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# Participant Involving in Organizational Development with PAR as a method.

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## ABSTRACT

When a leader wants to initiate or influence some necessary changes in the organization, he must be aware of the fact that the subjects that form the organization create their own meaning about actions the manager wants implemented. This article confronts the assumption that people are by nature resistant to change. The quite widespread narrative of resistance to change, is believed to originate from the many top-down driven change projects implemented by the top management or/and external consultants.

Is it possible to create a desired change in the form of the inter-subjective perception building about the organization in a management group with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) case study? The article deals with a Phenomenological case study, where the researcher, with a PAR approach method, creates a research design with the purpose to influence the participant's "Subjective perception building" about a specific organizational culture.

This is a case study in the Danish department of a mature German industrial group, which in the past has been a significant producer of equipment for propulsion for the maritime sector. The employees of the organization have experienced a big transformation from primarily being an industry unit to be a knowledge and development organization. This transformation has created a great uncertainty and fear among many of the employees, while at the same time the prevailing perception building around the concept of culture remains shaped by symbols from a more hierarchical classic industrial culture.

Participants of the project was found by a "vacancy" which encouraged participants to apply to become participants in the project and being offered new learning and personal development in return.

This specific case study demonstrates how this participatory approach has succeeded in creating both qualitative and quantitative indications that the culture today is experienced significantly different, while at the same time, employees today feel more comfortable. Both qualitative and quantitative analytics data, has been collected from the field and the fellow researchers subsequently have processed and published it in the organization. In between the analytics, the fellow researchers have launched a number of initiatives in the field, while they at the same time participated in learning workshops and dialogue workshops.

All the participants answer identically that they have experienced the project as instructive and stimulating, while fear has diminished or disappeared altogether. The culture is

now experienced significantly changed by all the stakeholders in the organization.

**Keywords:** Participant Involving Organizational Development. Action Research. Leadership Development. The Leader as a Fellow Researcher.

## Introduction.

When working with change in organizations the researcher should be aware of how the agents that form the organization are. If there are elements of fear for example, the receipt of changes may be experienced to be ruled by fear of the unknown, so that the participants naturally will try to apply some resistance in order to protect themselves. Kotter & Schlesinger (1979) highlights four factors as causes of resistance to change, namely: *the fear of losing something of value, misunderstanding and distrust, disagreement about the importance of change and whether the change is beneficial to the agent, and finally a low personal tolerance for change.* Randall Dunham (1984) and Paul Strebel (1996) describe similar factors as the cause of resistance and emphasize that: *an effective change management recognizes that there is always a certain degree of resistance associated with a change.* The top-down controlled change in many cases creates a form of resistance, and therefore it is of vital importance that all stakeholders in the organization are able to see the point with the actions taken. Peter Senge (1999, p 12) thus says that *"Little significant change can't occur if it is driven only from the top"*. It is of essential importance for the leaders, that the stakeholders must be able to see the point of the proposed changes.

Learning and change should be seen as coherent sizes (Hildebrandt, 2000, p 10), since a profound change is a change which combines inner shift in the stakeholder's perceived internal and external values and opinions (Andersson, 2004). Lasting change is not only about influencing the structures, strategies and systems, but certainly about influencing the stakeholder's thinking about cultures and attitudes. Lasting change is best created when participants involved experience the process as fair (Westergaard, 2013, p 10).

When the resistance is thus determined, it must not be regarded as a natural occurrence, but rather as a signal that there still are participants who cannot quite understand why change is necessary. The leader must take responsibility for that the participants constantly understand the activities underway within the organization.

## **The application of Action Research for change in organization.**

The use of action research in human and social sciences has since Lewin's (1946) statement "*that it is through changes in the organizations that we obtain, if not true, then more precise recognition of how an organization's agents interact with each other*", has had a still more widespread application around the development of organizations. Lewin advocated that the explored agents were involved in the process as fellow researchers of their own everyday life (Schutz, 2005, p 9). In an action research case study the researcher may share the more scientific realization process with the involved and active agents in the field that has been selected. This approach may be used by making the involved agents into fellow researchers with great advantage.

In the more general action research (Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985), is the hypothesis that there is a difference between what the participants or fellow researchers say and what they actually do. Their immediate observable behavior is often the product of many opaque conscious and unconscious factors, and participants are expected to practice different organizational defense mechanisms. In an action research project the participating agents may break with the prevailing discourse behavior (Argyris, 1990; Argyris & Schön, 1996). In the critical-utopian action research (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006, p 68) the hypothesis seems to be, that the agents may be seen as alienated, so that they may be characterized by a kind of false consciousness (Thielst, 2006, p 339) and the thereof derived opinion. The process of an action research project may be described by how action researchers and participants by mutual help, working together to contribute to emancipate them from an often unexamined behavior, often outside the field, so they may create a higher degree of self-awareness and empowerment about their own organization.

In the participant involved action research, there is often an implicit hypothesis that the employees know best "where the shoe pinches", and that they therefore have a potential for innovation that may be released if we are in a dialogic process of working together to influence the opinion creation of own behavior in the organization. However, there will always be, more or less, uninformed or directly hidden power relations in the game between researchers and those we work with, because the power of free democratic approach to an action research, is not an option in action science. The awareness of the always existing covered power structures in critical action research is an integrated part of this approach.

The participant involvement in this case study has been essential for all the stakeholders involved, and because of that, the focus quickly came on this particular form of action research, namely Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR has primarily gained increased use in areas of the minorities problem-solving in their own communities and sustainable livelihoods, education, public health, feminist research and civic engagement and the development of the working environment and change projects in organizations. PAR has a common denominator, namely the combination of democratic participation, action and research reflecting diverse ideological and organizational contexts.

Participatory Action Research (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p 31), as a method for organizational development may be a

scientific theoretical, and methodical criticism, of the more common top down and consultant driven organizational development projects, which subsequently must be implemented by the stakeholders in the organization (Duus m. fl., 2012, p 71).

In a PAR process, it is assumed that "*in the workshops, communities and dialogues actions that take into account issues and topics that are essential for the involved agents' working life are developed, especially when they participate as fellow researchers.*" (Reason and Bradbury 2008 p 1) It is out in the complicated everyday life, that Schön(1983) call swampy lowland, you may find new meanings and solutions to complex social contexts as which a modern organization also may be considered. "*The swampy lowlands, where situations are confusing messes incapable of technical solution and usually involve problems of greatest human concern*" (Schön 1983, p 42).

## **The Research Question.**

*Is it possible to create a change in the stakeholder's inter-subjective perception building about the organization with a Participatory Action Research (PAR) case study?*

Action research may also be seen as a research approach with a social change agenda, and as an indirect criticism of the common academic practice to observe and locate problems in organizations, without trying to make suggestions for solutions (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p 4). The starting point for this project was that the company management wanted to change or affect the perceived industrial culture towards a culture of service, without any of those two terms were defined. The actors involved in an organization create some structures of meaning and these are not generic, natural or a foregone conclusion, therefore they must be the product of a cultural impact since a specific behavior has been cultivated by the stakeholders in the organization to be a local cultural element. Alvesson (2013) describes this creation of meaning as an important cultural element. "*Culture describes social action as depending on the meaning it has for those involved.*" (Alvesson, 2013, p 6). Culture may thus be considered as the fabrication of meaning structures in the sense that agents interpret their experiences and control their actions being together with others (Geertz, Clifford, 1973, p 145). Through the individual interpretation and behavior, the organization's stakeholders influence these meaning structures and affect other agents' life- worlds and creation of meanings. Donald Schön also have a bid on these meaning structures, and he calls them "*Knowing in action*" as something we just do, without being able to put it into words, also called tacit knowledge (Davenport & Prusak, 1998). "*Knowing in action. When we go about the spontaneous, intuitive performance of the actions of everyday life, we show ourselves to be knowledgeable in a special way. Often, we cannot say what we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate*" (Schön, 1995, p 27).

Martin (1985) has the view that you cannot control and direct the creation of an organization's culture - it occurs when the agents in the organization interact with each other (Martin, 1985, p 95). When Martin has the view that leaders cannot create culture, because it is created by the stakeholders in the organization, it is in line with the view that the individual

himself interprets and creates meaning in his own consciousness and life-world. On the other hand, the leader may actively work to influence and try to give suggestions to a particular structure of meaning, but it will not change the fact that is in the individual the meaning there is created and that in this context the creating of meaning is free. Gioia & Chittipeddi (1991) use the term sensegiving on management's desire to affect the actual impact of meaning creation. No one can control the individual's opinion, but you may be able influence it, and with this influence you may change the intersubjective understanding of the perceived culture in a specific context.

In this specific case study, we have tried to put a linguistic distance to the traditional research questions, and instead used a more open "option formulation". The first two years we worked with a broad and open "Possibility Formulation" and find support for this in the literature on participant involved in action research, problem-based learning (PBL) and abduction (Reason & Bradbury, 2008; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Gadamer, 2000). The reason for this way, was to avoid sending signals about a too tight control, and pre-understanding, and instead focus on the democratic development processes. We wanted that the new discoveries of the culture that we created through disturbances and active participation in the creation of opinions about culture, should appear naturally and without too much control. The last year of the project, we tightened the scientific focus, which led to the following problem formulation: *How can we with an employee involved process influence a traditional rooted industrial culture towards a more contemporary service culture, where new meanings and experiences of the culture is created through the involvement?*

The approach to the action research process thus builds on inspiration from Schön 1995, Bargal 2006, Greenwood & Lewin 2007, Schultz 2005, Clark & Fast 2008, Reason & Bradbury 2008.

### A short introduction to the organization.

After a major strategic restructuring the organization was reduced from approximately 1200 employees to 450 in 2009. The 450 workers who remained in the organization were mostly well educated and very competent employees. About 30-40 employees had a specific function or leadership role for others.

In 2012, 15 mill. Euros was invested in new educational facilities and training sites. An act that sent a clear signal to the employees that there was a possible future for the organization.

On this occasion management proclaimed that it wanted to create a strong service and development culture in the remaining organization in Denmark. It was in this context in autumn 2012 that we decided to launch this organizational development project, which actively should influence the culture towards a more modern service culture - whatever that might mean.

### Design for this case study.

All equations must be numbered consecutively throughout our research design as it was based on PAR, angled into an organizational perspective in a phenomenological hermeneutic perspective, as well as a cultural study in the form of a

traditional quantitative/qualitative study and was implemented in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

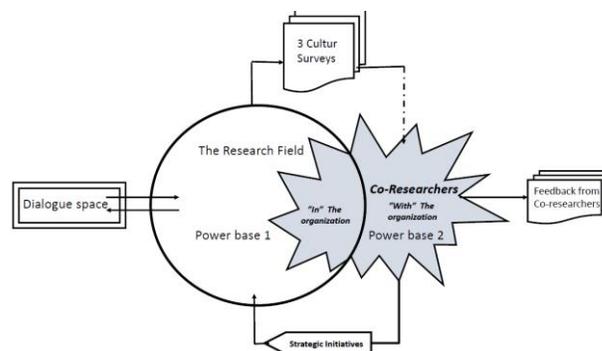


Figure 1. The research design.

With a mixture of curiosity and suspicion the project started in 2013. A steering committee was established that would monitor the process by 2 annual evaluations. The researchers were accountable to the steering committee, but were then giving freedom to create the content for the 3-year project.

Researcher and steering committee had established a common understanding that the field had to be defined and focus to deal with a leadership group of 30-40 employees. In January 2013 a dialogue-office (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p 29) was established directly in the heart of production facilities. With this location we wanted to create a safe place for confidential dialogues. The location was far away from the organization's headquarters, so that employees could get an easy access to a non-binding and secure dialogue.

Since we had a desire to create voluntary participation in the action research project, the corporate leaders were invited to join the project by searching for a "vacancy" as fellow researcher. The vacancy said that the project was voluntary and you would have to expect a lot of extra work that you would not be compensated for, and in return get some new personal experiences and competences. Six months into the process the fellow researchers was divided into three groups called the Culture Board, the Young Wild and the Site Manager Group. When the three groups are in the field they are part of the organization's general power structures (Power Base 1) and thus working "in" the organization. When the groups are in research mode, they are in another relation of power (Power Base 2), and do therefor not work "in" organization, but "with" the organization. Among other things this articulated difference makes the participants aware of the power influence on the possible action patterns. In the organization those individuals are subject to the many formal and informal structures and are included as resources in the organization's production.

The scientific focus is how the individual participants form their opinions about what is happening in the organization and its surroundings. The concept of life-world is central here and life-world is defined as the world that the participants experience directly (Clark & Fast, 2008). As subjects, the participants have their own subjective world and through the intersubjective processes ensues an individual horizontal fusion and thus arises a "taken for granted reality" that is shared with other subjects (Schutz, 2005). It is in such intersubjective intersection, the culture must be found, and therefore the researcher may enter into dialogues and working communities, to get closer to

understanding, and perhaps influencing the participant's experienced lifeworld.

### How did we organize the process?

In 2013 two introductory meetings were held for the management group where the researcher tried to describe the scope and purpose of the research project. The researcher presented his background, motives for the project, and introduced here the vacancy where interested employees could apply to become part of the project. It was an unpaid project, but it was emphasized, that the participants could expect to gain insights into both their own as well as the organization's development. It was essential that the participants themselves should be the driving forces in the project and that the researcher should not micro-manage the content and activities of the project. The project should be motivated and driven by employees, but it should be facilitated and supported by the researcher. That participants had to drive the project was a great challenge as earlier practice typical was that external consultants were called in to drive change projects.

*"Mogens - we have always been accustomed to a consultant or a manager telling us what to do. For a long time we were a little mad at you because you did not manage the process. Today I can see what you've done to us."  
(Manager, 5. February 2015)*

Based on the leader's applications "interviews" with those who had reflected on the ad were conducted. The interview served as a balancing of expectations and all interested parties were "employed". Subsequently we chose to form two groups, who was called the "Cultural Board" and "The Young Wild".

The "Cultural Board" was leaders with greater management and budget responsibility, whereas "The young wild" was younger executives with smaller elements of management. The two groups took part in a joint Kick-off day where the project was initiated, but after that day the researcher had meetings with the two groups separately. Next to these two groups the researcher followed the local Site manager group, which was also involved in the project. The dialogue meetings with the 3 groups were a combination of lectures and dialogues on behavior observed from the field.

### The Cultural Studies.

Before the project was launched, a comprehensive cultural study consisting of both qualitative and quantitative questions about job satisfaction among the organization's leaders was conducted. In the organization, there was a tradition of implementing such quantitative studies and the top management had a desire to "measure" the impact. By conducting a major study before, during and after the project, there was a slightly naive assumption that we would be able to measure an impact of the process. The cultural study contained 96 questions, both qualitative and quantitative.

The validity of especially the quantitative studies was actually quite limited, but we agreed to consider these inputs as an important feedback element from the field for the dialogues on the action research project. In this way, the cultural studies became a significant contribution to the dialogues about the

creation of meaning in the field, as well as the reception of the activities and actions exposed to the field. As a basis for dialogues the many studies in fact showed to be a great asset, and the changes of the studies and the results were the subject of very good processes

### Workshops for fellow researchers.

Start-up meetings were held with the fellow researchers. Local visions and values for future work were created, and an agreement was reached upon a set of "dogma rules" for future work. The Dogma rules were supposed to balance the expectations and as management of the, more or less, autonomous 3 groups work. These dogma rules are shown in Fig. 2. In the first two years workshops (approx. 4 hours duration) were held once a month. At these workshops, the groups worked on current topics and cultural realization issues. The results of the three cultural studies were also discussed and interpreted by all the fellow researchers. The results of the studies were processed by the groups before they were published in the rest of the organization.

#### Dogma rules:

We are all different but equal...  
If one person is against or disagrees – we are all against or disagree...  
All ideas are basically fine....  
We must obtain funding for what we decide...  
We can't commit anyone but ourselves...  
We are researchers and collect data...

*Adopted at the workshop August 12, 2013*

Figure 2. The Dogma rules from the project.

### A selection of some of the main contexts in the project.

The empirical data in a phenomenological action research project are often very bulky and complex. This is also the case in this case study. In addition to the three culture studies, each of which is more than 175 pages, there is a large amount of recorded dialogues and sessions. Each fellow researcher has conducted reflection records to document their own learning.

In the early cultural studies, elements of fear among the responses could be identified. The fear elements are standalone elements of meaning, which is something the individual subject feels in the relationship or in the overall organizational context. Leaders, who are for example exercising a tyrannical leadership style, may result in an underlying climate with elements of fear (Foucault, 2001). Partial or intermittent negative leadership may create a climate of fear and doubt. If employees witness individual leaders "get away with bad leadership", it may create a climate of fear for the future. For example may an authoritarian leadership style create a climate of fear of making mistakes, and at the same time little or no room for dialogue.

By analyzing the approximately 200 qualitative statements in 2013, 14 and 15, we could trace a development in the language when we were looking for elements of fear (A) Fig. 3. The analytics shows that in 2013 there were significant more

qualitative statements containing the words; *fear, scared, guilty, uncertainty and insecurity*. The analytics also shows that these statements are gradually reduced over the three studies. The critical statements in the same period also significantly reduced. Through the project, there is thus measurable evidence that the leaders were significantly more insecure in 2013 than they were in 2015. There is not asked specifically into the elements of fear in the qualitative statements.

	Qualitative statements with words such as Fear, Scared, Guilt, Uncertainty, Insecurity (A)	Qualitative statements with general criticism (B)	Qualitative positive or neutral statements. (C)
2013	14 statements	76 statements	104 statements
2014	10 statements	37 statements	196 statements
2015	1 statement	25 statements	189 statements

**Figure 3. Measurements of qualitative statements.**

Some middle managers feel really good to be able to lead their area of responsibility without senior leaders mingle, others like that the boss is aware of everything. *“Personally, I live in fear. It sounds almost melodramatic, yet ... In our business one of our value words is "dynamic" and one of its sub items is "do not be afraid to commit mistakes.”* (Sample of a qualitative statement (04-13- 1)

*Then you have to ask the higher top leaders to send out some common guidelines out for how to achieve the goals, rather than argue internally about guilt, guilt and guilt.* (Sample of a qualitative statement 05-13-1)

The analytics in Figure 3 shows that the leaders who participated in the study in 2013 used words like: Fear, Afraid, Guilty, Uncertainty, Insecurity, 14 times in 2013. The leaders, who participated in the study in 2015, only used those words one time. In the many statements from the leaders, it was obvious that there was a strained working climate in 2013 and that there are significant improvements in the qualitative statements by 2015.

**Some of the quantitative elements.**

Description of statements	2013	2014	2015	+/-
I have influence on my work	86 %	100%	100%	+14%
There is a balance in my work	32 %	38 %	58 %	+26%
Work is professionally developing	80 %	94 %	94 %	+14%

Description of statements	2013	2014	2015	+/-
I have influence on my developing	71 %	84%	84%	+13%
Personal conversations is treated seriously.	74 %	82 %	84 %	+10%
it is natural to have to change	97 %	100%	97 %	+0%

**Figure 4. Measurements from the Culture analyze.**

A wide range of other parameters were the subject of a more quantitative assessment.

Figure 5. Table illustrating the changes in the quantitative data about the personal development of the fellow researchers Fig. 5 shows examples of the more quantitative statements about the personal development. It is an exciting development that without having extra resources applied the leaders experience a better balance between workload and the resources available. This may be connected with the experience of more influence on their own development.

Description of statements	2013	2014	2015	+/-
The information is satisfactory	40 %	79%	84%	+44%
The information is timely	40 %	72 %	77 %	+37%
I’m well informed about developments	80 %	99 %	94 %	+14%

Description of statements	2013	2014	2015	+/-
I know the organizational strategy	23 %	54%	62%	+39%
Information from the manager group is good.	48 %	60 %	68 %	+20%
My manager is good at cooperation	80 %	88 %	94 %	+14%

**Figure 5. Measurements from the Culture analyze.**

Fig. 5 shows some pretty significant changes in the experience on the development of the leadership group information. The perceived information, along with information about the strategy work, is one of the points where significant changes due to the PAR project have been experienced. In the PAR project one of the significant stakes was a local site strategy and the numbers in the figures reflects that it has been successful.

Description of statements	2013	2014	2015	+/-
My manager give good feedback	20 %	41%	52%	+32%
Our management team is credible	55 %	72 %	84 %	+29%
Our leadership team is visible	38 %	69 %	64 %	+26%

Description of statements	2013	2014	2015	+/-
We handle conflict well	60 %	87%	71%	+11%
We are good at sharing knowledge	64 %	69 %	68 %	+ 4%
I know the management principles	46 %	44 %	55 %	+ 9%

**Figure 6. Measurements from the Culture analyze.**

In figure 6 some significant changes in the perceived leadership of the organization are shown. Based on the bad leader measurements and a direct result of this project a major reorganization of senior executives was created in 2013. In particular this new executive team has been significantly better to have a dialogue with the leaders, than the old group. When we look at the development between the leaders internally and knowledge sharing the changes are not nearly as significant.

Description of statements	2013	2014	2015	+/-
We have a service culture	61 %	89%	84%	+23%
We are good colleague sparring	54 %	60 %	75 %	+21%
I am proud to work here	85 %	98 %	98 %	+13%

Description of statements	2013	2014	2015	+/-
I like to recommend my workplace	23 %	53%	61%	+38%
In 5 years, I am still employed here	46 %	49 %	64 %	+18%
I am actively seeking employment	80 %	78 %	93 %	+13%

**Figure 7. Measurements from the Culture analyze.**

When studying Figure 7, it is remarkable that something significantly has happened with the participants' perception building around the perceived culture at work, while at the same time the number of active job seeking leaders has changed significantly. The fact that only 23% of the leaders would recommend the organization as an exciting place to work and 61% would recommend it after 2 years is also a significant difference.

**The distribution of responsibilities between the researcher and the fellow researchers.**

Throughout the project, it has been of essential importance that the participants have seen and understood their own role and responsibility in this project. The role as a fellow researcher in gathering data and bringing input to change initiatives and new insights has in this project meant a sense of responsibility for the development, which has been motivating many of the participants to work with the development of colleagues as well as their own development in the project.

In many action research projects it is a huge challenge to ensure that new initiatives are maintained and continued after the project has stopped and the researcher has left the organization (Pålshagen, 2000). The project was completed in December 2015, the dialogue office was closed and the researcher left the organization.

	Fellow researcher tasks	Shared tasks	Researcher's tasks
Operational level	Collecting data Input for efforts Test ideas Conducts test operations Ambassador Create new insights	Formulate the problem Formulation Facilitate efforts Participate in workshops Analyzes	Collect data Analyze data Facility can process Communicate new theory
Tactical level	Ambassador role Communication	Planning social Plan analysis	Provide an adequate disorders Give feedback
Reflection level	Discuss results Comment presentations and results Give feedback on the project Produce new insights	Approve statements and new results	Practice reflection with the participants
Final levels	Develop and communicate new insights	Through reading and approve the scientific evidence	Create scientific work

**Figure 8. The the shared responsibilities in the project.**

The last visible effort the group made was to create 10 recommendations to the executives of the organization. See Fig.9. The Culture Board and the researcher handed over these 10 recommendations and a general reporting of the project in February 2016, which marked the official end of the project.

**Recommandations to Site Management**

1. Show appreciation
2. Establish a feedback culture
3. Focus on Work-Life balance
4. Create a winner mentality – we want to be # 1.
5. Consider diversity as a strength
6. Reinforce the sense of community
7. Guard the trust
8. Sell credibility
9. Invest in the employees
10. Reinforce the branding

**Figure 9. Recommandations to Site Management group.**

The Culture Project is still, after 18 months since the shutdown, both visible and part of many leaders everyday life in the organization. The Culture Board still holds 3-4 meetings every year, where the project is followed up and where new initiatives to influence and maintain the desired experienced meaning of culture are brought up.

**What are the results of this case study?**

Through this project we have demonstrated, that it is possible to work proactively to influence the experience of a culture in an organization. The culture is elements of the social mental consciousness that the individual agent handles in his own horizon of understanding, and which is more or less shared by other agents in the form of a quota in the intersubjective perceptions, but also in a differentiated form outside the common realization. When each agent directs his internalization at something, subjective fragments of opinions are created; *some of them are given a common name such as culture*. How the individual subject creates opinions of what he directs his internalization against, is not available, but through a dialogue, two or more individuals may create internal horizon extensions together, that gradually must mean that they create a greater intersubjectivity around common concepts and the content of the influences of the common experienced culture in the organization. In this project, we could see a significant difference in how the young and the elderly creates the common culture-creating dialogue. Young people tend to ask more questions and have a burning desire to participate in improvements. The slightly older players seemed more satisfied with the existing structures, and often see culture as a protective element.

A participant involved action research project has in this case proved to be a highly effective approach and perspective to actively intervene and affect the common awareness about the phenomenon of culture in an organization. The participants in this case have experienced big positive improvements and personal development perspectives, which means that they all have had an experience of personal development which at the same time has had a positive impact on their future workplace.

*"I knew that culture may be moved much, but I have been surprised at how much and how fast a culture can be moved during a focusing action. Quite quickly we could see the results of the effort."* Quote from a fellow researcher.

*"Before, I was often annoyed at the people who talked about "the good old Alpha spirit" and "how we did in the good old days" but now I have gained a greater understanding of why this is so deep in them."* Quote from a fellow researcher.

The design of creating a "Cultural Board" and a more progressive group, the "Young Wild" has been a valuable setup, which meant that I as a scientist have had some active fellow researchers, who have injected valuable interpretations of their experiences from the organization into the project.

The cross-organizational composition of the groups and the recruitment through a job application seems to have also worked as we had hoped for. These two groups, together with Site Manager Group, have been "adequate" for the overall leadership.

In the current case it might look as if we have had a lucky hand regarding in creating an altered perception of the dominant perception of the concept of culture and a shared experience that culture is not something objective outside the single individual has also been achieved. It is the individual who put value and meaning to whatever the intentionality of the individual is directed at. The phrase we created in the process was; **CULTURE IS SOMETHING WE GIVE TO EACH OTHER.**

## CONCLUSIONS

In this case study a significant positive development in both qualitative and quantitative data, upon the involvement of employees in an organization's change project has been demonstrated and the project has had a significant positive influence on the perceived culture of the organization.

In 2012 Bo Westergaard received a great recognition at the AOM conference with an article titled "Managing an Unpopular Change Effort". Westergaard here introduced us for a concept he calls the Fair Process. Research in justice psychology and decision processes shows that there is inspiration in the concept of process justice (Thibaut & Walker, 1975; Lind & Tyler, 1998; in Westergaard 2013).

In this PAR project, the participating fellow researchers have experienced a *fair process* in which they have been enabled to make some influence on their own, as well as the organizational development, in such a way that the changes that have happened are sustainable and fruitful. Unlike many action research projects, the impact of this project is still active even though it is more than 1 year ago the project was formally completed.

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