the self with the addressee, the situation, and the momentary "receptiveness" of the other (Schulz von Thun, 1998). However

important these self-explorations and considerations may be, I read Bakhtin as an encouragement of “worrying less”: to “jump in” into dialogue and to solve things dialogically. “’Be a personality’”, as Bakhtin (1984a, p. 11) cites the literary critic Askoldov’s interpretation of Dostoevsky’s work. He then summarizes his colleague’s thinking:

> (…) Askoldov passes directly to the content of Dostoevsky’s works, showing how and for what reasons Dostoevsky’s character become personalities in life, how they show themselves for what they are. Thus personality inevitably comes into collision with the external environment – and this is above all an external collision with accepted convention of any kind. (p. 12)

“Being a personality” does not mean to be inconsiderate or disrespectful; it simply means to be direct, open, and honest and not to worry too much about the legitimacy or adequacy of an utterance. Surely, self-explorations and diplomatic communication have their value. However, their goal seems to accomplish a certain harmony: inner harmony through self-exploration, and outer harmony by expressing inner thoughts and wants in a considerate manner. Bakhtin seems to be less occupied with harmony; for him, the world as such is dialogic and frictional and full of disharmony. In a Bakhtinian world, disharmony seems to be the “natural order”, not harmony. I read this as an encouragement not to worry too much about causing disharmony, and first and foremost to be true to oneself and to others. Dialogue is a game without winners or losers – it is simply a game in a “fragmented” (Bohm, 1996) world. There is not much to gain by suppressing uniqueness and inner diversity. Such thinking is not entirely foreign to humanist communication theories. After writing his first best-selling books, the communication psychologist Friedemann Schulz von Thun (1998) addresses that his advice on good communication may have become an inspiration for “mechanical” communication. He corrects this interpretation by saying that sometimes in communication, authentic “roughness” can be considered more vital for dialogue than overly artificial diplomacy. Furthermore, Bakhtin’s emphasis of communication as voiced, embodied, differing in tonality, and brought forward by personalities can be read as an encouragement to participate “fully” in dialogue: being “emotional-volitional” (Bakhtin, 1984a). This resembles approaches of “embodied communication” (Tschacher & Bergomi, 2011). A narrow understanding of “communicative competence” can be constricting, and a Bakhtinian approach of “throwing yourself into dialogue, fully” could be a refreshing countermovement. Sometimes, pressure appears to be the “ideal communicator” (Pavitt & Haight, 1985), in particular in the context of organizations: the communicator is expected to be constructive, solution-oriented, emotionally “adequate”, detached from relational turbulences, and, above all, rational.

A Bakhtinian approach to dialogue encourages us to be less concerned about individual appearance and sovereignty, and to put more trust in the flow of dialogue and in learning from dialogue. Bakhtin (1986) states that our communicative competences anyway differ, depending on the sphere of life:

> Many people who have an excellent command of a language often feel quite helpless in certain spheres of communication precisely because they do not have a practical command of the generic forms used in the given spheres. Frequently a person who has an excellent command of speech in some areas of cultural communication, who is able to read a scholarly paper or engage in scholarly discussions, who speaks very well on social questions, is silent or very awkward in social conversation. (p. 80)

For Bakhtin, a “surplus in seeing” (1984a) is only possible in dialogue: we all have individual standpoints with limited views. This can be read as an invitation to *engage* in dialogue in order to grow and develop, and not to be concerned with communicative competence but to let yourself go in the flow of dialogue and to emerge as someone slightly different. It is a plea to be curious of what will evolve, a curiosity about the world that can only be satisfied by ongoing dialogue. Such a viewpoint also includes openness to inner dialogicality:

> In Dostoevsky, consciousness never gravitates toward itself but is always found in intense relationship with another consciousness. Every experience, every thought of a character is internally dialogic, adorned with polemic, filled with struggle, or is on the contrary open to inspiration from the outside itself – but it is not in any case concentrated on its own object; it is accompanied by a continual sideways glance at another person. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 32)

However, this viewpoint does not necessitate inner or outer harmony. For example, from contrasting research viewpoints, we may be engaged in an intense exchange; it is the heated debate that sparks curiosity about learning more about the other’s and our own standpoints and conclusions, respectively. The intensity of disagreement can make the dialogue more rewarding. I read Bakhtin’s work as a plea to passionately engage in dialogue and to “see more”. There is no harm in “throwing yourself in fully” and learning about the world: “The idea begins to live, that is, to take shape, to develop, to find and renew its verbal expression, to give birth to new ideas, only when it enters into genuine dialogic relationship with other ideas, with the ideas of others” (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 88).

Embrace unfinalizability. Second, what I take from Bakhtin”s writing and what also encourages a call to be direct and to “jump into dialogue” is Bakhtin’s preoccupation with “becoming” and “unfinalizability”. If everything is in flux, if everything can be opened up again, and if “there is no final word”, then there is no need to be overly concerned about making wrong statements or being perceived as bad. In any case,

we only know parts of the truth and others will complement it. But this can only happen through dialogue and not through (silent) monologue. Considering the world as "unfinal" encourages us to take part in discovering it, to be wrong, to correct oneself, and to point out where others may be wrong. The assumption of an open-ended world removes the pressure of the being right vs. wrong binary, and of the fear of losing face and being embarrassed. Embarrassment in a Bakhtinian spirit may only come to those who "clinch" a truth, who pretend to "know it all" and who have "definitive answers". They may be mocked in a carnivalesque way as they relate to others in a way of "being above", or as they are ignorant of life's diversity:

> The dialogic means of seeking truth is counterposed to official monologism, which pretends to possess a ready-made truth, and it is also counterposed to the naïve self-confidence of those people who think that they know something, that is, who think that they possess certain truth. Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 110)

Acknowledging the unfinalizability of individual knowledge could not only lead to a modest and curious search to learn more about the world but it could also assist in avoiding or getting out of conflict: it could also be a way to interrupt vicious communicative circles and "punctuation" (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). According to Bakhtin, there is no first word and no last word, and we can only always be in the middle of communication – thus, there is not much value in fighting about "who started something". Many dialogue (and psychotherapy) concepts suggest engaging in a more tentative and "hypothetical" mode of conversations: expressing the epistemological relativity of one's statements and leaving conversational room for others to join and correct or enhance (Andersen, 1987; 1990). Treating conversational topics as "unfinalizable" can support such a hypothetical stance. Bakhtin explicitly applies unfinalizability to individuals: we cannot finalize others, we cannot be finalized by others, and we cannot even finalize ourselves. Such a viewpoint could prevent us from irrational perfectionism, from being occupied how others view or label us, and from being afraid of not having all the answers before we dare to open our mouths. It introduces a certain "relaxation" to relating. Furthermore, as decades of social psychology show us, a lot of conflict is created by categorizing others and ourselves (Tajfel et al., 1971; Otten, 2016). "Practicing" a spirit of unfinalizability could thus result in giving others the chance to surprise us, to be more than we (and they) see, and to also apply this chance to ourselves: to change, to be wrong, to develop, to have had one opinion yesterday and to have another one tomorrow:

> (…) a living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process. In a human being there is always something that only he

> himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 58)

Such a thinking can assist in softening the "need for consistency" (Festinger, 1957; Harmon-Jones, 2019) that so often results in chronic conflict and antipathy (Scholl, 2005). Practicing unfinalizability constantly allows new encounters and relating modes.

Embrace questioning. This does not mean – bringing me to the third point – to plummet into relativism and an "anything goes" mentality. Anything could be expressed and people should not be afraid to express themselves, but there needs to be contestation, talking back, and testing: "A distrust of convictions and their usual monologic function" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 98). I interpret Bakhtin's rhetoric of the encounter of voices and worldviews as battles and not just as a call to not be afraid of "jumping into these battles"; thus also as a call for duty to "battle" truth: meaning needs to be contested, statements need to be evaluated and assessed. There needs to be a battle for truth(s) and a stance of cutting through wrongness and nebulous statements. Bakhtin's whole work can be read as a need to engage in disputation and discourse, in a rigorous exploration of the world, in what could be said "research": "a world of consciousnesses mutually illuminating each other" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 97). Bakhtin (1984a) points out Dostoevsky's ability to maintain a critical distance from any kind of ideology despite understanding an ideology: "Dostoevsky was capable of representing someone else's idea, preserving its full capacity to signify as an idea, while at the same time also preserving a distance, neither confirming the idea nor merging in with his own expressed ideology" (p. 85). At the same time, Bakhtin's (1984a, 1984b) fascination with the counterculture of carnival can be read as a call to distrust elites, high genres, sophisticated rhetoric, and structural power. It can be read as a call to speak truth to power, to mock "truth legitimized by status and habit only". It can be read as a Kantian (1999 [1784]) call to assume personal responsibility for enlightenment: "Habe den Mut dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen". Decoupling truth from status and power has a long tradition in experimental social psychology (Guinote & Vescio, 2010), as well as in discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wiggins, 2017). Laughing at power can be a quick way of coming to an "ideal speech situation" in a Habermasian (1981) sense: it quickly demystifies power imbalances. Such a carnivalesque attitude toward conversations is not an individual or activist strategy, as carnival is a collective phenomenon of switching roles and playing with the world order. Carnivalesque contesting of status and habit should be part of a collective culture of conversation: "Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid" (Bakhtin,

1984a, p. 123). It could be an enactment of Rawls' (2009 [1971]) idea that a just society is one in which everyone could approve the order because the distribution of roles is not known in advance. A carnivalesque attitude to power and status includes our inner dialogues – it forces us to question our truths and to counter narcissism, dogmatism, and taking ourselves and our opinions too seriously (Higgs, 2009):

> Carnivalistic legends in general are profoundly different from traditional heroicizing epic legends: carnivalistic legends debase the hero and bring him down to earth, they make him familiar, bring him close, humanize him; ambivalent carnival laughter burns away all that is stilted and stiff (…). (Bakhtin, 1984a, pp. 132/13)

However, a carnivalesque attitude toward power and relations is only one side of the coin; it can also be used to address "objects" – to question ideas, ideologies, and statements:

> Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look at its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. Laughter demolishes fear and piety before and object, before a world, making of it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 23)

Embrace equality. A drive for equality is thus evident in Bakhtin's concept of carnival, but also in his concept of the polyphonic novel. This brings me to the fourth point: the polyphonic novel expresses a deep respect for a diversity of voices and participants; yes, voices may fight and clash, and yes, this might support learning – but always on eye level, always on content level, and always in deep respect for the other and otherness:

> In actual fact, the utterly incompatible elements comprising Dostoevsky's material are distributed among several worlds and several autonomous consciousnesses; they are presented not within a single field of vision but within several fields of vision, each full and of equal worth (…). (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 16)

A clashing with another voice may even be understood as a compliment: taking it seriously, attuning to it, honestly trying to understand it, and jointly being engaged in a passionate exploration of the matter. Voices encounter through conflict – which means that these conflicts are a chance of true and honest contact and relationships. Many of us have experienced how conflict can bring us closer to others, allow us to understand others better, feeling "frictional warmth", and come to a new and deeper form of mutual understanding and respect. This requires, of course, the courage to engage in conflict, to be open to being wrong, and to give the other the chance to be a different person than the one whom we may have "finalized". Bakhtin (1984a) describes Dostoevsky's approach as "being a host" to many voices. The host metaphor is also popular in other

dialogue theories (and psychological intervention approaches), for example, as implied by the name of the Dialogic OD approach "Art of Hosting" (www.artofhosting.org). A fight for truth does not need to be a fight against another person (Bohm, 1996). A fight for truth does not need to be about being right or wrong, winning or losing, being stronger or weaker (Rosenberg, 2002). A fight for truth can be an honest encounter in which different standpoints battle without questioning the integrity of another person. Such a viewpoint aligns with the well-known concept of "separating people from the problem" (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 2011). In this regard, Bakhtin's battle-like vocabulary used to describe dialogue is only partly a symbol for what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) famously described as the cultural metaphor of "argument is war". Bakhtin strongly emphasizes the legitimacy, equality, and necessity of differing standpoints. He (1984a) claims that in the polyphonic novel, voices never merge – they retain their independency and freedom and the assurance of this is the task of the author as "host". As already indicated in *chapter 7*, Bakhtin (1984a) quotes the literary critic Kaus by saying: "Dostoevsky is like a host who gets on marvelously with the most motley guests" (p. 18).

Embrace uniqueness. As a fifth point, related to the previous, when reading Bakhtin, in particular his (1993) ethics of "answerability", I am reminded of humanist values (Cohn, 1994): to assume responsibility, to concentrate on actions and not on personality, and not to hide behind rules or systems – there is no "alibi" (Bakhtin, 1993). In a way, being individually "answerable" without the possibility of shifting responsibility to higher morals or abstract ideas, makes us "naked" and equal. This is not only equal in the carnival sense of "all societal positions are contingent", or in the polyphonic sense of "all voices are of equal worth", but also in a deep human sense beyond roles and standpoints: however romanticizing it may sound, after all, we are all human. We are all living and unique humans without the abstractions produced by science, arts, or morality. Such a viewpoint supports an honest and modest way of relating. Many concepts of "good dialogue" stress the importance of "I-messages" (Gordon, 2000), having a personalizing, deescalating, and ownership-signaling effect. Similar to the idea of unfinalizability, it also supports letting go of ideas and positions once in a while – and to gather as humans. Bakhtin (1984a) describes the role of "gambling situations" in novels as one which unveils that "underneath" we are all humans depending on luck:

> People from various (hierarchical) positions in life, once crowded around the roulette table, are made equal by the rules of the game and in the face of fortune, chance. Their behavior at the roulette table in no way corresponds to the role they play in ordinary life. The atmosphere of gambling is an atmosphere of sudden and quick changes of fate, of instantaneous rises and falls, that is, of crownings/decrownings. The stake is similar to a

> crisis: a person feels himself on the threshold. And the time of gambling is special time: here, too, a minute is equal to years. (p. 171)

As the "everyday people's voice" assists the OD process of THEATERORG to still personally laugh at what happens officially, and as the off-site retreat seemed to have evoked a change in intergroup relationships, the letting go of dividing abstractions and encountering as "pure" humans – cliché-like "over a beer" – may assist dialoguing and getting along in the world. Bakhtin's fascination with carnival in "pop and street culture" does not only show what monologic "high culture" is missing conceptually, but it could be a reminder to celebrate "nakedness" once in a while and let go of divisions to enable togetherness and contact. We can stop enacting certain divisive voices for a while, and stop being their "ventriloquists" (Wertsch, 1991; Cooren & Sandler, 2014) all the time. Similarly, Bakhtin's (1993) concept of "eventness" reminds us to attune to the uniqueness of situations; to not overburden them with the biases of abstractions and ideas, but to attune to them as they unfold in front of us, moment by moment. A similar viewpoint is also expressed in many "mindfulness"-based concepts of dialogue (Manterfeld-Wormit et al., 2019): these value a careful attunement to inner and outer reactions, to the moment, and to postpone judgement for a while (Bohm, 1996). Mindfulness-based approaches are currently in fashion in psychology: for example, in psychotherapy, they do not only inspire humanist and psychodynamic approaches, but also radically trigger the development of new approaches in cognitive-behavioral therapies, resulting in a "third wave" of behavioral therapy (Heidenreich & Michalak, 2013). Mindfully attuning to the "eventness" of dialogue also comes with mindfully attuning to one's "responsiveness" and "addressivity": What kind of tendencies to react do I notice? What kind of tendencies to address the other do I notice? Furthermore, a mindful approach to language includes being aware of the consequences of one's own words:

> For the word is, after all, not a dead material object in the hands of an artist equipped with it; it is a living word and is therefore in all things true to itself; it may become anachronous and comic, it may reveal its narrowness and one-sidedness, but its meaning – once realized – can never be completely extinguished. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 419)

Mindfully attuning to one's responses also encompasses knowing that our words affect how others think about themselves. Words have an "emotional-volitional" aspect (a "relational aspect"; Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967), influencing others' self-images: "The hero's attitude toward himself is inseparably bound up with his attitude toward another, and with the attitude of another toward him" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 207). This perspective can be read as an invitation to treat words carefully and others with care (Molterer, Hoyer & Steyaert, 2019).

Embrace meta-reflection. Sixth, Bakhtin does not just point out that we are all responsible for our own actions, but also that we cannot hide behind theories. What is more, he provides us with instruction manuals for meta-communication:

> Stylistics must be based not only, and even not as much, on linguistics as on metalinguistics, which studies the word not in a system of language and not in a "text" excised from dialogic interaction, but precisely within the sphere of dialogic interaction itself, that is, in that sphere where discourse lives an authentic life. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 202)

Bakhtin's whole work can be read as a meta-commentary on dialogue. It provides us with skills to see through rhetoric, monologue, strategic language, power, and language conventions, and habits. It provides us with the intellectual basis to see through the "games people play" (Berne, 1964). Furthermore, Bakhtin, similar to Dostoevsky, "always sees the voices" behind sentences. As I quoted in *chapter 3*: "Dostoevsky possessed an extraordinary gift for hearing the dialogue of his epoch, or, more precisely, for hearing his epoch as a great dialogue, for detecting in it not only individual voices, but precisely and predominantly the dialogic relationship among voices, their dialogic interaction" (Bakhtin, p. 90). He is not blinded by words. He sees and explains the dialogicality of monologic epics, doubled-voiced discourse, hybridization of words, stylized language, objective science, etc. He thus assists in understanding and talking about communication. His seeing of the voices behind words corresponds with psychological models focusing on the speaker behind the message (Bühler, 1934; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967; Schulz von Thun, 1981). This is also strongly expressed in Bakhtin's (1984a) concept of voices as worldviews and of utterances having tonality and being "emotional-volitional": Dostoevsky's "form-shaping worldviews does not know an impersonal truth, and in his works there are no detached, impersonal verities" (p. 96). We can learn from Bakhtinian thinking to see through the masquerade of words and to address the speaker directly. Furthermore, Bakhtin emphasizes the historicity and cultural embeddedness of words:

> When a member of a speaking collective comes upon a word, it is not as a neutral word of language, not as a word free from the aspirations and evaluations of others, uninhabited by others' voices. No, he receives the word from another's voice and filled with that other voice. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 202)

By understanding the origins of utterances not only from individual motifs but also from their contextual origin can assist in attributing behavior to context and also to increase empathy (Heider, 1958). Similar, being aware of the sociocultural embeddedness of our own words can assist us in being more modest when making statements, training multi-perspectivity, and understanding the relativity of standpoints.

Embrace pluralism. As a seventh point, and this is my last pragmatic-dialogical "take-away" from Bakhtin's writing, the world is pluralistic. We cannot escape it. We may have to live with it. This may sound trivial, but it has real consequences. Acknowledging the pluralism and complexity of the world can assist us to (emotionally) cope with constant frictions: "In this sense the unified evolving spirit, even as an image, is organically alien to Dostoevsky. Dostoevsky's world is profoundly pluralistic" (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 26). Bakhtin's strong depiction of a pluralistic world may thus suggest to us the importance of frustration tolerance (Jeronimus & Laceulle, 2017). We may encounter opinions we do not like, discourses and narrations we do not like, dialogue positions we do not like, and still we may have to endure them and be patient (Senge, 1990). It helps very little to wish the world is different. Instead, we may need to constantly "navigate" through a pluralistic world: getting to know other positions, explaining one's own standpoint, developing mutual possibilities for moving jointly, enduring frictions – and all of these not on a "once and for all" scale, but continuously and locally. Systemic therapists and consultants frequently speak of "navigation" to point out that, similar to sailing, we may have a goal, but we cannot ignore the winds and waves to which we have to adapt (Simon & Weber, 1987). This sailing metaphor may be more appropriate to engage in "dialogical wayfinding" (Bosma, Chia & Fouweather, 2016) in a complex world than trying to simplify the world in a linear way:

> In contrast to Goethe, Dostoevsky attempted to perceive the very stages themselves in their simultaneity, to juxtapose and counterpose them dramatically, and not stretch them out into an evolving sequence. For him, to get one's bearings on the world meant to conceive all its contents as simultaneous, and to guess at their interrelationships in the cross-section of a single moment. (Bakhtin, 1984a, p. 28)

Acknowledging the plurality of the world may assist in encountering difference in an open-ended and matter-as-fact way, resulting in decisions that may be more constructive and rational than when being captured by one's own monologic fantasies (Senge, 1990). In addition, turning toward the world "as it is" can also have a psychologically calming effect and restore the capability to act in difficult situations (Wagner, 2008).

These seven points of embracing dialogue, seeing the world as unfinalizable, contesting truth claims, treating other positions respectfully, approaching dialogue mindfully, seeing through language use, and accepting the world as pluralistic are some of the "take-ways" that I deduce from reading Bakhtin's work on a more pragmatic-normative level. I read Bakhtin's work not only as a passion for theoretical dialogue, but also as a passion for practical dialogue. Such a reading contains valuable implications to relate to others in dialogicality. The need to "deal with" dialogicality was

shown throughout this thesis; interpreting Bakhtin's work practically is thus also a contribution to finding ways of "comfortable discomfort" (Ruch, 2016). Dialogic OD can find inspiration in interpreting Bakhtin's writing for questions of practice. But more generally, Bakhtinian thinking could inspire to cope with and engage in dialogic "pathfinding" in a complicated and diverse world. Further research should engage in questions on pragmatic or normative interpretations of Bakhtin's writing. This can be done theoretically, but also empirically by exploring how organizational research is implicitly using Bakhtinian notions such as "surplus of seeing" or "dialogue" in this manner.

This brings me to the more general point of further research. When this research project ends, where should further research continue? I discuss these ideas in the next section.

8.5 Limitations and future research

In this section I reflect on the limitations of this research project and outline possible avenues for further research. I identify two limitations concerning the research design. First, I mainly participated in OD workshops with directors and staff members. Although I also observed workshops in which other employees participated (by taking part in different participation formats and thus getting to know what employees who were not part of the coordination circle and the steering group were discussing), I focused the analysis on the steering group workshops at TheaterOrg. A broader observation of more daily work or informal conversations of other employees about the OD process would have been a valuable source to further explore the diversity of voices, conversations, and surprises outside the decision-making steering group. Second, although intended, there was no opportunity to discuss the research findings with TheaterOrg. Although some participants of the steering group were extremely interested in discussing my research results and findings, possible dates to do so were frequently postponed by the theater, due to other pressing matters at that time. Eventually, the 2020 Corona pandemic prevented this endeavor. Although a joint discussion on the research findings could still take place, it will be after the publication of this thesis. Such a "participant validation" (Willig, 2017) lies in the future. Only at the beginning of my field work, when they were preparing a steering group workshop and we had lunch together, did I discuss my research project with the three facilitators. During this occasion I presented the findings of the preliminary interviews and

summarized the literature review, receiving intrigued questions and confirming comments. When referring to the material turn in organization studies and framing the “masterplan” as an example, one facilitator came to me afterwards saying that she was surprised by the dynamics that the introduction of the “masterplan” had triggered, with complicated tables suddenly dominating parts of the OD process. This “turn to materiality” is still underrepresented in current OD studies, as forthwith discussed.

As indicated in the literature review, OD migrated from positivistic to social constructionist conceptualizations. This resulted in focusing on discourses, narrations, and conversations. What is still missing, and what future studies should explore, is conceptualizing OD more specifically from an affect and material perspective, to introduce new OD theorizing. Bakhtinian thinking is frequently used to highlight the polyphony in organizations and to frame it as “normal”, and even as rewarding for organizational learning and development. Such a perspective usually emphasizes the more cognitive part of relational knowledge creation – development through a stimulating diversity. However, polyphony is a highly emotional phenomenon, of course. As becomes evident in the analyses, the clashing of voices can be conflictual and tense. To endure another perspective can be demanding and exhausting. To bear repetitive or detailed presentations can be tiring or frustrating. Dissensus can be a burden for relationships and moods (Scholl, 2005). Future research could, to a greater extent, explore these affective and material parts of polyphony and dissensus. First, it could explore the “emotional labor” that is needed to “sustain” good relationships despite divergent perspectives. How do OD participants deal with the difficult emotions that come with a plurality of opinions, and how do they maintain good relationships with their colleagues despite strong dissensus? Second, the organizational reflection literature specifically focuses on “anxiety” (Vince, 2002; Swan & Bailey, 2004). It hence neglects the role of curiosity, a drive for knowledge, the courage to say something, a joy of conflict and contradiction, the energizing force of anger, and being creative and trying things differently. The emotional spectrum related to organizational reflection cannot be reduced to anxiety alone. Further research should focus more on the emotions that motivate reflection, and not only on the emotions that hinder reflection. As this research project indicates, when voices clash, anger and frustration often play a role. How are voicing processes and problematizations emotionally mobilized and accompanied? Third, polyphony is not only a cognitive-discursive phenomenon. Polyphony can also be constituted through a diversity of bodies and materiality. Different OD participants can experience an OD workshop very differently; they read each other’s body languages and moods, they experience changing moods and a

diversity of atmospheres. How does such non-verbal and affective polyphony unfold? How can a "polyphony of materiality" be thought of?

Such a turn to affect and materiality could also lead to a more post-humanist research paradigm (Boje et al., 2012): "Perhaps this is what Kurt Lewin's field theory was becoming, a way of interplaying physical-materiality with discourse. After Lewin's death, the field of organization change became wedded to the social psychology of field theory, but estranged from any materiality" (Boje, Burnes & Hassard, 2012). A post-humanist paradigm could not only consider the physical-material world more emphatically, but also overcome traditional binaries. For example, Bryant and Cox (2013) interpret their empirical data from a post-humanist OD perspective, as follows:

> When re-reading the data through the posthumanist lens analysis attention might shift from developing potential for more productive communication and coping, such as from the new OD lens, to a focus on naming and disturbing the binaries assumed within discourses of leadership/followership, voice/silence and inclusion/exclusion that are evident here and are often assumed within many perspectives on organizational change. (p. 718)

Attuning to non-human actants can still be done within the CCO paradigm. As Cooren and Sandler (2014) argue, objects also have voices. For example, the masterplan in THEATERORG gains momentum by people referencing it in their conversations: "We need to finish this project quite soon according to the masterplan, let's hurry". Whether the voice related to this object is socially induced or socially interpreted does not matter – the masterplan starts to "speak for itself" and creates precedents; it has an influence on perceptions of reality. Also, Bakhtin's (1981, 1984b) admiration for Rabelais' metaphorical description of human bodies can serve as an inspiration to research embodiment.

A turn to practice theories could also strengthen the idea of a "dialogic mindset". Descriptions of such a mindset and attitude sound relatively "easy" – as if one could simply "switch" a mindset "on". However, how is the implementation of these mindsets practiced? What kind of narrations and discourses does the practicing of such a mindset draw on? How is it collectively embodied and performed? How is sensibility "cultivated" (Grant & Cox, 2017) in a community of practice? What are the roles of affect and materiality when enacting such mindsets?

Apart from these ideas on the development of post-humanist approaches in OD research, I also encourage future organizational and OD research to make more use of Bakhtinian thinking. As indicated throughout this thesis, Bakhtinian thinking has the potential to illuminate a conversationalist, pluralist, and reflective OD. There are three further points that I would like to make on how Bakhtinian theory can inspire

organizational psychology: the first refers to Lewin's (1952 [1947]) field theory, the second to Bakhtin's (1984b) concept of carnival, and the third to Oswick et al.'s (2015) concept of a democratic OD. Considering the aforesaid, I briefly indicate and explain possible research avenues in what follows.

Lewin's (1952 [1947]) field theory and Bakhtin's dialogue (1981, 1984a) theory have certain parallels. Coming from Gestalt psychological deliberations, Lewin postulated that behavior is a function of persons and their environment (Burnes & Cooke, 2013; Burnes & Bargal, 2017). Bakhtin's (1981) concept of centrifugal and centripetal forces form a certain field theory of their own. Both theories parallel in a physics analogy; Lewin (1959 [1947]) speaks of fields, forces and vectors, and Bakhtin (1981) of centrifugal and centripetal forces. In addition, both theories postulate conflictual dynamics between different forces. However, Lewin focuses more on individual behavior as the target of different forces; for Bakhtin, it is about language as such. Future research could further explore the relationship between these two schools of thought.

Another avenue for further Bakhtinian-inspired research in organizational psychology concerns Bakhtin's (1984b) concept of carnival. In this research project, I labeled the informal, entertainment and relationship appreciating voice the "everyday people's voice". It has a certain carnivalesque potential. For Bakhtin (1984b), the extraordinary quality of carnival is to "turn the world upside down": to play with formal roles, to pretend to be someone else, and to question hierarchies and societal orders. As the first analysis indicates, the response action of "stepping out" has such a carnivalesque quality; humor and personal talk and relations can question the formal side of work. A characteristic of organizations is that every employee has an official organizational role. However, it is always possible to switch to a more egalitarian and informal "everyday people's voice". Future research could further explore the premises and consequences of a "carnivalesque" role switch in organizations.

A Bakhtinian lens also lends itself to studying the concept of "democratic OD" (Oswick et al., 2015). First, the dialogical situation can be adequately described by a Bakhtinian framework: who is addressing the organization in "bottom-up" and "outside-in" OD approaches (Oswick, 2013) and whom exactly do they address, and to what kind of prior utterances is this a reply? Second, Oswick et al. (2015) consider dissensus to be important when studying such non-traditional OD phenomena. They refer to notions such as "positive upward dissent" (Kassing, 2002), "agonism" (Mouffe, 2008), or

"constructive deviance" (Robbins & Galperin, 2010). As shown throughout this thesis, Bakhtinian thinking is extremely suitable to explore the friction and tension in dialogue.

8.6 No final words

Having discussed the meaning of the research project in relation to ideas of Dialogic OD and organizational reflection and having indicated limitations of this research project and avenues for future research, it is now time for a look backwards and forward. This research project was a continuous dialogue between Dialogic OD literature and organizational reflection literature, Bakhtinian thinking, THEATERORG (and the preliminary interviewees), qualitative research methods, organizational psychology colleagues, the institutionalized academic setting of writing a thesis, language editing, and my personal interests, curiosities, questions and life experiences. These dialogue partners were not always as stable as presented in this thesis: literature fields shifted, theoretical frameworks switched, interpretations changed, research questions were altered, and analytic questions were adapted. The quest to make this research project meaningful led to regular transformations to arrive at a research design and at analyses and presentations that are coherent and logical enough to be convincing, on the one hand, and sufficiently different from previous studies to make an academic (and potentially practical) difference, on the other hand. Centrifugal and centripetal forces thus tore at this project. Consensus and dissensus regularly alternated: within me, between myself and the text, between research colleagues and the text, between myself and the field, literatures and theories, between literatures, between theoretical frameworks and collected data, between original observations and interpreted patterns, and so on. Helin (2015, 2019) reminds us that such a "polyphonic", "multi-authored" and at times eclectic back-and-forth between the different elements of a research project in a writing process are normal and rewarding; and that we can only do our best to circularly and rigorously attune to the polyphony in the collected data and in the presenting of the analysis, so as to "carve out" the Gestalt that makes a difference in research and in practice ("social validity"; Willig, 2017). The "surplus of seeing" (Bakhtin, 1984a) provided by continuous feedback from research colleagues was of utmost importance as it helped to *develop* this research project. Having established a certain Gestalt is, of course, a centripetal moment – but only a fragile one. Every reader will dialogue with this text equally torn between consensus and dissensus, and "borrow" words from the text, interpret them in their own way,

mingle them with their own words and create new words, engage with new voices, and develop new conversations. In this sense – despite all efforts to come to a temporary finalization – this research project is as unfinalizable as language itself. In this sense, the presented text is not just a "product" of polyphony, but also a dialogue partner hoping to elicit responses, surprises, reflections, and tensions – in a developmental and "comfortable discomfort" (Ruch, 2016) manner. So, the temporary centripetal moment of fixing this research project in text is an intermediate step to further dialogue: "There is no figure without a ground. Even dialogue needs monologue" (Emerson & Holquist, 1986, p. XX).

I attempted to be as transparent as possible when presenting literature positions, positions encountered in the field, and my own positions when connecting, contrasting and developing them to make myself "answerable" (Bakhtin, 1993) and to increase "opposability" (Bakhtin, 1984a) – so that the reader can differ from my positions, interpretations and conclusions, and engage in a dialogue with this research project. Of course, I am aware that my authoring creates a certain influential structure: my arrangement of "prologues", "presentations", "examinations", "reports", "debates", etc. and the "plot" of this text will inevitably create a certain "suggestibility". But Bakhtin's "meta-commentary" on language and "language games" (Wittgenstein, 2003 [1953]) may help oneself see through monologue and sense the contingency behind it.

This contingency needs to unfold: the temporary finalization may be unfinalized again, questioned, diversified, and "put on a threshold". As Gergen (2015) puts it: "As we speak together, listen to new voices, raise questions, ponder alternatives, and play at the edges of common sense, we cross the threshold into new worlds of meaning" (p. 6). This is my official "teasing" invitation for further conversation. And it seems like a good place to "end" and "step out".

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