Processes of Compromise in International Development Consultancies—Getting Heard as a Social Scientist

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February 2020

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Hertfordshire for the degree of Doctor of Management.

Abstract

This thesis explores the theme of compromise from the perspective of a social scientist working in the technically oriented environment of international development. My involvement is through my employment in a Danish consultancy company working in, inter alia, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East with government agencies, national companies, and non-governmental organisations. The main puzzle addressed in this research arises out of the link between compromise and conflict: how and why do people find ways to compromise and move out of situations of conflict? Associated aspects of this puzzle are how we might experience compromise and how it is, or might be, related to getting heard. I employ a narrative and ethnographic approach with episodes from my everyday work situations, including interactions with colleagues and clients, to inquire into the social, political, and emotional relationships involved in compromise. This research puzzle is of particular relevance to me as a social scientist with a frequent experience of being marginalised, where my interactions with others seem to involve compromise. My indications are that this experience is shared by many other social scientists working in international development—and perhaps by others finding themselves in a marginalised situation—and that my research puzzle would be of relevance and interest to them.

Various disciplines have taken up compromise, particularly marketing, politics, sociology, and ethics. In these fields, compromise appears typically to be considered a product, an agreement, or a solution, with some recognising that relational aspects play a role in reaching such outcomes. In contrast to this apparently common understanding of compromise, I view it as a relational and radically social process. This evolves in our interactions with others and in our private conversations with ourselves, the latter involving our anticipations of how others will react to what we might say or do. Compromising is about negotiations and adaptations to each other's views, enabling us to move on in conflictual situations, despite the sense of loss this involves either temporarily or permanently. Such processes are intertwined with power relations, which involve processes of inclusion in and exclusion from groups. I assert that persons or groups experiencing themselves in marginalised positions tend to adapt their views more than others, in attempts to gain some influence.

I argue that the experience of compromising is temporal and dynamic; that is, the meaning, significance, and the related emotions might change several times. My research indicates that compromising always involves some sense of loss at some point, but that the intensity of this varies. Compromising might simultaneously or at some other point be experienced in other ways, depending on the situation and

the persons involved. For example, it involved a sense of novelty in one of my narratives when compromising paved the way for us to move towards a cooperative atmosphere and relationship. It is when we reflect on our differences in views or 'stuckness' and adjust to different frames of reference in our compromising that novelty might evolve.

My argument is that for processes of compromise to evolve out of conflictual situations those involved must be aware of each other's views, with leaders—both those in formal and informal leadership positions—taking a key role in enabling others to be heard. This awareness might arise in several ways, primarily i) by those directly involved speaking up themselves, ii) through forming of alliances with others, and/or iii) through support from leaders. The latter's engagement in compromise includes their role in enabling those in marginalised positions to participate in processes of compromise, which might involve making it easier for these persons to speak up themselves or supporting them in other ways. I assert that relational leadership requires engagement in processes of compromise, currently often considered a feminine trait/skill. Speaking up, often viewed as a masculine trait/skill, is an inherent part of a leader's role in compromising; importantly, this means speaking up as a leader focused on mutual adaptations to each other's views, rather than on wanting to control the situation.

I do not want to idealise compromising. There are situations where stubbornly standing up for our views and value commitments will be the most ethical way to act, for example, to avoid harm to others and/or to maintain our integrity and what is important for us. There is a need for practical judgement in each situation of how best to act ethically.

Key authors: M. Benjamin, J. Dewey, I. Drabæk, N. Elias, M. Foucault, D. Griffin, A. Honneth, H. Joas, G.H. Mead, C. Mowles, J.P. Olivier de Sardan, J.C. Scott, R.D. Stacey, S. Sullivan.

Key words: Compromise, conflict, gender, inclusion and exclusion, international development work, novelty, power, recognition, relational leadership, speaking up.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

According to the United Nations, conflict and violence in the world are on the rise, with many conflicts today waged between non-state actors and with conflicts becoming more fragmented and protracted, involving an increasing number of groups. The increasing number of conflicts involve not only states and non-state groups but are also within families, with an increase in female homicide and domestic violence.[1] Similarly, organisational life is permeated by conflict, in people's interactions with each other. This situation of increasing conflict in different settings and contexts points to the importance of compromise, which is the theme I explore in this thesis. The following provides further background so as to understand the specific context in which I examine compromise and what it entails.

This thesis accounts for the research I have conducted over the last three years and six months at the Doctor of Management (DMan) programme at the Business School of the University of Hertfordshire. This professional doctoral thesis is an exploration of everyday work situations, including my interactions with colleagues and clients, to inquire into the social, political, and emotional relationships involved in compromise. My research has been conducted in an emergent and iterative way, involving exploration of work situations and processes that puzzled me, raised my curiosity, and could be described as breakdowns in my understanding (Brinkmann, 2012, pp. 12–13). Part of the methodological approach on the DMan programme is to be reflexive about the impact that my history and thinking have on how I interact with others at work and to explore this as a way of identifying my research theme. I started my research, therefore, by writing—and reflecting on—an autoethnographic account of what have been the main influences, themes, and occurrences mainly related to my work and studies—with some references back to my childhood and teenage years. This involved reflections on how these influences and occurrences have shaped my thinking as it was at the time of writing. This autoethnographic account includes narratives, as does my later exploration of other work situations. My research theme of compromise evolved partly out of the process of writing this account and discussing it with my fellow researchers and supervisors and partly its generalisable potential, as explained below.

My research theme is closely linked to my occupation as a social scientist engaged in international development work, which I explain briefly below before moving on to my research theme. This is

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[1] https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un75_conflict_violence.pdf, accessed on 28 January 2020

followed by an overview of the methodology I have used for my research and of the structure of this thesis.

Occupational background

It was my employment in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the 1980s that led me into international development work, with an aspiration to help improve the living conditions of poor families in countries such as Bangladesh where I had been posted. I became—and still am—part of the international development discourse, particularly as the government and non-governmental organisations in Denmark and other like-minded countries promote it. Key goals here include, among others, an end to poverty, good health with increased life expectancy, access to quality education, access to clean water and adequate sanitation, and gender equality,[2] all of which strongly resonate with me. Much international development work is, however, at the same time dominated by linear models and approaches, centred on results and value for money (Maclay, 2015, pp. 42–44) and based on the assumption that it is possible to predict and control what will happen in the future. One example is a results framework used by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which the ministry describes as providing the 'explanation for how the engagement(s) of a programme or a project will achieve the defined objectives through the hierarchy of planned results' (2017, p. 5). In a similar vein, there is a focus on quantification in the monitoring of development goals and interventions. An example of this is the approximately 1,600 quantitative World Development Indicators which 'is the World Bank's premier compilation of cross-country comparable data on development'.[3] Quantitative data are essential within international development work, but in my experience, they should often be used with caution because of the way they are defined, collected, recorded, and/or combined. Furthermore, everyday politics, negotiations, power relations, and other relational aspects which might influence the implementation of international development activities are difficult to quantify and explore through linear approaches.

Olivier de Sardan refers to a dominant meta-ideology in international development work, in which interventions are based mainly on what he refers to as two paradigms which appear to be intricately linked: the altruist paradigm (with development seeking the welfare of others) and the modernist paradigm (with development implying technical and economic progress). He critiques this meta-ideology

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[2] These are some of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/, accessed on 11 February 2020
[3] http://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators, accessed on 6 January 2020

for partially overshadowing that development work is also an arena, where social actors 'vie with each other for stakes of power, prestige, celebrity and control' (2005, p. 71). Similarly, Ferguson, in his analysis of a development project in Lesotho, highlights that political problems, processes, and decisions are treated as if they were technical, thereby ignoring political aspects both at government levels and in everyday situations (1994, p. 66). This situation might have changed somewhat since Ferguson completed his analysis more than 25 years ago, but in my experience, and as explained by Crewe and Axelby, technical knowledge still dominates much development work and is considered more reliable than other knowledge (2013, pp. 131–133).

I have been engaged in international development work since the mid-1980s, most of the time employed by a major consulting engineering company based in Denmark. My work has been—and still is—focused on socio-economic aspects as well as project management in consultancy assignments in Asian, African, Eastern European, and Middle Eastern countries. These assignments primarily aimed at improving the drinking water supply, sewerage, and the sanitary situation more generally in both urban and rural areas. Typically, there is a high focus on technical aspects and expertise in these assignments, while my work focuses on analyses of population trends, poverty, living conditions, and views of different population groups, as well as avoidance and mitigation of negative social impacts. In our conversations with local authorities and within our project teams of international and national consultants, there is often more discussion of technical details than of socio-economic issues and viewpoints. Although generally I feel recognised for my knowledge and expertise, I have often had an experience of my socio-economic views and expertise—as well as those of others—being marginalised in the many discussions about technical aspects. As a female social scientist working in a technically oriented and male-dominated environment, I have frequently had, in my perception, to struggle more than the engineers to have my views heard. In these discussions, I have experienced myself as silenced by engineers' focus on technical details and by myself in avoidance of conflict or in fear of being ignored, if I did speak up. I believe this has been one of the reasons why I have developed a habit of being soft-spoken or remaining silent, particularly in large meetings and in potentially conflictual situations. Although I am generally soft-spoken, I would also, however, characterise myself as a determined and, at times, stubborn person, and it has been important for me to seek some influence through conversations and alliances in smaller groups.

Research theme

Struggles for recognition of my views and those of others came up several times in my autoethnographic account of—and reflections on—the main influences, themes, and occurrences in my work life. I was persistent, and sometimes stubborn, about my views in these struggles, while at the same time often trying to avoid direct conflicts with other people or groups. I was puzzled about what my struggles for recognition might entail, influenced by my simultaneous persistence/stubbornness and conflict avoidance. As my research moved on, it was the relentless and rigorous questioning by my research colleagues and myself that made me realise that compromise represented a central theme in my work and thereby in my research.

The following has evolved into my main puzzle and research question:

> How and why have I, as well as other people, found ways to move on in some conflictual situations, but not in others—in other words, what does compromise entail?

An integrated aspect of this puzzle is how we might experience compromise. Some literature (see, e.g., Benjamin, 1990; Nachi, 2004) associates compromise primarily with feelings of loss and alienation, whereas I was uncertain as to whether it might also be experienced in other ways, for example, as gain and/or novelty. Another integrated aspect of my research is how compromise is—or might be—related to getting heard, in my case, as a social scientist working in the technically oriented environment of international development. This research puzzle is of particular relevance to me with my frequent experience of being marginalised and involved in compromise. My indications are that this experience is shared by many other social scientists working in international development—and perhaps by others finding themselves in a marginalised situation—and that my research puzzle would be of relevance and interest to them.

My research explores how and why compromise occurs—or does not occur—in our interactions with others and our thoughts or, in other words, our private conversations with ourselves. Compromise appears to be complex in several ways, not only because it might involve several people but also because of the contradictory loyalties and feelings it might entail. Benjamin illustrates this vividly with his example of how politicians committed personally to a specific moral position, for example, against abortion, might compromise on the same position in order to represent the views of their constituents

and colleagues (1990, pp. 139; 149–150). Such compromise might be regarded by some people as betrayal and be experienced by the politician as violating her/his personal integrity but simultaneously as preserving her/his integrity as an elected representative of others.

As Benjamin's example illuminates, compromise involves both relations with others as well as commitments to values. It is influenced by our individual histories as well as our histories together and by the interdependencies and power relations between us, as the following snippet from one of my narratives indicates. This is from a client meeting with the participation of, among others, Kasim and Pablo from the client's side and me as the consultants' team leader. I had proposed the meeting, following a conflictual and highly anxiety-provoking conference call, where my colleagues and I felt we had been treated unfairly.

> *I was tense during these explanations as I wanted my viewpoints to be clear. At the same time, I wanted to avoid a detailed discussion, which I feared might make it difficult to create a cooperative atmosphere going forward. Kasim's facial expression indicated to me that he was on the verge of interrupting a couple of times, but he did not…Just as I was completing my clarifications, Pablo joined on a telephone line. Kasim was quick to summarise our meeting so far…From my viewpoint, these were clearly not the points I had made during my earlier explanation, but I did not say anything. I felt that I had made my viewpoints clear, and I wanted now to move into discussions of our findings.*

The above is an example of the processes of adaptations to each other that I explore in this thesis. Below I explain key aspects of my research methodology so that the reader has an understanding, from the beginning, of how the research has developed and is structured, while I expand in depth on the research methodology in the synopsis. The latter also includes explications and reflections related to research ethics.

Outline of research methodology

An important part of my research methodology is how we work on the DMan programme, which was started 20 years ago by a group of researchers who developed the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating (see, e.g., Stacey, 2001, 2003, 2012; Griffin, 2002; Shaw, 2002; Stacey and Mowles, 2016). As explained in more detail in my synopsis, key features of the perspective are its focus on local

interactions and the communication between people in the form of processes of gesture and response (drawing on the pragmatist George H. Mead); these are influenced by our value commitments, the norms of the groups to which we belong, our histories, and our habits (building on, inter alia, another pragmatist, John Dewey). Another key feature is the power relations between people which are paradoxically enabling and constraining them at the same time (with the process sociologist Norbert Elias being an important theoretical source on this). The perspective also draws on the complexity sciences to explain how novelty evolves in human interaction and how micro-interactions and general patterns are mutually constitutive. I have drawn partly on literature about the perspective of complex responsive processes and some of its guiding theories, partly on other literature of particular relevance to my research theme and the initial patterns emerging from my narratives. The latter has primarily included authors writing about compromise, international development work, and gender. The research community I joined thus privileges a multidisciplinary approach.

My research did not start with a literature review to identify a gap in the theoretical understanding of a phenomenon, as is common in much doctoral research. Rather, my research takes practice and the experience of this as the starting point by using a narrative approach. Relevant literature has been identified in the ongoing reflections on the narratives and the puzzles that emerged from these. The identification of literature has thus been an ongoing process as my understanding developed or changed and new puzzles emerged. This has also been a social process in which I have been inspired by my two supervisors, the wider DMan community, and people outside this community. The strength of this approach is that it pays attention to emergent experience while, at the same time, there is a danger of pursuing too many lines of inquiry and thereby losing the overview or the 'red thread'. I have attempted to counter the latter by drawing primarily, but not only, on authors who—despite their differences— write in the Hegelian tradition where sociality, history, and inter-subjectivity matter. This has allowed me to explore my research theme of compromise from somewhat different perspectives, without getting lost in too many and too different lines of inquiry.

All students and supervisors on the DMan programme meet four times per year at residential weekends, where there are presentations and discussions in the larger DMan community and discussions in our smaller learning sets, consisting of four students and the first supervisor. Inspired by S. H. Foulkes's group analytic methods, each residential includes three so-called 'community meetings', which are open for discussions of whatever students and supervisors think is important for their research together and individually (Mowles, 2017, pp. 223–224). There have also been quarterly discussions over Skype with

my learning set. My research includes four projects and a synopsis, each of which has gone through several iterations, based on comments from and discussions with my learning set, my second supervisor, and the wider DMan community. My thesis has thus developed out of an individual and social process, drawing on multiple perspectives on my work.

Narrative inquiry is an important part of my research methodology, involving an exploration of micro-interactions with others, as well as my private conversations with myself. Using a narrative approach has made it possible for me to include not only summaries of what different persons said but also, for example, illustrations of bodily gestures and feelings as well as some historical and organisational background for our interactions. The narratives included in my thesis thus constitute the data or raw material for my inquiry into compromise.

My research conclusions and arguments are what Dewey refers to as *warranted assertions*, which my community of inquiry—that is, my learning set, second supervisor, and the wider DMan community—has found credible and plausible, based on their experience and in the context of a wider literature. At the same time, they are assertions that always remain open to be changed in the future (Martela, 2015, p. 540). These assertions have emerged in a continuous movement between my pre-understanding, my narratives, existing theories as well as comments and ideas from my community of inquiry. I have been a participant and emotionally involved in—and affected by—the research, as I explain with examples in the research methodology of my synopsis but, as my research progressed, I also have, in Elias's words, increasingly been able to 'take a detour via detachment' (1987, p. 6) from my emotional involvement in the interactions in my narratives. Elias suggests that, as human beings, we are always, at the same time, both involved in and detached about the situation in which we are, in some combination of the two. We can thus never be completely involved, unless we are very young babies, and never completely detached, unless we are psychologically damaged in some way (Elias, 1987; Mowles, 2011, p. 85). I attribute my increasing detachment during the research process to discussions with my community of inquiry, my reading of literature covering different disciplines, and reflections on what might have influenced me to think and act as I do or did. The methodology section of my synopsis includes further explication of my simultaneous involved and detached research stance.

Structure of the thesis

In addition to this introduction, my thesis consists of the following.

Project 1 is an autoethnographic account of and reflections on what have been the main influences, themes, and occurrences at work, and of how these have shaped my thinking. An important part of this reflexive approach has been to account for my assumptions and habits as they were at the time of writing Project 1, that is, at the start of my research.

Projects 2–4 are explorations of diverse aspects of my research theme of compromise, which includes getting heard as a social scientist. While Project 1 is a retrospective account, Projects 2–4 are based on narratives from recent work situations, where I draw on relevant literature in my analysis of what puzzled me in these situations about my research theme of compromise.

The synopsis presents key features of the perspective of complex responsive processes, my research methodology, including ethics, a summary and critical review of each of the four projects, and my three key arguments. As part of the synopsis, I explain how the various threads of practice and theory relate to each other.

My contributions to knowledge and practice as well as concluding remarks with suggestions for further research constitute the last parts of my thesis.

Research conducted as part of the professional DMan programme is seen as a process of learning, and it is, therefore, a requirement that my thesis shows movement in my thinking and practice. This is the reason why I present my four research projects as they were originally written, without updating them as my research progressed; this is to make it obvious how my thinking and practice have developed and moved during the process of writing the thesis. This becomes particularly evident in the synopsis, where I summarise the key themes and reflections in each project, interwoven with a further reflexive turn on them. A main reason why a DMan thesis includes four projects—and not, for example, three or six projects—is that the thesis is to show movement in thinking and practice and, at the same time, include in-depth exploration of key themes and aspects evolving from the project narratives and discussions in the DMan community. The risk of including six projects in the thesis would be that the exploration of each narrative/project would not go into sufficient depth; if the thesis included only three projects, it would be difficult to illustrate the movement in thinking and practice, particularly as Project 1 is a retrospective account of what has shaped my thinking and habits at work and the starting point for my research.

The research methodology, including ethics, is explained in depth in the synopsis, that is, after the four projects. The reason for this sequence is that my research methodology is interwoven with and has developed as part of the process of writing and discussing my four projects. Some of the movement in my thinking and practices has thus evolved from the way we work on the DMan programme and is explained in my research methodology.

Project 1—Recognition and values in international development work

Introduction

This project is a reflection on key themes and events in my life and how these have shaped the way I think and reflect on experience today. I touch upon my traditional upbringing, my involvement in international development work, and my gradual questioning of management tools, which focused on detailed plans and quantitative targets. I describe my struggles for recognition and inclusion, the new perspectives I gained from my further studies and the importance that the values of equality, diversity, and community consultation have for me.

Traditions and freedom

I grew up on a farm in Denmark, in a small village where neighbours knew and often helped each other. My father did most of the work in the stables and fields, while my mother looked after us children, did the housework, and, during peak seasons, helped in the fields. This was the common division of responsibilities between women and men in the village, and my siblings' and my tasks were divided in the same way. I mainly helped my mother with housework and sometimes with work in the fields, but the latter not nearly as often as my brothers. There were also traditional roles when it came to leadership in local organisations, where mainly men were elected to leading positions. At various times, my father was thus on the board of the village water scheme, the village community hall, the dairy, and the bank branch.

At the time, I did not reflect much, if at all, on this gendered division of responsibilities nor on the gender dimension of local leadership and cannot recall feeling restricted in any way. This lack of reflection or questioning, from my side and by others, might have consolidated or reinforced these gendered divisions. The traditional gender roles might also have influenced my choice of education. My parents encouraged me to study the subjects that interested me. However, at the time, it was common for girls to study languages and social subjects and for boys to study mathematics, physics, and other natural science subjects. I chose to focus on languages, first at high school and later at a business school. My father's interest in local and international politics might also have influenced my choice, as I was curious to learn about other countries and cultures.

For many years, my father was a member and later the mayor of the local council. We discussed local development issues at home, concerns raised at community meetings and conflictual situations, with for example local opposition to the closure of some primary schools. As a teenager, I sensed how much these conflictual situations affected my father and respected him for continuing the discussions and arguing for his views. In hindsight, I realise that my father's engagement in community affairs and local politics has had a strong influence on my current value commitments, especially the importance I attach to consultations with local communities and taking their views seriously.

Another important person during my teenage years was a friend who had lost her sight when very young. She had attended a specialised boarding school, so I did not know her well until she started in my school class. In the following years, we spent much time together. In some instances, I acted as 'her eyes', for example when whispering to her what happened on a film screen or what the teacher or students wrote on the blackboard. However, I was impressed by her determination not to let her disability stop her doing well at school, or living a life similar to other teenagers, such as doing sports and planning her further education. I am uncertain why my friend's determination called forth this respect and admiration in me, but it might somehow have reinforced the values I had from village life where many farming families faced financial difficulties and had to be determined and stubborn to make a living as farmers. I would thus characterise myself as determined and, at times, stubborn. I value being able to follow the path I want, which is illustrated by a vivid memory from my teenage years of the sense of freedom I experienced when horse riding and generally being with horses. Much of my life revolved around horses. I participated in a few local dressage competitions but have even happier memories from exploring the forests and fields, together with my horse and sometimes with other riders. I felt a sense of freedom, not because I wanted to get away from school or home, but rather a freedom to decide what direction I wanted to take, to get a bit lost sometimes and still be able to find my way back.

Development work, guidelines, and manuals

After my language studies, I was employed by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and soon got postings abroad, first at the embassy in Yugoslavia and later in Nigeria and Bangladesh. My interest in international development issues started before the embassy postings, influenced by Denmark's tradition for development assistance. I read articles and attended a few meetings about international

cooperation and development assistance, but it was during my time in Bangladesh that I realised that I wanted to work full-time on international development issues. Inspired by my involvement in the administration of development projects, my aspiration was to help improve the living conditions of poor families in countries like Bangladesh and somehow contribute to greater equality within and between countries.

After a couple of years in Bangladesh, I was back at the ministry head office, where I was responsible for the administration of water and sanitation projects in India. I learned much from working with my more experienced colleagues, for example about poverty reduction and other priorities in Danish development assistance. In the beginning, I found it useful to consult the many guidelines and manuals and use all the monitoring forms. This was also the time where the ministry introduced the logical framework approach (LFA), with a structured statement of objectives, outputs, activities, inputs, and several indicators with quantitative targets. These are seen as causally linked, meaning that specified inputs and activities will produce specified outputs, which will result in achieving the immediate objective. It is claimed that, in the long term, this will contribute to achieving the development objective (NORAD, 1996, p. 12). Initially, I considered the LFA a useful management tool, giving a systematic overview of what to do to have a successful project. We used the approach quite rigidly to start with, but some of my experienced colleagues started questioning its inflexibility, suggesting that many factors influencing a project would be unknown at its start. Danish non-governmental organisations (NGOs) presented similar views and gradually we introduced more uncertainties into the project LFA documents, such as elaborating the assumptions and risks in more detail. I felt the criticism of the initially rigid application of the LFA was justified and even after introducing more uncertainties had ambivalent feelings about using the LFA, as had several of my colleagues.

However, it was only several years later that I started seriously questioning the LFA. This was when, as part of a consulting team, I assisted local organisations in preparing a 20-year national strategy for rural water supply and sanitation. We were expected to use the LFA for the strategy. I had very mixed feelings, finding it impossible to predict what inputs and activities would be needed over a 20-year period to reach the objectives. In addition, when my colleagues and I discussed the LFA with staff in the local organisations, we found it difficult to explain the approach as the vocabulary in the local planning process was quite different and translation of LFA terms consequently difficult. However, it was a contractual requirement to use the LFA, so we did, though highlighting the many uncertainties.

This process made me reflect more deeply on the LFA and its assumptions that it is possible to predict and implicitly control the future. I realised that even listing risks was an attempt to predict and control what might happen in the future, with suggested measures to counter these risks. After joining the DMan programme, I have recognised that the LFA has its basis in cybernetic systems thinking, which was developed by engineers from the 1940s onwards. A well-known example of a cybernetic system is a domestic central heating system, where a regulator adjusts the heating to the desired temperature level when the temperature has become either lower or higher than desired, that is, based on negative feedback. Cybernetics is thus about control. When applied to organisations, there are two main types of regulation or control, namely i) anticipatory planning where mitigation of a sensed or predicted disturbance is attempted before it happens and ii) regular monitoring or review of performance followed by corrective actions to achieve the desired results (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, pp. 58; 68–73). In line with this, many project reviews measure progress and achievements based on the LFA matrices approved before the project start. If there are deviations from plans, a review mission will normally suggest corrective actions to achieve the original LFA targets. In my experience, it is rare that a project's LFA matrix is changed based on new insights or developments. I still use the LFA, when this is a requirement, but with reluctance and highlighting the many uncertainties.

My thinking was also influenced by a three-year diploma course on organisation and management, which I followed while in the ministry. Three subjects caught my particular interest: i) the psychologist Abraham H. Maslow's hierarchy of needs and the critiques of the same; ii) communication, especially two-way processes; and iii) interaction between people within and across groups (Heltbech, Mikkelsen and Andersen, 1988).

Maslow's hierarchy of needs from the 1940s has been illustrated as a pyramid consisting of six levels, from basic physiological needs (sufficient food, drinking water, shelter) to needs for self-actualisation, with lower-level needs to be satisfied to a large extent before people pay much attention to the next level of needs. It made sense to me that the extremely poor I had seen in Bangladesh and India would prioritise sufficient food before thinking of any other needs. I was more dubious about the categorisation and ranking of other needs, for example, that generally, people would prioritise safety higher than belonging to various groups. In my experience, it was not possible to generalise in this way. Also, a critique was raised of Maslow's theory that people's behaviour is not only determined by their needs but also by what other people and groups expect and allow (Heltbech, Mikkelsen and Andersen,

1988, pp. 55–56), which resonated with me. It was thus more the critique of Maslow's hierarchy of needs than his theory that influenced my thinking.

My interest in the two subjects of two-way communication and interaction in groups possibly originated from my father's engagement in local politics and his communication with various groups. During the course, a two-way communication theory was presented, with a sender, a receiver, and potential disturbances in the communication process. This appears based on Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver's sender-receiver model from 1949, which is derived from telephony and where communication is largely seen as a tool to transmit a predetermined message, in other words, to transmit what has already been thought (Larsen and Larsen, 2013, pp. 30–33). At the time, I did not question this simplification and years later used the sender-receiver model when discussing two-way vis-a-vis one-way communication with local leaders and volunteers. My understanding of the communication process has gradually changed, and in community-level discussions, I have introduced participatory tools, such as those included in the World Health Organisation's PHAST (Participatory Hygiene And Sanitation Transformation) initiative, where locally produced picture sets are an essential part (Wood, Sawyer and Sempson-Hébert, 1998). However, it added new perspectives to my understanding of communication when, a couple of years before starting on the DMan programme, I read about the theory of one of the leading pragmatists, George Herbert Mead. According to him, meaning does not arise first in each individual and then in the action of transmitting it, but rather in the interaction itself between those gesturing and responding to each other. We also gesture to ourselves at the same time as gesturing to others, which might enable us to anticipate the response we call out in others (as cited by Stacey 2012, pp.24–25).

Bureaucracy and recognition

I experienced the ministry as rather bureaucratic, with many rules and procedures to follow. This was in relation to my daily work of administrating projects and in relation to human resources (HR) management. As a representative of a relatively new union, I knew the ministry's HR procedures well. The union, whose members had a diploma or degree in languages, was struggling for recognition of its members' particular competences, including a higher remuneration. I felt this was a fair struggle, which I wanted to take part in, and over a three-year period spent much time on union work.

In the midst of this union struggle, HR staff asked me to help identify internal volunteers for a vacant administrative position in Warsaw. I was concerned. I had been back at the head office for an extended period and could be forced to take the position. After a few days, an HR staff asked if I would take the job. I tried to convince her it would be a poor utilisation of my international development expertise to send me to Warsaw to do administrative work. In the same breath, I assured her that I was interested in positions abroad, where I could use my international development skills, adding that I had applied for such a position two months earlier. I sensed she sympathised with my arguments, but she repeated that I had been back at the head office for an extended period and they had to fill the position. I sought the support of my head of department, who appreciated my work and my loyalty to the department (I had kept my promise of remaining in his department for at least two years). We talked to the head of the international development HR unit, who warned us that the ministry's HR staff appeared to be following the rules and that she might not be able to influence them. A few days later, the head of the ministry's HR department walked into my office and reminded me of my employment conditions and that I had to make up my mind. Did I want to take the position in Warsaw, resign or be dismissed? She appeared impatient that it was taking me so long to make up my mind. I was disappointed and annoyed that the ministry's procedures were so rigid and that compromises were impossible, but the procedures were no surprise to me. I had been stubborn and had used several strategies to try and get my way, but now felt I had exhausted all possibilities. I talked to my head of department and a few other colleagues before handing in my resignation.

There were, however, still ways of temporarily circumventing the rules. My head of department recommended me for a temporary international development position, financed under a separate budget. I was interested but concerned that it would only become vacant two months after I was due to leave the ministry. My head of department convinced the ministry's HR department to postpone my resignation date and, following this, I was employed in the temporary position for seven months and even received a higher salary.

I was sad to leave my colleagues but determined to continue working within international development. I sense that the determination and stubbornness, which I have taken with me from my childhood and teenage years, played a role here. I was not going to let others, or rather ministry rules, decide what type of work I would do in the future. The rigid rules had made it impossible for me to move out of the secretarial/administrative staff category, although I had moved to another type of work and had an education of the same duration as employees within the international development staff category. My

recent reading of the German philosopher Axel Honneth has been helpful in getting a clearer understanding of my struggle for recognition. Honneth distinguishes between three main modes of recognition, i) emotional support related to love and friendship, ii) cognitive respect related to legal relations or rights, and iii) social esteem related to a community of value (1995, p. 129). The second and third modes are of particular relevance here. Social esteem relates to a person's particular accomplishments and abilities and is, as other forms of recognition, a mutual process, which requires that people have a shared orientation of their values and goals (1995, p. 121), meaning they have a general reference framework based on which they can recognise, or not recognise, each other. Honneth emphasises that this framework is not static. Legal recognition has equality and universality as central aspects, where all members of a particular society or group have the same rights and can make claims based on these equal rights (1995, pp. 118–120). In my interpretation, legal recognition can apply to organisational rules. Using Honneth's categorisation, my struggle for recognition within the ministry was related to rights. The focus of my union work was to gain recognition for union members' particular competences, including the right to a higher remuneration commensurate with skills and qualifications, while the struggle for recognition of my international development expertise was to gain the right, for me and others, to be considered for positions reserved for other staff categories. At the same time, my head of department (and other colleagues) recognised my knowledge and skills, which led to my employment in the temporary position. Using Honneth's terminology, I experienced it as social esteem of my personal accomplishments and abilities that my head of department would take the discussions to get me into this position, which for me had a higher status than an administrative job in Warsaw. I left the ministry with a strange feeling of being both recognised and not recognised at the same time.

New perspectives on development and objectivity/subjectivity

My resignation from the ministry gave me the push to enrol for MSc studies in international development and public administration in the early 1990s. My main interest here was in the international development part, where the literature had more in-depth perspectives than those which I had experienced in the ministry. I was introduced to different development theories and critiques of the same, as presented, for example, by Bjorn Hettne (1990) and Georg Sorensen (1989). Whether influenced by neo-classical economics, Marxism or other ideologies, many theories have in common that they see development in an evolutionary perspective with a focus on new technologies, better systems and procedures, as well as economic growth. An example of the latter is that a country's average gross national product per capita is often used to measure a country's level of development

compared with that of other countries. Reading these theories made me reflect on assumptions underpinning development assistance. Using terms such as developed and developing countries illuminates the implicit evolutionary assumptions that developing countries are to catch up with developed countries and that all countries and their populations have the same overall goals. I recognised new dimensions of how the tendency to use averages conceals differences and inequality, for example between ethnic groups, socio-economic groups, and women and men within these. There is also a power dimension to development assistance. Although most international development organisations emphasise that programmes are defined based on the priorities of African and Asian partner organisations, the international organisations (and/or their funders) also have their priorities and pre-conditions. As partner countries/organisations are dependent on them for funding, power is tilted in favour of the international development organisations.

In the midst of these reflections, I came across a small introductory book on anthropology by the Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup (1992). This focuses on the particular and the importance of the local context in which events and change take place. This emphasis on the particular and the differences between and within countries made sense to me, as did her view that populations in African and Asian countries should not be considered as victims, but rather as active human beings who try to define or influence their own future.

Hastrup also argues that it is impossible for a researcher to stand outside her/his research area and objectively observe what is going on (1992, pp. 32–38). At first, I struggled to understand what implications this would have for me in my future role as a researcher or consultant. How would I be able to do research or consultancy work that would be more than my own subjective analyses of the situation? How would I be able to make analyses that others would consider valid? When writing my MSc thesis a few years later, these reflections became very specific. My thesis was an analysis of the seemingly major changes in family networks and gender relations in Male, the capital of the Maldives, from the 1970s to 1993. I was aware that I was part of the research process and that the analysis was my interpretation. However, I still wanted, and needed, to produce an analysis indicating some patterns, which others would consider valid. I started by reviewing existing books and articles but collected most of my information during two visits to Male, where I interviewed a few government and NGO staff as well as women in one neighbourhood, where I had good contacts, and which seemed to be an average-to low-income area.

I realised that my cultural background would influence the themes and questions I focused on and stated in my thesis that I tried to counter my Western bias by keeping an open mind to the subjects which women themselves brought up in our discussions and by focusing on what was different from my expectations. Reflecting on this today, I understand that 'trying to counter my Western bias' indicates that, to some degree, I believed I could be an objective observer who was not influencing the research process. Also, in later work situations I have found it difficult to move totally away from the assumption that it is possible to take a position as an objective observer or collector of information and views. The sociologist Norbert Elias suggests a distinction between being *involved* and being *detached*, emphasising that we always involve ourselves emotionally in social processes, but that a level of emotional self-restraint and distancing, that is, detachment, is possible. We are always involved and detached at the same time, but which of the two modes is most prominent differs according to context (1987, pp. lxviii–lxxii). I recognise this from work situations; I have felt emotionally much involved in conflictual situations, whereas my ability to be detached was higher in a research situation like in the Maldives.

I now return to recognition of diversity and agency within communities, as emphasised by Hastrup. In particular, I focus on these aspects in relation to gender.

Gender, diversity, and power

My interest in gender equality started in the 1980s when I was an active member of a development NGO focusing on poverty reduction and equal rights. I pursued this interest when joining an internal ministry working group on women in development and later during my studies in the early 1990s. Here I read articles and books by third-world feminists, Chandra T. Mohanty being one of them. She objects to the way Western authors, including feminists, often describe third-world women as a homogeneous and powerless group, for example, as victims of the colonial process, the economic development process, and the Islamic code. According to Mohanty, third-world women are often assumed to have similar problems, needs, interests, and goals as women living in Western countries. She argues, instead, that women are produced through the relations and communities they are part of, as well as involved in forming the same relations and communities (1991, pp. 56–59). Reading third-world feminists made me recall generalisations I had encountered in my work, for example, statements that improved water supply and sanitation would be of particular benefit to women, children, and other vulnerable groups, implicitly assuming that women are a homogeneous, vulnerable, and often powerless group. I started objecting to such generalisations and searched for examples of how women are active participants and

not passive victims. This is clearly illustrated in women's involvement in the Indian social movement, Chipko. My fellow students' and my review of articles and books showed that women became the most active participants in the protests against large commercial companies' felling of trees. Also, there were conflicts between women and men, where men had accepted the commercial tree felling due to job and other promises, while women protested because the tree felling had implications for their livelihoods and workloads.

For the analysis of the Chipko movement, my fellow students and I relied mainly on the discourse analysis as formulated by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who are often described as post-Marxists. They reject that class struggle is necessarily the most important antagonism in society and argue that each society has several discourses based on a variety of cultural, economic, and other relations. For them, a discourse exists only when it is articulated (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1990). My fellow students and I also referred to Michel Foucault, an influential scholar especially on debates about power. At the time, we did not explore Foucault's theories in much detail, but my limited reading raised my curiosity, and I returned to Foucault's theories for my MSc thesis.

My thesis was an analysis of the seemingly major changes in family networks and gender relations in the Maldivian capital from the 1970s to 1993. Foucault's and third-world feminists' theories about power and identity (e.g., Foucault, 1978; Mohanty, 1991) were important parts of my analytical framework. Foucault's understanding of power as existing everywhere, as inherent in all forms of relations (1978, pp. 92–93) was an eye-opener for me. Earlier I had mainly seen power as possessed by institutions, for example, when implementing laws and regulations, by countries more influential than other countries, and by individuals like organisational leaders. Reading Foucault and interpretations of his theories, such as Dag Heede (1992) and Paul Rabinow (1991, pp. 3–29), gave me a broader understanding of power as also existing in everyday interactions between women and men, between women, and between various groups. Furthermore, seeing power as being exercised as actions in response to other actions (Foucault, 1982, p. 220) means that people are not passive victims, but are likely to use different strategies to strengthen or maintain their position, depending on how they expect others to act or react. Foucault's definition of power thus illuminated for me how women, and men, are active participants in different relations, for example, in connection with the Chipko movement and when Maldivian women of different ages and social groups were struggling to find their roles and identities within the modern family.

Conflicts and emotions

A few months after leaving the ministry, that is, in the early 1990s, I was employed by one of the large consulting engineering companies in Denmark, ABI. I am still with the same company, where I have always focused on international assignments within the water and sanitation sector.

Five to six years into my employment with ABI, I moved to a country in Asia. After assisting with the development of a national rural water supply and sanitation strategy, my company won a tender to support the pilot implementation of the same strategy. The organisational set-up was complex. Our client was an international development agency, with the involvement of staff from its local office and its head office. The development agency had employed four international advisors (referred to as advisors below) directly to provide management support, while our contract was for a team of international consultants within different professional fields, with me as the team leader. The advisors, who arrived a couple of months before me, employed—together with their local counterparts (referred to as directors below)—local programme staff. These three 'groups' worked together to provide advice and support to local organisations at the central level, in four pilot provinces, and their districts. Most local staff were full-time in the individual provinces, while international staff provided advice on a part-time basis. In addition to acting as the consultants' team leader, I provided advice on management issues, community-level communication and decision-making.

At the start of the programme, the division of tasks between the advisors and me as the consultants' team leader was far from clear. For one of my first meetings with the central-level director and advisor, I brought the detailed activity and staff schedules we had prepared as part of our tender. However, the advisor and the director responded that they would much rather discuss the slightly updated national strategy. I agreed and waited one to two weeks before again suggesting we review the activity and staff schedules, but this kept being postponed. We had a consultancy contract to fulfil, and I feared the development agency would blame us for lack of progress if my colleagues' arrivals were further delayed. I tried a different approach and drafted brief terms of reference (ToR) for a couple of colleagues, and the directors and advisors accepted these. At the first planning meeting between the advisors and me, one of the advisors suggested that, in the future, the advisors and the local directors should together prepare the brief ToR for my colleagues. They were in the same locations, so this made sense to me and they took over my initial task. This was also the meeting where I first perceived the male advisors as being quite dominating and as wanting to lead the process. They talked more than anyone else, and I

felt they often interrupted the female advisor (three of the advisors were men, and one was a woman) and me. After the meeting, the female advisor and I looked at each other and found a quiet place to talk. We had met before in x province where she was based and had had open discussions of how to plan activities there. Now, we shared our frustrations about the interruptions and our lack of confidence in voicing our views more clearly. Like me, the female advisor was younger and had less experience than the other advisors. After the meeting, I reminded the central-level advisor, Adam, who would coordinate the preparation of my colleagues' ToR, that I needed these soon, but nothing happened.

Shortly afterwards, there was an attempt to move me out of the central-level office. Adam told me that he and the chief advisor had discussed that we consultants did not need to do much work at the central level; we had to focus on the pilot provinces. This included me—there was no need for me to support work at the central level, so it would be best if I moved to one of the provinces, and if I could do this within the next week, it would be even better. I was shocked, started trembling, and protested that I did not agree; there was a need for me to assist with central-level activities and overall coordination—and, according to our consultancy agreement, my base was in the capital. Adam explained that the national strategy had been adjusted and there was now more focus on a few pilot provinces, so this made it even more important that the consultants spend most of their working time in the provinces. He added that, without doubt, the director and the female advisor in x province would welcome me, and he knew I enjoyed working there. The latter was correct. The director was supportive of community-level activities and approved sufficient budget for our activities. Furthermore, he and the female advisor had involved me in recruitment of programme staff, and I felt included as a full member of this team, more so than of the teams in the other locations. However, I believed my work at the central level was important and was afraid of losing influence, if I moved. Also, I enjoyed living in the capital and the cultural and other activities it had to offer, and so did my husband. I phoned the female advisor, but she had not heard about the proposed move. I sensed she sympathised with my arguments for not moving, and I felt a sense of relief. I was aware she was unable to influence the situation, but the conversation strengthened my determination to fight the proposed move. I wrote an e-mail to my head of department in Denmark. He supported me in wanting to remain based at the central level, confirmed this was in accordance with our consultancy contract and suggested I talk to staff in the local office of the development agency. If necessary, he would also talk to the staff at the development agency's head office. I followed his advice and considered contacting the head of the local office, whom I knew from previous work, but decided not to. I was concerned this might offend the responsible officer. Instead, I met with the latter, explained the difficulties my colleagues and I had faced, and described the attempt

to move my base to the provinces. I sensed the officer was sympathetic to my difficulties and my arguments for remaining based at the central level, but also that he would rather not involve himself in the conflict. When leaving the development agency, I was uncertain about what would happen next.

The project office atmosphere was tense over the coming weeks, but there was no further discussion of me moving to the provinces. Eventually, an employee from the development agency's head office, Benny, stepped in. He held separate meetings with the advisor, Adam, and me, and later we all met at the development agency's local office. Benny was clear that he wanted solutions. After what I felt was a long discussion, Benny concluded that the consultancy team did have a role in connection with central-level activities and that Adam and I had to agree on how best to move forward. After the meeting, Adam was eager for the two of us to discuss it over a cup of coffee. He apologised for his behaviour, saying he had been sick and emphasising he wanted us to find better ways of working together. I had been nervous before the meeting, fearing that Benny and other participants might question my team leader skills and was now relieved. I reacted cautiously to Adam's apology and suggestion, wondering if he was sincere. Both Adam and I were tired after the meeting, so we only had a brief discussion but agreed to continue the next day. We had many discussions over the following days and concluded that I should again facilitate the preparation of ToR for my colleagues and, on my suggestion, I moved to the same office as my local colleagues. A few months later, Adam suggested that the programme employ a local administrator to assist me.

I felt I had won a struggle and had strengthened my influence within the programme. This had affected me emotionally, where I had often felt frustrated, powerless, shocked, and angry and had become uncertain about my own skills and views. I experienced it as a power struggle, sensing that some of the advisors had tried to undermine my position, especially by 'proposing' that I should move to one of the provinces. Earlier in the ministry, I had lost my struggle to make the rules more flexible and gain new rights, but this had not affected me emotionally in the same way as the conflicts with the advisors. On reflection, I see a tentative pattern in that my emotions were stronger when the struggle was for social esteem than when it was against long-established rules and for new rights for a group. In the latter struggle, I was able to be more detached, perhaps because it did not involve any major surprises for me—I knew the existing rules.

I suggest that Norbert Elias's understanding of power as moves in a game (1978, pp. 71–103) is useful in getting a better understanding of what was going on. Elias emphasises that players in a game are

dependent on each other and that each player will make moves in attempts to strengthen her/his position in relation to the other players. Both Adam and I tried to strengthen our positions by using various strategies in response to each other's moves. For example, Adam's 'proposal' to move my base to the provinces was what prompted me to discuss the issue with the responsible development agency officer. Before this, I had contacted both the female advisor and my head of department to gain support and allies in my struggle. Similarly, Adam's eagerness to discuss the issue informally after the meeting can be interpreted as a strategic move, with him recognising that the power relations and the relative 'strength' between us had changed in my favour.

In their study of a small community, Winston Parva in England, Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson (1994) relate power to inclusion/exclusion from two distinct groups, illuminating how differentials in the degree of internal cohesion, collective identification, and internal control can be important for power relations between groups. In Winston Parva, members of the established group spoke of themselves as 'we' and of the outsiders (i.e., the newcomers) as 'they'. At the beginning of our programme, there was a tendency among both advisors and consultants to speak about the consultant group and the advisor group, with the consultant group being more dependent on the advisor group than vice versa. There were, however, several other groups or teams within the programme. I thus felt accepted as an equal member of the team in x province, consisting of the director, his staff, the female advisor and local programme staff, whereas it had been difficult to negotiate my way into the central-level team, where I initially felt excluded from many discussions. My struggle had been both to strengthen my influence within the programme and be accepted as an equal member of the central-level team.

Values

In the section above, I reflect on my conflicts with other expatriates during the initial months of a programme. However, throughout the programme, my main interactions were with directors and staff in local organisations and our local programme staff.

Many local organisations gradually paid more attention to community-level communication and decision making, in line with the national strategy. There were, however, exceptions. A study conducted in the fourth year of the programme found that many household latrines constructed in remote, ethnic minority villages were not used. The provincial director had signed a contract with a local contractor to construct composting latrines in these villages, without giving village women and men a choice between

different types of latrines and without asking if they would use composting latrines. Subsequent discussions indicated that the main reason for the unused latrines was a strong reluctance among villagers to use composted human faeces as fertiliser on their fields.

I discussed the situation with my local colleagues, who shared my indignation and frustration, both because the villagers had not been consulted and because they, my colleagues, had not been asked for advice. The director had an authoritarian management style, and my local colleagues were afraid of him and did not want to discuss the incident directly with him. They were also concerned that if I discussed it with him, their working relations with him would be negatively affected. This put me in a dilemma. I felt strongly I should discuss the happenings directly with the director but, at the same time, did not want to jeopardise my local colleagues' working situation. In the end, I left the discussion with the director to the chief advisor, while my local colleagues and I focused on identifying potential ways of avoiding a similar future situation.

I was upset and felt guilty that this had happened and have grappled to make sense of my reactions. Generally, it was accepted as part of the 'learning process' that key principles of the national strategy were not strictly followed, as long as it did not involve the misuse of funds. This particular incident might be on the borderline of involving the misuse of funds, but this was not what upset me most or made me feel guilty. Rather, on reflection, I believe my reaction was linked to the violation of values that were important to me and a strong feeling that I (together with my colleagues) should have been able to detect this problem much earlier, so no or fewer families might have been affected. I was particularly upset because the incident involved poor ethnic minority families, who often experienced discrimination in several ways. The country had many ethnic minority groups and, according to human rights organisations, several of these experienced discrimination and suppression, including in this particular province. This was also my impression from talking inter alia with my local colleagues, though most were very cautious on the subject.

Mead's theory of cult values is helpful here (Mead, 1923; Stacey and Mowles, 2016, pp. 390–393). According to Mead, cult values are idealisations around a collective, which can be, for example, an organisation or a particular discourse. Individuals who belong to such a collective experience a sense of enlarged personality, meaning they derive their value as persons from the collective. I was and am part of the international development discourse, particularly that promoted by the government and non-governmental organisations in Denmark and other like-minded countries. Cult values here include

equality, respect for diversity, and community participation/consultation. These values appear as idealisations, which most people would find good and non-problematic, but difficult to implement directly in practice. As highlighted by Mead, idealisations need to be functionalised in everyday interactions between people. Such functionalisation will often involve compromises due to competing values, conflicting priorities, and/or barriers such as the lack of funds or staff resources.

Coming back to the latrine incident, there had been many discussions between local organisations, particularly their directors, and programme staff, about the key principles of the national strategy. The question is, however, whether these key principles (idealisations) had been functionalised to consider potential competing values and conflicting priorities of the provincial director. This question might be particularly relevant because of the multi-cultural dimension of the programme. I and other international staff had grown up with the values inherent in the mentioned key principles, whereas community participation/consultation and respect for diversity were probably relatively new principles for the director and his staff. The country had a one-party and relatively authoritarian administrative system with a high degree of control where reaching construction targets was essential. There is also a power dimension in that the programme funding came from the international development agency and the director might not have wanted to question openly the idealised key principles and the suggestions of how to functionalise them. He had used his position of power to sign the contract with the contractor and to exclude the ethnic minority families from the decision-making process, whereas his dependency on international funding might earlier have silenced him in the process of functionalising the key principles.

I have often reflected on this incident. At the time, it seemed to me that the values of respect for diversity and community participation/consultation were of critical importance. It made me, however, also uncertain whether generally I paid enough attention to the value commitments of others, their frames of reference, and the potential compromises involved in implementing general principles in a particular situation. Furthermore, over recent years, I have started to question whether it is always possible for us to express and discuss divergent views in a process of functionalising what Mead refers to as cult values or idealisations.

Being a social scientist among engineers

I work in a consulting engineering company, and most of my colleagues have engineering or natural science backgrounds, with only a few other social scientists in the company. A few years into my employment, together with a colleague, I initiated the establishment of a socio-economic group in the international part of our company. The group aimed at strengthening our position within the company and at experience and knowledge sharing, helping each other with suggestions if members felt stuck. The group dissolved a few years later, when several members had left the company. Since then, the number of social scientists in the company has reduced further. Although my work with local socio-economists has included much mutual experience sharing and learning, this has focused on a particular country and project. In recent years, I sometimes find myself professionally isolated at the company head office.

The international market has changed in recent years and the company's international water and sanitation assignments now focus more on design and construction supervision, that is, the engineering part of the sector, than they did say 10 years ago. We still conduct preparatory studies, where social and institutional assessments are important, but they are not of the same size as the large engineering projects. This market change has influenced my position or status within the department. There is still a need for my professional knowledge and skills, and I feel recognised for this. There is also an acknowledgement that interdisciplinary teamwork is important. However, as many assignments have an engineering focus, engineers are the preferred project managers, and there is less scope for me to use my project management experience. Although I acknowledge the reasons behind this, I have been frustrated when occasionally experiencing myself as excluded from new project management tasks. The frustration has been in relation to internal company decisions, but also to tendering of new assignments, where the external evaluation criteria stipulate that the project manager be an engineer, although most of the tasks listed relate to social, institutional, and financial aspects. The recent changes in the international consultancy market within the water and sanitation sector have thus influenced the roles of, and relations between, social scientists and engineers and thereby also shaped me and the work I do today.

Summary and emerging themes

Beginning in my childhood and teenage years, I would characterise myself as a determined, dedicated, and at times stubborn person, valuing the freedom to decide or influence the direction to take. Recognition for myself and others and struggles to achieve that recognition appear to be a crosscutting theme in my life. I have struggled against rigid rules and for official recognition of particular educational competences and international development expertise. In the initial months of an international water and sanitation programme, I struggled for recognition of my management role within the programme and for inclusion as an equal member of a team. I experienced it as a power struggle in which others tried to undermine my position and exclude me from important discussions. Due to a recent international market change, involving an increased focus on technical aspects, I have also occasionally experienced myself as excluded from new project management tasks and struggled to find myself a niche in this market.

Influenced by the international development discourse, I attach much importance to equality, respect for diversity and community participation/consultation. Using Mead's terminology, I have come to see these values as idealisations that need to be functionalised in a process where, in my experience, not all views might be expressed or heard. One example is that leaders and staff in local organisations dependent on funding from international agencies might not want to question openly these agencies' idealised principles and requirements or their suggestions of how to functionalise them.

The emerging themes I see for my further research are related to power relations and struggles, processes of inclusion and exclusion as well as the compromises that might be involved, for example, in the functionalisation of values/idealisations. I am curious about what occurs in everyday interactions and struggles and what it is that makes me, and others, find a way to move on or not move on. Being a female social scientist, working in a multi-cultural and technically oriented environment, I am also interested in how different areas of expertise, gender, and nationality might influence power relations.

Project 2—Processes of compromise in everyday politics

Introduction

As indicated in Project 1, there are a myriad of interweaving power relations and struggles in international development work. Staff in development organisations and their local partner organisations formulate strategies and form alliances in negotiations around their future and ongoing projects. Power relations exist and might change between leaders of local organisations involved in a development programme. Similarly, there are power relations, struggles for influence, strategies, and alliances within and among local population groups. Consultants engaged to assist in preparing and implementing a development project are not only observers of these power struggles but also play their own roles. Furthermore, power dynamics exist within their own teams. The following narrative describes the evolving power relations within a team of international and national consultants and our processes of compromise in our daily interactions.

Narrative—socio-economic surveys

The events in this narrative start in a large city in Asia, where my colleagues and I assisted the local authorities in preparing detailed master plans for improving the city's sanitary and drainage situation. We worked in a technically oriented environment where most staff involved, both from the local authorities and in our consultancy team, were engineers and technicians. At the same time, our contract highlighted that the master plans should address institutional and socio-economic issues as well as technical aspects.

The organisational set-up was that my international consulting company, ABI, had won this contract with the city's water supply and sewerage company (the Client), where an international financing institution (IFI) provided the funding through a loan and monitored progress together with the Client. ABI provided the international staff, and I was ABI's home office project manager, with the overall responsibility for the assignment. My colleague and senior engineer, Richard, acted as the team leader and reported to me. At the same time, I was his deputy team leader, with particular responsibility for institutional and socio-economic aspects. This was not a common management constellation within our company, but Richard and I had been colleagues for 25 years and knew each other well. A local engineering company was engaged as our sub-consultant, and its director, Masud, reported to Richard

and me. Masud was to provide the local staff, pay local expenses, and take care of local project logistics. He employed a local socio-economist, Shirina, and a local engineer, Hasan, both of whom appear in this narrative.

I met Masud on my first day in the project city. When he entered the room, I had just been around to greet all project staff and now stood in a corner, talking with several of our engineers. I recall that Masud was dressed in long, loose clothing, which was typical for devout Muslim men. I extended my hand to shake hands with Masud—as he had just done with all the male engineers—and was taken back when I heard him say that he did not shake hands with a woman. Having worked in Muslim countries for a number of years, I was well aware of this norm and respected it. However, at that very moment, I was surprised and felt excluded in the silence that followed his remark. I experienced the silence as awkward and had the impression, from their facial expressions, that some of my colleagues did as well. I also felt embarrassed that I had not foreseen Masud's reaction. This was one of the few times I met Masud. He was based in his head office in the capital and rarely came to our project city, so most of our communication was through e-mails and telephone conversations.

Our project tasks included socio-economic surveys, where data collectors had to ask potentially sensitive questions related to illegal disposal of waste and people's ability and willingness to pay a higher fee for improved services. I worked closely with my two local colleagues, Shirina and Hasan, to prepare the questionnaire and methodology for the first survey. Shirina was an experienced socio-economist, and from the moment we met, I had confidence in her capabilities. We got on well and soon established a close working relationship. Shirina was an outspoken person, which was unusual for a woman in her culture, and sometimes she openly disagreed with Masud. Hasan was an internationally highly respected specialist within his field of engineering and had good contacts within the IFI. He had been involved in similar surveys in other cities and was keen to share his knowledge. He was a busy person, however, and he could only stay in our project city for a few days at a time, which was not ideal for our teamwork.

The survey data collection was more than ticking off boxes in the questionnaire. Because of the many sensitive questions, it was essential that the data collectors have the social skills to establish good relations with the respondents. In another country, I had outsourced such surveys to a specialised survey company, and Shirina and Hasan agreed that a similar arrangement would be ideal for our surveys. I had a suspicion, though, that Masud would not be happy, as this would reduce his income

from the project. Also, the contract between our two companies did not indicate that outsourcing might be needed. Despite these doubts, I sent an e-mail to Masud with my suggestion, explaining my previous experience. When later discussing it on the phone, I sensed that Masud was irritated that we needed to discuss this issue. He made it clear that he totally disagreed, saying that his company had done similar surveys before and that his staff could certainly conduct this survey also. For me, outsourcing continued to be the ideal solution, but I was not surprised by Masud's reaction and felt it would be difficult for me to insist. Therefore, without much discussion, I accepted that we had to find another solution.

It turned out, however, that none of Masud's proposed survey staff had socio-economic backgrounds, and Shirina and I were not confident they would be capable of collecting good-quality data. Furthermore, Masud did not appear to have sufficient staff available at the time, and we were already behind schedule. After several e-mails and phone calls, Masud and I agreed on a compromise: Shirina would identify socio-economic university students to do the data collection. However, we also needed Masud's approval of the survey budget, which required many discussions. I recall thinking these would have been easier if we had been in the same location. Instead, we had to rely on e-mails and phone calls and often our phone connections were poor. Also, Masud talked like a waterfall; it was difficult to stop his flow of words and get him to listen to other views, which irritated me greatly. At the same time, I sensed, from Masud's tone, that he was annoyed that Shirina and I were so involved in these budget discussions. In my perception, his clear preference would have been to be in full control of the budget, as he was in connection with most other local expenses.

There were also conversations around the survey conflict, in which Masud did not take part. Some of these were between Richard and me, but most were between Shirina and me. Shirina often raised issues around her accommodation in the project city. Hasan and another senior local consultant had refused to stay in Masud's staff guesthouse and, instead, were accommodated in a small hotel. Masud insisted, however, that Shirina had to stay in the staff guesthouse, which in her description was of poor standard, crowded, and noisy. It was Shirina's clear impression that Masud wanted to save money wherever he could. This led us into some gossiping about how Masud tried to save money on the surveys, office supplies and how ridiculous it was that we wasted so much time on discussing budgets and survey teams when Masud could only save peanuts. We also talked about how Masud did not respect our knowledge and experience as socio-economists. We both considered it important that the situations and views of women and men from different socio-economic groups were explored in an appropriate way and felt that Masud did not recognise the importance of this or our expertise in this area.

A couple of months after starting the first socio-economic survey, we had to conduct a second survey, and the conflict between Masud and the socio-economic sub-team (Shirina, a student, and me) escalated. I informed Masud, in an e-mail, that Shirina had been happy with the socio-economic students conducting the first survey, so I warmly recommended that he should employ the same team again. However, it was clear to me from Masud's brief e-mail response that this was not his preference. He emphasised that the data collection should now be done by his permanent staff without involving inexperienced university students. I was frustrated and annoyed that we had to have this discussion again and also that in his e-mail Masud referred to having discussed the survey with Hasan, my local engineering colleague. At the time, I was in Denmark, so there was a good reason why Masud had not phoned me, but why had he not discussed the survey with Shirina, who had been much more involved than Hasan? Was he trying to form an alliance with Hasan to counter the influence of the socio-economists? These were some of my thoughts when I replied to his e-mail, repeating Shirina's and my recommendation to use the same survey team of socio-economic students. Later the same day, Shirina and I received an e-mail from our team leader, Richard, who was in our project city at the time. He had just had an angry Masud on the phone, insisting that his staff should conduct the survey. The staff had done a similar survey for a water supply project, where both Masud's and my company were involved, and these staff were not busy now so, Masud had told Richard, it would be cheaper for him to have them conduct the survey rather than employing university students. Richard strongly recommended utilising Masud's staff; in his view, it would not be a worthwhile fight to refuse this.

I was in my office in Denmark when reading this e-mail and felt my heart beating harder. Could this really be Richard's view? I knew that Richard had many other issues to deal with. As team leader, he was under pressure, as was I in my role of home-office project manager, from both the Client and the IFI. They had indicated they might want us to do far more engineering design work than we had budgeted for and, adding to this, our second survey was already delayed. Despite this, I was astonished and very upset that Richard did not appear to support me any longer in this survey struggle. I phoned Shirina to discuss what to do, checked the water supply questionnaire, which focused on technical issues, and told Richard that Shirina and I were still very concerned about the survey quality if the data were to be collected by Masud's technical staff. Not wanting to close down the negotiations, I highlighted, though, that I would be willing to review the CVs of Masud's proposed survey team. Richard conveyed all this to Masud.

Soon after, Richard left the project city for a long holiday, and I again took over the direct negotiations with Masud. I phoned Masud from my office in Denmark, still irritated that he was arguing his staff had the relevant experience, whereas I guess Masud perceived me as stubborn, irritating, and not respecting his knowledge as an experienced manager and engineer. Both Masud and I were polite and kept calm during the call. I emphasised that we were already delayed and needed the names and brief CVs of his proposed survey team within the next couple of days, which Masud promised to send. To my surprise, he also agreed it was important to have women in the survey team. He indicated, in his country, it worked best to have women interviewing other women. When putting down the phone, I wondered if there were misunderstandings in our communications. To my knowledge, Masud did not have any women among his permanent professional staff.

A few days later, I received an e-mail with the CVs of two of Masud's male engineers. I was close to losing my patience and told Masud in an e-mail that he needed to propose a team of 5-6 data collectors, including some women, adding that if we did not receive the brief CVs of all team members within the week, we would have to go back to our original proposal to hire socio-economic students. In the same e-mail, I highlighted two other outstanding issues, concluding that I would not be able to approve the next payment to his company before he had dealt with all three issues. It was unusual for me to resort to contractual threats, but my anger and frustration with Masud had built up over several months. I felt he did not respect Shirina's and my professional views as socio-economists nor the need for socio-economic expertise generally. After sending the e-mail, I was in real doubt as to whether it had been a good strategy to include the threat of not paying Masud's company. How would he react to this?

The reaction from Masud was a very angry e-mail to Richard, mentioning that Shirina and I were focusing too much on the survey team, while the survey questionnaire and methodology had actually been prepared by Hasan. Masud's company had conducted hundreds of socio-economic surveys and would also do this survey. Masud continued that his staff would provide the data tables to Hasan, who would use these for his report. He asked Richard to inform Shirina and me not to get involved in this second survey and referred to my contractual threat as rude and a statement that could only come from a team leader. Richard was still on holidays, but forwarded the e-mail to me, asking me to do what I could to solve the problems.

I was upset and angry that Masud wanted to dictate how to implement the survey. I was also annoyed that again he referred to my engineering colleague, Hasan, this time as responsible for the survey design

and data analysis. I had much respect for Hasan's expertise, but I had done most of the work on the survey design, and my socio-economic colleague would do most data analysis. At the same time, I reflected on the doubt I had experienced after sending the threat. Was Masud fully aware that, in addition to deputy team leader, I was also the home office project manager, with more formal authority than Richard? Had Masud felt that, with the threat, I did not recognise his role in the project and the interdependence between our two companies? However, frustration and anger were my strong emotions when, shortly after reading the e-mail, I talked to a close colleague, Frederik. He was not involved in our project and had never met Masud, but we had earlier talked about the conflict and my strong emotions around it. I started by airing my frustrations and anger in a brief e-mail to Frederik, indicating that I really felt like pulling out of the project. Later the same day, Frederik and I talked about how stupid the situation was, what my next moves could be, Richard's role in the conflict, my feeling that social aspects were being marginalised in the many technical discussions, and my strong emotions. This conversation illuminated my level of frustration, although I knew I was too stubborn to give up that easily.

The e-mail correspondence between Masud and me continued over the coming weeks. None of us referred to my threat nor to Masud's strong reactions to it. For the data collector positions, Masud submitted CVs of young university graduates, who had socio-economic or related educations and half of them were women, but they had no survey experience. Shirina and I accepted them and also that two of Masud's engineers would act as supervisors, while I insisted that Shirina would do the training and be the overall supervisor. Otherwise, Shirina and I were not involved in determining the budget for the second survey. Masud accepted my conditions and suggested that the other outstanding issues, one of which was payment to Shirina, would be dealt with when Richard was back from his holidays. To my relief, Shirina agreed to this, and finally, we could start the second survey.

The experience of everyday politics

The narrative above describes struggles between consultants involved in a particular development project, our different intentions and the clashes between us, the strategies we used to try to get what we wanted but also how, despite our strong disagreements, we managed to find ways to continue our work. It is clear from the narrative that work is not only about outcomes or deliverables but also about everyday politics when we negotiate how to move on. At first, it might appear that we were just stubborn, but for me, there was clearly more to the conflicts than stubbornness. I am curious what our

struggles were really about, what influenced the moves I and others made, and the different alliances we formed or tried to form. I am also wondering how we managed to move on, instead of ending up in a deadlock. Our negotiations appear to have involved compromises, but what did compromise entail for us?

The above are the main areas and questions I want to explore in the following. To do this, I indicate first some main tendencies in international development work and thereafter draw on writers within international development literature who appear to be potentially relevant, to see whether and how they might shed light on my puzzles and uncertainties.

International development literature

Although critique has been raised in the international development literature of linear models and approaches, such as, for example, the logical framework approach briefly described in Project 1, most development work continues to be dominated by such models and approaches, with a focus on results and value for money (Maclay, 2015, pp. 42–44). The assumption behind these is that it is possible to predict and control what will happen in the future. One example is the importance the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs attaches to a results framework, which 'provides the logic explanation for how the engagement(s) of a programme or a project will achieve the defined objectives through the hierarchy of planned results' (2017, p. 5). Furthermore, in the monitoring of development goals and interventions, the focus is on quantification, an illustrative example of which is the 230 indicators used for monitoring the achievements of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the United Nations (Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, 2016). Although these linear frameworks might sometimes be applied flexibly, the extensive use of them and of quantitative indicators leads to simplifications, in my experience, where everyday politics, with negotiations, alliances, and compromises between the many actors involved in an intervention, are insufficiently considered.

There is, however, a small group of authors who have written about politics, and lack of attention to politics, in international development work, and I will now turn to four of these authors.

Depoliticization of development work

I find support in the American anthropologist James Ferguson's book, *The Anti-Politics Machine.* *"Development", Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (1994), for my argument that international development work is not only about outcomes and deliverables but also involves politics, both of an everyday and a more formal nature.

In his introductory chapter, Ferguson is critical of the tendency among political economists to impute an economic function to development projects, which they primarily see as a device for the transition to a modern economy, and also of their tendency to assume that a structure rationally 'represents' a set of 'objective interests'. Instead, Ferguson argues, structures are multi-layered and often contradictory, with economic functions and interests located within structures that people might not even be aware of (1994, pp. 14–17). This critique forms the background for Ferguson's analysis of the international development apparatus of a development project in Lesotho. He gives a detailed account of the project conceptualisation, highlighting that the IFIs funding the project tended to ignore the political character of government organisations and to downplay political conflicts (1994, p. 72). He observes that everyday politics is also absent in the description of the project's target population, who mainly appear as an undifferentiated mass. Impediments to development of the economy end up being treated as technical problems, such as the lack of roads, markets, training, and credit, whereas political aspects disappear from analyses (1994, p. 66). Also, in Ferguson's perception, project staff tended not to understand, or to ignore, the political and power implications of their proposed reforms.

In my experience, Ferguson makes an important point, which is valid today. Although more political issues, such as the inclusion of ethnic minority and gender aspects, are now incorporated in many development projects, I believe there continues to be a tendency to overlook the everyday politics of local residents and the power relations between and within organisations or groups. As mentioned earlier, development agencies also still focus on linear models and quantitative targets, but, as Ferguson's analysis illustrates so well, it is impossible to predict the agendas and interactions of different groups and the way in which both everyday politics and more formal politics influence the outcomes of interventions.

I disagree, however, with Ferguson's tendency to portray the development project systemically by seeing the project organisation as a uniform 'whole', as if there are no differences and disagreements

among project staff. He describes political struggles between the project and government organisations and the daily politics of local residents, but he misses out on some of the complexity by not at least acknowledging the power relations and everyday politics that are bound to have existed between the many staff working in the project's eight divisions and 65 programmes. As the interactions between Masud, Shirina, Hasan, Richard, and myself show, project staff are part of the development apparatus, and our conflicts and compromises influenced how project activities were implemented.

In summary, I find that Ferguson offers strong arguments for the influence of politics within development work. He does not, however, go far enough, when missing out on some of the complexity by not paying attention to the everyday struggles and conflicts within development organisations, which is the focus of my narrative.

The economist Mushtaq H. Khan is another writer who, since the 1990s, has highlighted the importance of politics in international development.

Political settlements

Starting in the 1990s, Khan has developed the political settlements approach, which he describes in detail in a research paper (2010). According to this, a political settlement emerges when the institutional structure and the distribution of power within a society interact until a compatible combination emerges, where a minimum of economic outcomes and political stability are achieved. Institutions and the distribution of power in a society are described as an interdependent system in which institutions create economic benefits that contribute to the holding power of different groups, while powerful groups are likely to drive the evolution of institutions to achieve the benefits they desire (2010, pp. 21–22). The effects of different political settlements are described in terms of trade-offs between economic growth and political stability, illustrated through graphs. Khan classifies political settlements into four types, with all developing countries having clientelist political settlements. These are divided into four variants, the strengths and weaknesses of which Khan illustrates through several matrices, which he applies as his analytical framework to several case study countries (2010, p. 1).

The political settlement approach has an interesting focus on the interdependence between institutions and the distribution of power among different groups and pays some attention to history and changes over time. I disagree, however, with Khan on four main points. Firstly, his approach offers a structural

perspective of politics (Behuria, Buur and Gray, 2017, p. 522), which neglects the relations and interactions between people from/within institutions and population groups and disregards that people might belong to more than one group. Secondly, economic growth and benefits are at the centre of the analysis, which does not appear to recognise that economic aspects might not be the only aspects that matter to people. Thirdly, the assessment that all developing countries have the same type of political settlements, though with some variants, disregards the differences in the historical, cultural, and political situation between many so-called developing countries. Lastly, while other writers see Khan's classifications and variants as a good basis for construing informed hypotheses (Behuria, Buur and Gray, 2017, p. 524), there is a high risk, in my view, that these will be used to simplify the existing political situation and to predict future political developments.

I turn now to an author, who—in contrast to Ferguson and Khan—focuses on development professionals and their everyday practices and relationships. This is the British anthropologist David Mosse and the book he has edited *Adventures in Aidland. The Anthropology of Professional International Development* (2011a).

Development expertise

Mosse takes up some of the themes that I have identified in my narrative, such as power relations and compromises, and refers to the work of development professionals as

> the messy, practical, emotion-laden work of dealing with contingency, compromise, improvisation, rule-bending, adjustment, producing viable data, making things work, and meeting delivery targets and spending budgets. In doing so, they have to negotiate national identity, race, age or gender (2011a, p. 16).

Referring to ethnographic studies, he explains that development professionals often experience an awkward tension between the 'real' world, as described in the quotation above, and having to maintain their professional modes of thought and identities. The latter refers to having to work within global frameworks and models, which are presented as being universally applicable, meaning that, according to Mosse, development professionals are 'required to deny context, contingency, compromise, even their own agency, and to suppress the relational' (2011a, p. 21). Mosse highlights the tendencies

towards self-disciplining among professionals in attempts to minimise their individual risks (2011a, pp. 9–10), the effect of which is that the global models and frameworks are maintained.

I recognise the tension, to which Mosse refers, between having to work in accordance with general IFI policies and the everyday interactions with local authorities, community leaders, and within teams of consultants. My narrative describes such everyday interactions within a team of local and international consultants, our different viewpoints, and negotiations. We had to comply with the IFI's general policies and requirements, but our contract was also clear in that we had to pay attention to the local context, inter alia by conducting socio-economic surveys. Although I recognise the tension Mosse points to, I disagree with the dichotomy he presents between, on the one hand, a global development discourse, according to which development professionals are required to deny context and compromise and, on the other, the messy everyday situation in which we as development professionals find ourselves. In my experience, development work is more complex and fluid than Mosse implies. As my narrative illustrates, the everyday interactions between our team of consultants were not only influenced by general IFI requirements but also by our different professional and cultural backgrounds, by our differing intentions, and the context in which we worked.

The fourth author I bring in is the French anthropologist, Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, who offers, in my view, more nuanced perspectives than Ferguson, Khan, and Mosse on the interactions between the different actors involved in development work.

Development work as an arena

In his book, *Anthropology and Development. Understanding Contemporary Social Change* (2005), Olivier de Sardan highlights how development literature tends to resort to simplifications, overgeneralisations, and stereotypes (2005, p. 82), which means that differences and the dynamics in interactions between people disappear. He provides an illustrative example of how a development project is not a coherent entity based on technical rationality but rather influenced by, among others, the project organisation, which has its specific constraints, hierarchy, and adaptations (2005, p. 141). Olivier de Sardan raises a related criticism of what he refers to as the dominant meta-ideology of development, where most interventions are based on the altruist paradigm and/or the modernist paradigm. These paradigms partially overshadow that development is also both a market and an arena.

> It is a market in which goods, services and careers are put into circulation … It is a question of 'selling' projects, slogans, policies, hardware, software, careers … But it is also an *arena*. Various social actors, situated on the same stage, vie with each other for stakes of power, influence, prestige, celebrity and control (2005, p.71, emphasis in original).

Olivier de Sardan's focus on micro-interactions between various actors illuminates to me the complex and dynamic nature of development work, which remains unrecognised in much development literature. My narrative is about the micro-interactions between a team of consultants involved in a particular development project and, to me, it is helpful to see the latter as an arena, where particularly Masud, Shirina, and I, but also other actors, struggled for influence and for finding a way to continue our work in the midst of time pressure to have the survey results as soon as possible. Olivier de Sardan's understanding of development as an arena for everyday interactions between the many actors involved supports my view of the struggle described in my narrative as a dynamic and complex process. Part of our strategies was thus to form different alliances, some of which were permanent (between Shirina and me), while others appeared temporary (between Richard and Masud). Our strategies also involved conversations and gossip between a few of us.

Olivier de Sardan's examples focus on different population groups and less on the interactions between development professionals, which is at the centre of my narrative. Despite our different foci, I find Olivier de Sardan's attention to micro-interactions and power relations helpful in relation to my narrative. To me, his arguments have similarities with the perspectives on power offered by the German sociologist Norbert Elias, whose theory I touched upon in my Project 1. I am taken by Elias's understanding of power relations as linked to interdependencies and processes of inclusion/exclusion and find these linkages illuminating in my attempts to understand what is going on in my narrative.

Power as relations

Elias uses the metaphor of a game to illustrate power relations and dynamics between people, as does Olivier de Sardan (2005, p. 185), but describes it in more detail than Olivier de Sardan. I will first explain this metaphor before returning to my narrative and the relations within our team of consultants.

Power relations as a game

Elias uses the image of people playing a game, such as chess and football (1978, pp. 71–103), to explain how people interact and form figurations of interdependencies. As he highlights, and as Olivier de Sardan would agree, power is not a thing possessed by some people. Instead, power relations, and attempts to strengthen one's position in relation to others, form an integral element of all human relationships. In all games, players are interdependent as they have functions for each other and are, therefore, in positions to constrain—and enable—each other. The potential to withhold something from others is, however, often unevenly distributed. In other words, the relative strength of each player or person varies as highlighted by Elias:

> In so far as we are more dependent on others than they are on us, more directed by others than they are by us, they have power over us, whether we have become dependent on them by their use of naked force or by our need to be loved, our need for money, healing, status, a career, or simply for excitement (1978, p. 93).

The player who appears to have the relatively greater strength in a game not only has a higher degree of control over his opponent but also a higher control over, or rather influence on, the rules of the game and, therefore, on the result. However, as emphasised by Elias, power differentials in a game, and in everyday life, are not static but rather develop as a dynamic process as players make their moves. The outcomes of a game can thus not be predicted. As Elias explains:

> [F]rom the interweaving of countless individual interests and intentions—whether tending in the same direction or in the divergent and hostile directions—something comes into being that was planned and intended by none of these individuals, yet has emerged nevertheless from their intentions and actions. And really this is the whole secret of social figurations, their compelling dynamics, their structural regularities, their process character and their development (2000, p. 312).

Furthermore, no single player nor group of players can determine the course of the game, irrespective of how powerful they may be (1978, p. 147).

As mentioned earlier, I see some similarities between Olivier de Sardan's and Elias's understanding of power as relations and as linked to interdependencies between people and groups. What makes Elias's theory stand out as different, and special, for me is the way in which he uses the metaphor of a game to explain these interdependencies, the interweaving of interests and intentions and the dynamics of social figurations. Using the metaphor, or analogy, of a game allows us to express the dynamic and often strategic character of our interactions and illustrates that we cannot undo our gestures or moves but have to find a way to respond, to make the next move.

I return now to my narrative to explore how Elias's perspectives, and to some extent those of Olivier de Sardan, might shed some light on the interweaving of power relations within our team.

Power relations in my narrative

For this particular assignment, Masud's company acted as the sub-consultant to ABI, my company, and ABI and I, as the deputy team leader and home office project manager, appeared, therefore, to have the relatively greater strength in our relations. I had, for example, the formal authority to withhold payment to Masud's company. However, Masud had important functions in the project in that he was to provide all local staff, pay local expenses, and take care of local project logistics. There was, therefore, clearly an interdependence between Masud and me. There were also power relations and an interdependence between Shirina and me in that, for this project, I had the overall responsibility for socio-economic tasks but was dependent on Shirina for implementing most of them. Likewise, there were power relations between Shirina and Masud in that Shirina was employed by Masud and was dependent on him for her salary, while Masud was aware that he had to provide a well-qualified local socio-economist. There were also power relations and interdependencies between Richard and me, as he was the team leader, while I was the home office project manager and deputy team leader.

Using Elias's and Olivier de Sardan's metaphor of a game illuminates for me how Masud, Shirina, Richard, and I made strategic moves to strengthen our positions, but also made compromises in order to move forward. It was not a static situation, where the relative strength between us was established once and for all, but rather a fluctuating game, where we adjusted our strategies and our attempts at creating alliances.

Particularly, it strikes me that Richard played an important intermediary role in the negotiations around the second survey, whereas he had hardly been involved in the first survey negotiations. Probably, the relations between Masud and me/Shirina were somewhat strained after the first survey and, furthermore, Masud had a new situation where his technical staff did not have much work. My perception was that Masud believed he might gain the support from Richard, whereas he expected, and rightly so, that it would be difficult to convince Shirina and me that his technical staff should conduct the second survey. Masud's apparent attempt to create an alliance with Richard succeeded initially when Richard strongly recommended utilising Masud's technical staff. However, to me, this was a temporary alliance, as alliances with Richard appeared to be fluid and shifting, with both Masud and me talking and e-mailing privately with him in attempts to gain his support. This situation was different from the more permanent alliance I formed with Shirina, which lasted throughout the survey conflict and continued in our later struggles with Masud.

What may appear unusual is that some of our alliances were across partner organisations, where Shirina and Masud were from the same organisation and Richard and I from the same organisation. My close working relationship with Shirina and the priority we both attached to community consultations were an important background for our alliance. Women and men from different socio-economic groups were expected to benefit from the technologies proposed by our project, and we both found it important that their different situations and views were explored in an appropriate way. I believe the private conversations and gossip between Shirina and me played an important role in the forming and upholding of our alliance, which is a topic I return to later in this project. Masud was not able to uphold his alliance with Richard, perhaps because they had different intentions with their temporary alliance. Building on Masud's statements that it would be cheapest for him to have his unoccupied staff conduct the survey, it is my perception that Masud's strategies were mainly influenced by his responsibility to find work for his technical staff, thereby ensuring their continued employment and an income for his company. The irritation I sensed in Masud's voice during our discussions indicated, however, that he might also have fought for recognition of his long experience as a manager. Hasan appeared to be reluctant to involve himself in the survey conflict and did not appear to join any of the alliances. He might not have found this a worthwhile struggle, but there could be several other reasons that account for his reluctance to get involved.

My moves in the game were shaped, furthermore, by my emotions which were at times contradictory, pulling me in different directions. An illustrative example of this is the time when I issued the threat to

withhold the next payment to Masud's company. I had fears that the threat would lead to a stalemate in the conflict, but at the same time, I felt both anger and frustration, which had built up over several months. These feelings of fear, anger, and frustration were battling against each other. In the end, my anger got the upper hand, and I sent the threat.

To summarise, I see the conflict as a dynamic process where it was never possible to predict the outcome. We had different intentions with our struggles and formed alliances across partner organisations. In addition, my moves were formed by a tussle between my different, sometimes contradictory, emotions and I expect the same was the case for Masud, Shirina, Richard, and others involved.

To me, the power relations described in my narrative involved processes of inclusion and exclusion, influenced by the composition of our team, which had a vast majority of men with technical backgrounds, while the three socio-economists (Shirina, a student, and me) were the only female staff. With many of the discussions in our project office focusing on technical details, I (and probably Shirina) sometimes felt excluded. In other work situations, I have had similar feelings of being excluded from conversations and influence, as some of the narratives in Project 1 illustrate, and I am puzzled what these processes are about.

Processes of inclusion and exclusion

I focus first on Elias's theory about power as related to inclusion and exclusion from groups, before again returning to my narrative.

The established and the outsiders

How Elias writes about inclusion and exclusion makes it clear that we can understand these relationships only when we have a sense of their history and details about how people interact. The study conducted by Elias and Scotson (1994) in a small community, which they call Winston Parva, in England is an example of this. The study, which was conducted over several years around 1960, illustrates the dynamics of inclusion in and exclusion from two distinct groups, the established who had lived in their settlement for two to three generations and the outsiders who, as newcomers, lived in an adjacent area. There were no patterns of differences in nationality, ethnicity, occupation, income, and

educational levels of the two groups. The men worked in the same factories, and the children went to the same schools, but otherwise, there was not much social contact between the two groups. Families of the established group used gossip to stigmatise the newcomers, for example, that they did not maintain their houses and had poorly behaving children. In contrast to the newcomers, the established families had a high degree of internal cohesion and social control, which appeared to be powerful weapons for them to stigmatise and exclude the newcomers from, for example, membership and leading positions in the many local associations. The polarisation between the groups was clear from the way the established group spoke of themselves as a heroic 'we' and the outsiders as a derogatory 'them'.

Returning to my narrative, I find it beneficial to compare with Elias and Scotson's study, in my attempt to understand what was going on in the processes of exclusion and inclusion that I experienced. How did this feeling of exclusion evolve, and what was specific about the processes?

Socio-economic and technical aspects

We were a large project team, divided into several informal sub-teams, including a technical drainage sub-team, a technical sanitation sub-team, a socio-economic sub-team, and so forth. The latter consisted of the project's only female staff, Shirina, a student, and me, whereas the technical teams had three to four times as many staff. In our conversations with local authorities and within the project team, there was more discussion of technical details than of socio-economic issues and viewpoints. This indicates that the technical sub-teams were more influential and powerful than the socio-economic sub-team. However, it was not a polarised situation, like the one Elias and Scotson found in Winston Parva, as members of our different sub-teams did listen to, discuss, and help each other. Masud was not involved in the day-to-day project implementation and was, therefore, not a direct member of any of the sub-teams. However, I perceived his interest to be in the technical aspects of the project, being an engineer himself. It seemed to me that he preferred to talk to the project engineers, such as Hasan and Richard, rather than to Shirina and me. There might be several reasons for this, such as Hasan and Richard possibly having other ways of working than Shirina and me. I interpret Masud's apparent preference, however, as being mainly influenced by his technical background and possibly by local gender norms, as I will explain later.

I felt that Masud was trying to exclude the socio-economic sub-team from influence when he referred to having discussed the socio-economic survey design with our engineering colleague, Hasan and later when indicating he wanted the socio-economic sub-team excluded from the second survey. On reflection, I wonder whether Masud's experience might be that the socio-economic sub-team wanted to exclude him from the survey management, a role that he and his senior staff had had in other projects.

Although it was not a polarised situation, technical aspects and expertise had a dominant position within project discussions and activities, which is characteristic of many water and sanitation development projects. In their book *Anthropology and Development. Culture, Morality and Politics in a Globalised World* (2013), the two anthropologist researchers, Emma Crewe and Richard Axelby, argue that technology dominance is common for much development work:

> Science, and its application through technology, have been treated as being the bedrock of progress. If low levels of development are identified by the presence of poverty, hunger or disease, then certain forms of scientific knowledge and advanced technology can symbolically represent a higher level of development. They are also a large part of the means by which it may be achieved; science has been seen as synonymous with, or at least required for, technological advancement and human progress (2013, p. 131).

Also, the introduction of new technology might benefit some population groups more than others, for example men more than women or wealthier families more than the poor. In my experience, social scientists have an important role in researching the situations and views of local population groups and thereby contribute to making plans and technologies, like those proposed for our project city, locally appropriate (Crewe and Axelby, 2013, p. 145). I believe this was the main motivation for both Shirina and me to continue our struggle for the inclusion of socio-economic viewpoints.

Above, I have discussed processes of exclusion and inclusion in my narrative around socio-economic and technical aspects. We three were the only women in the project team, which makes me wonder whether and how gender might also have played a role in the way we included and excluded each other in groupings and discussions. Furthermore, our team consisted of both local and international consultants, so the question is whether and how nationality might also have been important.

Gender and nationality

There was a clear gender disparity in the project team, where only 10% of all project staff were women. I believe this gender disparity mattered in our discussions with local authorities about gender equality issues, for example, that only 8% of the water and sewerage company's staff were women and none of them in management positions. At times, these discussions appeared hypocritical in view of the significant gender disparity within our own project team, which became very noticeable at workshops. Did gender matter in the communication within the project team and with Masud? I find it difficult to assess this, as gender was so entangled with socio-economic/technical aspects, with all female staff belonging to the socio-economic sub-team. However, in my first meeting with Masud, local gender norms mattered. I had a feeling of being excluded from the group of men around me in what I experienced as an awkward silence following Masud's remark that he did not shake hands with a woman. I sensed that gender norms played into the relations between Masud and Shirina in another, more important, way. She was more outspoken than most women within her culture and had openly disagreed with Masud, for example, around her employment conditions, which appeared to clash with his norms of how local women should behave. At the start of her employment, he had also asked Shirina why she wanted to work in our project city, indicating that this was not the right type of work for a Muslim woman.

As mentioned, our team consisted of both local and international consultants. In some development literature, international staff are portrayed as the more influential group and local staff as often being marginalised or excluded from influence. In my particular narrative, however, there were alliances across nationalities, some permanent (Shirina and me) and some temporary (Richard and Masud), and it was not my experience that Masud, Shirina, or Hasan were excluded from discussions and influence because they were local consultants. Masud might, though, have had another perception of this, especially because nationality was interwoven with the contractual arrangement, where Masud's local company acted as the sub-consultant to Richard's and my international company. Nationality might also have been important due to the different working cultures in our two countries. Generally, in the project country, decisions tended to be made at top management level, whereas in Denmark, decision-making was—and is—often delegated to managers and staff at a lower level of the organisational hierarchy. Richard and I were thus able to make important project-related decisions on behalf of our company, whereas Masud had not delegated such authority to any of his project staff. I am uncertain how this and other differences in our working cultures might have played into our processes of

excluding and including each other and do not here have the space to explore cultural aspects in further detail.

To me, particularly expertise areas (socio-economic/technical) and gender appear as important in the processes of inclusion and exclusion evolving in my narrative, but in a fluid and changeable rather than a predictable way. I still wonder what role gossip and private or hidden conversations might have played in the survey conflict and in our processes of including and excluding each other.

Gossip and hidden conversations

I find Elias and Scotson's study in Winston Parva (1994) enlightening in relation to gossip. Their study shows that members of the established group used gossip to stigmatise the newcomers and strengthen their own internal cohesion and social control, thereby excluding the newcomers from, for example, membership and leading positions in the many local associations. Gossip was thus an important weapon for the established group to create and maintain an image of 'us' versus 'them'. Reflecting on it now, I can see that, through our private conversations, Shirina and I also created an image of 'us' versus 'them'. This image was sometimes of the female socio-economic sub-team versus the male technical sub-teams, but it was also an us/them image of the socio-economic sub-team versus Masud and his senior administrator. In Winston Parva, gossip appeared to be used mainly or only by the more powerful group to exclude the less powerful (as well as to keep the members of the dominant group in line), whereas in my narrative, it is the apparently less powerful group, the socio-economic sub-team, that used gossip, although the other groups might have done the same without my knowledge.

The use of gossip by the less powerful groups, as well as by the more powerful groups, is what the American political scientist and anthropologist James Scott writes about in his exploration of hidden and public transcripts in situations of dominance and resistance (1990). I want to emphasise that I see no contradiction in the way Elias and Scotson write about the use of gossip and the way Scott writes about hidden transcripts. Rather, they are complementary as their analyses are of different situations and contexts. Scott uses the expression 'public transcript' to describe the open interaction between subordinates and the more powerful, that is, what they can say and do openly. For Scott, a 'hidden transcript' is what particularly subordinates express among themselves, behind the backs of the more powerful, although the more powerful also have their hidden transcripts. As the term indicates, a hidden transcript excludes—or in other words is hidden from—certain other persons. Scott emphasises

that the frontier between the public and the hidden transcripts is not a solid wall, but a zone of constant struggle between different groups (1990, p. 14), which resonates with my experience. A hidden transcript can be made public, either intentionally or unintentionally. I did not have any hidden conversations where I discussed whether to issue a threat of withholding Masud's next payment, so in that sense, it was not a hidden transcript being made public. I am sure, though, that my threat was influenced by the hidden conversations that Shirina and I had had around the survey conflict.

I find Scott's analysis helpful in understanding public and hidden aspects of the power dynamics between Masud, Shirina, Richard, and me, although most of Scott's examples are of extremely polarised situations, with clearly dominant and subordinate groups such as slaves and their masters, squires and their tenants, and thereby different from the power relations appearing in my narrative. I find a lack, though, in Scott's examples of more in-depth context that might have revealed (more) differences and tensions within both the sub-ordinate and the dominant groups, which is a criticism also raised by Olivier de Sardan (2005, p. 81).

I sense that the hidden conversations and gossip between Shirina and me reinforced our alliance in our struggle for recognition of our viewpoints as social scientists, and for the inclusion of the views of different population groups, whereas I suggest that my hidden conversations with my colleague Frederik, in our head office in Denmark, played a different role. These conversations were not about forming or supporting alliances or primarily about gossiping (except that Frederik and I did talk about Richard who was a close colleague of both of us) but were rather important for me to reflect on the situation with more detachment. Frederik was not involved in the conflict, or in the project, although he might also have had his own 'agenda', as a close colleague of both Richard and me. I tried to explain and summarise the conflict, so it made sense to Frederik, and I believe this process and his questions in between, particularly those related to my emotions and my anticipation of Masud's reactions, made me reflect on other ways of understanding the situation. These discussions and my reflections did not mean that I became an objective observer. I was still very much involved in the conflict, also emotionally, but experienced myself as able to see additional angles and to imagine better what Masud's and Richard's perspectives might be. Throughout the conflict I was both involved and detached at the same time, as suggested by Elias (1987, pp. lxviii–lxxii), but I sense that the extent of my detachment increased following my hidden conversations with Frederik.

The public and hidden conversations around the survey conflict took place in different ways. Some were face-to-face, some by telephone, and many through e-mails. I have grappled to try to understand what influence it might have had on our interactions that many of our conversations were by e-mail. Similar to other conversations, I suggest it makes sense to distinguish between public and hidden e-mails. Public e-mails are those shared with all involved and which it would be legitimate, that is, acceptable, for all, to share with others later, while hidden e-mails are between a restricted number of persons and not considered acceptable to share openly with everyone. I see a risk in our increased reliance on e-mails in that not everyone involved in an exchange of e-mails might have the same interpretation of their status, that is, whether they can be freely shared with everyone or not. There is also the risk that the relations between people might change and some might decide to use (old) e-mails in a strategic way by sharing them with people not originally involved in the hidden conversation. Interactions through e-mails differ from face-to-face communication in that e-mails are documented word-by-word, are often stored, and can be reused. My experience is that most often e-mails are shared intentionally, but sometimes also inadvertently, particularly when new people are copied into a trail of e-mail correspondence. E-mails might thus start as being part of hidden transcripts but be made public, for example during or after a conflictual situation has ended.

Most e-mails between Masud and me were public, in the sense that Shirina and Richard were copied on these and we could all talk openly about their contents. I did not, though, copy Shirina on the e-mail containing my threat to withhold Masud's next payment nor did I tell her about it. Masud employed Shirina, and I did not want her to refer to the threat, either intentionally or by a slip of the tongue when she talked to other staff in Masud's company. There were also e-mails between Richard and me that I did not want copied or forwarded to Masud, that is, I wanted these to remain in the hidden transcript, and I tried to make this very clear in the headings or elsewhere in the e-mail texts. Similarly, there were e-mails to Frederik and other close colleagues that I did not want other colleagues or Masud to see.

Related to the survey conflict, I can think of only one hidden e-mail that was made public or semi-public, namely the e-mail which Masud sent to Richard with his strong reaction to my threat to withhold his next payment. Masud had not copied me on this e-mail, but Richard forwarded it to me, but without copying Masud on his forwarding e-mail, which is the reason why I refer to it as semi-public. I am uncertain, though, whether Richard ever discussed Masud's angry e-mail with him, but I believe he did not, as Richard was on holidays at the time and Masud and I had found a way to move on before Richard was back. To me, this e-mail is an example that there is no solid wall between hidden and public

transcripts, as suggested by Scott. I believe the e-mail, which to me appeared as hidden and public at the same time, influenced the later interactions between Masud and me, without knowing exactly how. The reaction having been documented in an e-mail meant that Richard could forward the exact wording to me and, I believe, having the exact wording had a stronger impact on me than if Richard had narrated a verbal or written reaction from Masud.

My hidden conversations and gossiping with Shirina, Richard, and Frederik influenced my public negotiations with Masud; my hidden conversations or gossiping with Shirina did so by strengthening our alliance, the 'us' versus 'them' perception, and my hidden conversations with Frederik by helping me reflect on the situation with more detachment, which influenced my next moves. I suggest that hidden transcripts/conversations often play a role in everyday struggles within organisations and that there is a complex interweaving of public and hidden conversations. I find support for this argument in Ralph Stacey's and Chris Mowles' reference to legitimate and shadow themes in organisations (2016, pp. 422–427), which has many similarities to Scott's distinction between public and hidden transcripts. Illustrated through examples, such as narratives around equal opportunities, they conclude that there is often a complex interplay between shadow and legitimate themes in an organisation and that new themes, new meanings, can emerge in this interplay and, with them, the pattern of power relations might change.

I am still puzzled by how Masud, Shirina, and I managed to move on, instead of ending up in a deadlock. Masud and I (supported by Shirina) each had our preferred options of survey teams, and, in the narrative, I refer to ideal solutions, negotiations, compromise, and acceptance of each other's suggestions. All these processes appear to relate to compromise, but what did this entail?

Aspects of compromising

The Oxford English Dictionary defines compromise as i) an agreement or settlement of a dispute that is reached by each side making concessions or as ii) the expedient acceptance of standards that are lower than is desirable.[4] These definitions consider compromise as an agreement/settlement/acceptance, that is, as an outcome, but is this really what compromise is about? To me, compromise is (also) about processes of give-and-take in conversations, which might enable us to move on.

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[4] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/compromise, accessed on 2 July 2017.

Compromise as a process enabling us to move on

A Danish consultant and graduate of the DMan Programme, Iver Drabæk, has the following, to me persuasive, description of compromising:

> In a way, compromising is the way we discover, negotiate and, to some extent, make use of the constraints we continually encounter in all our day-to-day actions and interactions. What is called "compromising" is the process that enables us to move on rather than being blocked (2008, p. 78).

There were several instances, in which Masud and I might have ended up in a stalemate, for example, if I had insisted that the first survey needed to be outsourced to a specialised company or if Masud had insisted that his permanent technical staff, who were all men, should conduct the second survey. However, in our conversations, we found a way to move on, rather than being blocked. Drabæk goes on to say that sometimes we are aware of the compromises we are about to make, but often we experience them only through the process of acting and interacting with each other. I would go further than this and say that we can never predict our interactions with other people and, therefore, we cannot predict either what compromises we are about to make. Masud and I (supported by Shirina) had different intentions in our negotiations around the survey teams, and I would argue that we were not able to predict our next moves and whether the give-and-take in our communications would enable us to move on with the surveys. Despite this, I had some anticipations as to how Masud would respond to what I said or wrote in e-mails.

I find it helpful here to bring in the American pragmatist, George Herbert Mead, and his perspective on interactions between human beings (1934). He refers to the communicative interactions between human beings as a 'social act'. This is an ongoing, iterative process in which a gesture by one person evokes responses in others as well as similar responses in the person gesturing. He uses a dogfight to illustrate a simple conversation of gestures, where the gesture of one dog becomes the stimulus for the other dog to respond. If the first dog snarls and thereby indicates it is ready to attack the second dog this influences and possibly changes the attitude of the second dog from being friendly to indicating it will take up the fight. The response might be a counter snarl, which will, in turn, influence the attitude and response of the first dog and so forth.

A more complex conversation of gestures among human beings involves significant symbols, particularly where language is involved. Mead defines a significant symbol as a gesture that 'calls out in the individual making it the same attitude toward it (or toward its meaning) that it calls out in the other individuals participating with him in the given social act' (1934, p. 46). This means that, as human beings, we can be conscious of each other's attitudes, that is, each other's tendencies to act because it calls out a similar gesture in us. This consciousness, the anticipation of anticipation, enables us to take the attitudes of the other into account in our gestures towards each other. According to Mead, meaning arises in the conversation of significant symbols, that is, in a social process of communication between individuals. In other words, meaning is relational and emerges as we respond to each other (Shaw, 2002, p. 27). When I was communicating with Masud or Richard, I had a private conversation going on with myself, whereby I was trying to anticipate the responses my gestures would call out in them, although there was no guarantee that my anticipation would turn out to be correct. To me, anticipating the responses to our gestures might impose constraints on our communication, as I believe it did for Masud and me. When I phoned him to discuss his insistence that his technical staff should conduct the second survey, I did not reject his 'suggestion' outright. I feared doing so would have closed down our negotiations, and I did not want that. Masud might have had similar considerations when, in reaction to my threat of withholding payment, he chose to send his angry e-mail to Richard and not to me. Furthermore, I suggest that my hidden conversations with Frederik, which helped me to see new perspectives on the conflict and of Masud's strong reaction to my threat, influenced my subsequent anticipations of how Masud would respond to my gestures and thereby also my subsequent moves to avoid ending up in a stalemate.

In the negotiations around the surveys, I was also influenced by the time pressure we were under to have the survey results as soon as possible in order not to delay the project. It was important for my company, including for me as the home office project manager, and for Masud and his company, that the project was completed on time, enabling us to maintain good relations with, and receive payments from, our Client. I did not want other project staff or other colleagues at my home office to blame me for delays in the project because of a conflict, which they might see as trivial. I was not only trying to anticipate the response of Masud or Richard, but also the reactions of other project staff and other colleagues at the head office. In my view, Mead offers a compelling explication of the social regulation that takes place here. He explains this in terms of the 'generalized other', which is made up of significant symbols reflecting the generalised attitudes, or discourse, of a social group or community (Mead, 1934; Simpson, 2009, p. 1335). As Ralph Stacey and Douglas Griffin explain, it would be impossible for us to

take the particular attitudes of all those directly or indirectly engaged in a complex social act. Instead, we use our capacity as humans to generalise the attitudes of many.

> In acting in the present, each individual is then taking up the attitude of a few specific others and at the same time the attitude of this generalized other, the attitude of the group, the organization or the society. These wider, generalized attitudes are evolving historically and are always implicated in every human action (Stacey and Griffin, 2008, p. 8).

Reading Mead, as well as Stacey and Griffin, has made me reflect on how and why it matters to me what others might think and conclude. In my particular narrative, I sense it influenced my negotiations with Masud that I wanted to be recognised by the Client, within the project team, and by other colleagues at the home office, as both a capable project manager and an experienced social scientist.

In summary, I would highlight that the negotiations between Masud and me (supported by Shirina) entailed compromises, whereby we avoided a stalemate. Rather than outcomes, I see our compromises as a process where I had conversations with Masud and myself at the same time. The private conversations with myself involved anticipations of Masud's response to my gestures, but also anticipations of how others would respond if we reached a deadlock. I find support for this understanding of compromise as a process in Chris Mowles' proposal that social life consists of ruptures and accommodations, for us individually and between us and others. We have to adapt to others, and in the process of doing so, we make the necessary adaptations to ourselves (2015, p. 130).

Seeing compromise as a process where we adapt to others and make adaptations to ourselves makes me wonder whether and how compromise might be different from cooperation. Or is it rather that the negotiations between Masud and me involved processes of compromise and cooperation at the same time?

Compromise, cooperation, and ruptures

Drabæk (2008) highlights that it is common to understand compromise as a situation in which two parties get less than they originally wanted or as one person accepting something because what he/she wanted was unattainable. Drawing on the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating, which combines insights from mainly process sociology, social psychology, and the complexity sciences

(Griffin, 2002; Stacey, 2003, 2012; Stacey and Mowles, 2016), Drabæk argues that, instead, what we call compromise should be seen as interactions occurring in the living present 'where we act in the present on the basis of expectations for the future that arise in accounts of the past, all in the present' (2008, p. 80). He concludes that what we often refer to as compromising is equal to the ongoing negotiation and dialogue that we have with others.

It resonates with my experience that compromise emerges in our interactions with each other in the living present. To me, this is supported by Mead's argument that meaning arises in the conversation of significant symbols. In other words, meaning did not arise first in me, which I then transmitted to Masud, but rather in our process of gesturing and responding to each other (Mead, 1934; Stacey, 2012, p. 24). This process was influenced by Masud's and my pasts, that is, our histories, cultures, values, previous interactions with each other, and by our wishes and anticipations of the future. In line with Drabæk, I would argue that our compromising emerged in this meaning-making process in our negotiations.

I am grappling, however, to understand whether and how cooperation might come into the negotiations between Masud, me, and others. A common definition of cooperation is the action or process of working together to the same end,[5] and with both Masud and me wanting to move on with the survey (to avoid delays in project activities), we worked at least partially to the same end. It was not, however, a smooth process of cooperation, but rather a process where we had our strong disagreements but managed to move on. This might indicate that the negotiations between Masud and me involved processes of compromise and cooperation at the same time.

These processes of compromise and cooperation involved ruptures, which threatened to end with a breakdown in our relations. After negotiations and adaptations to each other's views, I issued a threat to withhold the next payment to Masud. My threat, and Masud's strong reaction, is an illustration that there is no going back, that we act and react in the living present. When first reading Masud's response, I probably regretted my threat, but I could not undo it. The threat was a rupture to our negotiations. However, Masud sent his strong e-mail reaction only to Richard, and not to me, and when Richard forwarded the e-mail to me, he did so without copying this forwarding e-mail to Masud. To me, Masud's e-mail reaction, therefore, appeared as hidden and public at the same time, which might have made it

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[5] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/cooperation, accessed on 11 November 2017.

easier for us to continue our process of adaptations to each other, or in other words of compromising, and cooperation.

Conclusion

My narrative describes everyday struggles and negotiations between consultants involved in a development project and how we managed to move on with our work, despite our strong disagreements. I have found it elucidating and refreshing here to reflect on Olivier de Sardan's suggestion to see development work as an arena for everyday interaction, struggles, and negotiations between the many actors involved in a development intervention. Similarly, my reading of Elias and his understanding of power as linked to interdependencies and processes of inclusion and exclusion has given me a higher awareness of the interweaving of intentions and the dynamic nature of everyday struggles and negotiations at work. Writing this project has made me pay more attention to the different intentions I and others might have, the alliances we form, some of which in my narrative seemed to be fluid, shifting, and across organisations, and to the interplay of public and hidden conversations.

In Project 1, I describe how I have sometimes experienced myself as excluded from discussions and influence in work situations and, in this project, I have explored processes of exclusion and inclusion further, which I detect, in my narrative, to be mainly around expertise areas (socio-economic/technical) and gender. As a female social scientist working in a technically oriented environment, I have experienced other situations in which I felt I had to struggle for recognition of my views as a social scientist and for the inclusion of the views of others. Such struggles have affected me emotionally, as they did in my narrative, and I still wonder why I sometimes react quite strongly.

I have also been, and am, puzzled by what it is that enables us to move on instead of ending up in a stalemate, in a situation like the one described in my narrative. In my attempts to understand this, I have drawn on Mead, who explains that we can be conscious of each other's tendencies to act and take this into account in our gestures towards each other. Such anticipations are in relation to others involved in a conversation, but often also in relation to the 'generalized other', that is, the group, the organisation, the society. I find this a persuasive explication of how we are constrained in our gesturing and responding to each other, which might enable us to move on instead of being blocked. In my narrative, our negotiations entailed compromise, whereby we avoided a stalemate and, in contrast to

the common understanding of compromise as an outcome, I see it as a process in which we adapt to each other, but I am wondering whether there can be processes of compromise and cooperation going on at the same time. My tentative argument is that there might have been such simultaneous processes in my narrative, but I am uncertain whether I also felt a sense of loss when my ideal solutions were not implemented.

In Project 3, I will continue exploring conflictual situations and processes of negotiation, with a focus on my private conversations with myself. I am curious why it might be that in some situations, which I experience as conflictual and which affect me emotionally, I speak up and in other such situations I do not. Might it entail compromise when I do not speak up in conflictual situations, where I might have contradictory feelings?

Project 3—Conflicting value commitments and compromise

Introduction

In Project 2, I explored the everyday struggle, negotiations, and evolving power relations within a team of consultants and our compromises, whereby we managed to move on with our work despite our strong disagreements. Writing Project 2 has given me insight into the interweaving of intentions and the dynamic nature of our everyday negotiations with each other, the alliances we form, and how compromise might emerge out of this process. I argue that compromise with others is not an outcome in a conflictual situation, as is the common understanding of compromise, but rather a process, during which we take our anticipated reactions of others into account in our gesturing and responding to each other. Compromise with others thus involves mutual adaptations to each other, whereby we find a way to move on instead of ending up in a stalemate.

In this Project, I turn to the conflicting feelings and negotiations we encounter in our private conversations with ourselves and the compromises that might emerge out of these private negotiations. The following narrative is from the start-up of a new international development project, where I experienced conflicting feelings and was torn between whether to speak up or remain silent.

Narrative—conflicting feelings

There was excitement in my company about a new contract, which we had won together with local companies in an Eastern European country, in which we had hardly worked before. The contract was for a sanitation improvement project funded by an international financing institution (IFI), which we knew well from similar projects in other countries, and we felt this new project would be a good opportunity to establish our company name in a new country. It was, however, also a complex project with work in several cities at the same time, and we had, therefore, put together a large multi-disciplinary team, consisting of both international and national consultants. As is often the case, in my experience, my international company held the contract with the IFI, while the national companies acted as sub-consultants to my company.

The following is about our introductory team meetings, which involved five international consultants and around 15 national consultants. The four international consultants who appear in this narrative, Frederik (the project team leader), Richard (senior engineer), Karen (senior social specialist), and I

(senior social specialist) were all employed by my company and had worked together for many years. None of us had met any of the consultants from the national companies, until Sasha, our national coordinator and deputy team leader, joined us at the main airport of the project country.

To my surprise, Sasha was a young engineer, only in his late 20's. My first impression was of an energetic manager, who was keen to share his knowledge. During our drive into the city, Sasha explained about the different city areas and their history. I appreciated this brief introduction to a country and a city, which I had not previously visited. We arrived at the offices of Sasha's company, where Sasha started explaining his discussions with the water and wastewater companies we would visit over the coming days. This brief introduction reinforced my impression of Sasha as a good organiser and a pleasant person to work with.

Soon it was time for our larger team meeting. After the initial introductions—explaining about ourselves and our work experience—Frederik, as the team leader, went on to introduce the main activities of this new project. Shortly after, Richard got up from his chair and pointed to the map on the wall, trying to locate our project cities. Some of the national consultants helped, and there was a brief discussion of the characteristics of each project city. The national consultants appeared hesitant, however, when Richard raised questions about the planned future city developments. This made Richard refer to his work in other Eastern European cities, which all had had development plans, and he was sure that our project cities would also have such plans. He went on to compare our current project with similar studies we had conducted in Central Asia.

I had found the initial discussion of our project cities beneficial, whereas Richard's generalisation about the planning approach in Eastern European countries and his comparison with Central Asia made my toes curl. I was embarrassed by what Richard had said and by his tone and also anxious that the national consultants might perceive Richard as talking on behalf of all international consultants. Richard reminded me of a patronising schoolmaster, 'talking down' to the listeners around him, without acknowledging the local context and knowledge, and this was certainly not the image I wanted the national consultants to have of me. As Richard was talking, I recalled an incident a few days earlier where, during a meeting in our home office in Denmark, Richard had given what I had perceived as a lecture on issues it would be important for the social and environmental sub-teams to investigate during this project. The lecture had both surprised me and made me furious because of the content as well as his tone. In my perception, Richard had talked as if he, as an engineer, knew better than the rest of us.

This made me react spontaneously, telling him, in the meeting, that I totally disagreed with some of his views, referring to my long experience as a social scientist on similar projects.

Back in the meeting in Sasha's office, I was still thinking of the incident in Denmark, when Sasha spoke up. It was clear from his voice that he was annoyed when he emphasised that his country should not be compared to Central Asia. It was part of Europe, actually in the centre of Europe, and it would be much more relevant to compare the situation in our project cities with that of other European cities. An awkward silence followed, widely shared, judging from people's facial expressions. For a brief moment, I wondered why Richard did not respond to Sasha with an apology. Instead, after some remarks about the location of our project country and the distance to other European countries, the conversation moved on to our plans for the coming days.

Sasha explained about his telephone conversations with the water and wastewater companies in our project cities and the questionnaire he and his team had sent them. I sensed from a couple of remarks from other engineers in the room that they considered the questionnaire an effective way of collecting technical data, while I felt a knot starting to tighten in my stomach. Based on our contract and our experience from similar projects, the different sub-teams had prepared lists of the main information needed within our respective professional areas. The idea with these lists, at least from my side, was to discuss them within and across our sub-teams and use them during each sub-team's interactions with the relevant city authorities. Sasha and his staff had, however, combined all the lists into a questionnaire and had asked the water and wastewater companies to respond to it, if possible before our visits. I had received the questionnaire while in Denmark and had been frustrated. My concerns were that, firstly, much of the social information would have to be obtained from organisations other than the water and wastewater companies to which the questionnaire had been sent. Secondly, many items on our list were of a qualitative nature and were best discussed during meetings. Furthermore, the social questions, which Sasha and his staff had included in the questionnaire, were from our preliminary list and were outdated. However, I had resigned myself to the fact that there was nothing I could do at the time. The questionnaire had already been distributed. Also, I had not communicated directly with Sasha before and did not want to start our working relationship by being critical when it would not change anything. Back in the introductory meeting, the way Sasha emphasised the importance of the questionnaire fuelled the frustration I had experienced while in Denmark.

In the meeting, Sasha went on to explain that he wanted to create a central database and that the engineers based in his office would monitor the data collection and upload data to the central database. This was how he had organised earlier project work and, in his experience, this had been effective. I felt an increasing tightening of the knot in my stomach, as Sasha introduced his plans, and an urge to respond that I disagreed with both the centralised database and the social part of the questionnaire.

Despite my urge to respond to Sasha's centralised approach, something held me back from disagreeing openly. Instead, I mentioned, in a low voice, that in my experience it was useful to discuss data within sub-teams, without having to upload them in a database, and that it would actually be difficult to store some social information in a database. I did not elaborate much on this but looked across the table at Frederik to see if he wanted to continue. He did, and we had a discussion of how best to communicate within and across sub-teams, without discussing Sasha's proposed central database, the monitoring role of his engineers, or the questionnaire.

While this discussion was going on, I was engaged in a private conversation with myself, where my experience was one of being pulled in different directions. I wanted to protest and explain that it would not be a good solution to have Sasha's engineers monitor the data collection and upload all data to a central database, that this would create an extra unnecessary layer and a bottleneck. Earlier in the meeting, I had expressed some concern about the central database, but not much, and my concerns had not been taken up by others. I now felt an urge to be more specific in my protest. Similarly, I wanted to explain the concerns I had about the social part of the questionnaire.

At the same time, I was influenced by the experience I had had of Richard earlier in the meeting. If I raised my concerns about the questionnaire and the central database, I feared that Sasha, and other national consultants, would perceive me as talking judgementally about a project approach which might often be used in their country and as being condescending towards them, my new colleagues. I had recognised Sasha's irritation and anger from my own reaction a few days earlier, where I had perceived Richard to be talking as if he, as an engineer, knew more about the requirements within the social and environmental fields than I and others specialised within these fields. I wanted to recognise Sasha and his team for the knowledge they had of the local situation.

I experienced these desires and feelings as contradictory and was engaged in a private negotiation with myself. I wanted to speak and not speak up at the same time. In the end, I remained silent. When I left

the meeting room, I still had the uncomfortable knot in my stomach, indicating that something was bothering me.

Over the coming days, I had several discussions with Frederik and Karen about Sasha's proposed central database and the monitoring role of his engineers. I explained why I found Sasha's centralised approach so problematic and discovered that the knot in my stomach started to dissolve as I spoke. In the end, we agreed to suggest a more decentralised approach, with the establishment of a project web. All national and international consultants should have access to this, and each sub-team would be responsible for uploading their information. When Frederik, as the team leader, brought this suggestion up in a later team meeting, Sasha first appeared concerned. However, after some discussion, he accepted the suggestion, though insisting that we should also have a central database, which his engineers would maintain. In my view, it could lead to confusion and lack of consistency to use the two approaches in parallel, but we all accepted this.

Within the social sub-team, which consisted of both national and international consultants, we discussed my concerns about the social part of the questionnaire. Our conclusion was that, since the questionnaire had already been distributed, it would not change anything to raise our concerns with Sasha. Instead, we would focus on collecting our information and the views of various organisations in other ways.

Initial reflections on narrative

My narrative revolves around my private conversations with myself and the conflicting feelings I experienced in these. When Sasha explained his centralised approach, it affected me emotionally, and I felt an urge to express my disagreement. However, at the same time, influenced by my experience of Richard earlier in the meeting, I was keen to respect Sasha's local knowledge and the local culture. The latter was probably one reason why I experienced it as impossible to find a way to speak up in this situation, but I suspect there were other reasons as well. I also remained silent when, earlier in the meeting, Richard talked in a generalising way, without acknowledging the local culture and knowledge. In my private conversations with myself, I totally disagreed with Richard's generalisations, but I did not feel the same urge to protest as I did when Sasha presented his centralised approach. Discussions with my learning set and the wider DMan community indicate that my experience involved double bind(s), meaning that I was forced to choose between two negative mutually exclusive alternatives, neither of

which felt like the right choice (Bateson, 1972, pp. 206–208). However, there was clearly a difference in my emotional reactions in the two situations where I had to make a choice, a difference that puzzles me.

Despite being potential double binds, I am perplexed why, in both situations, I chose not to speak up. What were the reasons for this choice of silence? Linked to this, I am wondering why generally I have a tendency to remain more silent than most, especially in large groups, and whether this is linked to processes of compromise. When Sasha presented his centralised approach, I experienced it not only as difficult to choose between the two alternatives, manifested in speaking up and remaining silent. I also experienced it as a loss and a compromise with myself when I chose to prioritise the alternative of respect for local knowledge and culture, manifested in remaining silent. I wonder what compromise with oneself entails and also whether, and how, this compromise might have played into the later compromise with Sasha and others on the project approach.

I take up these puzzles and questions in the following, after exploring what it entails to have private conversations with oneself. I do not see private conversations as involving only me, that is, as an individual process, but rather as also involving others and my relationships with them. The pragmatist George Herbert Mead (1934) offers a compelling explication of this process of gesture and response.

Private conversations as social and individual processes

As explained in Project 2, Mead writes about the conversation of gestures between human beings and how they involve significant symbols. The latter means that we can be conscious of each other's attitudes and tendencies to act because it calls out a similar gesture in us, and this consciousness enables us to take the attitudes of the other(s) into account in our gestures. We have such conversations with others and as private conversations with ourselves, as Mead explains:

> Only in terms of gestures as significant symbols is the existence of mind or intelligence possible; for only in terms of gestures which are significant symbols can thinking—which is simply an internalized or implicit conversation of the individual with himself by means of such gestures— take place (1934, p. 47).

Our mind, and thinking, is thus our private conversations with ourselves, with the gesturing and responding of a body to itself (Stacey, 2003, p. 62). Our private conversations with ourselves are

influenced by our interactions with others, our membership in various groups, and our anticipations of the reactions of others.

In his explication of conversations of gestures, including our private conversations with ourselves, Mead refers to the dialectic of the 'I' and the 'me', where the 'me' is our anticipation of the attitudes and reactions of others, while the 'I' is our more spontaneous sense of self (1934, pp. 174–175). This means that, before we say or do something, we imagine how others would react to particular statements and other actions, and these anticipations influence how we actually act. However, we might also surprise ourselves, as well as others, in the way we act and speak. It is not two separate processes of the 'I' and the 'me' in us. As Mead explains, they cannot be split, but they are not the same either:

> The "I" reacts to the self, which arises through the taking of the attitudes of others. Through taking those attitudes we have introduced the "me" and react to it as an "I". The simplest way of handling the problem would be in terms of memory. I talk to myself, and I remember what I said and perhaps the emotional content that went with it. The "I" of this moment is present in the "me" of the next moment. There again I cannot turn around quick enough to catch myself…It is because of the "I" that we say that we are never fully aware of what we are, that we surprise ourselves by our own action (1934, p. 174).

In other words, the 'I' and the 'me' exist in a dialectic with each other and are inseparable, which I find is a convincing way of elucidating how, paradoxically, we are formed by and at the same time forming the social, by which I mean our relations with others and with our selves. As Douglas Griffin has expressed it:

> Both the self and the social are the same process, with the only distinction being that the former is a private role play or silent conversation while the latter is a public "game" and vocal communication…There is only the human experience of interaction or relating (2002, p. 154).

I would add to this that the public 'game' is important for a person's sense of self. This is not simply located, or does not simply arise, within an individual but rather emerges in the relationship with other people (Stacey, 2003, p. 64). This means that my sense of self is not fixed but depends on the particular situation and other people involved in this. As Mead explains:

> Selves can only exist in definite relationships to other selves. No hard-and-fast line can be drawn between our own selves and the selves of others, since our own selves exist and enter as such into our experience only in so far as the selves of others exist and enter as such into our experience also (1934, p. 164).

This is also the case in our private conversations with ourselves.

In my narrative, I refer to what I experienced as a negotiation with myself, involving conflicting desires and feelings. I wanted to protest and explain why a centralised approach was not appropriate and, at the same time, I wanted to respect the local knowledge and culture. As elucidated by Mead in his I/me dialectic, this negotiation involved my anticipation of Sasha's reactions if I responded negatively to his centralised approach and my simultaneous desire to influence the project approach. Mead argues convincingly how the 'I' and the 'me' cannot be split, and similarly, my two desires were not separate. Rather, they were interwoven and forming each other, influenced by my past and my membership in various groups. Although this negotiation of how to act took place in my private conversation with myself, it was thus both a social and individual process, influenced by my relationships with others.

This leads me to what it might have been that affected me so much when I heard Sasha explain his centralised approach. What was so important to me?

Conflicting value commitments

I find it helpful here to bring in the German sociologist Hans Joas, who explains how we have strong emotions around our value commitments (2008, p. 90). Below I will, therefore, examine how theories about values might help me understand my reactions.

Emotions and values

Joas describes our commitments to values in this way:

> When we talk about values, a strong affectual dimension comes in…our commitment to these are different from our commitment to purely cognitive validity claims. We have to take seriously the fact that we cannot simply 'have' values as we may have opinions, but that we have to feel strongly committed to them if the word 'value commitment' is to make any sense (2008, p. 90).

He goes on to say, inspired by the American pragmatist William James, that our commitment to particular values is similar to our commitment to particular persons in our life, and often we find it difficult to explain why we feel so committed to particular values and to particular persons. I would add to this that sometimes our commitment to values are bound up with our commitment to others who share this commitment. Joas highlights that values are ideals, which attract us and give our life meaning (2000, p. 125), and as another American pragmatist John Dewey persuasively has characterised them:

> The idealizing imagination seizes upon the most precious things found in the climacteric moments of experience and projects them. We need no external criterion and guarantee for their goodness. They are had, they exist as good, and out of them we frame our ideal ends (1934, pp. 44–45).

In other words, values are not something we have, or own; it is rather that values own us. Although value commitments are voluntary, they can be conflicting with our other value commitments, and such conflicts often arise in social situations where we are asked to make choices (Mowles, 2011, p. 164). When reflecting on it afterwards, I wonder why I reacted so strongly to Sasha's centralised approach. Why did I not tell myself that Sasha has been brought up in a country with centralised planning and control, that this is only our first team meeting and that there is still time to negotiate the way in which we will work? However, as I recall it, I did not have such thoughts during the meeting.

Discussing my narrative with a colleague made me recall other incidents where I have been frustrated and been emotionally greatly affected. I sense that such emotions have often been provoked when, in my experience, others were imposing restrictions on me or placing me in a particular 'box' or category without consulting me first. As mentioned in Project 1, I would characterise myself as a person valuing the freedom to influence the direction to take, which I see as a value commitment originating in my childhood and teenage years. On reflection, I believe that my strong bodily reaction to Sasha's centralised approach, with the increasingly tight knot in my stomach, was because, in my perception, Sasha was imposing restrictions on my—and other consultants'—ability to influence the project approach.

I want to emphasise that I do not see the situation as a dichotomy between the body and the mind, or between our emotions as bodily phenomena and our thoughts as disembodied processes, which has

been a common dichotomy in the Western world since it was proposed by the French philosopher, René Descartes, in the 17th century (Burkitt, 2014, p. 79). Instead, as Burkitt explains, our emotions and our thoughts are interwoven, are historically and culturally specific, and influence the way we act. Feelings and emotions thus depend on habits developed in the past, along with the values that are important to us in a particular situation (2014, p. 59). It is also important to highlight that I do not see value commitments as fixed and stable. As emphasised by Dewey, 'the standard of valuation is formed in the process of practical judgment or valuation. It is not something taken from outside and applied within it' (1916, p. 238). In other words, we do not have a fixed standard or ideal, which we apply in our assessments or decisions. It is rather that such standards or value commitments are formed and adjusted in a process of relations between others and me, and in my private conversations with myself.

In my narrative, I refer to how, when feeling an urge to respond to Sasha's centralised approach, I wanted to respect his local knowledge and the local culture. My embarrassment when Richard made his generalisations indicates how important respect for the local culture and local knowledge was to me. I see this as linked to what I earlier described as my commitment to values of respect for diversity and community participation (Project 1) and the importance I attach to community consultations and the inclusion of the views of different population groups (Project 2). Sasha and the other national consultants did not live in the project cities and were, therefore, not representatives of beneficiaries, who should be consulted before project investments, but to me, their local knowledge and views were still essential. I believe it also played into my contradictory value commitments that I had only just met my future national colleagues and did not want to start our working relationship by appearing critical.

Although I was embarrassed when Richard gave what I experienced as a generalising lecture and in my private conversations with myself disagreed with him, I was not in doubt about how to react publicly. I did not want, during our very first team meeting, to appear disloyal to a long-term colleague and signal disagreement among the international consultants, all from the same company. In my interpretation, I did not here have to choose between two value commitments, but rather experienced myself as compelled to follow norms about loyalty and group coherence, that is, when it is experienced as socially acceptable to disagree publicly and when it is not. Whereas values are ideals that give our life meaning, norms are experienced as obligatory and constraining and, thereby, as restricting opportunities for action (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 394). Our norms and value commitments are interrelated and influence each other; they play into our decisions about how to act and react in particular situations. In

my reaction to Richard's generalisations, it was the restrictive norms that were the more influential, although I was clearly embarrassed by Richard's generalisations.

What did these conflicting feelings, value commitments, and norms mean for my reactions? Why was it that I experienced myself as so torn in my private conversations with myself, between whether to speak or not speak up when Sasha explained his centralised approach? In the following, I explore whether and how this conflictual situation, as well as my experience of Richard's generalisations, might have involved a double bind.

Double binds

The British anthropologist Gregory Bateson is the most well-known author to have written about double binds, mainly in relation to schizophrenia. Bateson, who was heavily influenced by cybernetics systems theory (Griffin, 2002, pp. 45–46; Gibney, 2006, p. 49), defines a double bind as a situation in which, irrespective of what a person does, she/he cannot win (1972, p. 201). He goes on to characterise a double bind situation as involving two negative mutually exclusive alternatives, which are at different levels of abstraction. It is a situation in which people are forced to choose between the two alternatives, which might produce distress and anxiety because neither choice is experienced as the right one, and it often feels impossible to comment on the conflicting alternatives (1972, pp. 206–208).

Although Bateson's theory of double bind focuses on people suffering from schizophrenia, he acknowledges that other people also experience double-bind situations. The way in which Bateson's theory has been taken up by several authors writing about organisational issues is another indication that his theory has wider relevance than for schizophrenia. Two of these authors are Max Visser and Beatrice van der Heiden (2015) who, after briefly commenting on 22 definitions of double binds, propose to return to Bateson's original conceptualisation in their exploration of how inconsistent organisational conditions affect employee outcomes. Chris Mowles is another author who refers to Bateson's theory as important in the elucidation of double binds in organisations (2015, p. 14). An example of a double bind in an organisational context, as mentioned by Mowles, is that employees are invited to believe in the vision of their organisation and align with its values, and at the same time, they are encouraged to be their authentic selves and speak up, even when they disagree. These two requirements are often experienced as mutually exclusive, with the consequence that, whatever actions employees take, they feel it is not the right one.

A double bind is different from a dilemma. The latter is a situation where we have to choose between two or more alternatives, and this choice might be difficult, but the alternatives are not necessarily negative. In contrast to this, in a double-bind situation the two alternatives are always negative and mutually exclusive (Mowles, 2015, pp. 13–14). A double bind is also different from a paradox. The latter is a situation in which two opposite ideas exist at the same time and thereby produce an absurdity, that is, something that is against common sense. In a paradoxical situation, there are 'two, mutually exclusive, self-referencing ideas which help define each other but negate each other both at the same time' (Mowles, 2015, p. 13). A double bind and a dilemma are both about choosing between two alternatives, whereas a paradox is about self-referencing ideas that absurdly exist at the same time.

I find that Bateson offers a convincing explication of a double bind. His emphasis that we have to choose and that it is experienced as impossible to comment on the conflicting messages or situation, resonates with my experience. Like Mowles (2015, p. 14), I am, however, critical of the systemic assumptions in Bateson's theory when he states that the two mutually exclusive alternatives are at different levels of abstraction. Human beings are not systems that consist of levels or interact at different levels. Rather, we are selves who are, paradoxically, formed by and at the same time forming the social. In my understanding, double binds arise in the interactions between people influenced by the different groups to which we belong, our value commitments, ethical considerations, and so forth.

Bateson's theory of double bind offers a persuasive explanation of why, in my private conversation with myself, I experienced it as so difficult to choose between protesting against Sasha's centralised approach (i.e., speaking up) and respecting Sasha's local knowledge and the local culture (not speaking up). I had to choose between these two alternatives, and irrespective of which alternative I chose, it would have negative connotations for me. In this situation, I had to choose between two values that I was, and am, committed to. Not all double binds involve conflicting value commitments, for example, consider the joke about a mother who gives her son two ties and, when he puts one on, asks him what is wrong with the other one. However, when a double bind is a choice between two value commitments, we are often, or perhaps always I would argue, greatly emotionally affected. In my private conversation with myself during the introductory meeting, my experience was one of being pulled in different directions. In the end, I chose the alternative of not speaking up, with the cost that I lost an opportunity to influence the project approach. The uncomfortable knot in my stomach at the end of the meeting indicates that my choice affected me emotionally, in a negative way.

Earlier in the meeting, when Richard gave what I experienced as a generalising lecture, I also had to choose between two alternatives, manifested in speaking and not speaking up. In this case, I was influenced by restrictive norms around loyalty and group coherence when I chose not to speak up. In hindsight, I realised that the potential negative consequence of this choice was that Sasha and the other national consultants might have the impression that I agreed with Richard's generalising lecture, an impression which I did not want them to have. I have tended to interpret the situation as one of a double bind having negative connotations irrespective of whether I chose to speak up or remain silent. However, this was not my experience in the moment. Although in my private conversations with myself, I disagreed with Richard's generalisations, I did not feel an urge to protest as I did when Sasha presented his centralised approach. I would say that, at the time, I was not conscious of the negative consequences that my choice of silence might have and, therefore, did not experience the situation as involving a double bind.

The two situations were interlinked, however, in the sense that Richard's generalising lecture—and not speaking up against it—reinforced my wish later of not appearing to talk judgementally about local planning approaches. As the German sociologist Norbert Elias (1978, 2000; Elias and Scotson, 1994) highlights, our history and our past interactions influence how we act and react to what others say or do. Through my past actions, that is, by remaining silent in the first situation, I participated in creating a double-bind situation. This was not, however, an individual process where I created a double bind for myself, but rather a relational process. I argue that double binds emerge in our interactions with others and in our private conversations with ourselves, which involve anticipations of how others will react to our gestures.

My understanding of conflictual situations, such as conflicting value commitments and double binds, is very different from the claims of orthodox management literature that organisational conflicts can be managed through a variety of tools and techniques (Mowles, 2015, p. 120). The organisational scholar, M. Afzalur Rahim (2002), is one of the authors who writes within this tradition. He argues that conflict management should 'minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and enhancing [sic] the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness in an organization' (2002, p. 208). His recommended management strategy is to i) minimise affective conflicts, which involve inconsistent relationships, incompatible feelings, and emotions, ii) attain or maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict in relation to task or content issues, and iii) deal with conflicts by selecting one or

several of the following styles: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. Rahim goes on to list in which situations the different styles are appropriate. Interventions and styles to be applied should, according to Rahim, be determined based on a comprehensive diagnosis using inter alia a questionnaire to measure the amount and type of conflict at different levels. To me, Rahim's recommendations indicate that, in his view, it is possible for managers to stand outside conflicts in their organisations, determine whether a particular conflict is dysfunctional or functional and whether it should be minimised or attained by using one or several of the five styles of conflict management outlined above. This perspective is in stark contrast to my understanding of conflicts between human beings as dynamic, context-specific, and relational. Conflicts thus emerge out of changing relationships, I argue, and involve value commitments, feelings, emotions, and power relations, which cannot be managed through standardised tools or conflict management styles.

I will briefly return to the concept of double bind. My introduction to this concept was when I presented an outline of my Project 3 narrative to DMan students and supervisors during one of our quarterly residential weekends. This presentation was followed by several discussions, which were in plenum, in my learning set (3 other students and my first supervisor) and with other supervisors and students. Some indicated that my experience might have involved double bind(s), which later during the weekend led to discussions as to why I had chosen the alternative of not speaking up. One suggestion was that it might be helpful, in a similar future situation involving a double bind, to find an opening and make some general comments, although this would not remove the experience of a double bind. As my learning set pointed out, if in the introductory meeting in Eastern Europe I had made a general comment on centralised approaches, it might have made it easier for me to discuss my specific concerns directly with Sasha later. In her research on contradictions and double binds experienced by prison employees, the organisational scholar Sarah J. Tracy (2004, p. 142) reaches a similar conclusion. Although her research takes place in a completely different setting to mine, her argument resonates with me, that is, that denial of contradictions or double binds might exacerbate our experience of them, but that commenting and/or discussions might provide us with alternative avenues. This was not what I did in the introductory meeting, but it was discussions with Frederik and Karen that later enabled me to move out of a situation in which I experienced myself as stuck. During these discussions, I explained why I found Sasha's centralised approach so problematic; we discussed several options and, in the end, suggested an alternative solution.

In summary, values are ideals, which give our life meaning and involve emotions. Our value commitments, which, importantly, are not fixed and stable, can be conflicting with other value commitments, as they were for me when I heard Sasha explain his centralised approach. Having to choose between two conflicting value commitments might often put us in a double-bind situation, where neither choice feels like the right one. In contrast to orthodox management theories, I argue that conflictual situations, as for example double binds, cannot be managed, though general comments or discussions might provide us with alternative avenues to move out of a situation where we experience ourselves as stuck.

When faced with having to choose between two conflicting value commitments, I was much in doubt about which alternative to choose. In the end, I decided to adhere to my commitment to respect for local knowledge and culture, manifested in not speaking up. It might have played into this choice that Sasha presented his centralised approach in a way that, in my perception, did not encourage discussion. On reflection, which has involved discussions in my learning set, I am uncertain, however, whether my silence was an act of respect. Did I respect and recognise Sasha and his views when I did not share my own views? To explore this, I will draw on the German philosopher Axel Honneth (2000) and his interpretation of another German philosopher Georg W.F. Hegel. I see respect for, and recognition of, others as closely interlinked and will, in the following, use the two expressions interchangeably.

Respect for and recognition of others

Hegel describes recognition as the reciprocal limitation of one's egocentric desires for the benefit of the other and emphasises the reciprocity involved in recognition (Honneth, 2014, pp. 16–17). This is not a one-sided act but requires that when 'two subjects encounter each other, both must perform a negation upon themselves in which they distance themselves from what is their own' (Honneth, 2014, p. 15). This is defined in more detail in one of Hegel's major works, *Philosophy of Right*, from 1820, in his explication of an individual's 'general free will'. The word 'free' is of particular importance here, where Hegel uses friendship as the paradigm for the experience of this type of freedom:

> But we already possess this freedom in the form of feeling, for example in friendship and love. Here, we are not one-sidedly within ourselves, but willingly limit ourselves with reference to an other, even while knowing ourselves in this limitation as ourselves. In this determinacy, the human being should not feel determined; on the contrary, he attains his self-awareness only by

regarding the other as other. Thus, freedom lies neither in indeterminacy nor in determinacy, but is both at once. (…) (T)he will is not tied to something limited; on the contrary, it must proceed further, for the nature of the will is not this one-sidedness and restriction. Freedom is to will something determinate, yet to be with oneself in this determinacy and to return once more to the universal.

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Hegel: *Philosophy of Right*, quoted in Honneth (2000, p. 26)

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I understand this to mean that we realise our freedom when we are not preoccupied with our interests, needs, and value commitments but limit ourselves willingly in recognition of others. At the same time, such freedom entails that we maintain our goals and interests and do not sacrifice our identity to the interests and needs of others. This means that, paradoxically, at the same time, we are both limiting ourselves and not sacrificing our interests. Freedom involves thus both indeterminacy and determinacy at the same time, enabling us to return to the universal, which I interpret to mean that we return to a state that is more than the particular situation. To explain this experience of simultaneous determinacy and indeterminacy, Hegel uses the persuasive expression 'being with oneself in another' (Honneth, 2000, p. 29).

In the introductory meeting in Sasha's office, I chose to remain silent, out of respect for Sasha, his local knowledge, and experience. I willingly limited myself by not commenting much on Sasha's centralised approach, but at the same time, by remaining silent, I sacrificed my views. My first reflections on the narrative were that, by remaining silent, I had behaved in a more ethical way than if I had voiced my criticism. However, my silence also meant that Sasha was not aware of my views and that we could not together find a better solution. My urge to recognise Sasha and his local knowledge was thus not a reciprocal process and not one that helped us move on. My silence might simultaneously be seen as disrespectful as it left Sasha unaware of my views. Instead of 'being with oneself in another', I was lost in the other and in my anticipated reactions of the other, in a state of indeterminacy.

Mead suggests that we may anticipate the reactions of both particular others and the 'generalized other', which was also the case for me. My fear was that, influenced by Richard's earlier generalising and patronising lecture, in addition to Sasha, the other national consultants would see me as following in Richard's footsteps and as not respecting local views.

The situation in the introductory meeting was one of a double bind. However, I have also in other work situations had a tendency to remain silent, particularly when in large groups. I have often explained this by a lack of self-confidence and a wish to plan in advance what to say. Reading Honneth's interpretation of Hegel's 'general free will' has added another, though related, dimension to this. It has made me realise that this tendency to remain silent might also be because I am lost in the others around me when anticipating their reactions if I did put forward my views.

I have indicated above that at the same time limiting and not sacrificing our interests is a paradox, which raises the question of whether recognising this paradox might enable us to speak in a double-bind situation, and in other situations, and not remain silent as I did. A paradox might be vicious, meaning that it produces thinking or behaviour that become stuck, or it might be generative, allowing us to explore more than one dimension of our experience (Mowles, 2015, p. 13). Acknowledging the paradox of simultaneously limiting and not sacrificing our interests might be generative, in the sense that it might enable us to see different dimensions of a situation and thereby avoid focusing on being stuck. As an example, it might enable me, and others, to find a way to speak up more frequently in public.

However, remaining silent should not, I argue, be reduced to one reason—in my case of losing myself in the anticipated reactions of others. In my experience, silence is more complex than this. In the following, I will indicate the complexity and potential interrelated reasons for my silence in the narrative.

The complex and relational character of silence

There are three situations in my narrative where I remained silent, even though I felt I had something important to say. The first was when, in Denmark, I resigned myself to the fact that it would not change anything if I spoke up against the social part of the questionnaire, which I received from Sasha after it had been distributed. The second situation where I remained silent was when, in the introductory team meeting, I heard my long-term colleague Richard talk in a generalising way, without acknowledging the local culture and knowledge. The third situation was when Sasha presented his centralised approach.

One reason for my silence was, as explained above, that I was lost in my anticipations of the reactions of Sasha and Richard, respectively, and of others present and, in this process, sacrificed my own views. A second reason was, I believe, the influence from previous situations where I had remained silent. By not

commenting on Sasha's questionnaire when I received it in Denmark, I had implicitly accepted the questionnaire, and this made it more difficult to speak up against it later. Similarly, not speaking up against Richard's generalisations influenced my choice of silence when Sasha explained his centralised approach. A potential third reason for my silence vis-à-vis Richard and his generalisations was our recent dispute in Denmark, where I had publicly expressed my strong disagreement with some of his views. I believe, though, that the most influential reason for my silence vis-à-vis Richard was my wish to adhere to norms around loyalty and group coherence, that is, when it is acceptable to display public disagreement with a colleague from the same company.

Mixed in with the above is my tendency of remaining more silent than most, particularly in large groups. In Project 2, drawing on Elias's theory of power as related to processes of inclusion and exclusion (1994), I write about how technical aspects and expertise often dominate discussions at work, where, in my perception, I—and other social scientists—often have to struggle more than the engineers to have our views heard. In this process of inclusion and exclusion, I have experienced myself as silenced by engineers by their focus on engineering details and by myself in avoidance of conflict or in fear of being ignored, if I did speak up. I am convinced that my past experience influenced my choice of silence vis-à-vis Richard and Sasha in the introductory meeting. This was not so much because of our different areas of expertise, I believe, but rather the habit I have developed of remaining silent, in public, in potential conflictual situations, and of seeking influence through conversations and alliances in smaller groups, as I did in my Project 3 narrative.

The above highlights that it is not only our immediate past actions that might influence how we act and react to what others say or do. We are also influenced by the habits we have developed over a longer period of time. It is important to highlight, though, as Burkitt does when he explains, building on the thoughts of Dewey, that we might have a tendency to act in a particular way, but no two situations are exactly the same, and we adapt our actions, or our tendencies to act, to the particular situation (2014, pp. 6; 169).

I do not have space here to explore in depth all the reasons for my silence in the narrative. Instead, the above is intended as an illustration of the complexity of silence, with an interweaving of reasons. The pattern I see is that my silence, and that of others, emerges out of our relationships with others in specific situations and out of our private conversations with ourselves, where our habits also play a role. I thus see silence as both a social and an individual process.

After this diversion to the complex and relational character of silence, I now return to the double-bind situation when Sasha presented his centralised approach. I experienced this situation as not only one of a double bind, but also of loss and of compromise with myself when I had to choose between the two conflicting value commitments of i) being able to influence the direction to take and ii) showing respect for Sasha's local knowledge and the local culture.

Compromise with self and others

In the following, I am distinguishing between compromise with oneself and compromise with others. I want to emphasise, though, that the two 'types' of compromise are often intertwined, for example, compromise with oneself might involve, be related to or lead to compromise with others and vice versa.

Compromise due to conflicting value commitments

I start by examining what different strands of literature might have to say about compromise with oneself, but also with others.

In marketing and economics literature, it appears common to consider compromise a solution or an agreement, that is, an outcome, based on an individual's choice, with some authors seeing mathematical models of behaviour as helpful (e.g., de Clippel and Eliaz, 2012; Nicolò and Velez, 2017). De Clippel and Eliaz thus argue that the compromise effect, which refers to the tendency of individuals to choose an intermediate option in a choice set, may result from an individual's attempt to overcome the difficulty of choosing. They propose to view this as a 'cooperative solution to an *intra*personal bargaining problem among different selves of an individual, where each self represents a different criterion for choosing' (2012, p. 125). They indicate that, alternatively, a compromise might involve a solution to an *inter*personal bargaining problem where two distinct individuals need to agree on an option (2012, p. 129). It appears thus that the two authors distinguish between compromise with oneself and compromise with others, which supports the distinction I make. However, although the two authors refer to the two situations as *individual* and *collective* decision-making, respectively, they seem to maintain in both situations a view of compromise as the choice of individuals. This understanding is in contrast to my perspective on compromise as a relational and social process, both in situations of compromise with oneself and with others.

I find support for my perspective among some authors who write within the traditions of sociology and ethics. One of these authors is the French sociologist, Mohamed Nachi, who sees compromise as both an outcome (an agreement, a resolution to a conflict) and a process (2004, p. 293). He adds a new dimension to my understanding of compromise when he highlights that

> compromise would in a way be a matter of "common sense" in that it implies an attitude conducive to acknowledgement of the other, cooperation, negotiation, understanding, in virtue of which the parties to the compromise process work towards coordinating their actions and coming to an agreement (2004, p. 294).

What stands out as particularly important for me in this quote is that compromise with others is seen as a process involving 'acknowledgement of the other' and 'understanding'. These are prerequisites for us to adapt to each other and thereby find a way to move on.

Nachi points also to tensions and contradictions that compromise might involve. He emphasises that often compromise is necessary for the settling of differences and for keeping social bonds, while simultaneously, it can undermine key values for those involved (2004, p. 302). The latter is where compromise with oneself comes in. These tensions are highlighted in an evocative way by the American philosopher Martin Benjamin when he explains compromise through the metaphor of fire:

> Like fire, compromise is both necessary and dangerous to human life. Were we never to accept political compromise on matters of ethical conviction, we would cut ourselves off from large numbers of our fellow humans; were we always to accept it, we would become alienated from ourselves (1990, p. 3).

Benjamin refers to compromise on matters of ethical conviction, but I argue that we might face the same tension in other situations of compromise.

I recognise such tension when, in the introductory meeting, I was faced with a double-bind situation where I had to choose between two values that are both important to me. In this, I gave priority to what Nachi refers to as 'acknowledgement of the other' and 'understanding', but this came at a cost. I experienced it as a compromise when by honouring one value commitment I disregarded another,

namely that of being able to influence the project approach. Feeling alienated from oneself is a strong expression, but the knot in my stomach at the end of the meeting indicates that I had given up something of importance to me. At the time, I experienced this compromising as a loss.

In developing my understanding of compromise, I have been inspired by the research conducted by Iver Drabæk, as explained in Project 2. He focuses on compromise in relation to values within the assurance practice (2007, 2008) and argues that compromise is 'the actions that follow out of a perpetual negotiation' (2007, p. 154). This leads to his suggestion that compromise is equal to what Mead refers to as functionalisation of cult values or idealisations (2007, p. 133). According to Mead (1923) and as explained further in Project 1, cult values are idealisations, for example, within an organisation or a particular discourse, which need to be functionalised in everyday interactions. It resonates with my experience that compromise emerges out of continuous negotiations, both with others and oneself. However, although Drabæk's understanding of compromise as functionalisation of idealisations makes sense in his research situation, I would argue that compromise is broader than this. In my double-bind situation, the negotiations and the compromise were not about functionalisation of idealisations/cult values, but rather about a choice between two conflicting value commitments.

As explained in more detail in Project 2, I find that Mead (1934) makes an important contribution to understanding compromise in his explication of how we anticipate the reactions of others, including the 'generalized other', and take these anticipations into account in our gesturing and responding to each other. These anticipations develop during our public conversations with others, our conversations with a few people, and in our private conversations with ourselves. Although our anticipation of the reactions of others influence what we say or do, compromise still emerges in our interactions with each other as these interactions take place, that is, in the living present (Drabæk, 2008). This is supported by Mead's explication that meaning arises in our gesturing and responding to each other (1934, pp. 75–82; Stacey, 2012, p. 24).

Compromise with others is thus a relational and social process, and my further argument is that the same applies to compromise with oneself. The latter might often be due to violation of value commitment(s) but might also be for other reasons. It evolves mainly out of our private conversations with ourselves, which are influenced by our conversations with others. Compromise both with others and with ourselves involves our anticipations of the reactions of others, I argue, as do our other

interactions with each other, as well as our private conversations with ourselves, as explained in an illuminating way by Mead in his I/me dialectic.

Like other interactions, our compromise with others and with ourselves is influenced by our actions and reactions in the past. I might thus have avoided the experience of compromise with myself and of double bind during the introductory meeting if, earlier in the meeting, I had expressed disagreement with Richard's generalisations. I might then have found it easier to disagree publicly with Sasha and to do this in a way that respected Sasha's local knowledge. Furthermore, I would argue that there is often a temporal dimension to compromise with ourselves. My experience of a compromise with myself evaporated thus when, in a later meeting, I was part of a small group which suggested a more decentralised approach. In the latter meeting, we had a new situation in that it was some time since Richard had made his generalising remarks, and now we all knew each other better. In this new situation, I prioritised the commitment to values of being able to influence the future project approach without experiencing this prioritisation as a violation of my value commitment to respect local knowledge. This highlights that the experience of compromise due to conflicting value commitments, and of double binds, is context-specific and might be modified in later interactions, as might compromise with others for other purposes or reasons.

I believe that my experience of a compromise with myself and loss influenced the later compromise with Sasha and others on the project approach. It was my experience of loss, when by honouring one value commitment I disregarded another, that made me initiate the discussions with Frederik and Karen about Sasha's proposed centralised project approach and about alternative options.

Compromise with others

Instead of speaking up in large meetings, I often have conversations with a few colleagues in small groups to discuss my views and form alliances, as I did in my narrative. In several situations, it has been in such conversations that discussions of alternatives and/or compromise with others have started, as was the case when Frederik, Karen, and I agreed to suggest a decentralised approach, using a project web. For me, this suggestion was not a compromise, but rather my ideal solution. When presented in public, the suggestion constituted an important input, however, to our public negotiations with Sasha, out of which emerged an agreement of simultaneously using a decentralised and a centralised

approach. I experienced this as a process of compromise because of my fear that using the two approaches in parallel could lead to confusion and lack of consistency.

As a further reflection on Project 2, I would say that, for me, compromising has been a way of gaining some influence and recognition of socio-economic aspects and views in technically oriented environments. This is not merely a personal experience or a strategy that is unique to me. Others who experience themselves in a marginalised or minority position have used a similar strategy of seeking or accepting compromise. An example is from the situation of anthropologists at the World Bank in Washington. Their experience, as conveyed to the British anthropologist David Mosse (2011b), was one of significant professional marginalisation and of feeling peripheral to the work of the Bank, which is dominated by economists and economic paradigms. In order to gain some influence in an organisation which emphasised the universal, and general predictive models, over contextual knowledge, the anthropologists sought or accepted compromises in order to persuade task managers, vice-presidents, and others that social relations are important to development (2011b, pp. 89–90).

Similarly, Sasha might have considered compromise to be his best strategy. He might have experienced himself to be in the weaker position when the international team leader, Frederik, suggested an alternative to Sasha's centralised approach, indicating that this suggestion had emerged out of his discussions with other international consultants. It was my clear impression that Sasha had not expected others to oppose his centralised approach and that he had not tried to solicit support or form alliances. Another reason why Sasha might have seen himself in the weaker position was our contractual relations, with my company holding the contract with the international financing institution and Sasha's company acting as sub-consultant to my company. This establishes a hierarchy in our contractual relations, which to some extent might have been reflected in the relations between the international and national consultants and particularly so, I would argue, in the start-up phase of our cooperation.

This situation supports my tentative argument that people and groups experiencing themselves in marginalised, weaker, or minority positions are more inclined to seek and accept compromise than others, due to their higher dependence on those in stronger positions, than vice versa. I want to repeat though that I see compromise, with others and with oneself, as a context-specific, relational, and dynamic process, with compromising emerging in the living present.

Reading Honneth's interpretation of Hegel's 'general free will' and writing Project 3 have made me pay more attention to compromise as a reciprocal process, which involves willingly limiting ourselves by adapting to each other and, at the same time, not giving up our respective goals or views. Compromise evolves out of negotiations with others and ourselves, and during this process, I argue, we might detect new dimensions and ways of adapting to each other without sacrificing our goals and interests.

Conclusion

In this project, I have reflected on how we might encounter conflicting feelings, conflicting value commitments, negotiations, and compromise in our private conversations with ourselves. In my narrative, it was thus in my private conversations with myself that I experienced a battle between my conflicting value commitments of how to react when I heard Sasha explain his centralised approach. I find that Mead offers a compelling explication of such private conversations with ourselves through his I/me dialectic, which involves our anticipations of the reactions of others and simultaneously our more spontaneous reactions and sense of self. Our mind, and thinking, is our private conversations with ourselves, which are paradoxically both social and individual processes at the same time.

Bateson's theory of double bind has clarified for me why, in my private conversations with myself, I experienced it as very difficult to decide how to act when Sasha presented his centralised approach. As Bateson's theory points to, I was in a situation where I had to choose between two alternatives, in this case, between two value commitments, and irrespective of which alternative I chose, it would have negative connotations for me. Neither choice, therefore, felt like the right one, which affected me emotionally. In the end, I chose respect for local knowledge and culture, manifested in not speaking up.

My first reflections were that by remaining silent, I had behaved in a more ethical way than if I had voiced my criticism of Sasha's approach. Reading Honneth and his interpretation of Hegel's explications of an individual's 'general free will' has, however, been an eye-opener for me. It has made me appreciate that respect and recognition is a reciprocal process, where we attain our freedom when we limit ourselves willingly in recognition of others and at the same time do not sacrifice our own interests and goals. Although intended as a gesture of respect, my silence had the consequence that Sasha was unaware of my views and might instead or simultaneously be seen as disrespectful of Sasha. Instead of 'being with oneself in another', I was lost in my anticipations of the reactions of Sasha and others. Writing Project 3 has also made me aware that one of several reasons for my tendency to remain silent,

particularly in large groups, might be that I am lost in the anticipated reactions of others. I have realised that acknowledging the paradox of simultaneously limiting and not sacrificing our interests, in each specific situation, might enable me and others to speak up more frequently in public, instead of focusing on being stuck.

My experience of a double bind was simultaneously one of loss and of compromise with myself when by honouring one value commitment I simultaneously disregarded another. I was puzzled by what this experience of loss and compromise entailed. My exploration of different strands of literature indicates that, in marketing and economics literature, it appears common to consider compromise an individual's choice, which might be predicted with the use of models. In stark contrast to this, I consider compromise a relational and social process, both in situations of compromise with oneself and with others. Our compromising cannot be predicted but evolves in the particular situation, that is, in the living present, in our interactions with others and our private conversations with ourselves. I find support for this perspective among some authors writing within the fields of sociology and ethics. Two of these are Nachi and Benjamin, who have added new dimensions to my understanding of compromise. Their suggestion is that compromise might involve tensions and feelings of alienation from oneself when experienced as undermining important values for those involved, which resonates with my experience. In line with this, I argue that the experience of compromise with oneself is often due to the violation of value commitment(s) but might also be for other reasons. Such compromise evolves mainly out of our private conversations with ourselves, which are influenced by our conversations with others, as elucidated in Mead's I/me dialectic.

The experience of compromise might, however, evaporate or be modified in our later interactions, as was the case for me when, in a later meeting, I was part of a small group which suggested a more decentralised approach. This underlines how the experience of compromise due to conflicting value commitments is context-specific. My further argument is that, as with other interactions, our compromising with self and others is influenced by our actions and reactions in the past. Related to this, I see a link between my experience of compromise and loss, when by honouring one value commitment I disregarded another, and our later compromise on the project approach. It was the sense of loss that made me initiate the discussions about alternative options, which led to compromise with Sasha and others.

I argue tentatively that people or groups experiencing themselves in marginalised, weaker, or minority positions are more inclined to seek and accept compromise than others, because of their higher dependence on those in stronger positions, than vice versa. This is a strategy I have adopted on several occasions, and similarly, Sasha might have considered compromise his best strategy. He might thus have considered himself in the weaker position when the international team leader suggested an alternative to Sasha's centralised approach, indicating that this alternative had emerged out of discussions with other international consultants.

Writing Project 3 has alerted me to how compromise is a reciprocal process, which involves our adaptations to the views and interests of others without sacrificing our respective goals and views. These are reflections I will continue in Project 4, when exploring whether and how, in some cases, compromise might not only be about loss but rather (also) about novelty and creation of something new together with others. I wonder whether compromising, as a reciprocal process, might be related to, or involve, ambitions and public recognition.

Project 4—Recognition of leadership: Speaking up and compromise

Introduction

In the research in Project 3, I noted my tendency to remain silent in large groups and realised that instead of 'being with oneself in another', as Georg W.F. Hegel expressed it (Honneth, 2000), I often lose myself in the other and thereby sacrifice my own views and interests, or those of one group to the benefit of another. This insight made me appreciate that respect and recognition is a reciprocal process and that acknowledging the paradox of simultaneously limiting and not sacrificing our interests, in each specific situation, might enable me, and others, to speak up and let others know what my views are. This has inspired me to set myself the goal of finding ways to be more outspoken in public than I have often been in the past, which is a theme I explore in this Project 4.

The following narrative is about speaking up and gaining recognition as a leader, which also involved compromise. The latter is often associated with loss, but in my narrative, compromising appeared to be more about the emergence of novelty, involving a new atmosphere of cooperation.

Narrative—critical comments from a key client

Written comments

I was in our company office in Denmark when I received an e-mail from a key client, an international financing institution (IFI). Kasim, who is a social scientist and one of the IFI's leading specialists for our new assignment in the Middle East, wrote that they were disappointed with the quality of an inception report, which we had submitted two weeks into our assignment. He was concerned about whether this was an early indication of the quality of our final deliverables. Attached to his e-mail were his and his colleagues' detailed comments, many of which were very critical. Kasim ended his e-mail by suggesting a conference call a few days later.

My feelings were a mixture of astonishment, anger, and anxiety, as I read and reread the e-mail. Receiving critical comments to an inception report was highly unusual. I felt their expectations were

totally unrealistic, but at the same time, my heart was pounding hard. Why were they so critical at this early stage of our assignment? What implications would this have for our cooperation? How should we best handle the upcoming conference call? The e-mail also made me uncertain about my team leadership capabilities, which I felt had been questioned during our contract negotiations. At that time, I had explained my long team-leader experience and no further concerns were raised. The questioning of my team-leader competence kept nagging me, however, and was revived when reading the critical comments to our report.

Over the coming days, we discussed within the team, three from my company in Denmark and four from companies in the Middle Eastern country, how unrealistic and unfair the IFI's comments and expectations were for an inception report. A couple of us also briefly discussed whether our interpretation of the terms of reference (ToR) might be different from that of the IFI and whether this might be the explanation for some of their comments. However, my focus was on the many ambiguities in the ToR, and I did not reflect further on any doubts about our interpretation. Instead, we prepared our response to the many comments. In my e-mail to Kasim and his colleagues, confirming our availability for a conference call, I mentioned that we wanted to meet their expectations. I highlighted, though, the very early stage of our assignment, our limited time in the project areas, the limited documentation available, and our lack of permission to visit one project area. I spent some time formulating this e-mail. At the same time that I was trying to create an atmosphere of cooperation, I wanted to indicate that we found their expectations unrealistic.

The conference call

At the conference call a few days later, there were four participants from the IFI, Kasim, Tom, Daniel, and Olivia. From the consultancy team, we were five participants, three from Denmark and two from the Middle East. Kasim started by accusing our team of withholding information from them. Why had we not immediately informed them about the cancellation of our visit to one of the project areas? A long discussion followed of what had happened; Lara, one of my Middle Eastern colleagues, became somewhat agitated when explaining her many phone calls with the ministry and the IFI's local office. I added that the IFI's local office had been very helpful and that we had indeed kept the IFI informed through its local office. These explanations did not satisfy Kasim, however. He had heard from other sources and not from us that the visit had been cancelled. Kasim continued by asking us why, in our report, we had only mentioned the official reason for the cancellation, that is, the unavailability of key

stakeholders, and not the underlying *real* reason for the cancellation; the IFI needed to know the latter to assess whether the project implementation might be affected. After what I experienced as a long time guessing at potential reasons for the cancellation, Kasim suggested that the IFI would assist in obtaining permission to visit the last project area.

We moved into a discussion of the scope of our assignment. It turned out that Kasim and Tom had a different interpretation of the ToR than did our team. Tom appeared quite friendly when explaining the key aspects which they would like us to assess. Kasim concluded the discussion, however, by asking us to read our ToR again, as they were clear. I did not contradict Kasim's interpretation, although I did not find the ToR clear. In that particular moment, I was unsure where to find the ambiguities. Tom and Kasim insisted that we needed to include more conclusive assessments in our inception report. I was hesitant, explaining that we were early in our assignment and there appeared to be limited data available. This made Tom emphasise that having clearer assessments was a critical point for them and I did not feel I could pursue this point any further.

I asked for advice on their preferred report structure, referring briefly to their earlier criticism. My assumption was that Kasim might not have heard my brief reference to their earlier comments, when he responded that he had been a consultant for 13 years and, in his views, it was clearly the consultants' task to develop report structures. This was followed by an awkward silence. Kasim concluded the call by saying that they had serious concerns about the assignment and asking us to read the ToR and their comments again. In our revised report, we should then tell them whether we could conduct the assignment, what information gaps we had, and how to overcome these.

Strategy after the conference call

After the call, my two Danish colleagues and I looked at each other in shock. The call had been extremely unpleasant, Kasim's tone aggressive, and we felt we had been treated unfairly. I believe we also all feared that Tom and Kasim considered us incompetent. Our discussions continued the following day, which involved a call with our Middle Eastern colleagues. I also found the e-mail correspondence about the cancellation of our visit to one of the project sites, which showed that one of Kasim's head office colleagues had been informed and involved in the correspondence.

Over the next 10 days, our team put much effort into collecting additional information and revising our report, so it contained much more detail and more assessments than our first report and other inception reports for the same IFI. In my e-mail forwarding the revised report, I suggested a face-to-face meeting in the IFI head office to discuss our findings and strategies for moving forward. I was keen to have this meeting soon, so after five days I sent a new e-mail highlighting the benefits of such a meeting. One by one, all IFI team members confirmed their ability to participate on my suggested date, four in-person and two by telephone.

My goal for the meeting was to create an atmosphere of cooperation, similar to what my colleagues and I have had during other assignments for the same IFI. It was also important for me, however, to clarify our viewpoints on a few issues that had come up during the conference call. My plan for the conference call had been to be more assertive and voice our counterarguments more clearly than I had actually done. My strategy was to act differently during the meeting by taking the lead from the start, which included proposing the agenda. Since I had suggested the meeting, I assumed that Kasim and his colleagues would expect me to start the meeting, though not necessarily to take the lead.

During the days leading up to the IFI meeting, I attended one of our quarterly DMan residential weekends, where I shared the above narrative with my learning set (three other students and our first supervisor) and another faculty member. We discussed particularly my strategy for the IFI meeting, as described above. I mentioned that I had good relations with two IFI participants, Maria and Olivia, who were the only ones I had met in person previously, and we discussed whether and how these relations might be helpful and also that I hoped to have Daniel, who, as one of the IFI's overall managers, knew the quality of my work from many previous assignments, as an ally, if needed. One of the DMan faculty members recommended that I should be quite aggressive in my approach, more than I had planned. It was helpful to discuss this recommendation in the sense that it strengthened my determination, I think, to be assertive and take the lead from the start of the meeting. My focus was still, however, on trying to create an atmosphere of cooperation. I believe explaining my strategy for the IFI meeting and discussing this, as well as alternatives, made me more confident of myself as a team leader speaking into a delicate situation.

At the time of the discussions with my DMan colleagues I had not received the IFI's comments on our revised report, but I did so on the afternoon before the meeting. There were many comments, but rather than being critical, they were suggestions for our future work, which I experienced as a relief. I

spent the evening reading our revised report and the new comments, made a few notes, and reflected again on how best to start the meeting.

The meeting

Despite my preparations, I was still nervous when entering the IFI building. Kasim met me at the reception and we chatted as we walked to the meeting room. I mentioned that I had just been at a PhD residential weekend on complexity and management, where we focus on our personal work experience, which he appeared to find interesting. I was happy I had managed to mention this, hoping that he might see my PhD studies as an additional qualification. On our way, we met and chatted briefly with Maria and Olivia while we all met up with Daniel in the meeting room. There was some activity trying to connect the two last participants by phone. Tom managed to connect, while Pablo succeeded only later. In the midst of this, the four IFI staff shifted around so they now all sat on one side of the table, enabling them to share printed report copies, which left me sitting alone on the opposite side. Initially, this seating arrangement made me slightly uncomfortable, reminding me of an interrogation.

Kasim started the meeting by saying that the revised report was much better than the first report and asked Tom for input to the agenda. I was surprised and somewhat offended that he had not asked for my input, especially as I had proposed the meeting. In hindsight, I realise that he might have intended to do so after consulting Tom. I was so determined, however, to take the lead from the start, that I interrupted Kasim, albeit politely, saying that, as I had proposed the meeting, I would like to start by appreciating that they were all able to participate. I then proposed an agenda with three overall items, the first of which was the clarification of three issues from our earlier conference call. Firstly, I highlighted that, as explained in our report, we had not tried to withhold information from the IFI about the cancellation of one of our project visits as both their local office and their head office colleague, Pablo, had been informed. To soften it, I added that we were happy to learn that the IFI had now contacted the ministry to help us obtain the required permission. Secondly, I referred to the ambiguity of our ToR, which we explained in detail in our revised report. As we had been sure that our interpretation of the ToR had been correct, we had not even considered asking the IFI for clarifications. Thirdly, I highlighted that our revised report contained more assessments than the first version of the report, but that we would clearly not have been able to make these additional assessments within the original two-week deadline for submitting the report. I was tense during these explanations as I wanted my viewpoints to be clear. At the same time, I wanted to avoid a detailed discussion, which I feared

might make it difficult to create a cooperative atmosphere going forward. Kasim's facial expression indicated to me that he was on the verge of interrupting a couple of times, but he did not, whereas Olivia and Maria looked anxious, perhaps fearing a repetition of the conference call.

Just as I was completing my clarifications, Pablo joined on a telephone line. Kasim was quick to summarise our meeting so far, saying that our discussions indicated we needed to improve our communication, without specifying further. Looking at me, he continued that they would have had no problems giving us extra time to prepare our first report if I had asked for this. From my viewpoint, these were clearly not the points I had made during my earlier explanation, but I did not say anything. I felt that I had made my viewpoints clear, and I wanted now to move into discussions of our findings. We did not structure our further discussions according to my proposed agenda, but I experienced our interactions as a dialogue occurring in a cooperative atmosphere where we all raised issues that we found important, without an agenda as such. Contrary to the conference call, which I had experienced as an us-versus-them situation, that is, client-versus-consultants, it was now more of an open discussion. An example of this was that Pablo and Tom/Kasim discussed their contradictory views on one aspect of the project, while I was present.

At the end of the meeting, Daniel suggested that he and I have a brief separate meeting to discuss other assignments. I was happy that Daniel, as an overall IFI manager, made this suggestion, both because I saw it as an acknowledgement of all the work that I had done for the IFI and because it might increase the importance other participants attached to my views. During this meeting, we did discuss other assignments, but also how both Daniel and I had experienced the conference call, though constrained by sitting in an open area within the IFI building. I was relieved and confident when I walked out of the IFI building. Although the meeting had started differently than I expected, I stuck to my intentions of taking the lead at the start and had been more assertive than usual. I felt I had taken a high risk when interrupting Kasim and was happy that, in my perception, our later discussions occurred in a cooperative atmosphere.

Initial reflections on narrative

The narrative is about speaking up and gaining recognition as a leader, which involved compromise. When receiving unexpectedly critical comments from a key client, I experienced these as unfair and was, at the same time, anxious about whether the IFI considered me, as well as my colleagues, incompetent.

The critical comments made me recall the contract negotiations where, in my perception, the IFI questioned my team-leader qualifications initially. One of my concerns was whether they were still uncertain about my team-leader capability.

There was clearly an interweaving of power relations that influenced my actions and those of others in the course of the narrative. I experienced myself as having been strongly disciplined when reading the written comments on our report and even more so during the conference call, which provoked feelings of anxiety and irritation; anxiety because of the occasionally aggressive tone and what I perceived as vague threats of terminating our contract; irritation because Kasim, and to some extent Tom, appeared not to pay attention to my—and my colleagues'—viewpoints. I found it difficult to counter the criticism and voice our disagreement in a constructive way, as I had planned with my colleagues. I did try to express my points of disagreement, but this was in a soft-spoken and perhaps submissive way which, on reflection, I was unhappy about. Below, I explore what these power dynamics during the conference call might be about and what might have caused me to react in a soft-spoken way despite having other intentions.

I was determined to act differently during the face-to-face meeting and planned to take the lead at the start of the meeting. It was highly unusual for me, though, that I interrupted a client, that is, Kasim, when he appeared to expect that he would lead the meeting. I see this, and my narrative generally, to be about struggles for influence and recognition. I have often struggled for recognition of my views and my leadership, prompted by being a social scientist working in a technically oriented and male-dominated environment. My usual strategy has been through discussions in smaller groups and the forming of alliances. What appeared different this time was that I expressed my views in public in a potentially conflictual situation and in a more assertive way than I have normally done in the past. I am curious about what speaking up in this particular meeting entailed and what enabled me to express my views more clearly and forcefully in this situation than has often been the case.

I sense that the power relations during the IFI meeting between particularly Kasim and me involved negotiations between us about what to say and about taking the lead. To me, these negotiations involved processes of compromise. This was especially the case when i) Kasim did not interrupt or counter my explanations of key issues from the conference call although, in my perception, his facial expressions indicated that he was tempted to do so; and ii) I did not object to Kasim's summary of my explanations when Pablo joined, although I disagreed with the summary. In other words, we both

adapted to each other by limiting the expression of our views in recognition of those of the other in order to move on, and we thereby avoided a revival of the conflict from the conference call. Compromise is commonly viewed as involving a sense of loss, which has often been my experience. However, compromising in the IFI meeting appeared to be more about the emergence of novelty, involving a new atmosphere of cooperation, than about loss.

In summary, my puzzle is about what parts speaking up and later compromising might have played in my struggle for gaining recognition of my views as a leader; a struggle which took place in an interweaving of power relations. Speaking up as well as compromising occurred during the IFI meeting and my puzzle is about their combined influence on my struggle for leadership.

I start by exploring what the power relations and dynamics in the narrative might be about and particularly what part they might have played in constraining me from speaking up during the conference call, despite my intention to do so. Related to this, I also examine how the power dynamics constrained me from gaining some influence and recognition through compromising.

Power, interdependency, and constraints

As explained in Projects 1 and 2, I see power as inherent in all relations, as dynamic, and as linked to interdependencies, as illuminated by the German sociologist Norbert Elias (1978, 2000). In the current narrative, there was an interdependency between the IFI and my company, and thereby between Kasim and me. My company had been engaged by the IFI to perform a project assessment, with the IFI, including Kasim, dependent on our assessment for them to be able to decide whether to fund the particular project. Simultaneously, my colleagues and I were dependent on Kasim's and his colleagues' satisfaction with our deliverables, their approval of our payments, and their positive assessments when future assignments are tendered. I will label these our formal interdependencies, but there were also other dependencies between us, I would argue. The struggle for recognition of my views, and generally for my position as a leader, made me dependent on Kasim and his colleagues to accord this recognition. Similarly, Kasim, who had joined the IFI relatively recently, might have been struggling for recognition from his colleagues, and perhaps from me, of his expertise. He might have wanted to show his colleagues that he was adding value to this assignment. At the same time, he might have experienced himself under particular pressure because of fears that the apparently limited amount of data available for part of our assessment might make it difficult for the IFI to go ahead with the project. He had visited

the project sites earlier and might have had fears of being blamed by his IFI colleagues for not having detected this lack of data. Consciously or unconsciously, he might, therefore, have tried to pass on the blame to us as consultants.

My first perception was that, as consultants, we were more dependent on the IFI than vice versa. Probably, I interpreted our relationship in this way because the IFI had the formal authority to terminate our contract and because I experienced myself in an inferior position when we received such critical comments at an early stage of our assignment. However, the IFI also had obligations towards their Middle Eastern client and falling out with consultants might reflect poorly on the IFI's image vis-à-vis their client and others. On reflection, I question, therefore, whether it is possible to measure our relationship in this way, that is, that one group (us as consultants) was more dependent on the IFI than vice versa. My first interpretation that I was in an inferior position compared to Kasim and his IFI colleagues indicates, rather, that I tend to perceive myself as being of less importance and/or as having less influence than others, both as a leader and generally.

As my interpretation developed in hindsight, I realised that the power dynamics during the conference call and also at the start of the subsequent meeting involved processes of exclusion or marginalisation. This was particularly the case when, in my experience, Kasim and to some extent Tom appeared not to pay attention to, or in other words not to recognise, my views. In Project 2, I explored processes of exclusion and inclusion, drawing on the studies of Elias and Scotson (1994) and Scott (1990). I detected these processes to be mainly around expertise areas (socio-economic/technical), interwoven with gender aspects. As a female social scientist working in a technically oriented and male-dominated environment, I have often felt that I had to struggle for inclusion and recognition of my views as a social scientist and a leader. It was different, however, in the current narrative in that Kasim and I are both social scientists and both work within the field of development. In this situation, I experienced the exclusion and inclusion processes to rather be around our client/consultant relationship. I want to emphasise, though, that on reflection, I acknowledge that most likely Kasim, as well as the other IFI participants, had no intention of establishing a client-versus-consultants atmosphere, and also that it might not be the way they perceived the situation. Rather, Kasim's intentions might simply have been to put pressure on us, as consultants, to provide high-quality reports and/or to establish himself vis-à-vis his colleagues as being in control of the project.

The process of exclusion and marginalisation was, however, two-way in the sense that I might have contributed to this experience during the conference call by being soft-spoken and perhaps submissive. I am known as a quiet but also persistent person. I believe that I was even less assertive during the conference call than usual due to Kasim's and Tom's occasionally aggressive tone and my fear of an escalation of the conflict. My quiet voice and hesitant way of speaking might have exacerbated what I perceived as disciplining actions and my feeling of being excluded from influence. At the start of the subsequent meeting, I had a similar feeling of exclusion when Kasim asked his IFI colleague, Tom, for input to the agenda without asking me, the consultant's team leader, especially as I had proposed the meeting. In hindsight, it appears like a vicious circle where during the conference call my quiet gestures reinforced my feelings of being disciplined and marginalised by Kasim and Tom, which in turn made me react in an even more soft-spoken way.

The above reflections are about my experience of processes of exclusion and inclusion around our client/consultant relationship. I wonder, though, whether these processes, and the power dynamics in the narrative generally, were also influenced by gender stereotypes and the habits I have taken up, influenced by being a woman. In hindsight, it has thus struck me that during the conference call the outspoken, and occasionally aggressive, participants were both men, while the only female IFI participant hardly said anything, and I, as the consultants' team leader and a woman, spoke quietly, feeling myself in an inferior position.

The American feminist philosopher Shannon Sullivan draws attention to how the pragmatist John Dewey's notion of habit can help us understand gendered existence (2000, p. 24). Building on Dewey's perspective, she explains that we are our habits, which constitute our knowledge of the world and provide us with agency in it.

> For Dewey, individual habits are formed under conditions set by cultural configurations that precede the individual, which means that cultural customs (i.e., the habit at the level of society or culture) delimit the particular gendered or other options available to individuals and thus tend to reproduce themselves through individuals' habits. That is, in many cases our world "instructs" us on "proper" habit formation in its response to our engagement with and in it. Through our bodily habits, we incorporate our culture's gender (and other) constructs. The constructs that prevail within the culture(s) in which I am anchored will inform the habits that I develop—that is, the person that I become (Sullivan, 2000, p. 28).

I started my autobiographical exploration in Project 1 by describing the gendered division of responsibilities I experienced during my childhood and teenage years in a small village. This included the gender dimension of local leadership, where mainly men were elected to leading positions. During my childhood and teenage years, I did not reflect on or question these gendered divisions, and I am convinced that they have had an effect on my habits and who I am today. Similarly, I have been influenced by working as a woman in a male-dominated technical environment where the vast majority of leaders have been men and where they and most other colleagues have had different professional backgrounds to mine. Sullivan explains what she sees as the gender stereotypes in her American (middle-class) culture: A woman is expected to behave generally in a deferential and non-confrontational manner, which involves smiling and occupying minimal physical space; in contrast, a man is expected to act generally in a more confrontational and aggressive way, with a bodily style that does not seek to minimise conflict (2000, p. 35). To a large extent, these descriptions resonate with the gendered expectations from my traditional upbringing and with my interpretation of the gender stereotypes prevailing within many international development organisations and projects in which I have worked. These cultural customs, as Sullivan and Dewey refer to them, have influenced the habits I have developed of conflict avoidance, feelings of inferiority, being soft-spoken, and often remaining silent in large meetings. I believe this behavioural pattern is recognisable to many other women who have grown up with gendered traditions and work environments similar to mine. I am not saying, however, that these customs have had the same influence on all these women. On the contrary, they might simultaneously have been influenced by their membership in other groups and other encounters in their lives. Furthermore, some women might resist these gendered expectations and behave in a directly opposite way to mine. Similarly, not all men act in a confrontational and aggressive manner. Although both women and men are influenced by gendered customs prevailing in their culture, including in their work environment, this does not make all women within a particular culture act in one particular way and all men in another. This view is in contrast to how some authors, for example, Joan Acker (1990), write about gender in a binary and universal way. Acker presents men and women as dichotomies to each other, with men and their masculinity dominating organisations and thereby marginalising and subordinating women. To me, Acker portrays women as victims of male dominance, whereas I see women as active participants in struggles with others, both men and women, for influence and recognition, though this might often not be as equals due to historical patterns.

It is important to highlight, in my view, that there is often an interweaving of intentions, struggles, and power relations, which influence how we act and react (Elias, 1978, 2000). Thus, the presence of Daniel might have influenced the interactions between Kasim, Tom, and me during the conference call. Apart from introducing himself, Daniel did not speak during the conference call, but despite this, I experienced his presence as reassuring, as he knew the quality of our many previous reports, and others had described him as a fair and supportive person, which was also my impression from our contract negotiations. Probably, I felt Daniel might have the authority to intervene, either during or after the conference call. I am unsure what effect Daniel's presence might have had on the other IFI participants. Daniel was not a direct superior to any of them and all participants in the conference call, including Daniel himself, might have been unsure about his authority in a conflictual situation. The only female IFI participant, Olivia, who was also the only IFI participant in the conference call whom I had met previously, made a quiet comment and raised a question in an uncritical way towards the end of the conference call, but otherwise, she did not speak. I had found the previous discussions with Olivia interesting and inspiring, and I believe the same was the case for her, so she could have been a potential ally for me. When she spoke during the conference call, however, she appeared to be as intimidated as I was, indicating that she might be similarly influenced by the prevailing gender stereotypes, at least some of the time, just as I am.

The conference call illuminates that, although we as individuals have intentions, as I had of voicing my points of disagreement in a constructive but also assertive way, we are not able to determine or predict the course or outcome of our interactions. As explained by Elias, from the interweaving of many individual interests and intentions 'something comes into being that was planned and intended by none of these individuals, yet has emerged nevertheless from their intentions and actions' (2000, p. 312). Further explanations and reflections on this are included in Project 2.

Reflecting afterwards on the conference call, I was dissatisfied that I had not spoken in a more confident and assertive way. In the following section, I explain what I see as the reasons for this dissatisfaction with myself.

Determination and change of practice

Influenced by writing Project 3, I have set myself the goal of finding ways to be more outspoken in public. In particular, my reading of the German philosopher Alex Honneth (2000), and his interpretation

of Georg W.F. Hegel's explications of an individual's 'general free will', has had a great impact on me. This and my subsequent discussions with the DMan community made me realise that one reason for my tendency to be soft-spoken and remain silent in large groups might be that I am lost in the others around me when anticipating their reactions if I did put forward my views. Remaining silent or not voicing my views clearly means, however, that others are not aware of my views and cannot engage with these. Others might also interpret my silence or soft-spoken voice in other ways, for example, that I am not interested in the group or the topics being discussed, that I have no standpoints of my own, or am reserved.

My goal and determination of being more outspoken in public have led to some change in my practice, as confirmed by work and DMan colleagues. I still pay attention to my anticipations of the reactions of others but have started to voice my own views more often and more clearly in work situations. One example is an encounter a few weeks before the conference call. At that time, my colleagues and I received what I perceived initially as unfair comments from Jane, an IFI specialist with whom I had not worked before, to a project action plan we had prepared. In an e-mail, Jane wrote that they had revised our draft action plan heavily to make it consistent with other plans. I was taken by surprise and felt somewhat hurt, as we had prepared many similar project action plans for the same IFI. I explained my surprise and concern in an e-mail and suggested a telephone call to discuss the revisions and particularly the implications these might have for future project action plans we were to prepare. A colleague who was copied on my e-mail remarked that my e-mail was quite unusual for me, which I interpreted to mean that I was more outspoken and critical than I am normally. This made me somewhat nervous regarding how Jane might react. Her response was, however, to explain, both by e-mail and during the telephone call, why they wanted this project action plan to be different. She also emphasised that their revisions were not meant as a criticism of our work and apologised that she had not made this clear in her first e-mail. Following this, we had a fruitful discussion of future reports we were to prepare.

I thus had recent positive experience from voicing my views to a client and had intended to follow a similar strategy during the conference call. I did not manage to do so, however, and I was unhappy that I had not had the courage to put my points of disagreement across in a clearer and more forceful way. DMan colleagues have asked whether it might have influenced my response in the two situations that during the conference call the criticism was raised by men, while in the encounter a few weeks earlier the comments I perceived as criticism were from a woman. My first reaction was to reject that gender mattered in these two situations, but on further reflection, I am uncertain. Probably I do find it easier

generally to speak up vis-à-vis women than men, which could be influenced by my encounters with a number of men in senior positions who were confident they were right, liked to hear themselves speak, and were occasionally aggressive if their views were questioned. It might also have influenced my relative assertiveness towards Jane that this was articulated in an e-mail, whereas my soft-spoken style was during a conference call.

My quiet voice during the conference call made me determined to act differently during the meeting at the IFI head office. I wanted to speak up and have my views heard. This time, I did speak up as I had intended, although this involved risks in terms of our future working relations. So, what did speaking-up in this particular meeting entail for me? What enabled me to speak up and express my views more clearly and forcefully in this situation than during the conference call?

Speaking up and taking risks

The concept of *parrhesia*, which the French philosopher Michel Foucault takes up in some of his later work (e.g., 2005; 2010), appears helpful in relation to what speaking up entailed. Etymologically *parrhesia*, which stems from the Greek Antiquity, is

> the act of telling all (frankness, open-heartedness, plain speaking, speaking openly, speaking freely). The Latins generally translate *parrhesia* as *libertas*. It is the openness which makes us speak, which makes us say what has to be said, what we want to say, what we think ought to be said because it is necessary, useful, and true. *Libertas* or *parrhesia* seems to be primarily a moral quality that basically is demanded of every speaking subject (Foucault 2005, p.366. Italics in original).

Foucault defines *parrhesia* as a way of telling the truth in situations where this will, may, or must entail costly consequences for those who have told it (2010, p. 56). He explains it as an irruption, where speaking up entails substantial risks (2010, p. 62).

In my interpretation of Foucault, *parrhesia* is about standing up for one's views and interests by telling others what they are. It is about a willingness to take risks and face the consequences of speaking up, which might be positive or negative. As persuasively expressed by the British scholar Maria Tamboukou in her explication of Foucault's understanding of parrhesia, 'fearless speech is about the courage to take

up a situated position and simply dare say: 'the emperor has no clothes'' (2012, p. 860). It is important to highlight that I do not see speaking up and risk-taking as an individual act and neither does Foucault in my interpretation. Rather, I view *parrhesia* as shaped by the communities/groups of which we are members and thereby as a social act. In addition, as indicated by Foucault, *parrhesia* is about what ought to be said, in our view, and might primarily be about morality. It is not about speaking up out of selfish motives, but rather about attempts to bring members of a community or group to another understanding and into another relationship with each other, as persuasively explained by the American pragmatist George H. Mead:

> A man has to keep his self-respect, and it may be that he has to fly in the face of the whole community in preserving this self-respect. But he does it from the point of view of what he considers a higher and better society than that which exists. Both of these are essential to moral conduct: that there should be a social organization and that the individual should maintain himself (1934, p. 389).

I see some similarity between Foucault's explication of *parrhesia* and Honneth's interpretation of Hegel's 'general free will' in that we should not sacrifice our identity or views to the interests of others, although we might limit ourselves in recognition of others (further explanation of Hegel's 'general free will' is included in Project 3). *Parrhesia* is, however, also different from Honneth's interpretation of Hegel, especially in Foucault's emphasis on risk-taking and courage, which he considers essential aspects of *parrhesia*. It is this dimension of risk-taking that I find particularly helpful in relation to my narrative.

During the conference call, I had voiced some explanations and counterarguments to the critical comments we received, but this had been in a soft-spoken way. I had thus not taken the risk of speaking up more forcefully. In contrast, this was a risk that I was preparing to take during the face-to-face meeting, though still wanting to create an atmosphere of cooperation going forward. I believe three main aspects were important for my determination to speak up during the meeting. Firstly, though soft-spoken and preferring to seek influence through smaller groups, I am persistent when something is important to me, and I felt it was important to clarify and defend not only my views but also those of other members of the consultancy team. Secondly, Daniel had been one of the first to confirm his participation, and I had a feeling that I might have an ally in him if needed. Thirdly, I had gained some confidence from discussing part of my narrative and my strategy for the IFI meeting with my DMan colleagues, which took place in the days leading up to the meeting.

Speaking up is not only about my own goal and determination, but also about my interactions with others; in other words, speaking up is relational. When the meeting started differently to what I had expected, my response was to interrupt Kasim in an attempt to follow my strategy. For me, and perhaps for Kasim, the interactions between the two of us involved an improvised struggle for recognition by others as a leader and for retaining a perception of myself as a leader. It was a situation, however, where we could both be leaders, and I did not experience it as a struggle where we were trying to exclude each other from leadership. I was aware that speaking up in this way entailed a risk of reviving or escalating the conflict, and that this could result in an unpleasant and even antagonistic working atmosphere for the remaining part of the assignment. I tried, therefore, to express my views in a polite way and included an appreciation of the actions that the IFI had taken after the conference call, but the risk was still there. Attempting to have my views, and implicitly my leadership capabilities, recognised was more important to me at the time, though, than the risk it entailed.

My views were not explicitly recognised during the meeting, rather to the contrary when Kasim summarised my explanations at the start of the meeting. My experience was, however, that I had made my viewpoints clear and I probably also saw it as an implicit recognition that Kasim had not opposed my explanations. In my perception, these interactions between Kasim and me involved processes of compromise which, for me, appeared to be about the emergence of a new atmosphere of cooperation and less about loss, which is commonly considered an important aspect of compromise. Below, I explore what this potential novelty dimension of compromise entails and what might have made this type of compromise possible.

Compromise as movement and novelty

In my earlier exploration of compromise, I have drawn on Mead, particularly his explication of how we anticipate the reactions of others, including the 'generalized other' (1934). This influenced my argument that compromise with others is not an outcome but rather a process, during which we take our anticipated reactions of others into account in our gesturing and responding to each other. Compromise with others thus involves mutual adaptations to each other in an attempt to move on instead of ending up in a stalemate.

In my perception, Kasim and I were both adapting to each other, thereby avoiding a revival of the conflictual situation from the conference call. This was particularly the case when, in my interpretation,

Kasim's facial expressions during our face-to-face meeting indicated that he was tempted to interrupt and counter my explanations of key issues from the conference call, but he did not. Similarly, I did not object when Kasim summarised my explanations, though I disagreed with his summary. A process of compromise always leads to the emergence of a new situation, as do other interactions between human beings. I experienced, however, the process of compromise between Kasim and me as not only leading to a new situation but to a new situation that entailed a change in the relationship between us and thereby to novelty.

According to Mead, for novelty to emerge it is important to have the capacity to be several things, that is, to be in several frames of reference, at the same time. Mead uses the term 'sociality' to describe this capacity:

> The social character of the universe we find in the situation in which the novel event is in both the old order and the new which its advent heralds. Sociality is the capacity of being several things at once (1932, p. 75).

Mead explains further that sociality is 'the stage betwixt and between the old system and the new' (1932, p. 73) and refers to it as a process of adjustment or readjustment, which leads to the emergence of novelty. Building on Mead, Carroll and Simpson expand on this process of readjustment, which appears similar to my understanding of compromise:

> This 'in limbo' phase of action is the temporal dimension of framing movements that arise when two or more frames are in play…. In effect, sociality is the process of readjustment or re-construal of meanings that is necessitated by movement from one frame to another…. It is in this transitional phase of readjustment, where emergent objects belong to different frames of meaning simultaneously, that shared meanings are re-cognized, selves and situations are re-constructed, and directions for further action are re-negotiated; in other words, sociality is generative of novelty and change. Being 'betwixt and between' is key to understanding those dynamic movements, such as problem-solving, interpersonal interactions and direction setting, that define the leadership domain (2012, p. 1289).

My interruption of Kasim and speaking up was neither just part of the past conflictual frame of meaning, that is, the past conflictual atmosphere, nor of just the intended future cooperative frame/atmosphere, but rather betwixt and between these two frames/atmospheres and thereby belonging to both. By

speaking up, I wanted to clarify my views on key issues from the conflictual conference call but had, at the same time, the goal of moving towards an atmosphere of cooperation. I would say that I was in two frames of reference at the same time, but not fully in either of them. I was careful when expressing my views and did not object when Kasim summarised my explanations incorrectly, in my view. I see these actions as my simultaneous attempt to avoid a revival of the conflictual situation and move to a new atmosphere of cooperation. Similarly, Kasim might have been betwixt and between two frames of reference when he did not interrupt me, though to me, his facial expressions indicated a temptation to do so. I argue that it was in this process of adjustments to each other, or in other words, compromise, that novelty emerged, meaning in our situation that we were moving towards a new atmosphere of cooperation.

According to the German scholar Hans Joas (1996), the pragmatists link novelty with creativity and the reconstruction of habitual action in situations where a previously habitual action is interrupted or does not make sense anymore. For the pragmatists, Joas explains, it is the creativity of *action* that is important. Furthermore, creativity is not only found in art or other forms of activities that are advertised as, for example, relieving the stress from work. Rather, it resonates with my experience that, as the pragmatists argue, creativity is inherent in a variety of human actions.

> If he [the actor] succeeds in reorienting the action on the basis of his changed perception and thus continuing with it, then something new enters the world: a new mode of acting, which can gradually take root and thus itself become an unreflected routine. The pragmatists therefore maintain that all human action is caught in the tension between unreflected habitual action and acts of creativity. This also means that creativity here is seen as something which is performed within situations which call for solutions, and not as an unconstrained production of something new without any constitutive background in unreflected habits (Joas, 1996, p. 129).

In other words, creativity and novelty often occur in conflictual situations, where we encounter differences of opinion, or the situation develops differently from our expectations. In such situations, an unreflected habitual action is insufficient, and this is where creativity and novelty come in. Processes of compromise emerge in or from conflictual situations, which often or perhaps always entail a sense of loss at some stage of the process, but the intensity of this feeling varies, I contend. In some situations, compromise involves creativity and novelty, and this experience might override the initial feelings of loss in our compromising. There is thus a temporality to the sense of loss. When I compromised on

Kasim's summary at the start of the IFI meeting, I experienced it initially as a loss, though less intense than in some other situations, that I had not expressed my disagreement. I assume that Kasim might have had a similar (initial) experience of loss when he did not express disagreement with my views on issues raised during the conference call. This initial experience of loss disappeared for me, however, when we moved into a new situation of cooperation. If I had disagreed with Kasim's summary in an unreflected way, that is, without considering which consequences this might have, or if Kasim had expressed disagreement with my viewpoints in an unreflected way, then a new atmosphere of cooperation might not have developed. I argue that it was our processes of compromise, and the creativity in our actions, that paved the way for novelty, in the sense of a new atmosphere of cooperation, to emerge.

However, the experience of compromise varies according to the actual situation, as can be seen from a comparison with my earlier projects.

Meanings of compromise

In Project 3, I explored my experience of compromise due to conflicting value commitments, which entailed a strong sense of loss when I had to give up on something that was important to me. In other words, it felt like a sacrifice of part of my identity. In contrast, my overall experience of compromise in the IFI meeting was one of moving into a new atmosphere of cooperation. Creating such an atmosphere was my goal and hope for the meeting, which significantly influenced my experience of the process of compromise. The sense of moving into a cooperative atmosphere clearly overshadowed the degree of loss I experienced when I did not object to Kasim's summary of my views. Probably, it also played a role in my experience of our compromising that I had accepted the risk of speaking up at the start of the meeting and that I felt I had done this in a polite, but still clear and confident, way.

This indicates that compromise does not have the same meaning to us in all situations, which is a question taken up by the American philosopher Martin Benjamin in his book on compromise in ethics and politics. According to him, compromise in politics is often regarded as desirable and as involving insight, imagination, discipline, and skills, while in ethics compromise is usually seen as a weakness or lack of integrity (1990, p. 1). He distinguishes between three significantly different uses of the term 'compromise': as outcome, as process, and as betrayal. Below, I summarise these three distinctions (1990, pp. 4-10;12-20).

Meanings of compromise	Explanations
Compromise as outcome	Is something 'reached' in a situation of conflict or disagreement that appears to split the difference between opposing positions.
Compromise as process	Is a 'way of reaching' an outcome, of resolving conflict and disagreement, characterised by acknowledging each other's viewpoints and making reciprocal concessions.
Compromise as betrayal	Is compromise on moral principles, which is seen as betraying these principles and oneself, thereby compromising one's integrity as a moral person.

In Benjamin's view, compromise as an outcome and as a process are closely linked and normally both occur in conflicts of nonmoral, equally legitimate interests, while he suggests that compromise as betrayal is linked to conflicts of moral principles.

An example of a simple conflict of interests is between two friends who want to do different things on a Sunday. It might be relatively unproblematic for them to compromise on their different interests, although moral principles might be involved (see below), while it is often more difficult to compromise when parties to a conflict perceive their respective positions as rooted in moral principles.

> To compromise fundamental principles is to compromise not simply a contingent or readily interchangeable interest but rather what one regards as an essential aspect of the self. It is to alter one's fundamental convictions and perhaps to weaken or betray one's wholeness or integrity as a particular self—as a person with a determinate identity who stands for some things rather than for others (Benjamin, 1990, pp. 13–14).

I find Benjamin's distinction between compromise involving moral principles and compromise involving other nonmoral interests helpful in my attempts to identify patterns in the experience of compromise, although, as acknowledged by Benjamin, it is sometimes difficult to make such a distinction, and both types of compromise might occur at the same time. What has been especially insightful for me is Benjamin's explications of how politicians committed personally to a particular moral position, for example, against abortion, might compromise on the same position so as to represent the views of their constituents and other politicians (1990, pp. 139; 149–150). Such compromise might be regarded by others as betrayal and be experienced by the politician as violating her/his personal integrity, while at the same time preserving her/his integrity as an elected representative of others. A BBC radio debate in

November 2018[6] also took up the complexity of compromise and integrity. Participants in the programme linked the preservation of integrity in compromise to consistency and highlighted, among others, that refusal to compromise on a particular principle or issue can be a betrayal of others. The decisions and actions of politicians might have impacts on more people than the decisions and actions of non-politicians, but, in my view, we are all faced with dilemmas similar to those of politicians in the everyday politics at work, within our families, and other groups. It was not my experience that I betrayed my colleagues or my own identity when I did not express my disagreement with Kasim's summary of my viewpoints. However, in many other situations, I, as well as others, have faced dilemmas of choosing between our different loyalties.

Despite Benjamin's persuasive insights, I am critical of his tendency to focus on compromise as an outcome, which can be devised, for example, in politics and which involves somehow splitting the difference between the parties involved. Benjamin does recognise compromise as a process, but only in situations where it can also be seen as an outcome, for example, in the form of an agreement (1990, p. 35). This view is in contrast to my argument that compromise should be seen as a process entailing actions.

Benjamin's distinction between two types of compromise helps explain why, in some situations, I experience compromise as a significant loss, but not to the same extent in others. My experience of compromise with myself in Project 3 was due to conflicting value commitments, which I see as similar to what Benjamin refers to as moral principles. Value commitments are essential aspects of my identity, as is the case for most people, and having to disregard one commitment in favour of another felt like the betrayal of part of my identity, entailing an intense sense of loss. In contrast, my compromising in the IFI meeting did not appear to violate any value commitment, as I had already defended the reputation of my colleagues and myself as competent consultants. I did not experience it as a betrayal of my identity, though initially, it involved some degree of loss when I did not contradict Kasim's summary of my views. The initial experience of loss was overshadowed by the sense of moving into an atmosphere of cooperation and the change in our relationship, and thereby the novelty, this entailed. Although compromise probably always entails an initial sense of loss, it might later be experienced as novelty, which might dissolve the feeling of loss, I argue.

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[6] This radio debate on morality in compromise from November 2018 had journalists, authors, and researchers as participants. It took the British negotiations about exit from the European Union, Brexit, as its point of departure but also included perspectives on compromise more generally. The debate programme can be found here: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00013vv, accessed on 15 February 2019.

I now turn to further exploration of what it means, in my view, that compromise should be seen as a process entailing actions and what it is that makes processes of compromise different from other interactions.

Compromise as actions

As explained in Project 2, I argue, in line with the Danish consultant and DMan graduate Iver Drabæk (2008, p. 80), that processes of compromise occur in the living present in our ongoing gesturing and responding to each other. These processes are influenced by our pasts and by our wishes for and anticipations of the future but still occur in the living present. My further argument is that processes of compromise are about our actions in everyday interactions and less about our goals in the narrow sense that people often use this word.

In my narrative and in the reflections above, I refer to my goals of finding ways of being more outspoken and of creating or moving towards an atmosphere of cooperation. They were not fixed goals in the Cartesian sense of being externally determined or set by myself as mandatory. I would rather see them as ends-in-view, which is a concept suggested by Dewey, following his critique of Cartesian goals (Joas, 1996, pp. 153–155). Dewey's concern with the latter was that goals, understood as anticipated future states, do not describe adequately their role in our present action. In other words, if we only dream of the future, we are not acting. Instead, Dewey suggests, as paraphrased by Joas:

> the goals of actions are usually relatively undefined, and only become more specific as a consequence of the decision to use particular means…Only when we recognize that certain means are available to us do we discover goals which had not occurred to us before. Thus, means not only specify goals, but they also expand the scope for possible goal-setting. 'Ends-in-view' are not, therefore, vaguely conceived future situations, but concrete plans of action which serve to structure present action (1996, p. 154).

Taking the lead from the start of the IFI meeting was my strategy, or means, to enable me to be more outspoken than I had been in the conference call. Being more outspoken was not an end in itself, but rather a means to move towards my ends-in-view of being recognised for my viewpoints and my leadership. It was only in hindsight, though, that I discovered that recognition of my leadership was

among my ends-in-view, which is in line with the quote above that the means we use might expand the scope for goal setting.

Sometimes our compromising on actions might make us adjust or completely revise our ends-in-view, whereas in other situations processes of compromise might not affect what we aim at. In the IFI meeting, I would say that, as part of the process of compromise, I adapted my strategy, and the related actions, of taking the lead in the meeting. My ends-in-view remained the same, however. When writing the narrative, I believed I had two separate ends-in-view: i) gaining recognition of my views and my leadership and ii) creating or moving towards an atmosphere of cooperation. Probably, I saw the two as being even somewhat contradictory in the sense that speaking up in order to gain recognition might revive or escalate the conflict and therefore make it more difficult to move towards a cooperative atmosphere. On reflection, however, I have realised that, for me, leadership is closely related to cooperative relationships and probably vice versa. So, what I first saw as two separate ends-in-view might be so closely related that they should rather be seen as one. Most likely, I would not have experienced myself as gaining recognition as a leader if we had ended up in a conflictual situation. Below, I indicate how I understand leadership and explain what parts compromise and speaking up might have played in my struggles for recognition as a leader.

Leadership and practical judgement

In my experience, the focus by leaders (and others) on results and the extensive use of quantitative indicators and linear models in most international development work (Maclay, 2015, pp. 42–44) lead to simplifications and overgeneralisations, as explained in Project 2. Similarly, generalisations and simplifications are common in the dominant[7] discourse on leadership, where this is often viewed 'as a set of identifiable skills and competencies which can be developed and applied instrumentally irrespective of context' (Flinn and Mowles, 2014, p. 4). In the dominant understanding of leadership, it is generally assumed that leaders are able to stand outside the organisation, choose the direction in which the organisation or project should move, and select the structures and conditions that will enable them to be in control and ensure success (Stacey, 2010, p. 1). In line with this, there is a tendency to talk about what leaders *should be doing*, instead of examining what they *are actually doing* (Flinn and

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[7] I am not claiming that a dominant discourse is the only one there is or that everyone accepts it. Instead, I use the term to identify the discourse which reflects the most powerful ideology within organisational practice and research (Stacey, 2010, p. 10).

Mowles, 2014, p. 3). In contrast, I argue that exploration of relationships, micro-interactions, and everyday politics is important for understanding what leadership is about, both within international development work and generally. Micro-interactions are important, I suggest, influenced by Stacey and Mowles (2016, p. 380) who build on Mead, because it is in our fine-grained interactions with each other that general patterns emerge within an organisation or the wider society, and at the same time such patterns, or in Mead's terms our tendencies to act (1925, pp. 266–268), influence our detailed interactions. This makes micro-interactions and global patterns mutually constitutive. Through the exploration of fine-grained interactions and everyday politics we can detect patterns that will help us understand what leadership entails, I argue.

Although, as indicated above, the dominant discourse on leadership focuses on individual heroic leaders (and their followers), a growing number of authors have, in recent years, opposed this focus and, instead, advocate for a relational perspective on leadership. As pointed out by Uhl-Bien (2006), some of these theories emphasise the importance of interpersonal relationships but still have an entity or individual perspective, while others take a more relational perspective, focusing on leadership as a social and dynamic process (e.g., Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Fletcher, 2004; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Carroll, Levy and Richmond, 2008; Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2010; Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011). Cunliffe and Eriksen argue convincingly that relational leadership requires a relational ontology, where leadership is understood as a way of being-in-relation-to-others (2011, p. 1430). Furthermore, their empirical study highlights the importance of everyday mundane occurrences and micro-interactions in leadership, which is in line with my argument above and with the suggestion of Alvesson and Sveningsson to rethink leadership, 'taking the mundane, almost trivial, aspects of what managers/leaders actually do seriously' (2003, p. 1435).

The DMan graduate Kevin Flinn is another author who takes a relational view of leadership. He draws on the thinking of Ralph Stacey and Chris Mowles (2016) when summarising his understanding:

> I view leadership as a social and relational phenomenon that is neither confined to those in formal positions in the organisational hierarchy nor only available to extraordinary individuals in possession of special attributes that others do not have (as the dominant discourse would have it). A person is recognised as a leader when others recognise themselves in what that person is saying and/or doing, and in recognising themselves they come to recognise that person as a

leader. Leadership emerges in interaction. It is co-created in social processes of mutual recognition (2018, p. 47).

What I find particularly persuasive in the above quotation is Flinn's assertion that leadership emerges in interaction, as co-creation in a process of mutual recognition. This implies that leadership cannot be separated from the patterns of micro-interactions, in which it emerges. We can influence these interactions, and thereby the emergence of leadership, but not control them. During the IFI meeting, I tried to influence the interactions in attempts to gain recognition of my views and as a leader, but I was not able to control the interactions nor whether others would accord such recognition.

Flinn argues persuasively that leadership is associated with sense-making, reflexivity, and practical judgement which, in relation to leadership, he defines as summarised in the table below (2018, pp. 36; 69–75).

Leadership aspects	Explanations
Sense-making	Is establishing patterns in interactions between people and articulating an understanding that resonates with others. It is an ongoing process that is paradoxically both an individual and a social process at the same time.
Reflexivity	Is thinking about one's thinking, which involves questioning the basis of our thinking. It is becoming more detached in one's involvement, which is noticing what is happening and what the patterns are, with a view to asking whether this is useful for oneself and others.
Practical judgement	Is being able to decide what is needed in the moment and involves the articulation of a next step into an unknown future that resonates with oneself and those around one. Further, if realising that something novel is needed, it is also to have the courage to change tack.

These aspects should not be understood as separate, but rather as interdependent and as being in play simultaneously. In other words, they are intertwined elements of the same process, which Flinn refers to as reflexive curiosity (2018, p. 69). Also, importantly, these aspects should not be seen as individual leadership traits, but rather as relational processes evolving in our interactions with others and in our private conversations with ourselves. Such relational leadership processes often involve compromise, I argue.

When the IFI meeting started differently than I expected, it was important for me to try to take a somewhat detached view and use my practical judgement, which involved drawing on my past

experience and anticipations of the future, that is, of how others might react. My decision and action were two-fold and involved: i) interrupting Kasim, although this entailed a risk of reviving the conflict and ii) attempting to 'soften' my interruption and implicit criticism by appreciating actions taken by the IFI. I see the latter aspect of 'softening' as an important part of my identity, and of my leadership, where cooperation and conflict avoidance are vital.

Sense-making and practical judgement were also central in the processes of compromise between Kasim and me. In my view, these processes involved our mutual recognition of each other and what might be important for the other person. I interpret it as an implicit, though perhaps vague, recognition of my leadership when I was 'allowed' to suggest an agenda and explain my views without any interruption by Kasim or other IFI participants. Similarly, in my view, it entailed the recognition of Kasim and his position as a leading member of the IFI team when I did not contradict his summary of my views, despite my disagreement. It strengthened my self-confidence and enhanced my perception of myself as a leader that I had explained my views without reviving the conflict and that, following our compromising, we were moving towards a cooperative atmosphere. Furthermore, I sensed that the processes of compromise, combined with having explained my views, enhanced my leadership status in the eyes of the other participants. As argued in Project 3, influenced by Honneth's interpretation of Hegel's 'general free will', compromising is about adapting to each other and, at the same time, finding ways of doing so without sacrificing our own goals and interests. For me, leadership is closely related to creating or strengthening cooperative relationships and, influenced by my research at the DMan programme, I have come to see leadership, including the strengthening of cooperative relationships, as involving speaking up, which enables others to know what my views are. My further argument is that being skilled at and willing to enter into processes of compromise, with mutual recognition of each other, are important in what I consider relational leadership.

Discussions with DMan colleagues have made me reflect on what role gender might have played in my struggle for leadership. The American professor of management Joyce K. Fletcher (2004) highlights that, as a number of researchers have noted, traits associated with heroic leadership—such as individualism, control, assertiveness, and skills of domination—are generally regarded as masculine in our Western culture. In contrast, post-heroic leadership, which Fletcher summarises as a social process occurring in human interactions with a focus on practices and skills to establish collaboration, is associated with traits—such as empathy, community, vulnerability, and skills of collaboration—generally considered feminine. Fletcher argues that although both women and men can display the two sets of traits, the

gendered expectations are still there and exert subtle, or more explicit, pressures on women to act in feminine and men in masculine ways. This resonates with my experience from work within international development organisations and projects, although I want to caution, as Fletcher also does, against seeing women and men as dichotomies of each other. Women and men do not have innate leadership styles and are influenced by other circumstances than the prevailing gender stereotypes. Furthermore, gender stereotypes and expectations are not static.

Despite these reservations, I agree with Fletcher that prevailing gendered expectations of leadership matter. Working and leading in a cooperative and non-confrontational way, and promoting the same, is an important aspect of my identity and habits, which is influenced by the gender stereotypes of my traditional upbringing and those prevailing within much of the male-dominated technical environment in which I work. However, when interrupting Kasim during the IFI meeting and explaining my views and implicit criticism, I took a considerable risk of reviving or escalating the conflict. Following Fletcher's categorisation, this is likely to be seen as a masculine way of acting in an attempt to have my leadership recognised. I believe it was a mixture of Fletcher's so-called feminine and masculine traits that led to the recognition of my leadership.

In conclusion, I suggest that practical judgement is important for both female and male leaders to decide how best to act in particular situations and that gendered expectations is one of the aspects to consider in this judgement.

Conclusion

In this project, I have explored struggles for recognition of my leadership, which involved both speaking up and compromise. In contrast to the generalisations and simplifications in the dominant discourse on leadership, I argue, as do some other researchers, for example, Cunliffe & Eriksen (2011), and Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003), that research of micro-interactions, everyday politics, and the power relations with which they are intertwined is important for understanding what leadership is about. The events in my narrative can be described as everyday compared with occurrences affecting a whole organisation, such as restructuring, relocation, and retrenchments. However, leadership is also about how we interact in the everyday politics of our work; how a meeting opens, or an insensitive remark, can be important for how we go on together. I argue that details in our micro-interactions are important for us to make sense of what parts speaking up and compromise play in leadership and how compromise might be

experienced. In my analysis, I have attempted to point to and examine the most revealing details in my narrative.

Since writing Project 3, there has been some change in my practice in that I have started to voice my views more often and more clearly in work situations. I still pay attention to my assumptions about the reactions of others, but in my reflections on these, I try not to lose myself and not to give up on what is important for me, which has often evoked a strong sense of loss and sometimes felt like a sacrifice and betrayal of part of my identity. I have recent positive experience from voicing my views to a client and was dissatisfied that I did not have the courage to act in a similar way during the conference call with Kasim, Tom, and their IFI colleagues. This strengthened my determination to speak up and have my views heard during a subsequent face-to-face meeting. Despite the risk of reviving or escalating the conflict, I did follow my strategy.

In my exploration of speaking up, I draw on Foucault and his explication of the Greek concept of *parrhesia*, where he emphasises the important part that risk-taking and being willing to face the consequences play in standing up for one's views and interests. I suggest that the willingness to take risks is an important supplement to Honneth's interpretation of Hegel's 'general free will'. Although we might limit ourselves in recognition of others, we should not sacrifice our identity or views to the interests of others and, as emphasised by Foucault, we should be willing to take risks when speaking up with a view to changing the understanding and/or relationships within a group.

Cooperation and conflict avoidance are vital aspects of my identity and of how I understand leadership and moving towards a cooperative atmosphere was my end-in-view for the IFI meeting. My argument is that this type of leadership often involves processes of compromise and that this might enhance one's leadership status in the view of others, as I sense it did in my narrative when we moved into a cooperative atmosphere. My experience was that the process of compromise led to a new situation that entailed a change in the relationship between us and thereby to novelty. Building on Carroll and Simpson's interpretation (2012) of Mead, I argue that, for such change and novelty to emerge, it was important that Kasim and I, in our process of compromise, were betwixt and between two frames of reference, that is, the past conflictual atmosphere and the intended future cooperative atmosphere, and thereby belonging to both of them. In my view, considering both our past interactions and our intentions for the future was what enabled us to move to the desired future situation and thereby enabled change and novelty to occur.

Compromise probably always involves an initial sense of loss when we adjust to each other and simultaneously make adjustments to ourselves. However, I argue that compromise is not only or primarily about (anticipated or actual) loss. Compromising might later be experienced as novelty and gain, which might override the initial feeling of loss. This was the situation in the IFI meeting when we moved into a new atmosphere of cooperation. As circumstances, relationships, and/or one's own views change, the experience of compromising might change again. In other situations, as Benjamin persuasively highlights, a process of compromise can feel like violation of value commitment(s) and betrayal of part of one's identity but paradoxically at the same time be experienced as the right thing to do as it is honouring one's obligations to others, for example, a politician's obligations as an elected representative of her/his constituents or a leader's obligations to her/his colleagues.

I have earlier argued that processes of compromise occur in the living present, that is, in our ongoing gesturing and responding to each other. Sometimes, our compromising in our everyday interactions might make us adjust or completely revise our ends-in-view, whereas in other situations, processes of compromise might not affect what we aim at. The latter was the case in the IFI meeting where I compromised on my strategy which was to take the lead in the meeting. However, my end(s)-in-view of being recognised for my leadership and of moving towards a cooperative atmosphere remained the same.

Our intentions play a role in our interactions and in the power dynamics between us, as do the habits we have developed based on inter alia prevailing gender stereotypes. Despite my strong disagreement with some authors' tendency to portray women and men in a binary and universal way, I argue that my habits of conflict avoidance, feelings of inferiority, and being soft-spoken are influenced by the gendered expectations in my upbringing and working environment and are recognisable to many women in similar circumstances to mine. My further claim is that there are different expectations of men's and women's leadership, which exert pressures on women to act in feminine and men in masculine ways. In my view, it was a mixture, however, of my assertiveness (speaking up and risking a revival of the conflict), often regarded as a masculine trait, and my focus on cooperation (willingness to compromise), often seen as a feminine trait, that led to the recognition of my leadership, by myself and others. My suggestion is, therefore, that both female and male leaders should reflect on the gendered expectations they encounter, and in each particular situation, based on their practical experience, they

should assess how best to act, which might involve a mixture of what is often referred to as feminine and masculine traits or styles.

In summary, I contend that power dynamics, everyday politics, gendered expectations, and the habits we have formed are important in struggles for leadership. Furthermore, recognition of others and cooperation are vital elements in relational leadership, which often entails processes of compromise. Letting others know what one's views are, with the aim of moving group members to an understanding of each other's views, is an important part of relational leadership and compromising, I argue.

Synopsis of research

Introduction

> Like fire, compromise is both necessary and dangerous to human life. Were we never to accept political compromise on matters of ethical conviction, we would cut ourselves off from large numbers of our fellow humans; were we always to accept it, we would become alienated from ourselves (Benjamin, 1990, p. 3).

My research focuses on compromise and particularly what has evolved into my main puzzle and research question: How and why have I, as well as other people, found ways to move on in some conflictual situations, but not in others—in other words, what does compromise entail? This theme has emerged from my work as a social scientist in a technically oriented environment of international development, where I have experienced my socio-economic views and expertise—as well as those of others—being marginalised in the many discussions of technical aspects. My interactions with others appear to have involved compromise, and I have been uncertain, puzzled, and curious as to what compromise entails, how it is experienced, and how it might influence my attempts to gain recognition of my views. These are aspects I examine in this thesis.

I contend that my habitual way of understanding what goes on at work is not static but evolves over time. My thinking and understanding have thus changed since I started writing Project 1 more than three years ago, much influenced by my research at the DMan programme but also by other occurrences at work and in my life generally. It is with this in mind that I here draw together the research I have presented in four projects in the previous chapters. The synopsis is, therefore, not only a summary of my research but also a critical review and re-examination of the projects from my current standpoint. As explained in the introduction to this thesis, I have presented my research projects in the previous chapters as they were originally written, without updating them as my research progressed, in order to show how my thinking and practice have developed during the process of writing the thesis. In this synopsis, I summarise the key themes and reflections in each project, interwoven with a further reflexive turn on the projects, which in some instances draws on new literature. As part of this, I highlight what I see as being key movements in my thinking and practice during and as part of my research. The synopsis also includes the research methodology, including ethics, and my key arguments, while my contributions to knowledge and practice are set out in a separate chapter. My thesis is not a

retrospective write-up, as most doctoral theses are, but rather one that tracks how my research and understanding of compromise and getting heard have emerged during the research process.

The perspective of complex responsive processes of relating and my research methodology have been essential for the movements in my thinking and practice, and I start, therefore, with firstly a brief explication of key features of this perspective and secondly a methodological explication of how I have conducted my research.

Complex responsive processes of relating—key features

The DMan research programme, which I have followed throughout my research, has emerged from the work of a group of researchers, who developed the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating. They were dissatisfied with the dominant discourse on organisations, where organisations are presented as abstract systems 'in which the ordinary, lived reality of human beings who are actually 'the organization' disappears from view', as one of the founders Ralph Stacey explains (2012, p. 1). The perspective of complex responsive processes brings together, and builds on, insights from several disciplines, as summarised briefly in the introduction to this thesis. Below, I expand on those parts of the perspective and its guiding theories that have influenced me most in my research.

The perspective builds on the process sociology of Norbert Elias and his understanding of power as an inherent aspect of all human relating. Elias's explication of power relations was one of the first theories I drew on in my attempts to understand what was going on in the interactions in my Project 2 narrative. His view of power relations as linked to interdependencies, where people have functions for each other, and to processes of inclusion and exclusion (Elias, 1978; Elias and Scotson, 1994) was elucidating for me, as was how the perspective of complex responsive processes builds on and relates Elias's theories to organisations. Stacey points to how the power struggles, with dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, between, for example, academics and managers in a university or between marketing and production people in a company, directly affect the performance and evolution of the organisation (2012, p. 31). An interrelated influence in my research is Elias's assertion that the outcome of a struggle cannot be predicted; rather, it is from the 'interweaving of countless individual interests and intentions…[that] something comes into being that was planned and intended by none of these individuals' (2000, p. 312).

Secondly, I draw on the perspective regarding how it is guided by the pragmatism of principally George H. Mead to understand the communicative interaction of gesture and response between human beings, with meaning arising as we interact with each other (Mead, 1934; Stacey, 2012, p. 24). Similarly, as both Mead and Stacey explain (albeit 70 years apart), we have private conversations with ourselves, which constitute our mind and thinking (Mead, 1934, p. 47; Stacey, 2003, p. 62). Mead's understanding of the process of gesture and response, which involves anticipations of the reactions of others, has significantly inspired my understanding of compromise as a relational and social process. A further influence from pragmatism on my research is John Dewey's theories, particularly his understanding of values (1934) and habits (1922). Dewey and other pragmatists—including their influence on the perspective of complex responsive processes—have also been important for my research methodology.

Thirdly, the perspective of complex responsive processes is guided by insights from the complexity sciences. This is, for example, the case in its assertion—which is also influenced by Mead—that it is in our micro-interactions with each other that general social patterns emerge, and at the same time, such patterns influence our micro-interactions (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 380). This builds on analogies from the theory of heterogeneous complex adaptive systems; here, computer simulations have shown that, as algorithms/agents organise themselves in their interactions with each other, new forms of individual algorithms/agents and new overall patterns emerge at the same time (Stacey and Mowles, 2016, pp. 321–322). In terms of the key debate in sociology about the relationship between structure and agency, this key insight from the complexity sciences suggests by analogy a paradoxical movement of forming and being formed, both at the same time. I am inspired in my research by Stacey and Mowles's explication of the mutual constitution of general social patterns and micro-interactions, while I do not draw directly on the complexity sciences.

Fourthly, the perspective shares the group analyst S. H. Foulkes's view of the sociality of self, which he held in common with Elias and the pragmatists. This is also the reason why the DMan programme draws extensively on methods inspired by Foulkes (Mowles, 2017, p. 223; see also the description below of research processes on the DMan programme).

The mentioned key features of the complex responsive processes are interrelated in the sense that the interactions between people and our private conversations with ourselves are influenced by our value commitments, our habits, our membership in different groups, and the interweaving of power relations. Furthermore, our micro-interactions form general patterns, with micro-interactions being formed, at the

same time, by general patterns. It is important to emphasise that I have pointed only to some of the aspects of the perspective of complex responsive processes, that is, those which have been particularly important for my research. This is in accordance with the requirement that, as students in the DMan programme, we engage with the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating, without necessarily agreeing with it and until we might find more helpful theories to understand our dilemmas as independent researchers. This does not imply, however, that we are to draw on all its guiding theories; rather, we are encouraged to explore those theories that help us make sense of the puzzles we encounter at work.

Research methodology

As explained above, a central feature of the perspective of complex responsive processes is its interest in conversations and everyday interactions between people, as it is in these that wider patterns emerge and, at the same time, such patterns influence our everyday interactions (Stacey and Griffin, 2005, p. 24; Stacey and Mowles, 2016, p. 380). This perspective and my participation in the DMan programme thus require me to take my everyday work experience seriously and as the basis for my research. An important part of my research methodology and methods is how we work on the DMan programme, and I will start by explaining this.

Processes involved in researching on the DMan programme

As encouraged on the DMan programme, all my projects include narratives from work situations (see below about narrative inquiry) and my reflections on these. In this process, I draw on relevant theories to detect patterns in and new perspectives on my research. I also bring in theories which might state the orthodoxy, or which may have become accepted, in order to problematise them. The literature I bring in is partly about the perspective of complex responsive processes and some of its guiding theories and partly other literature of particular relevance to my research theme and the initial patterns that emerge from my narratives. For my research, the latter has included authors writing about, inter alia, compromise, international development work, and gender. I have reviewed more literature than I draw on directly in my thesis; some authors appeared important in the early iterations of my projects, but after further explorations, including discussions with my learning set and sometimes the wider DMan community, I realised that particular strands of literature did not help me make sense of my narratives and detect patterns in my research. Resonance with my learning set—that is, that they found particular

authors or strands of literature helpful in understanding occurrences in my narratives—has been important in the process of determining which literature was relevant to draw on directly in my projects.

All students and supervisors in the DMan programme meet four times per year at residential weekends. These include sessions led by supervisors or guest lecturers on key themes related to the programme, such as the thinking of the pragmatists, theories about power, emotions in organisations, group processes, research methods, and ethics. There have also been sessions with improvisational theatre, and at all residentials, some students present their work. During each residential, there are three so-called community meetings, which are influenced by Foulkes's group analytic tradition in the treatment of patients. Foulkes highlights the informality and spontaneity in group analytic sessions, with 'free-floating discussion', a minimum of instructions from the conductor, and no set topics (Stacey, 2003, p. 310). Similarly, in the community meetings, there is no fixed theme or agenda, and all students, as well as supervisors, can raise and talk about whatever they think is important for themselves and the group (Mowles, 2017, p. 224), as part of their task of conducting research together and individually. The community meetings provide an opportunity to engage with what is going on in this particular group, observing interactions, and reflecting further on processes of relating, including both those which are specific to the DMan group and those which are generalisable to other groups. The conversations are improvisational and involve reflections on and associations to what others have brought up. In contrast to the group analytic practice, there is no conductor in the community meetings, and the DMan programme is not focused on therapy but doctoral research.

Some students flourish in these meetings, whereas others find them more challenging. I belong to the latter group, in the sense that I have tended to remain quiet, feeling that the conversation had moved on by the time I knew what I wanted to say. Without doubt, my silence was related to fears of appearing incompetent or being ignored, if I had engaged in the kind of improvisation that is necessary for these meetings. My quiet appearance in community meetings can be seen as an example of my habit of generally remaining silent or speaking in a soft-spoken way in large meetings at work, which became a recurrent theme for discussion during DMan residentials. Prior to attending the DMan programme, I had started questioning this habit of silence and its impact in work situations. Despite this, I found many of the DMan discussions highly disturbing, having a feeling that my image of myself and my identity were being questioned by others, but also by myself. Also, when I did speak in community meetings, it tended to be about my silence and potential reasons for this, which disturbed me further. I felt I had more to offer than reflections on my silence and soft-spoken appearance. However, these discussions, combined

with writing Project 3, have made me reflect more thoroughly on my habits of silence and being soft-spoken, the reasons behind these, and how to change them. Dewey describes this process in a way that resonates strongly with my experience: 'Emotion is a perturbation from clash or failure of habit, and reflection, roughly speaking, is the painful effort of disturbed habits to readjust themselves' (1922, p. 76). After writing Project 3, which explores the reasons for my silence in large meetings, I have spoken more often in community meetings than earlier, but I have never been among those who spoke the most. My relative silence, as well as that of others, therefore, continued to be a topic of discussion throughout my DMan research. By the end of it, I have taken the first steps towards changing my old habit of remaining silent or speaking hesitantly in large meetings.

There have also been several discussions in my learning set (three other students and first supervisor) as to whether my relative silence in community meetings has had an impact on the progress of my research. The community meetings are important fora for reflecting on experience, puzzles, and arguments, and my relative silence might have slowed me down, as has been suggested. By not speaking much I have thus missed out on additional experiential material for my research and the ideas of others. Discussions during community meetings have, however, inspired many reflections in my private conversations with myself during and after the meetings and led to further reflections in our smaller learning set, thereby stimulating my thinking and giving me material for my research.

Discussions with my learning set have taken place during quarterly residential weekends and Skype calls. In addition to talking about the themes of the residential and those coming up within our group, we have taken turns to invite the set to comment on our work and discuss what needs to be done next. Before residentials and Skype calls, students have circulated the current iterations of their work and received written comments from other learning set members and at key instances from the second supervisor. By reading and commenting on several iterations of each other's projects, we gained a good knowledge of each other's work situations and the issues with which we are grappling. My learning set has thus been vital for my research, in identifying my research theme, establishing whether a narrative, my interpretations, and reflections make sense and create resonance with others. My four projects have all gone through several iterations, where my understanding and thinking have been challenged, sometimes provoking feelings of anxiety. This was the case, for example, in Project 3 where my learning set challenged my initial interpretation that I had behaved more ethically by remaining silent than would have been the situation had I spoken up against Sasha's centralised approach. Their challenging made me reflect more deeply on Sasha's potential viewpoints and question whether my silence was rather, or

perhaps simultaneously, disrespectful of Sasha, which troubled me deeply. This made me investigate the reasons for my silence, both in the meeting with Sasha and more generally in large meetings.

I sense that the discussions in the learning set about my research sometimes involved processes of compromise, where we adapted to each other's views, which enabled new understandings to emerge. An illustrative example of this is that one of my fellow researchers suggested, on several occasions, that we all have a moral obligation to speak up in public, whereas I was unsure and referred to the influence I had gained from speaking in smaller groups. This discussion became more specific when I explored, in Project 4, what speaking up entails. I sensed that our discussions here involved compromising, entailing adaptations to each other's views, with a new understanding emerging that the obligation of speaking up publicly is related to the purpose of this being larger than one's own interests, meaning that it feels important for others as well as oneself. However, as my learning set knows my research in detail—in other words, they are involved in it—there is also a risk that they might sometimes, perhaps unconsciously, have compromised too much on their original views in our discussions. My second supervisor has played an important role in countering this when reviewing and commenting on my research with further detachment, which has been at least once on each project and several times on the synopsis.

As shown above, my research has been an individual and social process with multiple perspectives on my work, which has made it more rigorous and enabled me to generalise beyond my own views. As Michael Pardales and Mark Girod explain, building on the American pragmatist Charles S. Peirce:

> it is necessary to subject our thinking to standards that lie outside of our own interests, concerns, and reflections. In this way, thinking must continually be subject to a community whose standards allow us to correct and revise our ideas (2006, p. 302).

The notion of a community of inquiry has its origin in the work of Peirce, who uses the term to refer to a group employing interpersonal methods for arriving at results (Pardales and Girod, 2006, p. 301). My community of inquiry has been my learning set, the wider DMan community, and to a lesser extent, close work colleagues with whom I have discussed my research. As I develop as a researcher, it is incumbent on me to widen this circle beyond the DMan community, including my final examiners, eventually to seek publication.

Having explained key structures and elements of how we work on the DMan programme, I now turn to why in research on relational aspects of work it is important to explore our micro-interactions with each other.

Micro-interactions and experience

I argue that research on relational aspects of work, such as power relations between different actors and their processes of compromise, is important to engage with, in our attempts to understand how they influence, for example, the implementation of activities, relationships, and the cooperation between the actors involved. I agree with Kelemen and Rumens that quantification plays a vital part in helping organisations to manage and improve their everyday activities, but that often it is not considered or recognised that quantification is embedded in political and power relations (2008, p. 129). It is thus not possible to quantify processes of compromise in a way that would be helpful; it is possible to quantify, for example, time used on meetings and phone calls during a week, but it would not tell us much, if anything, about, for example, people's motivation or particular relationships. My assertion is, therefore, that processes of compromise and other relational aspects of work cannot be fully explored through linear approaches and quantitative indicators, which dominate international development work (see Project 2 for further explication). Research on relational aspects requires a qualitative approach with the exploration of what goes on in the micro-interactions between us. An example is that it can be important for future relationships how a meeting opens, as it was in Project 4 when Kasim opened our conference call by indicating that we as consultants were not sharing important information with him and his colleagues. This introduced a 'them' versus 'us' relationship, which continued throughout the call and to some extent after the call.

Furthermore, influenced by Stacey and Mowles (2016, p. 380), who build on Mead, I suggest that it is in our fine-grained interactions with each other that general patterns evolve within a particular working area or the wider society. At the same time such patterns, or in Mead's terms, our tendencies to act (1925, pp. 266–268), form our detailed interactions. In other words, micro-interactions and general patterns are mutually constitutive.

My work experience emerges from fine-grained interactions with others, where the experience is an aspect of my everyday activities and engagement with others (Brinkmann, 2012, p. 38). As suggested by Frank Martela, building on pragmatism: 'as human beings we can never escape our embeddedness

within the world of experiencing into which we are thrown as actors' (2015, p. 539). Similarly, I am a participant in my research, as all other researchers are in their research, and there is no completely detached way for me of exploring what is going on from the position of an objective observer; rather, the research stance is one of simultaneous involvement and detachment (Hastrup, 1992; Stacey and Griffin, 2005, p. 2).

As a researcher, I am influenced by my particular history and group memberships, which Dewey explains in an illuminating way:

> We do not approach any problem with a wholly naïve or virgin mind; we approach it with certain acquired habitual modes of understanding, with a certain store of previously evolved meanings, or at least of experiences from which meanings may be educed (1910, p. 106).

I have been guided by an aspiration of achieving some degree of detachment in the research process, at the same time as being a participant (see also below under narrative inquiry and reflexivity).

I am using narrative inquiry as an important part of my research methodology, involving an exploration of micro-interactions between me and others as well as my private conversations with myself.

Narrative inquiry

One of the founders of the perspective of complex responsive processes, Ralph Stacey, explains the appropriateness of narrative inquiry as follows.

> The form of expression that is relevant to practical judgment in highly ambiguous and uncertain situations is that of narrative…because it is in the detail of the narrative that we find ourselves participating in that we can express the themes emerging in our experience, as well as the details of context, that enable us to form judgments on what is going on and what we might do as the next step (2012, p. 111).

Similarly, Barbara Czarniawska describes narratives as the main device for making sense of social life and action (2004, p. 11), while Carl Rhodes and Andrew D. Brown suggest that it is 'the ability to engage reflexively with the lived experience of work that is a key methodological advantage of narrative approaches' (2005, pp. 179–180). In other words, a narrative is more than recordings or summaries of

what different persons said; it is also about, for example, how people speak, their facial expressions or other bodily gestures they make, their feelings, and about the context in which the interactions take place. Using a narrative inquiry thus provides me with an opportunity to explore temporal and dynamic aspects, that is, the history of, for example, relationships, contradictions, and processes of compromise.

The narratives represent the data or raw material for my research inquiry. They are, however, not data in the traditional sense as something 'given' that we can collect and perhaps code. Instead, my narratives should be understood in the way that Svend Brinkmann (2014) explains data as produced, constructed, or in Dewey's words as 'taken', rather than 'given'. Data or rather instances in qualitative inquiry are thus selected for a purpose to describe a problem or a mystery and identify ways to understand and possibly resolve it. The narratives I have included in my research are thus accounts from work situations of processes that I found puzzling, particularly interesting, and could be described as breakdowns in my understanding (Brinkmann, 2012, pp. 12–13). Importantly, the narratives which I included have a relation to my research theme of processes of compromise. In the selection of my narrative for Project 2, the 'criteria' were not as clear as this, though. In my first iterations of the narrative, I saw the breakdowns in my understanding to be about struggles for recognition of my views and those of others, which was the potential theme I had identified in Project 1. It was discussions with my learning set and other research colleagues that enabled me to detect the role that negotiations and compromise might play in my puzzles both in the specific narrative and more generally in my work as a social scientist in a technically oriented environment. Compromise thus became my research theme, which was reflected in the further details I included in later iterations of the narrative about, for example, how Masud and I adapted to each other's views or requirements, indicating a process of compromise, and thereby enabling us to start the second socio-economic survey.

For a narrative to be a valid source of data, it has to make sense to and resonate with the experience of others, in other words, to be identifiable and persuasive to them (Stacey and Griffin, 2005, p. 27). My learning set has played an important role here. It is not only my reflections, analyses, and theorising that have been influenced by discussions in my learning set but, as indicated above, also my narratives have gone through several iterations. It can be seen as a limitation or a risk that such revisions of the narratives might take them further and further away from the original experience. However, there is not one *true* description of my original experience; in the first iteration, I might have left out some details which I did not consider important, and/or I might have highlighted some aspects which did not appear important later. In other words, comments on and discussions of my narratives pointed to potential

'blind spots' in my descriptions and gave rise to different perspectives on my experience. Examples are that, after discussions in my learning set, I added details about negotiations and compromising as well as instances of gossiping (all essential to understanding the politics of the relationships) to my Project 2 narrative, which broadened my reflections on what was significant in the narrative.

What I have found most challenging in the writing of narratives has been to gain sufficient detachment from my emotional reactions in the particular work situations, enabling me to pay closer attention to the reactions of others and their potential intentions. Here, I have found discussions with both my learning set and work colleagues helpful. An example of the latter is from Project 2, where discussions with my work colleague Frederik enabled me to reflect on the conflictual situation with Masud, and on my narrative, with greater detachment. I thus experienced myself as being able to imagine better what the perspectives of Masud and others on the conflict might be, which influenced my reflections on and analysis of our interactions.

My narrative inquiry is about detecting puzzles and breakdowns in my understanding, which drive abductive reasoning. The latter is another important part of my research methodology, as is reflexivity.

Abductive reasoning and reflexivity

A distinction is often made between three ways of reasoning in research: i) induction, which is a data-driven analysis building on the idea that data lead to theory; ii) deduction, which is theory-driven and concerned with the testing of hypotheses; and iii) abduction, which is driven by breakdowns in our understanding, surprise, or puzzles (Brinkmann, 2012, 2014). Abduction was proposed by Peirce in the early 1900s as a third form of reasoning, which Martela—building on Peirce—links to imagination, creativity, and possibly a learning process (2015, p. 248). This is elucidated further by Martela:

> The aim of abductive inference is to arrive at the best available explanation taking all into account—one's observations, one's pre-understanding, and any other material available such as previous theoretical explanations about the phenomenon. 'Best' here thus does not refer to any objectively best explanation, but to the best explanation from the point of view of the current standards of evaluation of the particular researcher or research community with regard to the values they see that science should advance (2015, p. 548).

Abductive inference involves a continuous movement between my pre-understanding, my provisional data in the form of narratives, existing theories as well as challenges and suggestions from my learning set and the wider DMan community, in other words, my community of inquiry. This is an iterative process, which is reflected in the six to nine iterations I have shared with my learning set of each of my four projects. Further movements in my understanding of what was going on in my different narratives occurred when writing this synopsis. For example, when writing the synopsis, I realised the importance of habit in my tendency to be soft-spoken and silent in large groups, which led to the exploration of Dewey's notion of habit and its relations to norms, or customs in Dewey's explication. Comments from my learning set on my first write-up of a project or the synopsis led me to a wide reading of relevant literature, re-reading of my narrative, and further reflections. There was no planned sequence of this; rather, it has been a constant movement between the mentioned activities, guided by my theme of compromising and my puzzles at the particular time. My research has also influenced the way I have acted in particular situations; a clear example of this was when I discussed my goals and strategy for a future client meeting with my learning set, a meeting which became part of the Project 4 narrative.

I acknowledge limitations in my research methodology in that it might be difficult to generalise from a limited number of micro-interactions at work which are observed and analysed from a first-person perspective. Some might view such accounts and analyses as too subjective for them to constitute valid research. I have, however, attempted to mitigate these limitations through discussions in, and challenges from, my learning set, the wider DMan community, and close work colleagues. My claim is that the validity of my research has emerged from the resonance that my experience, interpretations, and arguments have with my learning set, my second supervisor, the wider DMan community, close work colleagues, and with what I have found in relevant literature.

The aim of abduction is not to arrive at fixed and universal knowledge, but rather to arrive at what Dewey refers to as *warranted assertions*, which are 'outcomes of inquiry that are so settled that we are ready to act upon them, yet remain always open to be changed in the future' (Martela, 2015, p. 540). Consistent with pragmatic thinking, my research conclusions and arguments are thus provisional, and not *the* truth. They should still, however, provide plausible explanations, or warranted assertions, related to my research theme. Reflexivity plays an important role in arriving at such assertions.

Mowles explains reflection as our ability to detach ourselves from our involvement, whereas reflexivity 'calls into question how we know what we know and how we have come to know it…We 'bend back' (*re-*

flectere) our thinking on itself and on ourselves in order to understand our role in understanding what it is we are trying to understand' (2015, pp. 60–61). When taking a reflexive stance, I am asking how I have come to think as I do, how history and the traditions which I am part of have influenced me and others. An example of this is that, in the course of writing Project 1, I realised that my father's engagement in community affairs and local politics has had a strong influence on the importance I attach to consultations with local communities and taking their views seriously.

I view reflexivity as a social activity, which has occurred during my research in conversations with my learning set and others as well as in my private conversations with myself. The latter has involved my anticipations of how others might react to my reflections and interpretations, as Mead describes in a compelling way (1934; see also Project 3). I have used a reflexive approach in the interpretations of the particular work situations appearing in the narratives and, importantly, also when identifying generalisable patterns and arguments. Consistent with Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldberg's suggestion that wide reading is essential in our reflexive work (2009, pp. 271–280), I have explored relevant literature across several disciplines such as anthropology, management theory, philosophy, psychology, and sociology, as well as the cross-cutting theory of complex responsive processes of relating. This has enabled me to bring a variety of perspectives into my research and determine what is or might be generalisable. As mentioned, discussions with my learning set, my second supervisor, and the wider DMan community have also deepened my reflexive thinking and enabled me to gain a more detached perspective, at the same time as still being much involved in my research. As Elias explains, we are always involved and detached at the same time, but which of the two modes is most prominent differs according to context (1987, pp. lxviii–lxxii). It is through this reflexivity, with simultaneous involvement and detachment, that I have worked towards as rigorous and generalisable understandings and theoretical arguments as possible.

My methodology is not unique in its emergent approach and in being influenced by pragmatism. For example, grounded theory, which was developed from the 1960s by the two sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, is similar in those respects but is different in other ways. Firstly, grounded theory uses an inductive approach which is data-driven with the construction of concepts and categories based on qualitative data (Corbin, 2017), whereas in my abductive inquiry, the qualitative data, that is, the narratives, are selected based on puzzles related to my research theme. Secondly, grounded theory research follows a highly structured approach which appears to be partly built on a statistics processing model (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, p. 73), while my research process is more fluid and my

methodology more open, allowing for exploration of various aspects of my experience. Thirdly, emotional reactions often appears to be disregarded in grounded theory research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, pp. 66–67), while the different emotional reactions of others and myself in my narratives are key indicators of what is important for us individually and in our relationships and, therefore, also for my research on processes of compromise.

I mention specific feelings and emotions in my narratives and reflections, for example, frustration, anger, irritation, annoyance, embarrassment, anxiety, relief, and confidence. In some instances, I refer to bodily reactions such as starting to tremble, a knot starting to tighten in my stomach, my heart pounding hard, and facial expressions indicating disagreement. In Project 3, I refer several times to emotions in a more general way, such as strong bodily reactions and being emotionally affected, often indicating that this was in a negative way. In the Project 3 narrative, I had to choose between conflicting value commitments, which evoked strong emotions, feeling that I had given up something of importance. I found it difficult to specify what these emotions were about until, towards the end of the project, I link them to feelings of loss and alienation from myself and what I consider important. It was puzzles and reflections around my strong emotional reactions, including discussions with my learning set and close work colleagues, that made me explore theories about values and their link to emotions (Joas, 2008, p. 90). As Burkitt concludes, 'emotions are best seen as complex, ambivalent, unpredictable, and ultimately as difficult to govern as the social relations they both emerge from and feed into' (2014, p. 167). In other words, our emotions are relational, interwoven with our thoughts, and are part of our gesturing and responding to each other. It has, therefore, been important to describe emotions—both mine and those of others, the latter being assumptions based on, for example, bodily gestures—in my narratives and integrate them in my reflections and discussions with my research community.

In addition to pragmatism, my research methodology and methods are inspired by those of ethnography, particularly autoethnography.

Ethnography and autoethnography

Ethnography can be described as an inquiry into a social world that may be defined by, for example, geography, ethnicity, or class. However, it is more than the cataloguing of customs and habits. It is about thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973), which show the history and agency of the people appearing in them (Ingold, 2014, p. 385)—and this is also how I would describe my narrative inquiry. Traditionally, ethnography has been associated with fieldwork in a country other than that of the researcher, and

often for fairly long periods of time (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2009, p. 85); today it also takes place within the researcher's home country. Whereas ethnographic inquiries often include some reflections on the researcher's involvement in the research, autoethnography takes this much further by having the researcher at the centre of the inquiry.

According to Mariza Méndez, autoethnography emerged in the mid-1980s as a strand of ethnography, with a view to placing greater emphasis on the ways in which ethnographers interact with the cultures being researched, allowing them to put their own experience at the centre (2013, p. 280). Autoethnography, which often involves narratives, is about personal experience, including in relationships and interactions with others. Carolyn Ellis describes autoethnography as involving a 'back-and-forth movement between experiencing and examining a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of that experience' (2007, p. 14), which resonates with my experience from writing, analysing, and discussing my narratives. I have, for example, felt particularly vulnerable—and exposed—when writing about the many discussions at the DMan residentials of my tendency to remain silent in large meetings, both in DMan community meetings and at work, and about the strong feelings these discussions evoked in me. However, these discussions have made me reflect more deeply on my habits of silence and being soft-spoken and have played an important part in the development of my arguments and in my gradual change of practice. It has, therefore, been important for me to include these discussions, and my reactions to them, in this thesis.

My research has many similarities with autoethnography in that it includes narratives about my personal experience of interacting with others, my thoughts, and feelings as well as those of others, where I have been able to identify these. However, my methodology is also somewhat different from autoethnography. My research could be referred to as collaborative research, due to the multi-dimensional perspectives I have obtained from the many discussions with my community of inquiry, which is my learning set and the wider DMan community. However, it is not collaborative autoethnography in the way this is often understood as involving two or more researchers who contribute to the research with data generation, analysis, and writing, in other words, co-author the research (Lapadat, 2017, p. 598). An example of collaborative, co-authored autoethnographic or autobiographic research is that of Lapadat et al. (2010), where eight adults in a university setting in Canada wrote, shared, and theorised memories of life challenges they had experienced. According to the authors, this process of collaboration was 'a route to insight, a way to build community, and a means to democratize research' (2010, p. 78). Co-authored research like this example is one way of

incorporating multi-dimensional perspectives into research, while my methodology incorporates a variety of perspectives in a different way. I have systematically shared, received comments, and discussed my narratives, reflections, and analyses primarily with my learning set and second supervisor, but also with other DMan colleagues, as explained in further detail in the above section about the DMan research programme. Collaboration is thus a vital part of my methodology, but, in the end, I am the author who has to take responsibility for my research. In other words, my research methodology is collaborative but not collective.

Another difference between the two types of research is that, in collaborative co-authored research, it might be possible to anonymise each collaborating researcher to some degree (Lapadat, 2017, p. 599), whereas this is not possible in my research, where I am mentioned as the sole author. The latter also makes it easier for others appearing in my narratives to be recognised by themselves and perhaps by others. This leads me to my ethical considerations when conducting the research.

Research ethics

Although my personal work experience is at the centre of the narratives and my reflections on processes of compromise, power relations, struggles for recognition, and so forth, these narratives and reflections inevitably involve and feature other people. There are thus also several ethical aspects to consider in my autoethnographic accounts (Ellis, 2007; Lapadat, 2017).

Due to the evolving nature of my research, I—and other researchers at the DMan programme—have to make ethical judgements continuously, for example, in relation to what to include in a narrative, what to exclude, and the implications such inclusion/exclusion might have for those appearing in the narrative and for my research. Also, it could not be determined in advance who would appear in my narratives, especially as the focus is on breakdowns in my understanding. This has made it difficult to inform people in advance that they would (or might) appear in my narratives. I have informed my immediate colleagues, however, about my participation in the DMan programme and that this involves writing about my personal work experience, including my interactions with others. My immediate colleagues are thus aware of my research theme of compromise, key aspects of my research methods, and that they might appear in my narratives. The latter could have made them act somewhat differently towards me, though this is not my experience. I have also taken the opportunity to inform others, for example,

client representatives appearing in Project 4, about my research and its focus on my personal work experience.

Each individual appearing in my narratives is pseudonymised. This has involved a change of names of persons, organisations, and locations, and I have left out particular characteristics which might have made them recognisable. Where it made sense, I have avoided the use of names and locations, and I have not referred to specific dates. Furthermore, I have been careful to represent others appearing in my narratives and reflections in ways that I believe would be recognisable to them—though I can never be sure that this is the case—without their identity being revealed. This is with a view to representing their actions fairly, while their confidentiality is respected. Despite my efforts of anonymisation, some might identify themselves in my narratives, were they to read my thesis, and they might also be identified by others who know them well. I have encouraged most of those who might be most at risk of being recognised to read what I wrote about them and provide their comments. Most have done so and have commented that the narratives give a good or an appropriate account of the particular work situation and their role in it. People appear in my narratives, however, with whom I no longer have any contact. Also, I have assessed it to be too sensitive to ask or encourage a few people to read my narrative(s), because of concerns that it might jeopardise our work relationship. There is a risk that those who have not had the opportunity to comment on the narratives and my reflections might feel misrepresented, were they to read and recognise themselves in my thesis. This has posed an ethical dilemma with a choice between i) not including a narrative because for various reasons people appearing in it have not had an opportunity to read the narrative in advance of publication and ii) including the narrative because the situation appears important for the exploration of my research theme. I have chosen the latter option in some of my projects. Furthermore, while having carefully anonymised all others appearing in my narratives, I have tried to ensure that this did not alter the contents of my research and what I want to draw attention to. One of the ethical dilemmas that I encountered in the research process was whether to mention a special characteristic of a person appearing in one of the narratives. Some in my learning set considered it important to mention this characteristic as it seemed to influence my strategies, which I acknowledged at the time that it might have. However, I was concerned that mentioning this would considerably increase the risk of the person being recognisable. After further considerations, I decided not to include this special feature. Later, I realised that the feature was not important, after all. Another ethical dilemma I faced was whether to encourage a colleague appearing in my thesis to read parts of it. I was concerned how this person would

react and how it might influence our future work relationship. In the end, I gave her/him the whole thesis, and we had a friendly and open discussion.

Lapadat points to the researcher vulnerability in autoethnographic work, where researchers publish in their own names and, therefore, are not protected by anonymisation. As she points out, writing about personal experience might help the autoethnographic researcher make sense of this, but it also constitutes a risk of stigma, negative judgements, and undesired work consequences (2017, p. 594). The eventual publication of my thesis, with its narratives and reflections on my work experience and on the research process, will be under my name, which makes me vulnerable to negative judgements. I might also receive positive response, however, or a mixture of positive and negative judgements, both of which might be useful for my further reflections and those of others.

The above means, as the DMan graduate Kiran Chauhan suggests in his thesis, that

> ethics remain a live issue throughout the [research] process—assessments are made constantly about the competition between the potential impacts of using a narrative upon those described and on the researcher themselves, versus its importance for the deepening [of the] research inquiry (2019, p. 171).

Ethical considerations have been discussed regularly during the DMan residentials, both in plenary sessions and in my learning set. Such discussions have been about ethics related both specifically to our research and to what it means to behave ethically in our interactions with others at work. Trying to be ethical at work constitutes part of my research ethics, I would say, as my research is about situations at work. I thus view ethical considerations as an important and inherent aspect of processes of compromise. As elaborated in my arguments below, I assert that compromising entails recognition of, and mutual adaptations to, each other's views. This involves being accountable to each other, avoiding causing harm to others at the same time as not fully sacrificing what feels important for oneself and one's identity.

The following is a summary and critical review of my four research projects from my current standpoint. It thus includes a further reflexive turn on the projects, which draws on new literature in some instances.

Project 1—Recognition and values in international development work

Project 1 is an account of and reflections on the main influences, themes, and occurrences at work, and of how these have shaped my thinking as it was at the time of writing Project 1. The account is not only about me, though, but importantly also about others around me and our relationships, influenced by our different histories and group memberships.

My first employment was at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where, after a few years, I moved into international development work. I was curious to learn more about related theories and perspectives, however, and in the early 1990s, I enrolled for my MSc studies in international development. These studies have had a strong influence on both my thinking and my practice, as explained below.

Focus on the particular and diversity

Reading different development theories and critiques of the same (e.g., Sorensen, 1989; Hettne, 1990) made me reflect seriously on the extensive use in international development work of linear models and approaches as well as quantitative indicators, and how they make it difficult to discover and explore differences and inequalities within a country, for example, between ethnic groups, socio-economic groups, and women and men within these. An example is the logical framework approach (LFA) with its causally linked objectives, outputs, activities, inputs, and a set of indicators with quantitative targets (NORAD 1996, p.12; see Projects 1 and 2 for further critique of linear and quantitative approaches). During these reflections, I came across a book by the Danish anthropologist Kirsten Hastrup (1992), a book to which I have frequently returned. Hastrup emphasises the importance of focusing on the particular and on diversity. This involves taking the cultural and historical context into account in our research and work, which resonated—and still resonates—strongly with my experience in working with international development interventions. Hastrup's objection to the tendency to view population groups in African and Asian countries as victims also mirrored my experience and view; rather, as Hastrup argues, these groups consist of active human beings with agency, meaning that they attempt to influence their own situations in a variety of ways.

I had questioned, before my MSc studies, generalisations about populations and population groups, but reading Hastrup (1992) and other authors, such as third-world feminists (e.g., Mohanty 1991), gave me a

better foundation when arguing for the importance of recognising the diversity and inequality within populations, that is, the diversity in the situations and views of various groups and sub-groups in different settings in both non-Western and Western parts of the world. My current research has further strengthened and widened my commitment to taking the situations and views of others seriously, inter alia by paying more attention to—and reflecting, or trying to reflect, with more detachment on— relational aspects, such as power dynamics and processes of compromise.

In Project 1, I indicate that the practical implementation or, in Mead's terminology, functionalisation of key principles and values in international development interventions often involves compromise, and I question whether, generally, I paid sufficient attention to such compromising. With further detachment, this mention of compromise strikes me as rather general. Therefore, I attempt to particularise and explain its context in further detail below.

Values and compromise in international development work

My reflection in Project 1 on compromise evolved from a conflictual situation in an international development programme in Asia, where it was found that many household latrines constructed in ethnic minority villages were not used, according to villagers because of their reluctance to use the particular type of latrine. It also emerged that the villagers had not been given a choice between different types of latrines, although community-level communication and decision-making was a key principle of the programme. In Project 1, I reflect on my feelings of guilt vis-à-vis the poor ethnic minority families and on the process of functionalising the programme's rather abstract key principles. The latter can be characterised as cult values or idealisations which need to be functionalised in particular situations (Mead, 1923), which might often involve—as I mention in a general statement in Project 1—compromises due to conflicting priorities. The incident makes me question, in Project 1, whether the potential competing values and conflicting priorities of the provincial director had been (sufficiently) considered. I speculate that probably the programme's key principles were relatively new to the director, who worked in an administrative system with a high degree of control where reaching construction targets was essential.

Rereading this, I realise that my speculations might appear somewhat paternalistic vis-à-vis the director, especially as the international development programme was in its fourth year. What I do not explain in Project 1 is that, intertwined with the international development programme, the director was

implementing a national programme, which had a strong focus on the construction of latrines and water supply facilities. The director might thus have been under particular pressure to show construction progress at the time of the incident and might have feared that consultations with ethnic minority families would delay his construction. Finally, the director's dependence on funding from the international development agency might have made him reluctant to discuss his constraints with others. In this particular situation, the rather abstract programme principle of community-level communication and decision-making had not been functionalised or, in other words, not implemented. The provincial director might, however, still have experienced the situation as involving compromise due to conflicting priorities and principles, such as reaching construction targets, time constraints, poverty focus, and community-level decision-making. In my experience, conflicting priorities and interests are a prevalent feature of international development work, which the French anthropologist Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan has described illuminatingly as an arena, where various actors struggle with each other for inter alia stakes of power, influence, and prestige (2005, p. 71), a process, which often involves compromise, with power relations typically tilted in favour of the international development agencies and their frequent preconditions for financial support. Such power relations influence processes of compromise, where those in the less powerful situation might often adapt their views more than the more powerful, as explained in more detailed in my review of Project 3 below.

In Project 1, I also write about my struggles for recognition, for myself and others, the evolving power dynamics, and compromise—and sometimes refusal to compromise.

Struggles and compromise

Struggles for recognition appear to have been a recurring experience in my life. This was the situation when my immediate superiors and my colleagues recognised my international development expertise, while this expertise was not officially recognised by the ministry where I worked. Administrative rules made it impossible for me to move out of the administrative staff category, in which I was originally employed, and I eventually resigned. In Project 1, I blame the outcome of my struggle on the rigid rules and, implicitly, on HR staff for not being willing to negotiate and compromise. However, I appreciate now that I had not been willing to negotiate or compromise either, which meant that the only option left for me was to resign (or be dismissed). If I had complied with the ministry's rules requiring me to take an administrative position in Warsaw, it might have been possible to negotiate an agreement guaranteeing my return to an international development position after one or two years. This situation

illustrates that parties engaged in a conflict are not always willing to compromise, that is, to adapt to the views and interests of others (see Project 2 for further explanation), which can result in the end of a working relationship. It was important for me to continue working with international development, and I was not willing to compromise on this. In hindsight, my assumption is that the HR staff's main concern was that compromising on ministry rules in my case would have set a precedent, which others might refer to in the future. A compromise in my situation might have made it difficult for the ministry to maintain the rules or to implement them as strictly as they had done previously.

I have also struggled for recognition of my management role and capabilities. The narrative I bring into Project 1 is from the same programme in Asia as referred to above. This involved a power struggle where international advisers tried to undermine my management position and exclude me from important discussions. In Project 1, I draw briefly on Elias's perspective on power in my attempt to understand what was going on. He uses the illustrative metaphor of people playing a game to explain the interdependency between individuals or groups involved in a game and the interweaving of power relations when we attempt to strengthen our positions and influence in our micro-interactions with each other (1978, pp. 71–103). As an example, when one of the advisers, Adam, asked me to move my base from the capital to the provinces, I was shocked and attempted to convince him that his 'proposal' did not make sense. When this failed, I discussed with other colleagues and later with the responsible development agency officer—both about this particular incident and about other disagreements between the advisers and me—to gain support and allies. What I did not recognise, when writing Project 1, as potentially being of significance was that my strategic moves focused on the forming of alliances through discussions in smaller groups and with influential individuals, in attempts to have my views heard and gain influence in this way, rather than through repeated direct discussions with Adam and the other advisors. The reliance on discussions in smaller groups and alliances ties in with the strategy I have used in many other situations, which I take up in Projects 2 and 3. Based on our discussions and future cooperation, I believe that Adam—and at least some of the other advisers—respected me for taking the issues up with others, enabling us to move on in a situation in which we had become stuck.

My observations in Project 1 are that I lost the struggle in the ministry for official recognition of my international development expertise due to inflexible rules, while in the programme in Asia I won the struggle for recognition from the international advisors, national directors, and programme staff of my management role, which involved having strengthened my influence within the programme. These observations focus, however, on my goals only and do not recognise those of others nor our histories

together. Recognition is not a one-way but rather a reciprocal process, where the parties involved limit their respective desires to the benefit of the other (Honneth, 2014, pp. 16–17) or, in other words, recognise each other's interests. In the case of the ministry, neither HR staff nor I were willing to recognise each other's interests officially or to attempt to find another solution by compromising. In contrast, in the later parts of my struggle for recognition within the international development programme, Adam, other advisors, and I did—during our many discussions—to some extent recognise each other's views and positions. This enabled us to adapt somewhat to each other, through a process that can be described as compromising, thereby creating a more cooperative working atmosphere and relationship. In my view, this outlines a more nuanced explication of the outcomes of the two struggles than indicating winners and losers.

By the end of Project 1, I had outlined a research theme around struggles for recognition of my views and those of others. There were also other themes that I considered important for puzzles around my work as a social scientist, including, for example, negotiations, power relations, and our commitment to different values. I found it difficult to limit myself to one theme until, during meetings with DMan colleagues about my Project 2 narrative, we discussed the theme of compromise and what this might entail. In hindsight, I sense that arriving at compromise as my research theme involved a process of compromise in itself. At first, I experienced it as a loss that I could not explore in-depth all the other themes in which I was interested. However, as it developed, my research on compromise came to involve the exploration of elements of most other themes which I felt initially I had had to give up. My initial sense of loss therefore gradually disappeared, influenced by my new understanding of how the different themes were interwoven and taken up in my continued research on compromise.

Project 2—Processes of compromise in everyday politics

Project 2 starts with a narrative from an international development project in Asia. Here, a conflict evolved primarily between Masud, the director of a local engineering company responsible for providing national consultants, and me as my company's project manager responsible for socio-economic aspects. We were to conduct socio-economic surveys, which Masud wanted his technical staff to conduct, while I wanted the interviewers to have socio-economic qualifications. After negotiations, we agreed to use socio-economic students as interviewers for the first survey. The conflict escalated in connection with the second survey where, after much negotiation, I issued a threat to withhold the next payment to Masud's company. Masud's reaction was a furious e-mail to Richard, my international team leader colleague. In this e-mail, Masud did not recognise the socio-economic expertise of the national socio-

economist Shirina and myself, which angered me. However, in our subsequent e-mail correspondence, neither Masud nor I referred to my threat or to Masud's reaction to it. Instead, we agreed on a third alternative for how to conduct the survey.

In summary, the narrative is about everyday struggles, power relations, our different intentions, forming of alliances, and compromising. For me, the struggle revolved around the expertise needed to conduct the surveys appropriately, while Masud might have experienced this differently, which I return to below.

Power relations, alliances, and processes of inclusion and exclusion

As explained in Project 2, Elias's elucidation of the dynamic and unpredictable nature of our micro-interactions and power relations as well as his explication of our interdependencies (1978) resonate with my experience both in the narrative and more generally. There was thus a clear interdependency between Masud and me, although my position as the project manager might generally have weighted our power relations in my favour. Our attempts to create alliances is an illustration of the complex, dynamic, and fluid nature of our power relations. There was a stable alliance between Shirina and me, whereas Richard appeared to be in temporary and shifting alliances, sometimes with Masud and at other times with me. These alliances were across partner organisations, which might appear unusual, as I mention in Project 2.

However, after rereading it, I realise that I do not explain clearly in Project 2 that Shirina was a free-lance consultant, hired by Masud for the first time for this particular assignment. Shirina was dependent on Masud for her salary, but she did not have a strong sense of loyalty to him and his company, rather to the contrary due to their conflictual relationship. At the same time, she and I had a common cause in wanting an appropriate exploration of the situations and views of different population groups as well as recognition of our expertise as socio-economists. In contrast, I experienced Richard's temporary alliance with Masud as an act of disloyalty—probably because Richard and I had been colleagues in the same company for 25 years—while Richard might have considered his alliance as a way to avoid further delays in project activities. These further reflections indicate the complexity of alliances, which can be formed for a variety of reasons and take different forms. Influenced by my further research, I now view my conclusion that *alliances across partner organisations appear unusual* as a simplification. Partnerships vary, both within international development work and generally, and so does the contexts in which alliances are formed and the relationships between those involved.

Power relations often involve processes of inclusion in and exclusion from group(s) when we interact with each other (Scott, 1990; Elias and Scotson, 1994). In Project 2, I explore such processes mainly in relation to areas of expertise—where I worked as a social scientist in a technically dominated environment—which was what the struggle between Masud and me was primarily about, seen from my perspective. As indicated in Project 2, it is possible Masud might rather have perceived the processes to be around nationality, interwoven with our contractual arrangements, where Masud's local company acted as a sub-consultant to Richard's and my international company. In Project 2, I do not explore this much, though I point out that our alliances were across nationalities. At the time, I found it difficult to take a detached view of our struggle and imagine what role nationality and race might have played for Masud in what he might have experienced as my interference with his project responsibilities. He might have associated this interference more with the fact that I was a foreigner from the Western world interfering with his responsibilities than with concerns about expertise. Furthermore, Masud's attempt to create an alliance with Richard might have been not only because of the latter's position as team leader but also as a Westerner, who might be more influential in the struggle with another Westerner than Masud as a national director. Uma Kothari refers to 'the authoritative power of whiteness in development' (2006, p. 14), that is, the power of Westerners either employed directly by bilateral or multilateral donors, non-government organisations (NGOs), or consultancy companies. As Kothari explains, this leads to unequal power relations between those who give and those who receive assistance. She presents several examples of how being a white Westerner is often associated with higher competence and influence; one example is of how her competence or influence as a consultant— she is a British citizen of Asian descent—was devalued on an occasion in Asia, where her white colleague was allocated meetings with ministries and international development agencies, while her meetings were with smaller NGOs and lesser government officials (2006, p. 16). Kothari's example illustrates the complexity and intertwining of nationality and race in international development work—she was working as a British consultant for a bi-lateral agency in an Asian country but appeared not to be considered as important and influential as her white colleague; this might have been due to her Asian descent. It resonates with my experience when Kothari suggests that being white and from the West symbolises expertise and influence, for some, which the dichotomy between the 'first world' and the 'third world' also illustrates.

It was in these processes of inclusion and exclusion that Masud, Shirina, and I found a way to move on, to compromise, despite our strong disagreements.

Compromise as a process

At the start of my exploration of compromise in Project 2, I present a dictionary definition, which describes compromise as an agreement, a settlement of a dispute involving concessions, or as acceptance of lower standards. My further research confirms that this definition corresponds to the widespread understanding of compromise in different strands of literature (see the section on key argument 1 below). In contrast to the definition of compromise as an outcome, the Danish DMan graduate Iver Drabæk presents an explication of compromise as a process involving negotiations and as enabling us to move on rather than ending up in a stalemate (2008, p. 78), which resonated—and still resonates—with my experience in the narrative and generally. I continued my search in Project 2 for explanations, mainly drawing on Drabæk (2008) and other authors writing from the perspective of complex responsive processes and their guiding theories (Mead, 1934; Stacey and Griffin, 2008; Simpson, 2009; Stacey, 2012; Mowles, 2015), intertwined with my analysis of the compromising occurring in the interactions between Masud, Shirina, and me. By the end of Project 2, my summarised understanding of compromise was of a process, which involves a give-and-take in our communication, where we adapt to each other. These adaptations are influenced by our anticipation of the reactions of others, both those directly involved in a conversation, but often also in relation to the 'generalized other', that is, the group, the organisation, the society (Mead, 1934, pp. 154–156). Our processes of compromise thus involve conversations with others and with ourselves. As emphasised in Project 2, we are not able to predict the outcome of our compromising; rather, it is a relational process occurring in the living present, influenced by our pasts as well as our wishes and anticipations of the future (Drabæk, 2008).

My understanding of compromise has developed further since writing Project 2, which the following further reflections indicate. In my narrative and analysis, I refer to *a* compromise and to compromises, the latter in the plural, as does Drabæk (2008). This indicates that compromise can be counted, as if it were a thing or an outcome, which is not consistent with my processual and relational view of compromise. This inconsistency reflects partly that, when writing Project 2, I was uncertain at times as to whether it made sense to view compromise as simultaneously a process and an outcome, and partly how difficult it can be to explain processual occurrences clearly. 'Compromising' might thus be a better word than 'compromise' to capture the processual nature of the concept. This concurs with how many contemporary scholars have adopted a process vocabulary, where 'the growing use of the gerund(ing)

indicates the desire to move towards dynamic ways of understanding organizational phenomena' (Langley and Tsoukas, 2010, p. 9). In the same vein, the American scholar Karl Weick posits that using a noun indicates that something is finished and history while using 'ing' in verbs indicates a present as well as a history; in other words, the latter indicates that something is ongoing and that there is movement (2010, pp. 108–109).

Towards the end of Project 2, I indicate my uncertainty as to whether I felt a sense of loss in the processes of compromise between Masud and me, when my ideal solutions were not implemented, but I do not reflect further on this. I thereby missed out on some of the complexity and the temporal aspects of compromising. Influenced by my further research, I identify an initial experience of loss when, in our compromising around the second survey, we agreed to move on with a team of interviewers who were not my preferred team. This sense of loss gradually disappeared, however, when Shirina confirmed that she was training and guiding the interviewers and later indicated that the new interviewers appeared to conduct the interviews appropriately. I was relieved, and I sensed that the same was the case with Shirina.

Although my analysis in Project 2 pays much attention to power relations, including processes of inclusion and exclusion, I do not make a clear link to how our dynamic and evolving power relations influenced, or might have influenced, our processes of compromise. On further reflection, I want to add that my threat of not paying Masud's next invoice was a forceful gesture, which I could make only because of my position as the project manager and the authority this involved. Also, Masud's strong reaction, involving an attempt to exclude Shirina and me from future influence, can be interpreted as an expression of his potential experience of being in the weaker position. Although our compromising entailed mutual adaptations to each other's views, Masud might not have felt that this occurred in an equal way. Rather, his experience might have been that he had to adjust his views more than did Shirina and I.

Project 3—Conflicting value commitments and compromise

The Project 3 narrative emerges from the start-up of a new international development project in Eastern Europe. During the introductory meeting between national and international consultants, I was pulled in different directions by my conflicting feelings. First, I was embarrassed when my colleague, Richard, generalised about planning approaches in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in a patronising way. Out of loyalty to a long-term colleague—and not wanting to display disagreement in our first meeting—I did

not speak up, although our national deputy team leader, Sasha, was clearly annoyed with Richard's generalisations. I had another important private conversation with myself when Sasha presented his centralised approach. I felt an urge to protest but, at the same time, did not want to appear judgemental, as was my experience of Richard earlier. In the end, I remained silent but troubled by the lost opportunity of influencing the project approach. This troubled feeling diminished during later discussions about alternatives to Sasha's centralised approach and when compromising evolved.

To sum up, the narrative is about conflicting feelings, being torn between whether to speak up or remain silent, and about compromising. The narrative revolves around my private conversations with myself, which entailed having to make a choice in a double-bind situation between two mutually exclusive alternatives, where I experienced neither alternative as the right one (Bateson, 1972, pp. 206–208). I had to choose between two conflicting values: i) the importance I attach to community consultations and respect for the views of others (manifested in remaining silent vis-à-vis Sasha's centralised approach) and ii) the freedom or ability to influence the direction to take (manifested in speaking up). Exploring this situation provided the opportunity for me to delve further into the complexity of compromising, which is not always about choosing between what is experienced as right and wrong.

Silence and habits

My initial interpretation in Project 3 is that, by remaining silent, I had behaved in a more ethical way than would have been the case if I had raised criticism of Sasha's centralised approach. However, my research colleagues kept reminding me of my tendency to be silent in large groups (see also research methodology above) and querying whether my silence vis-à-vis Sasha did indeed signify respect, which led me to the exploration of what respect or recognition involves. As the German philosopher Alex Honneth (2000) explains in his interpretation of Hegel's 'general free will', we attain freedom when we willingly limit ourselves in recognition of others and at the same time recognise—and do not sacrifice— what is important to us, in a state of indeterminate determinacy, the former referring to recognition of others and the latter to what is important for oneself. Hegel explains this with the persuasive expression 'being with oneself in another' (Honneth, 2000, p. 29). Reading Honneth's interpretation of Hegel and discussions with research colleagues made me realise that one of several reasons for my frequent silence in large groups, including in the introductory meeting in Eastern Europe, is that I am lost in the anticipated reactions of others, in a state of indeterminacy. In Project 3, I conclude that my silence, although intended as an ethical act, might simultaneously be disrespectful as it left Sasha unaware of my

views, which would have been helpful for him in this instance. My further research has led me to a more nuanced understanding of the situation, based on my reading about Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung*.

According to Gordon Rixon (2016, p. 494), Hegel identifies two related but opposed meanings of *Aufhebung*: negation and preservation, which indicates the dynamic contention of his concept. Some Hegelian interpreters have added elevation as the third dimension of *Aufhebung*, as a reconciling transit to the next contradictory moment. In other words, 'something is sublated (*aufgehoben*) only in so far as it has entered into unity with its opposite' (Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, pp. 81-82, quoted in Rixon, 2016, p. 497). Influenced by this, I would say that—based on discussions with research colleagues and my reading of Honneth's interpretation of Hegel—my original interpretation that I was acting in an ethical way by silencing myself vis-à-vis Sasha's centralised approach was moved to a new understanding. My original understanding was thus not (fully) negated nor was it the same (preserved), it was *aufgehoben* in a new arrangement, where the same tension existed between contradictory value commitments and between what was ethical and what was unethical to do. This is an illustration of how our understanding of a situation might change over time. My current understanding of my silence vis-à-vis Sasha, as explained below, might thus change again at a later time.

In Project 3, I explain that losing myself in the anticipated reactions of others is only one of several interweaving reasons for my frequent silence in large groups. Another related reason is linked to how, as a social scientist working in a technically oriented environment, I have often had, in my perception, to struggle more than the engineers to have my views heard (see Project 2 and Crewe and Axelby, 2013, pp. 131–133, for explications of the common dominance in much development work of knowledge considered to be technical and, therefore, more reliable). In these processes of inclusion and exclusion, I have experienced myself as silenced by engineers' focus on technical details and by myself in avoidance of conflict or in fear of being ignored, if I did speak up. In Project 3, I conclude that these processes of inclusion and exclusion have made me develop a habit of often remaining silent in large groups. I do not explore habit much in Project 3, but I have since then realised that habit might play an important part in my silence. In the following, I draw, therefore, on the pragmatist John Dewey and his illuminating explications of habits.

According to Dewey, habits are learned functions, which cannot be separated from their physical and social environment:

> Habits may be profitably compared to physiological functions, like breathing, digesting. The latter are, to be sure, involuntary, while habits are acquired. But important as is this difference for many purposes it should not conceal the fact that habits are like functions in many respects, and especially in requiring the cooperation of organism and environment (1922, p. 14).

Our habits are acquired or learned through our membership in different groups and being part of various social and physical environments, starting from our childhood. In other words, habit is formed through our experience (1922, p. 66), where we as human beings develop habits based on the customs, or collective habits, of the social group(s) to which we belong or have belonged. Habits are thus socially produced in our interactions with others. Although habits involve a tendency to repeat acts (1922, p. 42), they are also dynamic. As Dewey explains, we are part of different environments that overlap and interweave, and so do the habits we develop. There is thus 'a continuous modification of habits by one another…constantly going on' (1922, p. 38). Dewey also points to how social customs exist because of the habits of individuals, thereby indicating that our habits are formed by and also forming social customs:

> To a considerable extent customs, or widespread uniformities of habits, exist because individuals face the same situation and react in like fashion. But to a larger extent customs persist because individuals form their personal habits under conditions set by prior customs. An individual usually acquires the morality as he inherits the speech of his social group. The activities of the group are already there, and some assimilation of his own acts to their pattern is a prerequisite of a share therein, and hence of having any part in what is going on (1922, p. 58).

This explanation resonates with the experience that my habit of often remaining silent or being soft-spoken in large meetings has developed partially out of the technical environment in which I work as a social scientist. However, the habit has not only developed out of the focus on technical details but also out of my tendency—or habit—of losing myself in the anticipated reactions of others, if I did speak up. Furthermore, by remaining silent or being soft-spoken, I might have reinforced the focus on technical details, which is an illustration of the interdependency between social customs and the habits of individuals.

Influenced by Dewey, James Garrison suggests that 'habits are so automatic that they do not pause to reflect and inquire. Indeed, a habit remains largely invisible to those who possess it, until it is disrupted' (2002, p. 14S). To some extent, this resonates with me, although I disagree with Garrison's apparent allocation of agency to habit. I have noticed that many others speak more in public than I do; my habit of often remaining silent—or soft-spoken—in large groups had therefore not been invisible to me before it was disrupted by the many discussions during our DMan residentials. However, it has been my automatic reaction to remain quiet or soft-spoken in large meetings. It was only when challenged over a long period by my research colleagues, that I started seriously reflecting on this habit, how it might have developed, and how to change it (see also the section above on research methodology).

My choice in the Project 3 narrative between speaking up and silence entailed a choice between two conflicting value commitments, as explained above, involving an experience of compromise and loss. Below, I summarise how writing Project 3 moved my understanding of compromise.

Compromise, loss, and temporal aspects

My understanding of compromise by the end of Project 2 is much influenced by authors who write from the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating. In Project 3, in my exploration of what other strands of literature have to say about compromise, I find support for my understanding of compromise as a relational and social process among some authors writing within the traditions of sociology and ethics (e.g., Benjamin, 1990; Nachi, 2004). Furthermore, both Nachi (2004) and Benjamin (1990) elucidate how compromise might involve tensions and feelings of alienation when compromise is experienced as undermining important values for those involved. This offers a persuasive explanation of my experience of compromise and feelings of loss in the narrative when, by honouring one value commitment, I disregarded another, namely that of being able to influence the project approach. Another insight evolving out of Project 3 is that the experience of loss and compromise might evaporate or be modified in our later interactions, as was the case when I discussed alternatives to Sasha's centralised approach with two colleagues and when compromising with Sasha and others evolved on the project approach. Finally, I argue tentatively in Project 3 that people or groups experiencing themselves in marginalised, or the weaker, positions are more inclined to seek and accept compromise than others, highlighting that, for me, compromising has been a way of gaining some influence and recognition of socio-economic aspects and views in technically oriented environments. Influenced by Honneth (2000) and his interpretation of Hegel, I conclude Project 3 by indicating that compromise

involves reciprocity, which entails our adaptations to the views and interests of others without sacrificing our own goals and views.

I distinguish, in Project 3, between 'compromise with myself' and 'compromise with others', stating that I found support for this distinction in de Clippel and Eliaz's exploration of the compromise effect within marketing (2012), although I was critical of their apparent view of compromise as the choice of individuals in both situations. I explain that compromise with oneself might often be due to violation of value commitment(s) and mainly evolves out of our private conversations with ourselves, with anticipations of the reactions of others. I argue in Project 3 that what I refer to as 'compromise with oneself' involves others. From my current position of further detachment, I want to add that compromising on my value commitments brought me into a different relation with others and did not affect me only, but also others. In other words, the compromising influenced the further interactions between Sasha, me, and others. My current conclusion is that compromising cannot be split into a dichotomy of compromise with self and with others; compromising is more complex than this, with an interweaving of social relations within which the particular process evolves.

I turn now to my tentative argument in Project 3 that people or groups experiencing themselves in less powerful positions are more inclined to seek and accept compromise than others. When re-reading these parts, it strikes me that I appear to explain compromise as a one-way process, involving mainly one person or one group. This is not my view of compromise. Rather, compromising involves making adaptations to each other, which might often not be a deliberate or conscious process. The power dynamics in particular processes of compromise might, however, mean that one person (or group) adjusts his or her views more than the other person(s) in order to gain influence. Compromising between two or more parties is not about splitting the difference between their positions in an equal way, but rather about negotiations and the power relations between them. It should also be mentioned that persons in powerful positions might adapt their views more than others because they believe this is the right or most ethical way to act, because they dislike conflicts, to show how magnanimous they are or for other reasons.

I refer in Project 3 to compromise as a reciprocal process entailing adaptations to each other without fully sacrificing one's goals and views. In other words, it is a process of give-and-take for all persons involved. I want to qualify this further by saying that this is not to indicate that one's own views remain the same. Rather, compromising is a process of movement, involving reciprocal adaptations to the views

of others. Some might question whether my experience of compromise in the introductory meeting in Eastern Europe due to conflicting value commitments was a reciprocal process. I argue that it was, as the process involved adaptations of my relations to others and thereby affected them. It was also this experience of compromise—and loss—that made me initiate discussions about alternatives to a centralised project approach and eventually led to our compromising on this aspect.

In Project 3, I do not make a clear linkage between the habit of silence and compromise, or between speaking up and compromise. This is one of the aspects I take up below in my further reflections on Project 4, which focuses on speaking up and compromising as potentially involving change and novelty.

Project 4—Recognition of leadership: speaking up and compromise

Project 4 starts with a narrative in which my colleagues and I received unexpectedly critical comments from a key client, an international financing institution (IFI), regarding a report we had prepared. We experienced these as unfair and were, at the same time, anxious about whether the IFI considered us incompetent. This was at the start of a new assignment in the Middle East, where I was the leader of a team of international and national consultants. A conference call, taking place soon after, started with an unexpected accusation from Kasim, a leading IFI specialist, that our team had withheld information from him and his IFI colleagues. Later, Kasim concluded the call by saying that they had serious concerns about the assignment and by asking us to read our terms of reference and their comments again. My colleagues and I found the conference call extremely unpleasant. After submitting our revised report, I arranged a meeting in the IFI head office, with the aim of creating an atmosphere of cooperation but also of clarifying key issues. I had not been as assertive during the conference call as I had intended, and I wanted to act differently during the face-to-face meeting. Here, I was so determined to follow my strategy that I interrupted Kasim, albeit politely, and clarified my colleagues' and my viewpoints. Kasim and his IFI colleagues did not interrupt me, although Kasim appeared tempted to do so. When another IFI specialist joined, Kasim was quick to summarise my clarifications. Although I disagreed with his summary, I did not say anything. I wanted to move on to discussions of our findings, which took place in a cooperative atmosphere.

In summary, my puzzle in Project 4 is about what parts speaking up and later compromising might have played in my struggle for gaining recognition of my views and my leadership; a struggle which was intertwined with power relations, including an experience of being excluded and ignored in discussions.

Feelings of inferiority and speaking up

In Project 4, I identify processes of inclusion and exclusion around our client/consultant relationship, particularly during the conference call, although this might not have been Kasim's and Tom's interpretation. The experience of exclusion or marginalisation was particularly when Kasim—and to a lesser extent Tom—appeared not to pay attention to my views and those of my colleagues, for example, when we explained how we had not withheld any information from them. I also explore whether and how these processes of inclusion and exclusion might be related to gender, by drawing on the American feminist philosopher Shannon Sullivan. Influenced by Dewey's notion of habit, she suggests that cultural customs delimit the particular gendered and other options available to individuals and that we tend to incorporate our culture's prevalent gender constructs through our habits (2000, p. 28). In Project 4, I identify similarities between the gendered expectations Sullivan experienced in her American (middle-class) culture and those I have encountered.

However, customs are not the same in all cultures and there might be variations in how women and men are expected to behave in Sullivan's American culture and my Danish culture. Similarly, there might be variations within our two national cultures. The following are, therefore, additional reflections on gender aspects. The Danish researcher Sara Louise Muhr (2019) provides a Danish perspective on gendered expectations, drawing on interviews with about 150 middle- and top-level leaders (both men and women) in Danish companies. According to these leaders, women were expected to be empathetic, quiet, and caring. In contrast, men were expected to be strong, aggressive (some used the warrior metaphor), and focused on results (2019, pp. 114–121). To a large extent, these descriptions—which have many similarities with those presented by Sullivan as prevalent in her culture—resonate with the gendered expectations from my traditional upbringing and my technical work environment. I find it plausible that such expectations influenced the habits I—and others—have developed of being soft-spoken, often silent in large groups, avoiding conflict, and feeling inferior. However, influenced by other groups and encounters in their lives, other women might have developed habits very different from mine. Similarly, not all Danish men are focused on results or act aggressively. Women from the same culture are thus not a homogeneous group and neither are men, which Muhr also highlights (2019, p. 251). Furthermore, women and men are not passive victims of gender constructs and expectations but are involved in forming and recreating them, which sometimes involves challenging or subverting them.

Habits give us some degree of stability in our lives, with a tendency to repeat acts (Dewey, 1922, p. 42) as, for example, my tendency to remain silent or soft-spoken in large groups. Despite this, habits might also be disrupted, for example, when we become members of new groups. The combined influence of writing Project 3 and discussions with DMan colleagues made me determined to change my habits by being more outspoken in public. In Project 4, I give an example of how I have started voicing my views more clearly in public and explain how I was dissatisfied with myself that I failed to act in a similarly assertive way during the conference call, which is an illustration of how difficult it is to adjust long-established habits. As explained in Project 4, the French philosopher Michel Foucault offers convincing perspectives on what speaking up entails through his interpretation of the Greek concept of *parrhesia* (e.g., 2005; 2010) which, inter alia, involves saying 'what we think ought to be said because it is necessary, useful and true' (2005, p. 366). I argue, based on Foucault, that *parrhesia* is about bringing the members of a group to another understanding and into another relationship with each other, as also highlighted by Mead in his explication of moral conduct (1934, p. 389). When I spoke up in the IFI meeting about key points from the conference call, I wanted simultaneously to move towards a cooperative atmosphere within our larger group of consultants and IFI specialists. This made me express my views in a polite way and appreciate the IFI's recent actions.

Work colleagues have indicated some change in my practice where, at the time of finalising this thesis, I am somewhat more outspoken than I was two to three years ago, although my old habit of remaining silent in large meetings or speaking hesitantly still prevail in some situations, particularly when these involve conflict or potential conflict. A recent example of my greater assertiveness was when discrepancies were detected in the engineering figures for a particular project. When alerted to this, one of the engineers, Allan, who is a long-term colleague of mine, wrote to his engineering colleague that it was hopeless for them to coordinate when they received the social data so late. Allan could not wait for the social data, as the other engineer did, and had to get on with preparing his part of our report. This made our team leader recommend politely that the engineers coordinate from the start, instead of blaming the social team. I also sent a brief e-mail to Allan saying that I would have been quite annoyed if I didn't know him as well as I did, followed by a smiley. Allan repeated, however, that it was the social team's fault that he and the other engineer had not been consistent in their figures. This really upset me, and I told Allan, in an e-mail, that I would not accept his blaming of the social team, adding that I view our assignments and our reporting as teamwork where we show respect for each other's areas of expertise. I knew Allan was under strong pressure to meet the deadlines of another project, so—on reflection—I was concerned about whether I had been too harsh on him. I returned to our exchange of

views a couple of weeks later when Allan and I sat next to each other on a flight. Here we both repeated our views, without adaptations to each other's views. Despite this, I felt the discussion cleared the air without ruining our work relationship—and it made it easier for me to work with Allan on the next assignment.

My speaking up in the above situation did not involve or lead to compromising, but it still enabled us to move on in the particular situation, and the discussions of our disagreements might even have improved our cooperation more generally. It can thus be important to stand up for one's views in situations where compromising is not possible or not the preferred way forward. This is in contrast to the processes of compromise evolving during the IFI meeting.

Compromise, novelty, and leadership

In my further exploration of compromise in Project 4, I build on Mead, Dewey, Joas, and others writing in the pragmatist tradition. As Joas explains, pragmatists typically link novelty to creativity and reconstruction of habitual action in situations where a previously habitual action is interrupted or does not make sense anymore (1996, pp. 128–129). Consistent with Joas's exposition, Mead suggests that novelty evolves in the process of adjustment or readjustment when we are 'betwixt and between the old system and the new' (1932, p. 73). In the explication of Carroll and Simpson, who build on Mead, it is in the movement from one frame of meaning to another frame—where we belong to two (or several) frames of meaning at the same time—that change and novelty emerge (2012, p. 1289). As a further reflection, I want to add that this understanding of how novelty emerges is different from how some strands of management literature consider innovation as a prime strategic goal of organisations which can be achieved through a rational planning process, often involving the use of models with several phases (Fonseca, 2002, pp. 18–19). Other strands of management literature view innovation as primarily a political and spontaneous process, where it is nevertheless possible for leaders to design and manage the organisational and contextual conditions, or, in other words, design a system for spontaneity to occur (Fonseca, 2002, pp. 22–27). The processes of compromise between Kasim and me in our face-to-face meeting did not, however, evolve as part of a planned process or in conditions managed by others; rather, it emerged out of our everyday interaction. In our processes of compromise, Kasim and I were betwixt and between two frames of reference, that is, the past conflictual situation and the intended future cooperative atmosphere, as I explain in Project 4, and thereby belonging to both of them. I argue, in Project 4, that this was what enabled change in our modes of acting and thereby made it possible for

novelty to occur, with our movement to a new atmosphere of cooperation. I also explore the different experiences or meanings of compromise. Benjamin (1990) distinguishes between compromise involving moral principles and nonmoral interests—a distinction I found helpful when writing Project 4 in explaining why the intensity of my sense of loss in connection with compromise varies significantly, although acknowledging—as does Benjamin—that it is difficult to determine when compromising involves moral aspects and when it does not. I assert, in Project 4, that although compromise probably always entails a sense of loss, it might later be experienced as novelty, which might dissolve the feeling of loss, and—as circumstances, relationships, and/or one's views change—the experience of compromising might change yet again (see key argument 2 below for further explication of this assertion).

When writing Project 4, I was grappling to find some patterns as to why, in some situations, I experience compromise as a significant loss but not to the same extent in others. It was in this connection that I found Benjamin's distinction between compromise involving moral principles and nonmoral interests helpful (1990). This was especially the case as he associates compromise on moral principles with the betrayal of part of one's identity—the latter in my interpretation involving value commitments—and feelings of significant loss, whereas the latter feelings were indicated as less intense for compromise on nonmoral interests. On further reflection, I see this distinction as a simplification, as all our interests have moral aspects. Rather, I now suggest that compromising always involves moral or ethical aspects in its focus on mutual recognition with simultaneous adaptations to each other; in other words, compromising involves being accountable to those either directly or indirectly involved in the process. In the IFI meetings, Kasim and I were most directly involved, while other meeting participants, my colleagues in the consulting team, and other colleagues were less directly involved. In our compromising, Kasim and I were also accountable to the latter groups, I assert. Returning to the question of why in some situations I experience compromise as a significant loss but not to the same extent in others, I associate intense feelings of loss in compromising with a violation of values—or persons—that are important to those involved. As Joas explains, 'When we talk about values, a strong affectual dimension comes in' (2008, p. 90), where it is often difficult to explain why we feel so committed and greatly affected if they are violated. Not all processes of compromise involve commitments to values or persons, which I sense is one—but probably not the only—reason why my feeling of loss is less intense in some situations.

Compromising probably occurs in all types of leadership, while it appears—as mentioned in Project 4—to be an inherent aspect of what I consider relational leadership. The DMan graduate Kevin Flinn asserts that 'leadership emerges in interaction. It is co-created in social processes of mutual recognition' (2018, p. 47). My additional argument is, in Project 4, that such processes often involve compromise. I thus sense that compromising in the IFI meeting, combined with having explained my views, enhanced my leadership status in the eyes of other participants and, with hindsight I would add, in the eyes of other colleagues. Leadership is, however, also influenced by other expectations in our particular culture, and in Project 4, I examine what role gender might play in leadership. The American professor of management Joyce K. Fletcher (2004) points out that traits associated with heroic leadership (individualism, control, assertiveness, skills of domination) are generally regarded as masculine in our Western culture, whereas traits associated with post-heroic or relational leadership (empathy, community, vulnerability, skills of cooperation) are generally considered feminine. Muhr reaches similar conclusions in her Danish research (2019). It resonates with my experience from work within international development when Fletcher and Muhr argue that, although women and men act in both so-called masculine and feminine ways, there are still expectations and pressures for women to act in feminine and men in masculine ways. As indicated in Project 4, I have been influenced by gendered expectations in the way I work and lead. I assert, though, that it was a mixture of my assertiveness (regarded as masculine) and my focus on cooperation and compromising (considered feminine) that led to the recognition of my leadership. In Project 4, I suggest that leaders should use their practical judgement to decide how best to act in ethical ways in particular situations, considering gendered expectations as one aspect of this judgement. On further reflection, I want to add that reflecting on gendered expectations is important, as these might have consequences for how one's actions are interpreted and judged by others. I do not argue, however, that women act in feminine ways only and men in masculine ways only. It is possible for both women and men to contribute to the change of gender stereotypes by acting in ways that are different from these.

A further reflection is that—influenced by my research at the DMan programme—I have come to see speaking up as an important aspect in our mutual recognition of each other and of what is important for others and ourselves. Speaking up should here be understood as 'what we think ought to be said' (Foucault, 2005, p. 366) and is about preserving one's self-respect from the viewpoint of what is considered a better society (Mead, 1934, p. 389) or a better relationship within a group. Without others being aware of what our views are, others will not be able to engage with these. Speaking up is,

therefore, an important part of both compromising and relational leadership, I argue, with leaders taking a role in enabling those in the weaker position to be heard.

Having re-examined and expanded on my projects as originally written, I now turn to summarising and explaining my main arguments concerning processes of compromise, from the perspective of a social scientist working in international development. These arguments have evolved from my four projects, including the reviews above.

Key arguments

In the following, I will elaborate on three key arguments which address my main puzzle and research question: How and why have I, as well as other people, found ways to move on in some conflictual situations, but not in others—in other words, what does compromise entail?

Firstly, I argue that compromising is a relational and social process, where people adapt to each other, enabling them to move on in conflictual situations. Such processes evolve in the particular situation in our interactions with each other and in our private conversations with ourselves, the latter also involving others. Compromising is intertwined with power relations, which often involve processes of inclusion and exclusion. I contend that persons or groups experiencing themselves in marginalised or weaker positions are often inclined to adapt their views to a larger extent, in attempts to gain some influence, than is the case for others in a process of compromise. There are also conflictual situations where persons/groups are not willing to compromise because of the value commitments involved, the harm it might cause to others, and/or others might see it as a betrayal. The power relations between the persons/groups involved comprise another reason why compromising might not be possible.

Secondly, I assert that the experience of compromising is temporal and dynamic. For those participating, it always involves some sense of real or anticipated loss, which might be either the primary or secondary and either a temporary or permanent experience. Compromising might simultaneously, or at some other point, be experienced—by some or all involved—in other ways such as novelty, which might change yet again. I posit that it is when people are betwixt and between two or several frames of reference—where they consider their past interactions and their intentions for the future, seen from their perspective of the present—that novelty might evolve in their compromising. Importantly, this might not be the experience of all involved in the process.

Thirdly, I argue that for processes of compromise to evolve out of conflictual situations it is required that those involved are aware of each other's views, with leaders—both those in formal and less formal leadership positions—taking a particular role in enabling others to be heard. This awareness might arise in several ways, primarily i) by those directly involved speaking up themselves, ii) through forming of alliances with others, and/or iii) through support from leaders. I assert that relational leadership requires engagement in processes of compromise, currently often considered a feminine trait/skill. Speaking up, often viewed as a masculine trait/skill, is an inherent part of leaders' role in compromising; importantly, this means speaking up as a leader focused on mutual adaptations to each other's views, rather than acting as a leader wanting or trying to control the situation.

I expand on each of these arguments below.

Key argument 1—Compromising as a relational and social process

My first key argument is that

> ***Compromising is a relational and social process, in which we adapt to each other, enabling us to move on in conflictual situations; these adaptations are intertwined with power relations in which those in marginalised positions might adapt their views more than others involved.***

Compromise has been taken up in several strands of literature, particularly marketing, politics, sociology, and ethics. Within marketing, there has been much research on the compromise effect in consumers' choice of products (e.g., Dhar, Menon and Maach, 2004; Kivetz, Netzer and Srinivasan, 2004b, 2004a; Sinn *et al.*, 2007; de Clippel and Eliaz, 2012; Kim and Kim, 2016; Lichters *et al.*, 2016; Nikolova and Lamberton, 2016; Kim, 2017; Nicolò and Velez, 2017). Most authors writing about compromise within this field appear to consider the decision-making between the compromise option (i.e., the middle option) and other options as an individual's choice, based on a balance of reasons for and against the various alternatives (e.g., de Clippel and Eliaz, 2012). Some researchers within marketing acknowledge, though, that relational aspects might play a role in decision-making (e.g., Dhar, Menon and Maach, 2004; Nikolova and Lamberton, 2016). Nikolova and Lamberton (2016) thus examine whether and how the gender composition of a dyad's joint decision-making between several options might influence their choice. Their empirical studies show that dyads involving women, as well as

individual women and men, had a preference for compromise options, while two men making a joint decision were less likely to choose such options. Nikolova and Lamberton point to the influence of relational aspects but also acknowledge that their research does little to elucidate the interpersonal dynamics in the joint decision-making. Irrespective of these variations, compromise within marketing appears typically to be considered an outcome, that is, a product or an agreement, where quantitative studies and mathematical models are frequently used for prediction of behaviour. Nicolò and Velez (2017) draw, for example, extensively on mathematical formulae to calculate and predict how an equitable compromise can be reached, with the parties' extreme proposals balancing each other.

In politics, compromise also appears often to be viewed as an agreement or a solution to a conflictual situation (Hallowell, 1944; Benjamin, 1990; Boudreaux and Lee, 1997; Bellamy and Hollis, 1998; Haas, 2016; Tillyris, 2017), that is, as an outcome. Some writers recognise, though, that relational aspects play a role in reaching a compromise agreement in politics. Bellamy and Hollis (1998) thus argue that the art of compromise is negotiation, which involves respect for those involved, rather than seeking to get as much as possible of one's own way. They conclude that a good compromise involves the integration of various interests and ideals, by accommodating the views of others as much as possible. Bellamy and Hollis refer to two examples of compromise in politics in the United States: the accord over slavery agreed between the northern and southern states in the early years of the republic and the relatively recent legislation over abortion. These examples focus on the difference in viewpoints and how a compromise agreement was reached but do not include explorations of what occurred in the micro-interactions between those involved in the negotiations.

According to Anthony Hussenot's brief literature review of understandings of compromise within the fields of sociology, ethics, and organisational studies (2016), it is common within these fields to regard compromise as a stable agreement and a method to prevent, suspend, and solve conflicts. As Hussenot points out, there are still a few authors, including himself, who take a processual perspective on compromise. Based on his organisational research, Hussenot argues that compromises are constantly defined and redefined throughout our activities; in other words, they are temporary and situated in practice. Furthermore, compromises are interrelated, with past compromises being involved in the process-making of new compromises. Hussenot, who draws on the Actor-Network-Theory (see, e.g., Latour, 2005), gives agency to compromises by viewing them as outputs of organisational processes and as actants participating in the making of organisational phenomena (2016, p. 851). It resonates with me that the experience of compromise is temporal, and that one process of compromise might lead to or

relate to other compromising. I disagree, however, with Hussenot's claim that compromises are actants, which as non-humans can play an active role in compromises. In Hussenot's definition, actants are physical, abstract, real, or imaginary phenomena, which can influence, constrain, and sometimes impose their will (2016, pp. 840–841). As explained below, I view compromising as a relational and social process, which is dependent on negotiations between people and our private conversations with ourselves. As human beings involved in compromise, we have the capacity to take ourselves as an object, that is, to anticipate the reactions of others and take these into account when we act. A process of compromise does not have this capacity, or the agency required to impose a will.

In contrast to the apparently common understanding of compromise as an outcome, I view it as a relational and social process, which evolves in the particular situation in our interactions with others and in our private conversations with ourselves, which also involve others. This view is influenced by Drabæk's narrative inquiry into compromise, trust, and ethical dilemmas in his work within the field of assurance as carried out by accountancy companies (2007, 2008). Drabæk, who is a graduate of the DMan programme, uses narratives from work situations as the basis for this research and, in his analysis of compromise, draws on, amongst others, Mead and the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating. He links compromise to perpetual negotiations and to the functionalisation of what Mead refers to as cult values, that is, idealisations in everyday interactions (Mead, 1923; Drabæk, 2007, p. 133; see further explanation on cult values in Project 1). Building on Drabæk's research, I understand compromise as a process in which we adapt to each other, thereby enabling us to move on instead of ending up in a stalemate, closing down a conversation, or ending a relationship. Compromise is thus about negotiations and give-and-take in our interactions with others and in our private conversations with ourselves. I view it as part of a process of cooperation; in my understanding, the latter typically involves people working together in an atmosphere and relationship in which they listen to and respect each other, discuss differences in views, challenge each other without becoming aggressive, and in some situations compromise, that is, adapt to each other despite the sense of loss this involves (see key argument 2 below about compromise and loss). Compromising and colluding have in common that they might support people in their ongoing relating. The two processes are, however, also different in that compromising involves adaptations to each other's views and interests, while collusion, in the explication of the DMan graduate Graham Curtis, involves acting in accordance with expectations and norms, for example, in the facilitation of an event or a job interview (2018, pp. 152–153). Collusion might, for example, occur in a meeting where some aspects cannot be discussed, and this is where collusion arises (2018, p. 2). The motives for collusion could be, for example, to avoid feelings of shame

or anxiety or in avoidance of some form of punishment. In contrast to what is posited in much marketing research, compromise cannot be predicted, I argue, but evolves as we interact with each other. Our interaction occurs in the present, which we understand through our interpretations of the past and our anticipations of the future, both of which change as we try to understand or construct the present. As Stacey, Griffin, and Shaw explain, building on Hegel and Mead, 'in terms of meaning the future changes the past and the past changes the future, and meaning lies not at a single point in the present but in this circular process of the present' (2000, p. 35). They refer to the latter as the living present, where paradoxically the past, in the form of our personally experienced histories, helps us to recognise the future and give it meaning, yet at the same time the future is also changing the meaning of the past, all occurring in the movement of our experience in the living present (Shaw, 2002, p. 46).

The above concurs with Mead's view that meaning arises in our gesturing and responding to each other, both in our conversations with others and in our private conversations with ourselves (1934). As human beings, we are able to anticipate the reactions of others, which enables us to take these into account in our gestures towards each other (Mead, 1934, p. 46). These anticipations are both in relation to particular others but also in relation to the 'generalized other', that is, groups, organisations, and the society to which we belong (1934, pp. 154–156). Our anticipations of the reactions of others might influence and constrain our communication, as illustrated in Project 4 when Kasim did not interrupt me although his facial expressions indicated that he was tempted to do so and also when I did not protest against Kasim's summary of my explanations, despite my disagreement. There is no guarantee that our anticipations of the reactions of others are correct, with meaning still arising as we interact, as explained above. This view of our interactions is in contrast to the widespread understanding of communication, which—influenced by Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver's sender-receiver model from 1949—is largely seen as a tool to transmit messages that have already been determined in our thoughts, as explained by the DMan graduate Henry Larsen (Larsen and Larsen, 2013, pp. 30–33). So, compromise did not first arise in me, which I transmitted to Kasim or vice versa.

There are also situations in which processes of compromise are not possible, or rather where the persons or groups involved in a conflictual situation are not willing to negotiate and adapt to the views and interests of others. One reason is that the conflictual situation might involve values or other aspects of life that are important to us and who we are, which relates to our identity. Compromising in such situations might involve unbearable feelings of loss and alienation, while others might view compromising as the betrayal of a cause, the group or particular persons (Benjamin, 1990; Nachi, 2004).

Another reason why compromising is not possible might be the power relations between the parties involved in a conflictual situation.

Processes of compromise are thus intertwined with power relations; the latter often involving processes of inclusion and exclusion (Scott, 1990; Elias and Scotson, 1994). In my projects, I have primarily explored such processes around areas of expertise, based on my experience as a social scientist working in a technically oriented environment; I have also reflected on inclusion and exclusion around nationality, gender, and client/consultant relationships, with an interweaving of some of these aspects of social identity. Based on my research, I argue that persons or groups experiencing themselves in marginalised or weaker positions are often inclined to adapt their views more, in attempts to gain some influence, than is the case for other persons or groups involved in a conflictual situation. This is not a one-way process; rather, for a process to involve compromising, this requires all involved to adapt their views, although this might often not be experienced as occurring in an equal way. Adaptations are linked to the power relations in the particular situation. Examples are those presented by Mosse (2011b) of how anthropologists at the World Bank in Washington experienced themselves professionally marginalised by the prevalence of economic paradigms. Generally, the anthropologists considered compromise their best strategy to gain some influence, for example, as a 'gateway to get people in the Bank to think about context' (2011b, p. 90) and adapted their views to a larger degree than was the case for the many economists in the Bank. Another example is that, in Project 3, Sasha might have experienced himself in the weaker position when the international team leader proposed an alternative to Sasha's centralised project approach, indicating that this proposal had emerged out of discussions with other international consultants. This might have led Sasha to adapt his views more than did others in our process of compromise, although this is difficult to measure. My assertion is that compromising between two or more persons is not about splitting the difference between their positions or viewpoints in an equal way (as if this were possible to calculate) but rather about negotiations influenced by the power relations between them. The latter are dynamic, which affects the compromising taking place in the particular situation. Although I see a pattern that persons or groups experiencing themselves in weaker positions are inclined to adapt their views more than others, in some situations, it might be people in the more powerful positions who adapt their views most.

People's experience of processes of inclusion and exclusion varies and might develop in a dynamic way and so might their experience of compromising, which is what my next argument takes up.

Key argument 2—Compromising is not always primarily about loss

My second key argument is that

> *The experience of compromising is temporal and dynamic; it always involves some sense of real or anticipated loss, which might be either the primary or secondary and either a temporary or permanent experience; compromising might simultaneously, or at some other point, be experienced in other ways such as novelty.*

As illuminated by Nachi (2004) and Benjamin (1990), compromising involves tensions and feelings of alienation and loss. Compromising is still necessary and beneficial in many situations, as maintaining our views without any adaptations to those of others constitutes a risk of cutting ourselves off from large numbers of fellow humans (Benjamin, 1990, p. 3). I do not want to idealise compromising, however. It is not the solution to all conflicts, as explained in key argument 1 above. There are situations in which standing up for our views and value commitments in an uncompromising way will be the most ethical way to act, for example, in order not to cause harm to others and/or to maintain our integrity and what is important for us. As Stacey explains, there is a need for practical judgement in each particular situation about how best to act ethically. Practical judgement involves drawing on one's experience from previous situations, with recognition of the patterns in interactions and the power relations between those involved and trying to imagine the impact of one's actions on different persons/groups in the future. It entails paying attention to the group dynamics and is about intuitions of how to act in the particular situation (2012, pp. 107–108; 121).

Influenced by my reading of Honneth (2000) and his interpretation of Hegel's 'general free will', I suggest viewing compromise as a reciprocal process which involves our adaptation to the views and interests of others without fully giving up—or sacrificing—our views or goals. Hegel's persuasive notion of 'being with oneself in another' (Honneth, 2000, p. 29) is thus an important aspect of compromising, I argue, although adaptations to each other's views and interests might not be experienced as occurring in an equal way, as explained earlier. Our views and goals do not remain unchanged in this process; rather, compromising is a process of movement as we adapt to each other.

Benjamin provides a compelling illustration of the complexity of compromise with his example of how politicians committed personally to a specific moral position might compromise on the same position in

order to represent the views of their constituents and colleagues (1990, pp. 139; 149–150). In other words, refusal to compromise on a particular personal position can be a betrayal of others, while compromising might be experienced—at least at some point—as a personal loss, alienation, and perhaps sacrifice of part of one's identity. As Nachi explains, compromising involves acknowledgement of the other, negotiation, and understanding (2004, pp. 293–294). This implies that we are accountable to other people and groups, who are either directly or indirectly engaged in a process of compromise. In the same vein, Drabæk highlights that in compromise we have to move away from what Mead calls the 'narrow self' and instead develop a 'larger self' where we identify with the interests of others and which thereby 'transforms the basis for what we call compromise from the self to the relation between the self and the others' (Drabæk, 2007, p. 34). With its focus on mutual recognition of and adaptations to each other's views, compromising involves ethical aspects, I argue.

My research indicates that compromising always involves some sense of loss for those participating, but that the intensity of this varies, inter alia, influenced by whether the compromising entails commitments to particular values or persons. Furthermore, the intensity in the sense of loss might vary among the persons involved in a particular process of compromise, depending on their different histories, the groups to which they belong, and the values that are important to them. Irrespective of its intensity, the sense of loss might be overshadowed by other events and/or by a change in how people experience their compromising. My intense sense of loss due to conflicting value commitments in Project 3 thus gradually evaporated when we discussed alternatives to Sasha's centralised approach and when compromising evolved on the project approach. As explained in key argument 1 above, we have anticipations of the reactions of others, and these influence our interactions and compromising, though there is no guarantee that our anticipations are correct. Similarly, we have anticipations of how we will react ourselves, but our actual reaction might differ from our anticipations. An example is that person A wants to engage an external consultant to facilitate a project workshop, while her colleague B wants to bring in a facilitator from their company. In their compromising, A and B agree to abandon their two suggestions and instead engage a third facilitator C who had left the company two years earlier and who might be able to somehow combine an internal and external perspective. A might anticipate a feeling of loss or regret at the time of the workshop that her preferred candidate is not doing the facilitation, and this might be her actual reaction; alternatively, she might like the way that C facilitates the workshop, either immediately, upon reflection, and/or following further discussions with B and/or others. This illustrates that our anticipations of feelings of loss might not be what we experience in our compromising, meaning that, although we may try to anticipate the future, we cannot predict it. This

brings me back to Mead's exposition that meaning arises in our gesturing and responding to each other, involving both our conversations with others and our private conversations with ourselves (1934).

Not only does compromising call out feelings of loss in varying degrees of intensity, it might also simultaneously, or at some other stage, be experienced in several other ways, depending on the particular situation and the persons involved. It might thus involve an experience of novelty, as it did for me when compromising paved the way for us to move towards a cooperative atmosphere in the IFI meeting in Project 4. Mead elucidates that for novelty to evolve we have to be 'betwixt and between the old system and the new' (1932, p. 73), which involves a process of adjustment or readjustment. Carroll and Simpson build on Mead when they suggest 'It is this transitional phase of readjustment, where emergent objects belong to different frames of meaning simultaneously, that shared meanings are re-cognized, selves and situations are re-constructed, and directions for further action are re-negotiated' (2012, p. 1289), concluding that it is in this process of adjustment and movement that novelty emerges. Being betwixt and between two or perhaps several frames of reference means that we are influenced by both our past interactions, including the outcomes of these, and our intentions for the future in our interactions in the living present (the latter expression is explained further in key argument 1 above). It is in this process of reflections on and adjustment to different frames of reference in our compromising that novelty might evolve, I argue. Novelty, however, is not an inherent part of all processes of compromise. Rather, the pragmatists associate novelty with reflection and creativity within situations where our habitual ways of acting are insufficient and, instead, a new way of acting and new solutions are required (Joas, 1996, pp. 128–129). Creativity and novelty might thus evolve in compromising when differences in views and interests have developed in such a way that we cannot move on by acting in an unreflected habitual way—and in some situations, such unreflected habits might involve compromising. If I had disagreed with Kasim's summary of my explanations in an unreflected way, without considering, on the one hand, our past conflictual interactions and, on the other hand, my goal of creating a cooperative atmosphere, then the latter might not have developed. I argue that it is in processes of compromise which involve reflections influenced by being betwixt and between different frames of reference—and the creativity this entails—that novelty might evolve. This is a further development of Drabæk's conclusion that, rather than inhibiting us, compromise is or might be 'a constraint that at the same time is enabling', and this might make 'way for new solutions and actions and thereby allows us to proceed' (2007, p. 135). Drabæk's focus is on compromise as the functionalisation of values or idealisations, such as objectivity and independence in the accountancy business, whereas my research pays more attention to how we might experience compromise, how this

varies, and how it might change several times. Also, I explore in further detail than Drabæk what is 'needed' for novelty to occur in processes of compromise.

This raises the question of whether and how compromising is different from processes of innovation. Based on a literature review across several disciplines and a content analysis of 60 existing definitions, Baregheh, Rowley, and Sambrook propose the following general definition of organisational innovation: 'the multi-stage process whereby organizations transform ideas into new/improved products, service or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in their marketplace' (2009, p. 1334). The three researchers focus on definitions and do not explore the processes of innovation in any great detail. The latter is at the centre of Fonseca's research. He is critical of what he views as the prevailing assumption that 'humans can purposefully design, in advance, the conditions under which innovation will occur' (2002, p. 3). Instead, he argues that innovation is a complex responsive process in which ideas are products of streams of conversations, characterised by a high level of experienced misunderstandings, meaning that no immediately coherent action is possible based on what people say. It is from this process of conversations that new patterns of talking and meaning, that is, innovation, might emerge (2002, pp. 112–113). There appears to be similarities between Fonseca's understanding of innovation, which draws on, inter alia, the complexity sciences, and the pragmatists' views of novelty and creativity, particularly that innovation and novelty emerge from situations in which people are stuck, and no coherent action or no habitual way of acting seems possible. Fonseca does not seem to make a clear distinction between the emergence of novelty and of innovation, though appearing to link processes of innovation with tangible outcomes (2002, p. 117), such as new/improved products or services with examples of innovating concrete pipes and digitised surveys. In contrast, the experience of novelty that evolved in the processes of compromise between Kasim and me during our meeting was not a product or service, but rather a new, more cooperative way of working together. I view compromising as different from processes of innovation in that the former involves mutual recognition of, and adaptations to, the views of others involved, which *might* lead to an experience of novelty. Processes of innovation do not necessarily involve mutual adaptations among the participants in conversations, and the latter might only be linked to innovation if there are tangible outcomes.

In summary, compromising always involves some actual or anticipated sense of loss, for example, if we have to choose between our different loyalties. Despite this, compromising might simultaneously, or at some other stage, be experienced—by some or all involved—in several other ways such as novelty,

which might override or reduce our actual or anticipated feeling of loss. The latter might be either the primary or secondary and either a temporary or permanent experience, I argue. It is important to emphasise that people experience compromising in different ways and that this develops dynamically over time, that is, it might change several times. Several people might thus not have the same experience of novelty in their compromising as I—and probably other participants—had in the IFI meeting in Project 4.

My last argument is about how compromising involves awareness of each other's views and the role of leaders in this connection.

Key argument 3—Compromising requires awareness of each other's views

My third key argument is:

> ***For processes of compromise to evolve out of conflictual situations it is required that those involved are aware of each other's views, with leaders—both those in formal and more informal leadership positions—taking a particular role in enabling others to be heard.***

Compromising is a relational and social process, in which people adapt to each other in their interactions with each other and their private conversations with themselves. Such mutual adaptations are possible only when those involved are aware of each other's views. This awareness might arise in several ways, primarily i) by those directly involved speaking up themselves, ii) through the forming of alliances with others, which might involve a spokesperson, and/or iii) through support from leaders. Listening to each other is an essential part of this process. It is important to highlight that there might be considerable challenges and barriers for some people to speak up in public, which I return to below.

Speaking up is not just the opposite of remaining silent. Rather, speaking up should be understood, I argue, in the way Foucault interpreted the Greek concept of *parrhesia* as being about saying 'what has to be said, what we want to say, what we think ought to be said because it is necessary, useful, and true' (2005, p. 366). It involves being willing to take risks (Foucault, 2010, p. 62) and having the courage to take a position (Tamboukou, 2012, p. 860). In Mead's explication, this entails saying what ought to be said in order to preserve one's self-respect from the viewpoint of what is considered 'a higher and better society than that which exists' (Mead, 1934, p. 389). In other words, speaking up—both as part of

processes of compromise and in other situations—involves ethical aspects by taking into account the interests of others in the group and those of oneself. *Parrhesia* is thus not an individual act, with which Foucault would have agreed, I believe. Rather, speaking up—including our willingness to take risks—is shaped by our group memberships as well as our other interactions and is thereby a social act. The way we express ourselves when speaking up takes account of the anticipations we have, in our private conversations with ourselves, of how others will react to what we are about to say. These conversations take the form of what Mead refers to as the I/me dialectic, where the 'me' is our anticipations of the reactions of others, both particular others and the 'generalized other', while the 'I' expresses our more spontaneous sense of self. Importantly, the two processes cannot be split but are not the same either. As Mead elucidates: 'The "I" of this moment is present in the "me" of the next moment. There again I cannot turn around quick enough to catch myself' (1934, p. 174).

As mentioned, barriers or challenges exist to speaking up, which are formed by our relationships with others and our private conversations with ourselves. These include processes of inclusion and exclusion (Scott, 1990; Elias and Scotson, 1994). In my situation, particularly processes around areas of expertise in my work as a social scientist in a technically oriented environment, gender, and client/consultant relationships have been important, whereas other aspects such as nationality and race might have been more important for some of the others involved in my narratives. Processes of exclusion or marginalisation are not only about what the more powerful say or do; those experiencing themselves as excluded or marginalised might also contribute to the process by not speaking up, I assert. For example, by being a soft-spoken female social scientist working in a technical environment, and often remaining silent in large meetings, I might have reinforced the focus on technical details and simultaneously contributed to my feeling of being marginalised. My soft-spoken appearance and frequent silence have, inter alia, been barriers for engaging in processes of compromise in public. Instead, I have tended to seek influence through discussions and alliances in small groups, which in some situations have enabled compromising to occur. An illustrative example of the latter is from Project 3. There I remained silent in the introductory meeting when Sasha proposed a centralised project approach, although I disagreed; instead, I had several discussions with our team leader and another colleague, explaining why I found Sasha's proposal problematic. The result was a suggestion of an alternative decentralised approach, which became an input to the compromising between Sasha and our alliance, with the team leader as our spokesperson. The above is an example of a situation in which the sharing of views was through an alliance with others, which enabled compromising to occur. However, I was not here in a particularly marginalised or weak position but rather influenced by my private conversations with myself, involving

conflicting value commitments and habits. There are other circumstances in which speaking up entails greater risks. An example is about how young professionals might find it difficult to speak up publicly against their colleagues who have many years of experience within a particular field, especially if—in their perception—their experienced colleagues have not taken their viewpoints seriously in previous situations. However, for persons or groups in marginalised or weaker positions to gain some influence by compromising, it remains a requirement that others are aware of their views, which might best be achieved through alliances with others and/or through support from leaders. These latter strategies are in some contrast to how speaking up, or voice, has been considered in much feminist as well as gender and development literature as a main way in which women's agency and empowerment was demonstrated, with some development agencies presenting poor women's voices as evidence of their agency (Parpart, 2010, pp. 1; 22). In the literature on voice and agency, there has been much focus on individuals, their empowerment and change, often with insufficient attention to the deeper structures (Parpart, 2014, p. 391), that is, to norms and power relations. I concur with Parpart's critique of the frequent equation of agency with voice, in the literal sense of speaking up. There are many circumstances in which this might entail great risks for women's—and men's—safety and/or for their relationships with others. As Parpart posits, a broader definition of agency is required with a greater focus on 'the often hesitant, fitful and unpredictable possibilities for growth in consciousness and actions' (2010, p. 22), which involves thinking about the intersection between silence, agency, and voice.

Returning to the role of leaders, I posit that compromising probably occurs in all types of leadership, ranging from leadership focused on individual heroic leaders to more relational perspectives on leadership, while compromising is an inherent part of my understanding of relational leadership. The latter is a social and dynamic process (as suggested by, for example, Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003; Fletcher, 2004; Uhl-Bien, 2006; Carroll, Levy and Richmond, 2008; Crevani, Lindgren and Packendorff, 2010; Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011). Relational leadership is not confined to persons in formal positions nor limited to individuals with particular attributes or traits but is rather a phenomenon that emerges in interaction in processes of mutual recognition (Flinn, 2018, p. 47). Seen from my perspective, relational leadership involves attempts at creating or strengthening cooperative relationships, which entails being willing to and skilled at engaging in compromise—including speaking up and enabling others to do so— thereby enabling mutual recognition to occur. Important to add is that we can influence the micro-interactions, in which leadership might emerge, but we cannot control these interactions nor whether or how leadership emerges. I argue that leaders take an important role by paying attention to working

relationships within and between groups, which might in some situations involve leaders challenging processes of exclusion or marginalisation, thereby enabling those being marginalised—or at risk of being marginalised—to speak up and engage in processes of compromise. In other situations, this might involve a leader speaking on behalf of one or several of her/his colleagues who feel themselves in a weak position. The latter would require careful considerations, involving several discussions with those experiencing themselves in a weak situation; a leader's direct interference might have the opposite result to that intended and lead to the escalation of a particular conflict or to further marginalisation of a person or group.

Earlier, I referred to processes of inclusion and exclusion as barriers to speaking up and thereby to compromising. Interrelated barriers are the social customs and the habits, which people have acquired or learned (Dewey, 1922, p. 14), starting from their childhood—and including both leaders and their employees. As Dewey explains, habits are socially produced, informed by the social customs of the groups to which people belong or have belonged. Inspired by Dewey, Sullivan depicts habits as sedimented in, and as the very structure of, people's lives (2000, p. 26), which I find a convincing way of illuminating how important habits—and the related social customs—are for people's identity, their interactions with each other, and not least for their private conversations with themselves. Although habits involve a tendency to repeat acts (Dewey, 1922, p. 42)—often in an unreflected way—they are not static. Rather, they are continuously being modified by our other habits and both forming and being formed by the customs of the different environments and groups to which we belong (Dewey, 1922, p. 38; Sullivan, 2000, pp. 34–35).

Sullivan (2000) draws attention to how Dewey's notion of habit, including the interplay between social customs or expectations and habits, can help us understand our gendered existence. As an example, my habit of conflict avoidance and being soft-spoken has been influenced by processes of inclusion and exclusion, I contend, which have involved social customs and expectations of how women and men should behave. According to Danish leaders (both men and women) interviewed by Muhr, women in Danish companies are generally expected to be empathetic, quiet, and caring, and men to be strong, aggressive, and focused on results (2019, pp. 114–121; see also my further explication in the review of Project 4), which to a large extent resonates with my experience—and with that of several others who have grown up in work cultures similar to mine, I believe. It is essential to emphasise, though, that women are not a homogeneous group—nor are men—and others might have developed habits that are very different from mine. The mentioned gendered expectations exert pressures, however, on women

to behave in so-called feminine and men in so-called masculine ways, both when they are in leadership and other positions. Furthermore, perceptions of many areas of expertise tend to be gendered. An example is that men occupy the majority of leadership positions, which has influenced the traditional perception that leaders—irrespective of whether they are men or women—should behave in so-called masculine ways. Another example is that most work involving social or socio-economic aspects in international development tends to be conducted by women rather than men, and this has probably influenced the typical expectation that social scientists in this type of position should act in so-called feminine ways. It is important to highlight that the general expectations of women and men—and leaders and social scientists in international development work—are not static; individual men and women contribute to the adjustment of gendered expectations, the gendered associations to various professions, and also to the creation of new expectations.

As mentioned, leadership is often associated with masculine behaviour, whereas I argue that relational leadership requires engagement in processes of compromise, currently often considered a feminine trait or skill. Speaking up is an inherent part of the role that leaders play in compromising; importantly, this means speaking up as a leader focused on cooperation, rather than on wanting or trying to control the situation. Leaders' engagement in compromise includes their role in enabling those in marginalised or weaker positions to participate in processes of compromise, which might involve making it easier for these persons to speak up themselves or supporting them in other ways, such as listening to them and speaking on their behalf, if this is what appears most appropriate. As an example, young professionals who find it difficult to express disagreement publicly with their experienced colleagues might appreciate the support of a leader in having their views heard, enabling them potentially to engage in a process of compromise.

Based on my four projects and three key arguments, I now proceed to summarise my main contributions to knowledge and practice.

Contributions of this thesis

My research contributes to the literature on compromise and might be of interest to consultants, other practitioners, and researchers in international development, sociology, management theory, and politics.

Contributions to knowledge

My thesis makes a contribution to the literature on compromise in several ways. Firstly, it demonstrates the relevance—and importance—of paying attention to the micro-interactions with others and the private conversations with oneself in attempts to understand processes of compromise at work. It also shows how compromising, viewed as a relational and social process, influences, for example, the implementation of activities and the cooperation between those involved. Using narratives from work situations—as I do in this thesis—makes it possible to explore not only what people say, but also the way they express themselves, their bodily gestures, their feelings, and the historical and organisational environment in which the micro-interactions take place. This has enabled a rich exploration of processes of compromise, which points to generalisable patterns.

Secondly, my research contributes with a radically social perspective on compromise, where those involved adapt to each other, enabling them to move on in conflictual situations, instead of ending up in a stalemate or closing down a conversation. I argue that compromising always involve others, also when this appears to take place primarily in our private conversations with ourselves. This processual and relational understanding is in contrast to how compromise often appears to be viewed within the fields of marketing, politics, sociology, and ethics as an agreement, a solution, or a product, that is, an outcome, as explained in key argument 1 above. Important to mention is that some authors viewing compromise as an outcome consider some relational aspects. An example of this is the marketing research of Nikolova and Lamberton (2016) on how the gender composition of a dyad influences its choice between a product compromise option and other product options. Another example is the research of Bellamy and Hollis (1998) on compromise in politics; they posit that compromise involves negotiations to accommodate the views of others as much as possible. They refer to the accord on slavery agreed to in the early years of the United States and the country's relatively recent legislation on abortion as cases of compromise. Although involving relational aspects, in both research examples the focus is on compromise as an agreement or a product, that is, an outcome in which the micro-

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interactions between those involved in compromise are not explored. Inquiry into processes of micro-interactions and the compromising they involve in our interactions with others and in our private conversations with ourselves is at the centre of my research. My processual and relational understanding of compromise is inspired by Drabæk's research on values and compromise. He associates compromise with negotiations and the functionalisation of cult values or idealisations in everyday interactions (Mead, 1923; Drabæk, 2007, p. 133), as explained in key argument 1 above. His further argument is that, drawing on Mead (1934), compromising can involve sacrificing the 'narrow self' in the development of a 'larger self', which involves recognition of the interests of others. This means that the basis for compromising is the relation between the self and others involved (2007, p. 133). In continuation of this argument by Drabæk, I assert that Hegel's notion of 'being with oneself in another' (Honneth, 2000, p. 29) is an important aspect of compromising, both in our interactions with others and in our private conversations with ourselves; this means that compromising is a reciprocal process which involves adaptations to the views of others without fully giving up—or sacrificing—our own views and what is important to us. Furthermore, compromising is not about splitting the difference in the views of two or several persons but rather about negotiations and adaptations to each other, influenced by the power relations between them. My research indicates that persons or groups experiencing themselves in marginalised or weaker positions are often inclined to adapt their views more, in attempts to gain some influence, than is the case for other persons or groups involved in a process of compromise. For me, particularly marginalisation related to i) areas of expertise, where I work as a social scientist in a technically oriented environment, ii) contractual arrangements between consultants and clients, and iii) gendered expectations have been important, whereas nationality or race might have been more important for Masud and Sasha appearing in my Project 2 and Project 3 narratives, respectively. In some situations, it might be people in the more powerful positions, though, who adapt their views most. Importantly, I am not arguing that compromising is—or should be—possible in all conflictual situations. The latter might, for example, concern values or other aspects of life that are important to the persons involved and who they are, and they might, therefore, not be willing to compromise.

The third contribution of my thesis is related to the varied ways in which compromise might be experienced, and how this might change over time. Literature on politics, ethics, and sociology (see, e.g., Benjamin, 1990; Nachi, 2004) appears to associate compromise primarily with feelings of loss and alienation, with some recognition that the intensity of this feeling might vary. In contrast, my assertion is that people experience compromise in different ways, depending on the particular situation, the

persons involved, the latter's group memberships and histories. In some situations, the feelings might be primarily about loss, whereas in other situations and/or for other persons they might primarily involve gain, for example, in the form of novelty, and/or other feelings. Those involved in a particular process of compromise might thus experience this differently, and such experience might change several times, which illustrates the complexity of compromising. My research indicates that compromising always involves some sense of actual—or anticipated—loss, which might be either the primary or secondary and either a temporary or permanent experience. Instead of being primarily and permanently about loss, I argue that compromising can—in some situations or for some persons— simultaneously, or instead, be about moving into something new; in other words, be about novelty. Building on Mead (1932, p. 73) and Carroll and Simpson (2012), I suggest that it is when people are betwixt and between two or several frames of reference—where they consider their past interactions and their intentions for the future, seen from their perspective of the present—that novelty might evolve in their compromising. As indicated earlier, an important point is that this might not be the experience of all involved in the process. Furthermore, novelty is not an inherent part of all compromising. Rather, inspired by the typical pragmatist understanding of novelty (Joas, 1996, pp. 128– 129), I suggest that novelty might evolve in compromising when differences in views make it impossible to move on by acting in an unreflected habitual way. It is reflections in such situations that make novelty possible.

The fourth contribution of my research is its emphasis on the idea that compromising involves mutual recognition of and adaptations to each other's views, which are possible only when those involved are aware of each other's views. This awareness might arise in several ways, primarily i) by those directly involved speaking up themselves, ii) through forming of alliances with others, and/or iii) through support from leaders. Speaking up is here not just the opposite of silence but is rather to say 'what we think ought to be said' (Foucault, 2005, p. 366); this involves ethical aspects by taking into account the interests of others in the group and those of oneself. Processes of inclusion and exclusion (Scott, 1990; Elias and Scotson, 1994) might constitute barriers or challenges for those in marginalised positions to speak up themselves in public. This might make them seek influence through alliances. However, leaders also have an important role here, I argue, in enabling marginalised persons or groups to speak up and engage in compromising and also in speaking on their behalf, if this is what appears most appropriate; the latter requires careful considerations about how others might react to this. In my view, being willing to and skilled in engaging in compromise—as well as assisting others in such a process—are important aspects of relational leadership.

The final contribution of my research on processes of compromise is to the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating. Authors writing within this perspective take up conflict, power relations with processes of inclusion and exclusion, and communicative interactions between people more generally, but they rarely mention compromise. The exception is Drabæk (2007, 2008), who has contributed to the perspective of complex responsive processes with his processual and relational view of compromise. My further contributions to the perspective of complex responsive processes are i) my assertion that Hegel's notion of 'being with oneself in another' (Honneth, 2000, p. 29) is an important aspect of compromising, meaning that compromising involves adaptations to the views of others, importantly without fully giving up our views and what is important to us; ii) my proposition that persons or groups in marginalised or weaker positions are often inclined to adapt their views more, in attempts to gain some influence, than is the case for other persons or groups involved in a process of compromise and; iii) my third and fourth contributions explained above; these contain other aspects of compromise, which Drabæk does not take up.

The following section sets out my contributions to practice, which are closely linked to the contributions to knowledge.

Contributions to practice

In this section, I address the changes in my practice during the research, which has taken place within the last three years, both as I have experienced them and as indicated by direct work colleagues. I also reflect on how the wider community of practice—other consultants and practitioners working in similar environments—might be inspired by and benefit from my research.

Firstly, my experience is that I have gradually become able to take a somewhat more detached view of what happens in work situations. I am still a participant and emotionally involved in—and affected by— the interactions with my colleagues, clients, and others but—influenced by my research including my research methodology—I am now better able, in Elias's words, to 'take a detour via detachment' (1987, p. 6) from my emotional involvement. This entails being better able to imagine and reflect on the potential backgrounds, influences, and motives of others, as well as my own, in our interactions. In the conclusion to Project 2, I write that 'I believe writing this project has made me pay more attention to the different intentions I and others have, the alliances we form…and to the interplay of public and hidden conversations.' As my research has progressed, I have increasingly been noticing—and reflecting on—

the details in our interactions at work, for example, who speaks most and how, their bodily gestures, my own reactions and emotions as well as those of others. In other words, I am paying more attention to my experience at work—as well as to that of others—than I did before starting the DMan programme. I have not only experienced a higher degree of detachment from my emotional involvement but also a higher degree of reflexivity. As Mowles explains, this involves being 'able to think about how we are thinking about how we are engaged' (2015, p. 60). This entails thinking about our history and group memberships and how they might have influenced us and how we think today. I tend to be particularly reflexive about work situations where I—or others—remain silent or soft-spoken, although I felt that I—or the others—had something important to say. Sometimes, my reflections remain in my private conversations with myself while, at other times, I discuss them with close work colleagues; both types of situations often involve attempts to find patterns and ways to, for example, enable the views of a particular person or group to be heard.

Secondly, I feel more confident now than three years ago that it is possible to find ways to move on in conflictual situations without giving up on what I feel is important for me and others, and also that it is possible to do so in public without first resorting to discussions and alliances in small groups. I have started taking more risks of speaking up without having planned in advance what to say. This gradual change of practice has been greatly influenced by my reading of Honneth (2000) and his interpretation of Hegel's explications of an individual's 'general free will' and by my subsequent discussions with DMan colleagues. These made me realise that I might often have been lost in the anticipated reactions of others, rather than 'being with oneself in another' as Hegel suggests is important for us in order to realise our freedom (Honneth, 2000, p. 29). My later study of Dewey's explications of habits, including the interdependence between social customs and the habits of individuals (Dewey, 1922)—and the gendered aspects of these as elaborated by Sullivan (2000)—has contributed further to my change of habit, from being soft-spoken or silent in public to become somewhat more outspoken, inter alia as a pre-condition for compromising within the public domain. Speaking up in public when we have something important to say means that others are aware of our views and can engage with them. Ethical considerations are essential, however, in connection with speaking up, and such considerations involve taking not only one's own interests and feelings into account but also those of others. My gradual change of habit is an illustration that, although our habits are sedimented in and the very structure of our lives, as Sullivan posits (2000, p. 26), they are not static, and neither are the social customs and expectations of women and men in different positions. One example is the gradual influence that women in Denmark have gained by speaking up in public. One of the long struggles was,

for example, for women to gain access to university studies and to use their education afterwards. In 1877, Nielsine Nielsen was able to enrol, as the first woman, at a Danish university. It took her, however, another 12 years of struggle before she was allowed to practice as a medical doctor, and she was never allowed to train as a gynaecologist (Muhr, 2019, pp. 28–29). Today, there are as many women as men—or perhaps more—who enrol and complete university studies. Another more recent example is the young Swedish activist on climate change Greta Thunberg, who has gained recognition by speaking up and has influenced others, particularly young people, around the world also to speak up about climate change and the need for action.

In Project 4, I give two examples of how I have started voicing my views more clearly in public and a third example is included in the synopsis (the review of Project 4). The latter is an example of a situation in which neither my colleague nor I were willing to adapt our views to those of the other; in other words, there was no compromising. Despite this, my experience was that our direct and relatively frank discussions of our disagreements made it easier for me, and perhaps for my colleague, to continue working together—and the discussions might even have improved our cooperation. Speaking up more frequently is, therefore, not solely to engage in processes of compromise. My change of practice is also that I am somewhat more prepared to stand up for my views in situations where I and/or others involved are not willing to adapt to each other's views. Project 4 also includes, however, reflections on my experience of failing to act assertively during a conference call, despite my goal to do so, which illustrates how difficult it is to change long-established habits. I find my gradual change of habit rewarding but at times also an uncomfortable process, which Dewey describes so eminently: 'reflection, roughly speaking, is the painful effort of disturbed habits to readjust themselves' (1922, p. 76).

In our discussions of my studies and my potential change of practice, long-term colleagues have indicated that, compared to two to three years ago, I now appear more confident and speak more in larger meetings. When I asked for more details, one of them explained that, whereas earlier I sometimes spoke in a strained way, as if I did not think others would take me seriously, I now appear to believe more in my professional competences and knowledge—and I have now somewhat higher clout and influence. It resonates with me that I have now more confidence in my knowledge and competences as a social scientist and in that my knowledge matters—or should matter—to others. However, it is not only an increased confidence in the competences learned from my education and my many years of working as a social scientist; the additional knowledge acquired during my DMan studies related to my research theme of compromise and getting heard has made me more confident, as have

my increased reflections on our micro-interactions with each other at work. This includes a closer attention than previously to the potential intentions of others and the potential reasons why they react as they do.

Discussions with colleagues, from both my company and other companies, indicate that the experience I take up in my narratives resonates with many other social scientists working in the often technically oriented environments of international development—and with women working within international development more generally. After reading my draft thesis, one colleague thus highlighted how recognisable my experience and feelings were to her, as a social scientist and woman working in assignments and environments similar to mine. She had experienced similar situations and feelings but had never been able to pinpoint what it was that disturbed or puzzled her. My narratives and analyses had made her reflect on some of her past interactions and relationships with colleagues and clients, where she had not spoken up and where, after some time, it appeared too late to do so. I do not mean to indicate that all others react in the same ways as I did; rather, some might react in very different ways, influenced by their histories and their group memberships. My experience might also resonate with consultants in other fields in Denmark—and perhaps in other Western countries—who have experienced themselves in marginalised or weaker positions and/or who have, perhaps for other reasons, the habit of speaking hesitantly or remaining silent in public. I hope that my research will inspire these consultants and other practitioners to reflect on and discuss their everyday work experience, their interactions with others, and their private conversations with themselves. I suggest that my thesis can contribute to such reflections and discussions, particularly regarding processes of compromise, getting heard, and methodological considerations.

At a team leader seminar in our department a couple of years ago, we shared and discussed our work experience from various projects through narratives and small theatre plays. My colleagues and I are now discussing options for conducting other seminars using a similar approach and also whether and how we might be able to use narratives, and reflections on these, more generally in our work. One possibility is the sharing and discussion of narratives within our multi-disciplinary project teams, which might be helpful in, for example, increasing the coordination and integration of activities across disciplines. In particular, this might be helpful for those experiencing themselves in marginalised or weaker positions. I envision that the team leader and/or a senior team member would play an important role in enabling and supporting those who might experience themselves in weaker positions to speak up through their narratives and during discussions. I have had initial discussions with a younger

colleague, who works with tasks similar to mine, about how this approach might be used in a long-term project where we are both involved.

I will write a section on processes of compromise and getting heard in a book which is planned for publication in a series on complexity in management. In addition, I am planning to write an article on the same theme in one of the international development journals, such as the Journal of International Development, World Development Perspectives, or Development in Practice.

Concluding remarks

The aim of my research has not been to arrive at universal conclusions and knowledge but rather to contribute with what Dewey referred to as *warranted assertions*. These are explanations, arguments, and generalisable patterns, which my community of inquiry—that is, my learning set, second supervisor, and the wider DMan community—has found credible and plausible, based on their experience and in the context of a wider literature. I have also tested out ideas on my work colleagues, who have found these plausible. However, as Martela explains, *warranted assertions* always remain open to being changed (2015, p. 540) and, I would add, to being complemented and expanded, based on further research.

My research is based on the experience—and written from the perspective—of a female social scientist working as a consultant in a technically oriented environment of international development. Exploration of processes of compromise and getting heard in other fields of work and/or in other environments might bring new perspectives or add further nuances to my research. I suggest that such explorations constitute interesting opportunities for further research.

My thesis briefly examines leadership roles in processes of compromise and the inherent aspect of speaking up. This includes indications of patterns in the gendered expectations of women and men in leadership and other positions, where skills and gestures of compromising are often associated more with women than men, while the opposite is the case for speaking up. I propose that the enabling and supportive role of leaders in processes of compromise deserves further research. I am particularly interested in, and curious about, whether and how gender might influence the role that leaders play—or do not play—in supporting processes of compromise at work. This is an area of research that I hope to contribute to in the future, with a focus on consultancies within international development work.

In key argument 3, I touch briefly on the frequent equation of agency with voice, whereas, as posited by Parpart, a broader definition of agency is required, which involves thinking about the intersection between silence, agency, and voice and what happens at this intersection (2010). Exploring this in relation to processes of compromise is another area that merits future research and one that I might also be interested in pursuing. Such research could possibly be linked to further exploration of the enabling and supportive role of leaders in processes of compromise.

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