The Appeal to Values
in the
Management of International
Non-governmental Organisations:
Linking Ethics and Practice

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May 2007

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Hertfordshire for the degree of Doctor of Management

The programme of research was carried out in the Department of Human Resources and Strategy: University of Hertfordshire

in collaboration with

The Institute of Group Analysis

Abstract

The appeal to values in the management of international non-governmental organisations: linking ethics and practice

This thesis deals with the way that values get taken up by managers and leaders in international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), organisations which already have a rich history of public appeals to values. By 'values' I take to mean those generalised and idealising statements, such as the aspiration to 'mutual respect', 'equity and justice' 'honesty and transparency' in dealings with others, which usually accompany the organisation's vision and mission statements. The thesis sets out the argument that modern management methods based on systems thinking have been imported largely uncritically into the INGO sector, and in situations where the future is uncertain, or where there is difficulty or conflict, managers often attempt to cover over this conflict or uncertainty with an appeal to values which pictures an idealised future or an imaginary unity. Further, the thesis attempts to explore this phenomenon and to uncover some of the ethical issues that arise in the process of an appeal to unity when I am engaged as a consultant in working with managers in the INGO-sector. The thesis considers how my own practice as a consultant has changed and developed as a consequence of considering these phenomena more intensely and acting on the conclusions from these reflections.

The research was prompted by my feelings of being co-opted into a process that encouraged conformity in INGOs in a way that left me feeling uncomfortable. In exploration of this discomfort and as student in a faculty pursuing the conceptual development of professional practice I have drawn broadly on the phenomenological tradition of research as a way of better understanding what I was encountering and how to make better sense of it. The method underpinning this thesis uses narrative, and reflection on narrative with a community of enquirers, which has included both fellow students on the course, as well as a wider group of interested academics. I have used as my research material my own experience of working with INGOs as a consultant and have reflected on those occasions when the discussion of values is very much to the fore. It has

also meant my locating the discussion of values in a wider discourse of philosophy, sociology and psychology and mounting a critique of the dominant paradigm for understanding values in current management and organisational change literature, which is often understood as a tool for management to bring about employee alignment. Instead, I have set out an emergent understanding of values as radically social phenomena arising in the daily interaction between engaged human beings. I argue that, because of our interdependence, we are obliged to renegotiate our value commitments on a daily basis as a way of working out how we can continue together. This has involved developing a different understanding of the relationship between self and other, and a more nuanced insight into the workings of groups and the relationships of power that arise between people. Engaging with values in INGOs as a consultant invited into conversations in INGOs has thus involved my paying attention to power relating between myself and others, and the dialectic between the good and the right.

Reflecting on the ethical aspects of my own consultancy practice has involved an investigation into what we might mean by ethical practice, which is generally understood to be following a series of linear rules and paradigms. I have begun to develop in its stead a theory of consultancy practice based on concepts of mutual recognition and mutual adjustment that create more space for movement within the broader social processes that can severely constrain what it is and is not possible to say and do.

This thesis contributes to knowledge in the field of the management of INGOs by being one of the first to offer a critique of accepted paradigms of management theory, particularly as it relates to the appeal to values as part of strategy formation. Moreover, the emergent and social theory of values that I develop as a foil to more orthodox understandings of the role of values in the management of INGOs is also unique. My arguments concerning the ethical practice of consultancy in the domain, underpinned by a dialectical engagement of self and other, are particularly relevant to the field in which I am involved where the encounter with difference is inevitable. In the literature on management of INGOs, where research on consultancy practice is still rather thin and orthodox,

my argument for a different understanding of ethical practice offers a considerable divergence of approach. In pointing to the similarities between the pressures facing INGO and private sector organisations I have also called into question the uniqueness that many scholars claim for the current management practice in INGOs. My attempts to use narrative and reflection on narrative as a method that strives to articulate what a different practice might look like should also make a new contribution to the debate about method, and ways of discussing management practice, in international development.

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Introduction

As a consultant to international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) of ten years' standing I am often invited to help senior managers plan and execute strategy and other organisational planning events. During these occasions there is often an appeal to values as a way for the group to find its way towards defining the next stage of the organisation's development. For example, it is a taken for granted assumption that the correct way to undertake strategy planning is to reclarify the organisation's vision, mission and values with staff, and to invite them to align their own values with those of the organisation. I give examples of in Project 3 the kinds of values that get adduced on these occasions. So, for example, a major British INGO espouses values of 'mutual respect, equity and justice, honest and transparency.' In contrast to John Dewey who sees values as cases 'of practical judgement, a judgement about the doing of something' (1915/1998: 243), managers and leaders in INGOs understand values to be idealised and generalised statements which are deemed to motivate and inspire the employees in the organisations particularly at times when strategy is being developed. Strategy development in INGOs can sometimes lead to euphoric events where senior managers and leaders get drawn into over-promising what the organisation is capable of achieving. Claims can be made for the transformative effect of INGO intervention which offer qualitative and substantial discontinuities with the past, and which then become translated into strategies and plans with milestones and 'measurable' outcomes. As one senior manager recently claimed in such an event, all everyone had to do was to 'think of the change you want to bring about and work backwards from there.' Alternatively, at times in organisational life when there is conflict or uncertainty, I have experienced managers in organisations appealing to values in ways which have made me feel distinctly uncomfortable.

My doctoral thesis is an exploration of this phenomenon, the way that values are now being taken up in the management of INGOs and the effect that this has on staff, consultants and others involved with them, in environments which already have rich histories in relation to the appeal to values. Many INGOs were started by visionary founders as a moral response to injustices that they perceived in the

world. I myself joined an INGO as a young man inspired by this very sense of injustice and was driven to seek ways of being practically involved to 'do something' about the injustices I perceived. I still seek most of my work in this sector. In exploring this phenomenon, then, using my own experience as data, writing and reflecting on this data with others and drawing some conclusions which then informs my practice, I have tried to develop an alternative understanding of how we might work with values in the management of INGOs. In reflecting on my own practice at the same time and trying to locate it in the literature on consultancy practice, I have tried to explore what we might mean by an ethics of practice in the domain of international development, given its particular rich moral history and context. In so doing, I believe that I offer a radical challenge to the uncritical adoption of more orthodox management theory in general and in particular the way values are taken up in management practice.

The thesis turns on a radically social understanding of values and the power relationships that come into play when staff in an organisation try to work out how to go on together. It suggests that such power relationships are not just manifested in direct conflict between managers and staff but attempt to inform and constrain what employees think and believe. In effect, when managers begin to think of values as an instrument of management, rather than as contested and conflictual social phenomenona, they are in danger of manipulating their employee as they invite them to conform and cover over any misgivings or differences they might have for the 'good' of the organisation. Employees are alienated from the complexity of their day to day lives with an appeal to an imagined unity. I argue that this way of working may only perpetuate the very difficulties that employees are experiencing and denies them the opportunity of engaging with their day to day practice.

In becoming aware of what has motivated me, and in reflecting on my long association with INGOs I find myself needing to respond to Norbert Elias' challenge which he set out at length both in *"Problems of involvement and detachment" (*1956; subsequently revised with a German translator, M. Schröter, 1983, and republished in English, 1987) and in *What is Sociology* (1978). When scholars attempt to understand the societies of which they are part, how is it

possible to become more detached about their involvement in the phenomenon they are describing? In the latter volume Elias sets out three specific challenges:

> First, in constructing or criticising sociological theories, to what extent am I primarily attempting to establish the validity of a preconceived idea of how human societies ought to be ordered? Secondly, to what extent do I accept those results of theoretical and empirical investigations which confirm my own aims and hopes, and disregard those which are incompatible with them? And, thirdly to what extent am I chiefly concerned to find connections between particular social events, how their sequence can actually be explained, and what help social theories can offer in explaining and determining the trend of social problems – and last, but not least, in providing practical solutions to them? (1978: 153)

In Elias' terms, in undertaking this investigation I must continue to declare an interest and take seriously what arises for me and others at the same time. Given that I come to this area of enquiry with some of the very same value motivations that inspire the people I am working with, I need to take seriously the way in which we are all affected by this in our interactions together. Bourdieu was also aware of this very phenomenon, of the need for researchers to declare an interest, since he observed that 'The body is in the social world and the social world is in the body' (1982: 38), which seems to me to be pointing to something similar to Elias. That is to say, our experience is paradoxical. We are formed by social processes that give rise to the way that we can experience the world, and at the same time we form the social world by contributing to it. As a consequence I have been obliged to pay attention to my own part in the social process in which I participate and to find a vocabulary for describing the phenomena I experience. My reflections on self and others interweave.

In setting out my investigation it is important to do justice to the manner in which social processes, and ways of thinking about them, have evolved over time, but also to find ways of developing new ways of describing them that become necessary because past descriptions are no longer adequate. For example, Elias (1978: 33-49) carefully interprets the work of Auguste Comte

(1798-1851) (*Cours de la Philosophie Positive,* [1830-1842] 1936) to draw attention to how thought has evolved through different modes; for Comte theological modes of understanding preceded metaphysical ways of describing social phenomena, which in turn were developed into a scientific approach to understanding the world. By 'scientific', Elias takes Comte to mean the indivisibility of theory and empirical work, of interpretation and observation, and in making this distinction he understood the study of society to be a new area of science which required new tools of thought.

I do not understand Comte, or Elias, to be saying that these are three separate and distinct ways of understanding the world, rather that they interpenetrate, but that one particular mode can come to dominate other or newer ways of seeing the world. For Elias this is where there is an unheeded confusion of facts with values. This would in some way account for some of the events that I describe in my projects which have occasionally felt like religious gatherings. Rather than trying to come to terms with the immense complexity and difficulties facing INGOs and other organisations, leaders and managers have seemed to me to be covering them over in a quasi-religious way, in a search for immutability in the presence of great complexity - a phenomenon also noted by Elias:

> To put it briefly, the less amenable a particular sphere of events is to human control, the more emotional will be people's thinking about it; and the more emotional and fantasy-laden their ideas, the less capable will they be of constructing more accurate models of these nexuses, and thus of gaining greater control over them. (1978: 156)

In some of these events, the fantasy that leaders and managers can bring about idealised change in the world in the way that they describe, is yoked together with a scientific approach to planning that change. It is important, in my opinion, to do justice to the role of the religious imagination in motivating human action at the same time as drawing attention to some of the consequences of the quasi-religious appeal to values in these contexts. In other words they create conditions where it is possible to say some things about the world, but to obscure others. It

is this phenomenon of the potential for manipulation as a characteristic of management in INGOs on which my thesis turns.

Over the years I have become increasingly uncomfortable with the lack of reality convergence of the claims that senior managers make and the appeal to values that accompany them. I have become uneasy with the situation I have found myself in, as a facilitator and consultant, seemingly helping to promote euphoric and charismatic events. I am neither against exciting and motivating staff, nor am I opposed to planning. However, I feel as though I have been co-opted into encouraging staff to pass over the very real difficulties that employees in INGOs face in the day to day in favour of an escape to an idealised future. Employees' everyday experience is simply not valued. Throughout my thesis I also describe episodes around consultancy and development work in INGOs where there are attempts to cover over conflict and difference through an appeal to values.

An overview of the projects
In drawing attention to my own development I note in Project 1 how, alongside many thousands of idealistic young people, I joined an INGO to 'make a difference' in the world and still make most of my living trying to contribute to what they do. I address the genesis of my own values and describe the assumptions that I brought to bear in developing my early career as a consultant to INGOs. I start to describe my growing realisation of the inadequacy of some of the theories that I attempted to put into practice. I begin to develop theories around power and practice.

In reflecting on the theories that I have been using in my practice both knowingly and unknowingly, in Project 2 I began to locate it among different schools of thought of scholars who write about development management in general, and values in particular. I have used as my research material my own experience of working with INGOs as a consultant and have reflected on those occasions when the discussion of values is very much to the fore. To broaden my thinking I examine how values get taken up in philosophy, sociology and psychology, particularly in the traditions of pragmatism and hermeneutic phenomenology. I begin mounting a critique of the dominant paradigm for understanding values in

the management literature, as a tool for management to bring about employee alignment. In its stead, I propose an emergent understanding of values as a deeply social and paradoxical phenomenon arising in the daily interaction between human beings engaged in processes of mutual recognition. This theme also gets expanded further in Projects 3 and 4.

In Project 3 I adduce both Dewey and G.H Mead to explore what the latter described as the 'enlarged self', where, in taking the attitude of another, we are able to expand our ability to act beyond a narrow self interest. This involves me in exploring how values emerge out of the daily interaction with others, and thus causes me to reflect on theories of practice and the dialectic of self and other. In this project I explore what the concept of emergence might mean for understanding how values arise between interdependent people engaged in discovering how they might go on together.

In particularising the general and generalising the particular, in project 4 I draw attention to the global processes of marketisation in which we all work. These processes of marketisation severely constrain what it is possible to say and do. I have adduced other scholars who have pointed to the same phenomenon. My research has also led me into reflecting on my own consultancy practice, in particular how different scholars address the ethical implications of practice and how an emergent theory of values might lead to a different way of practising and thinking about practice.

Finally, in the synopsis I sum up what I have learned from the experience and make an assessment of my contribution to this area of enquiry. I also set out the method I have pursued over the course of my DMan and make a critical assessment of the theory of complex processes of relating developed in the two series published by members of the faculty at the Centre for Complexity Management, University of Hertfordshire, which have heavily influenced my work.

During the course of the DMan I have attempted to engage radically with my practice in the company of, and accompanied by others. In paying attention to

what happens during this intense engagement I have learned a lot about myself and my practice and have developed a much greater ability to notice the potential for different ways of acting. In this sense I would argue that the process has enabled me to transform my practice through radical engagement with it. The process has been arduous and sometimes painful. This offers a very different understanding of 'transformation' from the one generally offered by current management orthodoxy and it is this difference that involves me in the course of this thesis.

Project 1
Practising values and values in practice

Language, values and meaning

I want to begin to make sense of my professional experience with a focus on the power relations I find myself participating in as a consultant to organisations, and the role that values play in this dynamic. This will involve a consideration of the expectations that I create together with my clients about what is happening, and how we mediate what transpires. These expectations are about what it means to be competent and professional, what a consultancy intervention should look like, and how groups of people might be creative together. I also want to go on to argue that the way that thinking about international development practice has evolved during the last fifteen years or so has made aspects of the power relationship between donors and recipients undiscussable. This is ironic in an arena where politics, power and inequality have always been very much to the fore in discussions within the sector. My first project will begin to ask questions about what it is that underpins my own way of working and the assumptions that inform the organisations I work with. I will do this by describing some incidents in my working practice as a way of exploring some of the themes that arise.

Narrative 1

I was recently employed by the Department for International Development (DfID) to go to China as part of a consultancy team advising the Ministry for Water Resources (MWR) on project management. The water project that the DfID is funding in China reflects the shift in thinking that has taken place in the last decade away from capital intensive projects and towards water demand management. This way of working is guided by quite clear principles which have evolved across the globe in lots of different contexts, but can only be realised in a local setting bearing in mind the specificities of the particular river basin and the participation of all of those who might be considered stakeholders. The very nature of the project is predicated on participation and learning about what will work in each place, and is very intensive in terms of the involvement of people in decisions about their local environment.

The method that the DfID prefers to manage its disbursements to foreign governments is called the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). Originally developed by the US military in the 1960s and adopted by USAID as a way of reporting on its work to Congress, the logical framework approach has quickly spread to other funding institutions such as the World Bank, the UN and of course the British Government. The logical framework approach posits a logical connection between the overall purpose of the project, which could be described in quite an abstract way, introducing water resource demand management principles to China, say, which are then "made concrete" through project goals, and which would begin to specify the nature and type of the specific case studies, which in turn would be realised through specific activities. These activities are grounded in assumptions and monitored and evaluated against OVIs (objectively verifiable indicators); the course of the project is judged against key project milestones identified and described in advance. In essence the LFA is based on first order cybernetic systemic thinking (Wiener, 1948; see also Jackson, 2000, 70) predicated on negative feedback to correct and stabilise a project and keep it on course to achieve predetermined outcomes. Although we were equipped with no specific guidance from the DfID which would explain the organisation's own understanding of logical framework analysis, it has been my experience that in some cases the DfID will accept both positive and negative feedback in the administration of the logical framework analysis creating a more adaptable second order model based in systems dynamics (Forrester, 1961), which may then influence project development even to the extent of reconsidering some of the project goals. The exact circumstances under which this is allowed to happen and what this may mean for the project management approach however, has never been spelled out to me, and in general the logical framework approach is not often explored in its use. It is taken for granted.

As we got into discussing the logical framework approach with Chinese colleagues it quickly became apparent that there were going to be difficulties of language and meaning. In English 'purpose' and 'goals' have specific logical framework meanings and help to disaggregate the project into manageable and logical parts. In Chinese, 'purpose' and 'goals' could be the same Chinese

character (along with 'intention', or 'aim'). As the conversation proceeded there was little effort made on the part the international consultant team to explore the ramifications of the situation we found ourselves in together – we are in a country which has a rich and ancient culture and language, which prides itself on its engineering and project management achievements (during the SARS crisis the Chinese built a 1000 bed hospital in a week), and which has a complex language and culture that is to an exceptional degree able to express ambiguity. As a team of consultants we are tasked to convey the principles of the logical framework approach on behalf of the DfID, which uses terms that are probably opaque to most ordinary speakers of English. In most situations this would be an invitation to explore the complexities of the situation in which we found ourselves and could lead to a better understanding on both sides of what was needed and what might work in the Chinese context. Instead it became an opportunity for the lead consultant to ram home the logical framework approach as he understood the DfID to mean it. "This is considered to be international best practice for water resource demand management," he said, effectively closing the discussion down. I found it very difficult to know how to engage with the situation as a junior member of the consultancy team: I did not want to problematise log frames and undermine my team, yet at the same time I was very uncomfortable with the situation I found myself in.

In this project I will try and uncover some of the origins of my own values and those of the people I was working with and how these may have contributed to the power dynamic in which I found myself caught up.

How my values emerged – exploring involvement and detachment
I will begin by narrating an early experience of facilitating an Equal Opportunities workshop in Oxfam, one of the UK's largest international development NGOs.

In the late 80s senior managers in Oxfam wanted to review the organisation's compliance with Equal Opportunities legislation, and more than this, to bring about behaviour change in its employees. They had decided that if they were to take the different aspects of employment legislation seriously, then simply

writing new policies and procedures would not be enough. They engaged a team of outside consultants to train up a cadre of Oxfam employees, of whom I was one, to understand the legislation and to design and deliver training courses.

The training courses were structured in a way that started with a presentation of the UK law at the time and an overview of where the organisation stood on these matters. These were presented as norms that everyone should adhere to. In Oxfam, we were explicitly advised not to deal with people's opinions but to enable challenges to be made to "unacceptable" behaviour. We conjured up unacceptable behaviour by asking people to reflect on the legislation and the organisation's aspirations and to come up with examples of unacceptable behaviour under the headings of racism, sexism, homophobia and disability discrimination that they had experienced in the workplace. We would then role play a scenario and then try and correct it by replaying the scenario asking participants what they thought worked and what did not.

The ideas that underpinned my training as a facilitator can be found in a book such as Schwarz's *The Skilled Facilitator* (2000), which is very popular amongst facilitators. Drawing on the work of Senge (1990) and Argyris and Schön (1974) Schwarz posits a model of good group work practice which differentiates between effective groups and ineffective groups. Good group work, then, is about moving from ineffective to effective behaviour both on the individual and group level.

The role of the facilitator is to help point out the discrepancy between behaviours that help and behaviours that impede the proper functioning of the group within the organisation, to draw attention to what Argyris (1990) calls "espoused theories" and "theories in use"; the difference between what we say we do and what we actually do. This, in essence, was what senior managers in Oxfam wanted to achieve with the Equal Opportunities training programme – specifically, to align employee behaviour with a preconceived set of ideal behaviours.

In effect this is positing a system of cybernetic control (see again the work of Wiener (1948) and Forrester (1969) mentioned above), where there is a concept of effective or model behaviour, an equilibrium state, to which groups should aspire. The role of the facilitator is to act as a correction mechanism when the group deviates from this definition of effective behaviour. This is possible because the facilitator sits outside the group and can objectively notice when the deviation occurs. In order to do so s/he has a mental model of what good group process looks like (in Schwarz's terms it is group process, group context and group structure, all of which are interrelated) – if you affect one part of the interrelated parts and you affect the "whole".

Objectivity can be achieved, Schwarz argues, through the facilitator being "substantively neutral":

> I do not mean that you have no opinions on the issues that the group is discussing. That would be unrealistic and inhuman. Rather, I mean that you facilitate the discussion without sharing your opinions so that group members cannot tell what you think about the group's issues; consequently you do not influence the group's decisions. (2000: 41*)*

Not only does this theory of facilitation posit a notion that consultants can be neutral, but also that they should be required to encourage groups to achieve a stable state, to resolve conflict through dialogue, and to dampen down behaviour that threatens to destabilise agreed norms. It would not do justice to the substantial literature on facilitation and consultancy to suggest that all books are the same; however there are some popular and pervasive understandings about what facilitators and consultants should do and how they demonstrate competence. For example, in the conference centre where the DMan residentials are held there is a bulletin board where articles of interest to students on management courses are pinned up. The January 2005 Roffey Institute Bulletin published a Masterclass article on facilitation which identified things to look for to spot a good facilitator:

- Participation is high, goals and objectives are set and are clear, and the process moves along at the right pace.
- Good facilitators lead without appearing to
- They know how to trigger and control group dynamics such as discussion and participation.

(Roffey Institute Bulletin Jan. 2005)

It was within this set of expectations, that I could control the group processes, that I could set goals and objectives in advance and adhere to them, and could lead without appearing to, that I undertook the Equal Opportunities training in Oxfam. However, I discovered in the running of them that at no point did I feel neutral about the issues we were discussing, substantively or otherwise, and exercising explicit, rather than tacit power and control was the only way of maintaining any semblance of order.

In our exploration of what group norms "should" be, my co-facilitator and I were presenting ourselves as repositories of progressive wisdom in an organisation that had strong values, motivational and aspirational, around progressiveness. I can see looking back on the events that the guilt and shame of the participants, insofar as they perceived themselves that they were falling short of these values, played a large part in our being able to control the group and I will explore some of the reasons behind this below.

This did not prevent some of the sessions from being very turbulent; many staff in Oxfam were inherently oppositional and utopian - against capitalism, against patriarchy and against management - and since this was a management initiative some staff would have been suspicious of it despite its progressive intent. Equally, other staff who benefited from harassing women or discriminating against black and ethnic minority staff also found it challenging. Nor did it prevent some of the sessions from being very creative, particularly around the role playing we were doing when people had an opportunity to act into the moment, sometimes to find a new way of dealing with work place situations which had inhibited them and which they may have experienced as oppressive

for some time. Role plays did offer opportunities for what Gergen calls "generative discourse", i.e. "ways of talking and writing (and otherwise representing) that simultaneously challenge existing traditions of understanding, and offer new possibilities for action." (1999: 49)

However, there was a limit to how far we were prepared to let these discourses stray; as facilitators we were pre-occupied with control as we struggled to keep the lid on quite explosive issues, particularly around sexual orientation and the status of women in the workplace, and in the end we exercised that control through staking a claim to a "higher truth" in an organisation that contained employees who were restive for higher truths.

It struck me, even at the time, that the idea of neutrality was an illusion that both the group and I were sustaining together. There was little shared acknowledgement that we were a group of people interacting together, rather than my being a facilitator who sat separate from and outside the "main" group. I was conscious of the power that I could exercise, and if I am honest with myself I enjoyed it and felt uncomfortable with it at the same time. My enjoyment arose out my experience of the movement that we were making together, that it was possible to lead and guide a group in an exploration of some difficult human problems. It is important to consider the work of Norbert Elias here, and his contribution to thinking about power. For Elias (1978) power differentials inevitably arise as a consequence of humans living together and interacting. What is of significance for Elias is the interdependence that forms the basis of all human power relating:

> Whether power differentials are large or small, balances of power are always present wherever there is a functional interdependence between people. (1978: 75)

For some reason the trainees and I had colluded to cover over the power dynamics of this "functional interdependence". My discomfort arose from the ethical implications of the collusion that was being exercised here; if the other individuals I was working with were ceding me power, how could I be sure of

using it well? If they gave up their shared responsibility for what was going on how could they fully recognise themselves in the group process? And as an individual interested in politics and power relations, why was I concerned to spend so much energy exercising control?

Politics, power, faith and emancipation

I want to return for a while to issues of politics, fundamentalism and values to see if I can untangle some of the threads of what was involved in this power dynamic between the course participants and me.

Starting with the development of my own values, I have had an ongoing involvement with the works of Marx since I was a teenager and have reappraised him and reformed my opinions of him as time has passed. At the risk of simplifying this movement of thought, it might be helpful at least to point to a moment when my reading of a book helped me begin to make sense of feelings that I was experiencing. As the child of working class but aspirational parents I had won a scholarship to a fee-paying public school from an ordinary state primary. At this school I encountered a majority of children who were from a very different class and background to me; confident, monied, sure of their place in the world and what the future held.

I went to this school, but often did not feel a part of it, was slow to learn the register of language that was needed to survive in the new circumstances, and became disoriented as I came to realise the narrowness of perspective of the suburbs from which I had emerged. I was conscious of a very definite power imbalance between my classmates and myself.

The *Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels, [1888], 2004) which I read aged 14 seemed to identify a set of causes, in the way capitalism worked, for the discomfort that I was experiencing. I, my family and people like us were the objects of a power relationship which was necessarily exploitative because of our relationship to the means of production. The alienation that I felt, that my father felt, was an inevitable consequence of where we found ourselves in the class system, in the kind of expectations that we had about what we could achieve, and

what "the system" would allow us to do. If it was inevitable that people from my background should be and feel exploited, it was also comforting to read that the dialectic of history would make our suffering and sense of alienation redundant, that the reversal of fortunes for the owners of capital was inevitable.

Wrestling with Marx was probably a significant moment in the development of my sense of values, about what was important to me, and the identification that I began to feel with others who were alienated and exploited because of the alienation that I myself felt. I can also see the utopian overtones of the values that I had begun to develop which must have also inevitably been informed by a largely Christian education.

The origins of values
Hans Joas' in his book *The Genesis of Values* (2000), makes a distinction, drawing on John Dewey (1934), between norms and values; norms are obligatory and constraining and provide moral criteria for assessing what ought to be done, while values are voluntary and compelling in a committed sense. It is important to understand the paradoxical nature of values as Joas describes them since he presents them as the highest expression of our free will: they are 'voluntary compulsions'. Through the power of imagination we are able to experience a wholeness of purpose which we cannot ever realise, but which enlarges our sense of self. I will continue to explore this understanding of values in subsequent projects.

In reflecting on my early encounter with Marx, and my subsequent decision to work in INGOs which have an explicit moral mission, I see a connection between my values and a faith in emancipation. I think the ideas of salvation and utopianism are important because of the connections that Joas (op. cit.) makes, drawing on the works of James [1902] (1983) and Durkheim [1912] (2001) between the origin of values and their relation to religious experience. Both philosophers, according to Joas, draw attention the fact that religious experience involves a transcendence of self in some greater whole, and Durkheim in particular noted the group dynamic of religious belief, with belief a form of collective ecstasy. I can relate the development of my own values to a belief in a

set of principles greater than myself where I and others who joined me, could transcend the constraints of the situation in which we found ourselves. Taylor (1989) makes a similar point in *Sources of the Self,* where he argues that, in our narratives about our own lives we have to place ourselves in orientation to the good, and weave our lives into some pattern of higher action. For those from a leftist and Christian background it is then possible to align oneself with a perceived forward march of history:

> This is obviously the case of those secular derivatives of Christianity, which see history in terms of a struggle between good and evil, progress and reaction, socialism and exploitation. The insistent absolute question here is: Which side are you on? This permits only two answers, however near or distant we may be from the triumph of the right. But it is also true for other conceptions which are not at all polarized in this way. (1989: 45)

In Oxfam, years later, there was a strong belief in the collective morality of what we were doing, that we were trying to lead good lives and help others to do so starting by helping to provide the basic material means for life. The other important factor here is that it was not enough to strive for personal liberation; salvation was collective, not just individual.

In the Equal Opportunities training we were mixing up norms and values in an organisation that had strong values about acting for the good. Passion for fairness and justice verged on the religious in the organisation and permeated everyday interactions. There was an intermingling of the personal and the global; we, the employees, believed ourselves to be part of a global movement for change, where we could transcend global injustice through collective action and personal application. Particularly in the 1980s there was a melding of the politics of personal progressiveness and social progressiveness which broadened the spectrum of extremes. Many workers in Oxfam at the time came from a Marxist, or at least leftist tradition, or from Christian traditions that espoused liberation theology, such as radical Catholics, or Quakers.

Among certain staff in Oxfam at that time, including myself, there was an argument for a progressive form of politics that was applied in the round. Justice and equity could only be achieved if we pushed "progressive" values into every corner of life, both at work and at home. We tried to be systematic in our utopianism; we wanted to "get something done" about justice and fairness, and looked for opportunities for effecting this in the workplace. If it had overtones of the religious, not to say Puritan, it was also not far from straying into fundamentalism. This is what Weber draws attention to in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1905] (2001) in which he described how Protestantism encourages individuals to do good works for the glory of God and to live a good life, both bound into one rational plan.

Norbert Elias picks up some of these themes in his work. In an essay on *Involvement and Detachment* he explains that human behaviour lies along the spectrum of that title:

> …the very existence of ordered group life depends on the interplay in man's thoughts and actions of impulse in both directions, those that involve and those that detach keeping each other in check. They may clash and form alloys of many shades and kinds – however varied it is the relation between the two that sets people's courses. (1956: 226; republished in Elias, 1987 3-4)

He later develops this idea of process in *The Symbol Theory* (1991) when he describes the ability of human beings to communicate about what doesn't exist and what they cannot experience; fantasy, he argues, is the twin-brother of reason. Where we begin to get into difficulties is when we begin to think of fantasy as reason, as sometimes exhibited in fundamentalist political or religious belief systems. As a group of trainers we were committed and involved but had a tendency to present our involvement as being a universal truth, a detached and objective position. The element of fundamentalism played out particularly in areas where I, and the colleagues I worked with, had an idea that people needed to be liberated, but they didn't always know that they did because they couldn't see how they were being exploited. We took up the quasi-Marxist idea of "false

consciousness" to explain this phenomenon, and my role as an Equal Opportunities trainer was to help them understand a better way of being and more compatible way of behaving according to the values that we said we all espoused. On reflection I can better understand the discomfort about the ethical implications of my relationship to the group if the group did cede me power in the way that I was experiencing it, in the sense that I was attempting to coerce them into change.

How values get taken up in groups – the work of G.H. Mead

George Herbert Mead's theory of cult values, as taken up in Griffin's book *The Emergence of Leadership* (2002), is also helpful here. In two essays written in 1914 and 1923, Mead argued that when countries or institutions think of themselves as if they were wholes they then can start to ascribe to all the members of that idealised group values that are deemed universal and overriding norms. These values are an important part of who we are and where we come from, but ethical issues arise when the values of an idealised group become norms to which individuals must subscribe if they are not to be deemed sinful or selfish, i.e. they become a cult which can exclude or include according to the level of adherence to the norms. Reflecting back on my working relationships with colleagues, and in particular the Equal Opportunities training programme, the guilt and shame that we elicited was very much focused on the process of trying to present as an absolute value what can only be mediated in the course of everyday interactions.

Another interesting aspect of what was happening in the UK during the training is that overseas the process would have played out substantively differently. I have facilitated workshops in less developed countries where, because of the discourse that makes power and politics more explicit, the dynamics of power and control are more openly contested. Moreover, developing societies are in general more socially traditional so the personal and social arenas are less conflated. In terms of the body of literature that informs international development, there is a tradition of working with groups which has been bred out of literacy work and participative rural appraisal techniques championed in particular by Paulo Friere (1970) and Robert Chambers (1996) which have been

so successful in developing countries that they have found their way back into ways of working with marginalised groups in the UK. They are based on what Jackson (2000) calls emancipatory systems thinking:

> Emancipatory systems thinking specialises in identifying contradictions in social systems, the existence of conflict, and the domination of some groups over others. The aim is to promote radical change and to emancipate the deprived majority. (2000: 330)

Friere's thinking in particular originates in the same Marxist and humanist tradition that influenced workers in Oxfam, which argues that individuals can only be fully human once they become capable of acting as knowing subjects to transform the world. However, for a white facilitator in a developing country there is usually less of a mutual fiction of neutrality and power equivalence, particularly in those countries which have had colonial histories. Emancipatory training and facilitation is explicitly about power relations, not least the power of the white, Northern-educated facilitator who comes, paradoxically, in the role of outside expert using an approach that aims to "empower" the participants. People from developing countries need no lessons in power relationships because they often experience them as a living condition of their daily lives and are much more likely to challenge consultants and facilitators about their legitimacy. The relationship is complex and conflictual.

Exercises that explore the structural bases of inequality have been transformative for many of the groups that I have worked with, particularly when role playing, acting and crafting activities together. They have provided opportunities to functionalise the very values and ideas that we were exploring together, but that this is not enough on its own. I would argue from where I stand now that the process of engagement, of acting with others to explore the meaning of what we were engaged in, was as important as the greater understanding that we achieved about the situation we found ourselves in. The movement was less about discovering a revealed truth, an objective and detached state that, with the right approach and intention we could arrive at together, but rather a joint exploration to uncover a better understanding of power.

Attempting organisational transformation

I have begun to explore above what happened in my relationship with groups that invited me in to work with them when it interwove my values and theirs in the particular context of the values that imbue many international development NGOs and the people who work in them. In the 90s the same NGOs I was working with began to attempt projects of organisational transformation. To do this they turned not to any home-grown theories informed by emancipatory and participatory approaches, but to the world of business where strategic planning had been practiced for a number of years.

I was asked by one NGO to help them with a strategic planning process which they believed would make them more professional. The agency's preferred choice of methodology was John Bryson's *Strategic Planning for Public and Non-profit Organisations* (1988) which was popular among a number of NGOs at the time who were trying to learn lessons from the private sector.

Bryson's is a systematic methodology which would be very familiar to many senior managers; there is an eight step process which starts with a clarification of the organisation's mission and mandate, then proceeds through a visioning process, a scenario development process, a testing and evaluation of scenarios, a drafting and testing of the draft and then adoption and implementation. The methodology is one which claims to be data driven, since participants in the process are sent off to research their areas of work and make presentations on the situation as they understand it currently and future scenarios that they think are likely.

This form of strategic planning sits somewhere between what Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998) call the design and the planning schools of strategy. In the first of these, planning is viewed as a deliberate process of conscious thought, usually, but not always, articulated from the top. In the second school, the design principles are articulated much more rigorously:

> Underlying the whole exercise was the machine assumption; produce each of the component parts as specified, assemble them according to the blueprint, and the end product (strategy) will result. (Mintzberg et al,1998: 57)

Bryson does not recommend rigidity, but we poor strategisers, using the methodology for the first time, tried to use the approach by the book to make sure that we were getting it right.

We were asked to develop a strategy with the Africa Department. When we began we discovered that some of the participants' analyses of the situation "out there" in Africa was both riveting and profound. Many of the workers in this agency had a lot of experience and were trained as socio-political analysts; they knew the countries they were working in very well, often spoke local languages and had as good an understanding of what was happening within the country as any outsider could. However, the moment we attempted to speak about what we might do about it, or how we might work together to operate more effectively, all kinds of animosities, grudges and chasms opened up in the group. Interestingly, when the strategic issues arose towards the end of the planning not one of them was about focusing on dialogue among team members or setting aside time for making sense of the work they were doing together. At one point my co-facilitator and I intervened to point out that not one of the list of priorities was about spending time reflexively together. The suggestion of including it as a strategic priority was resisted by the group since it was not perceived as being "out there", doing development work with the poor. What was interesting to be part of was how an inherently political organisation, used to dealing with issues of power and deprivation on the day to day, could be so averse to addressing it's implications in their own working relations.

Over time, as I have undertaken strategic planning with different organisations, I realised that what participants seemed to remember about the experience was the process of being involved, and of contributing. For more junior national staff in overseas offices of international aid agencies this was often the first time they had been involved in "important issues" like strategy making, which had been

the preserve of the managers, usually white. Although the plan itself may not have been transformative, any prolonged process of discussion moved the group of people who had been involved on from where they had started out and left a lasting impression on them and on me.

Systems dynamics

As a consultant I have high aspirations to be competent in what I do and this has led to a hunger to discover what works when invited in by organisations and groups, and to discover how I can contribute to the good. I also realise from my above account how the theories that have motivated me have promised an opportunity to unify disparateness, to bring together the self and the collective, the organisation and its aspirations.

It was because of my realisation that the process of engagement was important that I was initially attracted to Senge's *The Fifth Discipline* (1990). Senge argues that with systems thinking, team learning, surfacing mental models, building shared vision and personal mastery we can improve organisational development and learning. The first thing that attracted me to this approach is that it seemed to rehabilitate the subjective, since by "surfacing mental models", being able to articulate the way you see the world and comparing and contrasting this with the way others saw the world was a good start for working at making sense together. Secondly, I was someone who enjoyed modelling processes – I had worked in the local County Council on data systems and had used both data flow diagrams and data tables to model the information needed for computer systems. Being able to engage participants in a change process in modelling their own situations, using soft systems or other dynamical systems modelling (Forrester, 1969) mapping approaches seemed to help move groups on; it felt like a more creative way of understanding the environment that groups found themselves in. It literally put them in the picture and gave them an opportunity to reflect on the different connections between what they were doing and what everyone else was doing.

The other appeal to me of Senge's approach is described and critiqued by Griffin (2002) in its offer of a model of transcendence. The Fifth Discipline posits a

model of collective action for change, one where sharing and dialoguing are at the centre of organisational change. Commitment is at the core:

> "If the individuals commit to the organisation, they are committing to something that will enable them to be more than they could ever think of being as individuals. In teams they can become creative through dialogue." (Griffin, 2002: 43)

Using Senge and soft systems mapping was not without its difficulties, however. The first of these was that I was not always clear, and nor were the participants, about what our mental models were, let alone how we might surface them. How did we know which bit of our mental models we were using at a particular point in time? How do I know if I'm being honest about what model I was applying? The implication of the book is that human beings think in coherent blocks which one can disaggregate. Secondly, given my emancipatory systems background I was still suspicious of the implied neutrality of the approach, that with sufficient expertise and honesty we could all discover the truth that was lurking underneath to be uncovered.

As I have worked with groups on developing their visions I have stumbled across a number of problematics that get played out in the way the group works together. We start from a position of implied common sense, that you can't get to where you are going unless you have a clear sense of where you want to get to (the journey analogy, with maps and directions is often the way that consultants explain to groups why they need to go through this process), but this quickly runs into difficulties. Firstly, the visioning process is based on the notion that we can think first and act second, which is a notion contested these days even by cognitive scientists. Damasio (2000) argues that humans are more likely to feel their way towards a future and then rationalise it retrospectively. Indeed, many groups find the exercise of coming up with a vision really hard, and struggle to create something that convinces them.

Secondly, there is a problem about whose vision counts most and what happens to those staff members who don't entirely share the vision. What if the group

creates a vision that more senior managers do not share, and what are the implications for freedom, an issue that exercises Griffin (op. cit.), if the reverse is true, that the staff don't share the vision of senior managers? In *The Fifth Discipline* visioning is a harmonising activity, but this seems to gloss over my experience of it in practice where contentions around what the vision might be are actually issues of power. Visioning becomes an exercise in control.

Consultancy as fiction, facilitation as performance

As I worked with groups over the years, I strove to be with them in a way that supported the fiction of neutral facilitator whose job is to aid the group in its decision-making and problem solving towards greater effectiveness. I can do this by helping them to plan events which describe a predetermined outcome, and with discipline and control, keep them to task to achieve the goal that they have set themselves. I can point out where they are deviating from their goals and process values because I sit outside the group and can be a neutral and objective observer. I am there principally to help them resolve conflict and maintain stability. My role, and the process we are engaged in, is often undiscussable

In this way what Goffman (1991) has to say is pertinent here: he argued that we might view social interaction as a kind of performance, with the performer and audience conscious, unconscious and studiedly unconscious of what is going on at the same time. We might see the facilitator as a kind of magician, an illusionist, with what Goffman calls a "front" or trappings of the trade which sustain the illusion, such as flip chart paper and pens, and the many exercises and slides that we use to sustain the "substantively neutral"/"only here to help" charade. The role of magician seems to occur in all societies: looking at the role of shamans in their communities Goffman quotes Kroeber (1952):

> Probably most shamans or medicine men, the world over, help along with sleight-of-hand in curing and especially in exhibitions of power. This sleight-of-hand is sometimes deliberate; in many cases awareness is perhaps not deeper than the foreconscious. The attitude, whether there has been repression or not, seems to be towards a pious fraud. (1952: 311)

Despite many organisations believing that they are seeking what they would consider professional and managerial consultancy support, it seems to me that they are also looking for a shaman to reassure them that the rains will come. It can cause problems when as a practitioner reveals this sleight of hand or can only offer part reassurance; that the only thing that you can trust is the fact that the exploration we undertake together will be unpredictable.

Recently I was asked to facilitate a workshop which was supposed to be a "listening event" where a government department invited in distinguished outsiders who could contribute to their policy making. With participants I made a number of changes to the way activities were planned during the day in response to what came up from individuals and groups; so instead of asking them to form into two different groups during the day everyone stayed in the same group, since, as one might expect, it took so long for the first group to get going. At the end of the day I tried to continue the conversational style of the event by convening a final sharing session sitting down in a circle. After the day was over I was criticised by my contractor for not doing what a facilitator ought to do. What she meant was that I had not stood up at various stages of the day to show that I was in control. Moreover I had changed the way the day progressed; she saw my role as keeping the day on track with what we had agreed in advance and to knock it back on track when it deviated, and she said she found the change in plan, though minor in many ways, so disorienting that she could not concentrate on participating.

Pursuing the image of drama, mostly what I have enjoyed about facilitation and consultancy is the opportunity it has given me to extemporise, to go off script and jam with the participants and colleagues when we get deep into some discussion of importance to the group. Ultimately, though, there are expectations which are mutually created, that I am tacitly in control, that it is my responsibility to ascribe a narrative of meaning to the interaction that has occurred, often in advance of it occurring, and I am judged as to whether the group has achieved these "outputs" or not.

Reflections in summarising

Returning to the beginning of my narrative in China, and thinking about how this first project leads into further research, I can see that power relations, particularly between consultant and contractor, but also between donors and their beneficiaries, are at the heart of my enquiry. This area of enquiry is particularly important both for me and the majority of organisations who engage me since our values, and how we realise them, are a significant motivator for the work that we undertake. It seems to me that the management approaches adopted by funding agencies over the last 15 years or so have significantly affected their working relationships with the beneficiaries they like to call "partners". These have led them into power relationships significantly tilted in their favour which cause fundamental tensions with their espoused values. Moreover, the way they have chosen to work with partners has made these very power relations undiscussable. In China the beneficiaries of UK government aid were denied an opportunity to participate, which is something Shotter (1993) draws attention to in *Conversational Realities* in the way that dialogue is conducted:

> In having other people's meaning imposed on them, they had been derived of their right to participate in the making of meanings relevant to the situation they were in, to negotiate a properly *shared* outcome; they were unable to make a unique meaning appropriate to their unique circumstances. (1993: 28)

Participation, learning and partnership are three terms that funding organisations often use to describe the way that they want to work with others. At the same time they have project management methodologies and what they describe as "capacity building programmes" (building management capacity in partner NGOs in the South) that seem to make such aspirations very difficult to realise.

Additionally, in the way that I learnt to be a consultant and facilitator, drawing from thinkers such as Schwarz (2002), Senge (1990), and Schein (1987) I have found myself colluding in a relationship that tried to cover over the power relationships between my contractors and me, with a way of thinking that suggested it was possible to be "neutral", "objective" and somehow outside the

dynamic that we were engaged in together. This I have found disabling and contrary to my instinctive understanding of what was happening between us.

As part of my research I would want to explore further how the thinking on complex responsive processes, and in particular the work of Norbert Elias and George Herbert Mead, could offer a critique of the current practices of many funding agencies, and could begin to offer alternative understandings of process. I would hope that further research would also afford me alternative perspectives on how I could better support organisations that I work with, towards a way of being that is more mutually creative and more explicit about co-creation of unexpected outcomes, rather than outcomes that I am supposed to be responsible for defining in advance. In this way I hope to be better able to describe an alternative professional competence in other terms than of "objectivity" and control, so that I can find comfort in both knowing and not knowing how the consultancy intervention will turn out.

Project 2

Recognising values in development practice – from balance to paradox

Introduction

In this my second project I intend to return to the themes of power and values in the context of working with international NGOs and donors, and to investigate some of the discourses about the same in the mainstream international development literature. In describing my experience I have bumped up against a series of paradoxes in the work that I have undertaken with others and this too has become a theme that I have wanted to uncover further. So I will attempt a critique of the development literature and then go on to explore the similarities and differences between the ideas expressed in more mainstream development thinking and an approach that the theory of complex responsive processes of relating might take towards the same issues. I will do so as a way of making a contribution to the discussion on ethics, values, and power in the mainstream development literature, all of which figure prominently, because of the highly political nature of development,.

Narrative – the formalities and informalities of project management

I have worked with a British NGO B in Bangladesh (NGO B) for the last two and half years helping them prepare for taking on a contract with the Department for International Development (DfID), and have worked with them subsequently as an intermittent support whilst they implement it. The contract is to last for 5 years and attempts to scale up by a factor of five work that had been successfully undertaken up to that point between NGO B and local NGOs it calls "partners". Instead of spending half a million pounds a year they aimed to spend two and half million pounds a year connecting poor communities to clean water supplies and helping them build latrines.

I had been asked by the Asia Regional Manager of NGO B UK to visit Dhaka and support the NGO B team because of mounting pressures within the office, between the NGO B team and partners as well as between DfID and NGO B, all

perceived to be as a result of the new contract with DfID. At the time of my visit the staff of NGO B were a year into their contract and had passed through the initial phase of the project called the 'inception phase', where they are supposed to have done all the necessary hiring of new staff, training of partners, planning and the writing of policy papers. Staff within DfID, and partners, were concerned about delays in progress, and some employees within NGO B were protesting about the perceived difference in management style that undertaking the new project had brought about. For some progress was too slow, for others it was too fast and was failing to take enough staff members along with the changes. At the same time there was a new indigenous Country Representative in NGO B, who had been promoted from within; he had been party to the setting up of the new project but had not been in charge of it. Equally, all the staff within DfID who had helped shaped the initial project had moved on to other countries and the project was now being managed by newcomers who had not known the project from the beginning.

In my meetings in London and Dhaka I became aware of an increasing level of what might best be described as panic amongst senior managers about NGO B's perceived failure to produce what were termed "deliverables". From the Regional Manager's perspective, based in London, everything seemed to be taking an inordinate amount of time and he himself had been involved in meetings with DfID in London to explain away the delays. The partners were chafing in two different ways; they wanted to be allowed to get on with the work, but felt that NGO B were being too perfectionist about what had to be in place before the work started, and they also experienced managers in NGO B as being mired in organisational changes brought on by attempts to adapt to what they thought DfID required of them. Partners were not always sure in what voice employees in NGO B were talking to them; as NGO B or as representatives of DfID. We had a number of conversations about contracts and contract compliance, the meaning of partnership and the stresses and strains that this new set of expectations was creating.

Some background

As I have described in Project 1, DfID is a medium-sized civil service bureaucracy which privileges paperwork and policy as a way of working. At the centre of DfID's project development methodology is the logical framework approach or logframe, which is in essence a cybernetic system, describing milestones and outputs for the whole five-year project. Progress is tracked on a continuous basis against these milestones, and it was this tracking process which had caused alarm in DfID UK and Bangladesh that the project was falling behind schedule. Moreover, DfID sets broad social objectives for its projects which have to be supported by comprehensive documentation. So NGO B was obliged to produce papers on how the project would also support gender relations, equity, the eradication of poverty, as well as promoting good governance. There were a number of ironies around this way of working; firstly staff from DfID had themselves contributed to the delay in the project by refusing to sign off on some of the paperwork which they considered to be of insufficient quality. This resulted in a three-month delay last autumn. Secondly, in insisting that NGO B was light on expertise, staff from DfID had persuaded NGO B to appoint two senior advisers on poverty, equity and gender and on governance. Not only did the two new senior posts create conflict within NGO B about what their purpose was and how they fitted into the hierarchy, but they also contributed to overheads, about which DfID was now beginning to complain.

In response to the panic amongst senior managers about the perceived lack of progress the person responsible for NGO B within DfID in Bangladesh had begun trying to exert more and more pressure. This pressure manifested itself in her asking questions about how much time various members of NGO B staff were spending on DfID-funded work to the extent of calling in to question their leaving the country on NGO B business, and demanding that NGO B demonstrate productivity improvements. This form of coercion was creating resentment within the senior management team of NGO B, who nonetheless began pressuring their own partners to work faster; the partners themselves were mildly affronted feeling that they had been ready to work faster all along.

Returning to the narrative

I eventually got to meet the DfID representative towards the end of my visit to Dhaka and discovered her to be a young British Pakistani woman far removed from my experience of the white, middle-aged men who were responsible for initiating the project. She was bright and personable and showed herself to have a keen interest in the success of the project. After the initial preliminaries and explanations of what I was there to do I began to test out with her how possible it was to explore some of the contradictions that I had experienced so far; that NGO B was being held responsible for the performance of its partners over which it had minimum control; that DfID was partly responsible for the delay that it was criticising; that the log frame is a planning tool and a best guess at what scaling up to that degree might mean, yet she was applying pressure as though these projections were entirely reasonable. Although she accepted many of these points, and moved visibly from her starting position admitting that she had been "demanding" and "hard-arsed", agreeing to meet the partners face to face rather than working just through NGO B, she nonetheless responded fairly defensively. On the one hand she said she could only expect what was "reasonable", on the other hand she argued in a way that I experience many middle managers arguing in large bureaucracies, that NGO B should demonstrate how it is "adding value" to the enterprise and could demonstrate effectiveness and value for money. There would be an opportunity to "finalise" the log frame but NGO B had, after all, signed a contract. She said that since she hadn't been involved with the project from the start she felt she could be more detached. This was something she expected NGO B to be able to do too, to stand back from its partners and be more objective. She also mentioned that water and sanitation was just one of her areas of responsibility, since she was responsible for energy and transportation too. She simply did not have time to follow the detail of the project and that is one of the reasons why DfID had contracted NGO B to do this.

I could see towards the end of an hour that she was getting restless and that she was beginning to make gestures and signs that she was not going to sit there comfortably for much longer. I took the lead from her cue and told her that I would not take up much more of her time. Just before I rose to leave she commented on my business card, which we had exchanged in formal fashion at

the beginning of the meeting. "I notice from your business card that you live just down the road from me. I was born and brought up in Oxford, and my parents still live there." It was like a dam bursting. In a very short timescale we exchanged where she had gone to school, where my own children go to school, what had happened during the last election to the local MP, how she was a Labour voter but as a progressive and as a Moslem couldn't forgive the Prime Minister for taking the country into the war. On the one hand she was clearly conscious of the fact that the 'neutral' civil servant façade had slipped, yet on the other she clearly could not stop herself. She told me about how she had trained as an engineer, how she had practised engineering herself in the developing world and how she had a passionate interest in reaching the largest number of people with this current NGO B project.

By the time we had completed our walk to the front door the formalities were more or less resumed, yet I was conscious that something significant had happened. Through the interstices of her role and the way that she had been trained to think and talk about development projects her real passion for the detail of the work shone through. And not just about the work, but about life in Oxford, politics in general and I began to recognise her as a person in her own right. We had both experienced her being indiscreet. And yet she had been sitting on this enthusiasm for the duration of the meeting. I wonder whether there would have been circumstances where she would have not shown it at all, and how different the meeting would have been if she had made the connection at the beginning of the meeting. It was clearly more than just a job to her; she was doing it because it allowed her to practice her values and the difference that she wanted to make through her work.

Reflections on the narrative
In this project I am still continuing with the same definition of values that I quoted from Joas (2000) following John Dewey (1934); that is to say, values are paradoxically both compelling (in a voluntary sense) and uplifting at the same time, since they are freely chosen. They contrast with norms which are obligatory and constraining, providing moral criteria for assessing what ought to be done. Joas compares and contrasts these by describing them as the difference between

the good (what I consider to be good, driven by my values) and the right, which is what the majority of reasonable people would consider to be the right. This idea of paradox at the heart of values, that values are a voluntary obligation, will become central to my project as it develops and I will be looking to see what other authors make of the same concept.

What I experienced in my encounter with this DfID employee was very different from what I had expected from other people's descriptions of the way that she had been working, although I had experienced that side too. I have begun to wonder how such a person, who had obviously struggled herself to do well, who had experienced water and sanitation work directly in developing countries and who cared about what she was doing could come to work in a way that people experienced as bewildering and oppressive. For the duration of our interview she was keeping herself in check; I wonder how much of herself she had to hold in whilst doing her job and where she would go for an outlet for her enthusiasms and her value judgements about the work that she was doing. I wonder also how constrained she felt by DfID's norms and how much freedom she could find for the expression of her values in her work.

It strikes me that it was partly the way that she was required to do her job that kept her so detached from the emotional charge and engagement that I experienced at the end of our meeting. Because she is so busy with three big thematic briefs and because, partly in recognition of this, DfID contracts out the day to day management of projects to third parties, such as NGO B, or even to myself as a consultant (see Project 1 where I was acting as a consultant for DfID in China), then she is removed from direct contact with the contingent nature of messy development work in context. For nearly nine months she had not visited the field, had not had seen with her own eyes, heard with her own ears the difficulties of what was being attempted. In the absence of direct experience all that she had to fall back on were the log frame and the policy documents. I noticed how narrow the discussion becomes when it turns into a question and answer session about why the "deliverables" have not been produced to time, and how I myself have allowed contractors such as DfID to escape the difficulties of

undertaking development by absorbing them myself, and as an intermediary, simply passing on a polished product.

I can see that we are both, the DfID employee and I, trapped in the dynamic that we contribute to and are formed by. However, in the past I have had a much clearer defeatist sense of victimhood about my situation as a consultant; it was easy to portray my practice as being me against the big donors and their ways of working. My choices were either to accept a contract and undertake the work as I thought the contractor wanted me to do it, in a way that I often found incredibly constraining, or not accept the contract at all. On reflection and from experience, however, I can see that there are far more options than that. From the above narrative and other experiences, I have realised that, although we come at this from different places, employees from DfID and I are in many ways in the same situation, struggling, to a greater or lesser extent to find room for our values in the way that we are required to work. There can be as much that unites as divides us.

What becomes intriguing, then, is what it is about the way that international development is undertaken, the narratives and expectations about what constitutes professional practice that so shapes the ways of working as to limit and constrain what we talk about and the way we talk about it. It is this that I will start to investigate first and then try to locate myself and my own practice within it.

Development discourses
There is a growing voice in development literature that is beginning to draw attention to the disjuncture between the specifying of what needs to be done and the doing of it, between policy and practice. For example David Mosse, an anthropologist and development practitioner who now teaches at the SOAS, has recently (2005) written what he describes as an ethnographic study of ten years' involvement with a development project in India in which he draws attention to the growing gap between donors' infatuation with policy work and its complete removal from the realities on the ground:

..the policy-oriented staff of donor agencies like DfID are themselves increasingly removed from the contingencies of development. But at the same time..Aid policy has become more managerial. Its ends – the quantified reduction of poverty or ill health – have narrowed, but its means have diversified to the management of more and more; financial and political systems and civil society. A unipolar global political order renews confidence in rational design and social engineering….The paradox is that 'high managerialism' actually controls less and less. It privileges policy over practice….More than ever, international development is about generating consensus on approaches and framing models that link investment to outcomes, rather than implementation modalities. Questions of implementation are somebody else's problem. (2005: 237)

Mosse argues in his book that projects can be successful despite rather than because of the policy context that frames them, and illustrates how policy workers in donor agencies, consultants such as myself and even some project workers are often remote from the network of relationships and the social, economic and historical context in which they are working. In this reference he also starts to explore what he refers to as paradox, noting the contradictory movements of donor bureaucracies wanting to control more and more and yet becoming further and further removed from the everyday experience of managing. I suggest that, rather than drawing attention to paradox, which I explore later, Mosse is merely pointing out a contradiction, an irony that on the one hand managerialism wants to control more, whereas in reality managers can control less and less.

He discusses how conversations within donor agencies are about stabilising the favoured representations of how things are said to be working and about garnering the necessary political support for those representations:

If one problem with the assertion of policy over practice is the subjugation of certain positive outcomes; a second is the perpetuation of false models, simplifications and development illusions. In the

competitive market for success it is difficult for dependent agencies *not* to portray their actions as achievements in terms of currently favoured models. The cost of breaking ranks is high and public disputes over meaning and interpretation are rare. (Ibid: 235)

In drawing attention to the power dynamic and the difficulty of opposing the growing convergence of thinking about how best to do development Mosse helps re-problematise relationships that can sometimes become occluded in technical vocabulary. For example, staff in both NGO B and NGO B UK felt uncomfortable that they had signed a contract with DfID and obliged their organizations to deliver the outcomes as specified. My experience of them was that they felt powerless to argue their case, to set out some of the legitimate reasons for delays and to admit some of the less legitimate ones. My argument is that some of their feelings of powerlessness relate to their inability to find legitimate expression for their values in dialogue with DfID because the latter demands the same detachment from values from those whom they contract as they do from their own employees. This is an area I particularly want to explore as this project unfolds particularly because I have found myself caught up in the same dynamic as a consultant practitioner and have felt myself silenced in situations where the obvious things for me to draw attention to became covered over with an instrumental discussion about targets or outcomes.

Another important development of Mosse's approach, which is also to be found in other writers such as Eyben (2003), and Cleaver (2002), in contradistinction to the DfID member of staff's call for NGO B to be detached from its partners, is to rehabilitate the subjective, and to include the actions and perspectives of the author as an object of study in what is being described. Not only does this new cohort of development commentators take themselves seriously as actors in the narrative that they are writing about but they are also interested in the day to day, local actions of ordinary project staff and beneficiaries to show how

> ...subordinate actors in development, tribal villagers, fieldworkers, office staff, even project managers and their bosses in relation to donors – create everyday spheres of action autonomous from the organising policy

models, but at the same time work actively to sustain those same models-the dominant interpretations – because it is in their interest to do so….It will become clear how, paradoxically, the practices of project workers erode the models that they also work to reinstate as representations. (Mosse, 2005: 10)

Mosse is drawing attention to a simultaneous, paradoxical dynamic that occurs in projects where actors both sustain and undermine the narratives that describe the work being undertaken and in doing so he is keen to pursue "not whether but *how* development projects work" (ibid: 8). By describing the work in this way he tries to distinguish himself from two other schools of commentary on approaches to development. He argues that there are three schools writing about international development and the organisations that undertake it; the instrumental school, which I will explore first below and which will include mainstream writers on development as well as the big donor agencies and their approaches; the critical school, which takes instrumentalism and mainstream development to task, and Mosse's own school, which is a progressive ethnographic approach and which I will term the social anthropological school, which criticises both. Finally I will start to explore what complex responsive processes of relating might add to the mix.

A reprise of the three schools

Though they are more focused on development as a theory than the organisational and management consequences that underpin it, amongst the instrumentalist writers one would probably want to include Fowler (*Striking a Balance,* 1997; *The Virtuous Spiral,* 2000) and Edwards (*Future Positive*, 1999) and Edwards and Hulme (*Making a Difference,* 1992; *NGOs – Performance and Accountability* 1995), who, although thoughtful and critical, nevertheless, as the titles of their books suggest, promote the idea of INGO performance through management and planning techniques. It is important to bear in mind that any categorisation is going to cover over important nuances and differences; I would not want to imply that the instrumental school is in any way blind to some of the broader issues to do with power and values that I have outlined above. For

example, in a recent essay on NGOs and social change Edwards and Sen (2002) criticise INGOs for having forgotten their values:

> The claim that development NGOs are explicitly "values-based" organisations is an article of faith these days. However, there is less evidence that NGOs put these values into practice in their organisational structures and behaviour, or even that they are clear what their core values are. (2002: 47)

And I will return later to what their prescriptions would be for bringing issues of power and values back to the fore. However, writers in the instrumental school spend time exploring how the dominant managerialism can be applied in the international development context.

In the critical school we would find commentators, broadly speaking from a Marxist and/or particularly French post-modernist, tradition promoting a contrary view that development has become a form of imperialism, Escobar (1995), Esteva and Prakash (1998), Cowen and Shenton (1996), or that management methodologies in use in donor agencies are a necessary accompaniment to economic liberalism (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). There are journals such as the Review of African Political Economy and Third World Quarterly which would be more sympathetic to this "development as neo-colonialism" position. In addition it would also be important to mention the humanist critics of the instrumental school, principal among them being Robert Chambers (1997, 2002) because of his substantial contribution to thinking about participation and participatory methodologies which aim to challenge the orthodox power balances.

In the third category, the anthropological school, I will place Mosse, Eyben and Cleaver and other colleagues whom I will introduce later.

I want to stay with these three broad ways of thinking about the management of development - instrumentalism, a broad critical school, and social anthropology -

to see how useful they are for understanding my experience in Bangladesh. In particular I want to explore how they represent the nexus of power and values.

Instrumentalism

In returning to my experience in Bangladesh I would argue that the person I was dealing with in DfID was constrained to an extent within the instrumental position taken up by her agency, but it was one that she herself momentarily tried to subvert. This might be an example of what Mosse alluded to in the quotation above where workers in the project both subvert and uphold the narrative about the project at the same time in their daily dealings. If we consider this situation in context with an over-stretched member of staff in DfID from a minority background, and a woman, trying to make an impact in her own institution there can be little wonder that, in the formal context of an interview about NGO B's performance, there was no room for challenging the orthodoxies of the managerial approach. The vocabulary of what has become known as managerialism, with its emphasis on compliance and "best practice", does not often invite investigation and can operate according to an occluded organisational logic. Although nominally about learning, the project is also about DfID being able to make credible representations to the relevant Minister in the UK that money has been well spent and that a specified number of beneficiaries have been lifted out of poverty. Instrumentalism finds it difficult to entertain other discourses. Yet it is hard to know whether it was through the interaction with me, perhaps the invitation to reflect on the role that she was playing as project manager, perhaps by my expressing points of view that had not been expressed to date by NGO B staff through their lack of assertiveness, that she could recognise herself in what she was saying. In an instant of doubt and self-reflection the power balance had shifted slightly. The instrumental approach is not blind to power issues; for example adherents are capable of mounting a critical review of gender relations, or the structural causes of poverty, for example. But it is rare to experience an analysis that starts from understanding power relating in personal interaction with others; discourses on power in the instrumental context tend to be at the meta level. A cursory review of Fowler's books reveals little analysis of power in inter-relational terms. An essay by Quarles van Ufford, Giri and Mosse in a book entitled *A Moral Critique of*

Development, Quarles van Ufford and Giri (eds) (2003), accuses instrumentalists of unbounded, a-historical and artificial optimism; the authors point to the fact that development management makes completely unrealistic claims that through the proliferation of managerial instruments societies can be re-engineered top to bottom for the good.

> The confidence in rational design and social engineering has never been greater, and the policy concepts applied reflect a growing sophistication of management, which is able to absorb and deflect challenges. Bottom-up, and 'participatory' development approaches, which spread within mainstream development agencies in tandem with 'results-oriented management', often serve the instrumental needs of programme delivery rather than reviving a critical politics of development. (2003: 6-7)

My guess would be that issues of power within DfID as an agency would be just as difficult to draw attention to as would be power relations between DfID and NGO B, and DfID employee and myself. In this sense the allusions that I made in Project 1 to Mead's work on cult values (1914, 1923), where organisations idealise their values to such an extent that to stray from them would be to invite exclusion or censure, are probably relevant here also.

The critical school
Next I want to turn to the critical school and two thinkers who are central to them to see how much of a contribution to my understanding of power and values they might make. The theme that I will look at in particular is the one set out by Mosse that working in development projects is a struggle over the creation, translation and destabilisation of interpretations and narratives about what is happening.

The influence of French post-modernists, particularly Foucault and Derrida, are pervasive in the critical development literature, especially the idea that power arises in the struggle for dominance of one narrative over another, or that the process of exclusion and inclusion is an act of violence. This is what Parfitt (2002) argues in a book about postmodernism and development where he

attempts to rescue Derrida from what he considers to be the twin poles of foundationalism and relativism (by foundationalism he means an essentialism that frames things in terms of absolutes; he is here making the argument that the critical school has over-egged their case in attacking instrumentalism, and uses post-modernist writers to make a more nuanced but still critical case against development):

> Our analysis of deconstruction (*Derrida and Levinas*) has shown that, contrary to the prejudices of many observers, it is not a relativistic discourse at all. In fact, of the various theoretical structures we have examined, it is probably the most successful in dealing with the dilemma of foundationalism versus relativism. In formulating our theories and analytical positions we have to institute closure, this being the only access to truth that we have. However, it must always be remembered that in making a closure, we inevitably commit the violence of making exclusions, and our exclusions return to haunt us. It follows from this that the course of least violence is to try and remain open to alterity, to welcome the other. (2002: 115)

The term "radical alterity" is one that Derrida used to describe the interdependence of concepts that are linked in a binary fashion, say speech and writing, where, although one is usually privileged over the other, their radical interdependence will mean that the less privileged concept will return to destabilise the privileged. In bringing about "closure" then, recognising this rather than that, choosing this rather than that, we are doing violence to otherness. What is useful in Parfitt's interpretation of the structuralist position is the encouragement to be open to otherness that the staff member in DfID, for good reasons and bad, appeared to find difficult, and equally what I might have witnessed in Derrida's terms is an example of alterity where the worker from DfID temporarily destabilised her own instrumental position because of the exclusions she had made to adopt it. However, where Derrida's position seems to stretch too far when viewed from my experience in Bangladesh is in the implication that the privileging of one concept over another amounts to violence, and that the destabilisation process happens inevitably, curiously without human

agency. It is true that staff from NGO B had experienced DfID's intervention in the project to be hugely discomfiting; they had not yet located their voice to engage with the premises of what was being argued against them; they themselves had not been able to argue a position of "alterity". However, to describe the relationship of power that exists between donor and recipient and equating it with violence draws the picture far more starkly than I experienced it in Bangladesh, where a degree of gentle probing did bring about some movement, a minimal recognition that there were other ways of perceiving things and other ways of behaving.

Foucault, another favourite of the critical school of development, can be equally monolithic, or in Derrida's terms "totalising", in his analysis of power, as this example from the essay entitled Truth and Power (1984) shows:

> "Truth" is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation, and operation of statements. "Truth" is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power and truth which it induces and which extends it. A "regime" of truth.
> …
> It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power…but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural within which it operates at the present time.
> (1984: 74-75)

From my experience of working as a consultant with donor and development agencies I would not want to underestimate the difficulty of arguing against the orthodox discourse concerning the way that development should and does take place. As Mosse pointed out above, "the cost of breaking ranks is high." However, to describe the relationship between donors and the organisations they fund as a kind of hegemony as a description of how I and the NGO B staff were experiencing power in their relationship with DfID staff does not seem to me to do justice to the daily, hourly acts of subversion carried out by individuals both within and outside the "regime", and in the interaction between individuals that

destabilises the dominant discourse. Moreover, for Foucault the concept of power seems to be a thing, an "it", which is lodged in social, economic and cultural systems that needs to be wrested from them. For me, Foucault's concept of power, as with Derrida's, is curiously reified, disembodied and static, removed from the day to day activities of human beings. And as Burkitt (1999) points out, Foucault's concept of power borrows heavily from Nietszche and relies on a Darwinian interpretation of human existence as a recurring violent struggle for domination. What this leaves out, as it does also for Derrida, is the possibility of creative human exchange, which, despite the obvious power imbalances, can create new possibilities other than one side triumphing over the other. In Bangladesh I had no intention of meeting the DfID staff member and wresting power from her, and yet, curiously, in our interaction a destabilisation did take place.

The social anthropological school

The effect of the post-Modernists is widespread, however, and Mosse, too seems influenced by the post-modernists in his portrayal of power and exclusion as an act of violence:

> The point is that modern development policy, which appears as rational abstraction separate from the social order it governs…can be shown to be historically grounded in particular interests and events, contingencies, violences and exclusions. The apparent logic, universality and coherence of these ideas, and the expertise and rational design they call forth, are not inherent but produced through the messiness of contingent practice which succeeds in concealing social practice by effecting the separation of ideas and their objects. (Op. cit.: 246)

Mosse's narrative is strong on the contingent and specific nature of development work and he reinstitutes the author/observer, as ethnographer, back into the picture. In doing so he questions their status from objective, scientific observers who work in a value-free environment, and he centralises the day to day practice of individuals working together. In this sense he separates himself from the instrumentalists, who still strive to impose a sense of order on a chaotic

development world and work to stabilise narratives about what is happening on the ground, often without even being part of what is happening by contracting out the task to others such as myself. They foster the concept of detachment and objectivity without being alive to the subjectivity of their own positions. Mosse also draws attention to the fact that both the instrumental school and the critical school fall into the same trap of essentialising or trivialising what they would intend to criticise. Cleaver (2002) makes a similar point about Chambers' humanism, accusing him of idealising the knowledge of the poor:

> Positive views of culture tend towards a profound foundationalism about local communities and their inhabitants. For example, in the writings of Robert Chambers, a moral value is attributed to the knowledge, attitudes and practices of the poor, the task of development being to release their potential to live these out….Is there not a danger of swinging from one untenable position ('we know best') to an equally untenable and damaging one ('they know best'). (Cleaver, 2002: 233)

Mosse puts forward the argument that the position of the critical school can sometimes read like the obverse of the instrumental approach, so we simply have two sides of the same coin. And he tries to make a separate space for a social anthropological and ethnographic approach. However, although he touches on power and the difficulty of undermining the dominant narratives, Mosse's argument is still essentially heavily influenced by a post-modern analysis of power as a struggle between competing discourses. In this sense his model is still abstracted from the day-to-day interaction of human beings and concerns the inter-relationship of signs and signifiers. He also conflates, as does Foucault, the concepts of violence and power and writes about them as one and the same phenomenon. Understanding power does involve some judgement about the relationship of dominance, but this is not the same thing as assuming that violence is an integral part of the dynamic.

Method and ethics

I have described in Project 1 how the context of international development is a highly values-charged environment – actors within it are not only trying to do

good, to make a difference, they are also trying to develop ways of working and ways of describing the doing of good in the alleviation of poverty and suffering. Conversations about development take place against this backdrop, what Charles Taylor (1991) calls 'significant horizons', on a daily basis. What I mean here, drawing on Taylor, is that people who work in international development define what they do against a backdrop of moral concern about the injustice and the unacceptability of poverty and suffering in the developing world. Their work is judged by the community of practitioners to be of worth in the context of these horizons, the very same horizons which informed the genesis of development organisations in the first place and which are still a motivating factor for many of the people who work in them. Discussion about what kind of intervention makes the most difference becomes more charged because there seems to be so much at stake.

In the way that each of the schools of thought describe the interaction between human beings, between the developed world and the less developed world that we have come to understand as 'development', there begins to emerge a way of presenting the nature of the ethical encounter, the struggle over value positions between the actors. The authors are themselves aware of the ethical problems that emerge and present a very different way of understanding them. Their way of seeing the world contains within it a prescription for changing it and turns in particular on the relations between the self and others.

For example, Edwards and Sen (2002), writing from within an instrumentalist position, are aware of the slippage between overtly value-driven organisations and their practice and see as a remedy a call for personal transformation:

> It is fascinating to recognise that the core of religious teaching concerns our feelings towards each other – a deeply social statement as much as it is profoundly personal. But to love our neighbours as ourselves, we must come to understand our inner being, to recognise that in our deepest essence we are compassionate, capable of giving love and worthy of receiving it. (2002: 43)

I put forward the argument above that the writers within the instrumentalist position generally have a weak grasp of the power relations between individuals and usually describe power at the meta level, as being about gender inequality or social exclusion. Edwards and Sen are less interested in issues of power relating, but in our mutual feelings for each other. There seems here to be an unacknowledged paradox at the heart of the reference that although both authors call for a greater recognition of interdependence and decry selfishness, their solution lies in the direction of personal transformation and discovering one's "inner essence". The authors never explore this potentially generative paradox of transforming the self with a view to transforming others. There seems to be no clear way of bridging the inner and outer, or of understanding how this inner transformation would take place except through transcendental means.

For Parfitt (2002), writing from a sceptically critical position, the best that post modernism can offer is an ethics of "least violence", since violence is never far away in the encounter between the self and other. The very nature of deconstructionism, with its openness to alterity, leaves it prepared for working against the worst excesses of the inevitable violence that occurs when making judgements in the relationship between self and others.

From an anthropological perspective, Giri and Quarles van Ufford, in another essay in *A Moral Critique of Development* (2003), set out a more nuanced understanding of the moral relationship between self and other in the development context, and a clearer explanation of their inter-dependence. Referring to Schrag (1997) the authors point to the need for us to be familiar with the 'grammar of paradox', balancing the need for the care of the self with the care for others as well as the particularity of the exchange. The authors also draw on Alistair MacIntyre (1999) to

> ...help us understand the qualities that are required to participate in a relationship which involves not only an abstract self and an abstract other, but also a particular self and a particular other, or particular selves and particular others. For MacIntyre neither the language of self-interest nor the language of benevolence is enough. Instead it needs a language of

giving and receiving in which both the self and the other are giver and receiver at the same time….This mode of engagement…urges us to be attentive to how interdependence is put into place in the practice of development, for example the dialectic between goal and result, the interaction between actors and target groups, others and self. (2003: 272/3)

Although acknowledging interdependence, the balancing of ethics and aesthetics, the authors also aspire to a 'transcendental inspiration of unconditional love' to put development back on a more moral footing. The anthropological journey takes us a long way away from the individual and helps us begin to understand the dynamic nature of human inter-relating, but also strays into slightly naive transcendentalism. Whilst drawing attention to the need for a greater understanding of paradox, the authors manage to diffuse some of the more radical implications of enduring a paradox producing an almost classical incremental action-reflection model aiming at balance. What is significant here is that Giri and Quarles van Ufford seem to be ignoring the paradox at the heart of what MacIntyre (ibid.) is saying where development practitioners are givers and receivers *at the same time*. This is not simply a question of balance, but a relationship of opposites in tension always negating each other. In this sense I would argue that they have yet to acquire 'the grammar of paradox' to which they point, rendering it rather into an attempt to acknowledge the two aspects, giver and receiver, in the same account as two separate phases. In this there is no dialectic, no dynamism.

Summary
To reprise, I have made the case above that the instrumentalist understanding of power relating at the individual level is weak, and I gave one example where one of the main writers in the instrumental tradition gave a prescription for the discovery of our 'inner selves' as a means of putting the relationship between self and others on a different footing. For the post-modernists, the triumph of one side over another is inevitable but can be mitigated with a doctrine of 'least harm'. The social anthropological school enjoins a paradoxical understanding of the relationship between self and others but ultimately tries to resolve the

paradox with a reflective incrementalism and an injunction towards balance. In this respect their preferred paradigm seems to be open systems theory where they assume the ideal state to be one of homeostasis.

Next I will explore how the theory of complex responsive processes understands power relating and the interaction between self and others. I will do so because I understand complex responsive processes to be offering a much more radically social understanding of power relating as well as a much more dynamic and generative concept of paradox at the centre of the creation and recreation of values.

I hope that I have demonstrated above that the international development literature is exceptionally theory-rich and is populated with people who are keen to measure what they do against 'significant horizons'. My reflections on my own practice in the development context, however, have led me to feel that none of the theories explored above have offered me sufficient explanation of what has happened during my career in development. I recounted in Project 1 how NGOs were often filled with high-minded but sometimes impractical people who tended towards utopianism, amongst whom I would include myself; managerialism seemed to offer a way out of the ideological impasse so that we could spend less time talking about politics and more time getting the work done. However, subsequently I have experienced managerialism as driving out issues of politics and power to such an extent that ways of working appear to me to be completely inconsistent with the values base of what development organisations are set up to do, and in contradiction with my own values too. My investigation of complex responsive processes is a way for me to rehabilitate the political in the context of development which has become a landscape of human undertaking virtually indistinguishable from any other, such as enterprise or banking. And at the same time it seems to me that international development is a natural home for a set of explanations which might focus on a dynamic explanation of power and is grounded in the recognition of self through others.

Complex responsive processes – recognition of the self through others

I will turn to this theory as articulated in particular through the works of Stacey (2000), Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000), Griffin (2002) and Shaw (2002) to see what it might add to the ideas set out above as a way of understanding my experience in Bangladesh and the exploration of values and power relating. Where the proponents of complex responsive processes would appear to me to part company radically with both the postmodernists and the social anthropological approach outlined above, is in their understanding of the dynamics of communicating and power-relating, and the radical paradoxes that these involve, and how this affects the creation and recreation of values. The theory of complex responsive processes understands organisations as the complex patterning of repeated non-linear interactions between human bodies. Because humans are involved feelings are always aroused as are three inter-related aspects of relating, which are communicative interaction, power relating and the evaluative choices people make. Drawing on the work of Elias (1978) and Mead (1934), the theory understands power as a necessary expression of human relations because we are inter-dependent. Elias uses different analogies to explain his understanding of power relating, and has variously described it as being like a dance (1968) or like a game of chess (1978). When two people play chess together they each need the other to play the game – each serves a function for the other, and the moves of one player inform the moves of the other. It would be difficult to understand the sense of a player's move out of the context of his or her opponent's moves:

> …like the concept of power, the concept of function must be understood as a concept of relationship…when one person (or group of persons) lacks something which another person or group has the power to withhold, the latter has a function for the former….People or groups that have functions for each other exercise constraints over each other. (Elias, 1978: 78)

Elias' understanding of power relating introduces the notions of inter-dependence and yet can still entertain the idea of power imbalances as one side, with greater ability or knowledge, can dictate the course of play more than the

other. This is a very different understanding of power relating than that demonstrated by the post-modernists, where power and violence are interlinked, and that of the social anthropological school which seems to be striving for some kind of power balance. In some senses, for Elias even in a situation of imbalance the more powerful still needs the less powerful; each constrains the other in the figuration of the relationship, but that is not to say either that their freedom for action is equal nor is their moral responsibility towards each other. The term 'figuration' is at the heart of Elias' work and by it he meant the structural interdependence between humans that describes all relationships.

But when the power of two chess opponents is equivalent then they both have less chance of manipulating each other thus producing a game that neither of them has planned. This is the kind of relating that Elias thought most closely resembled the social process, as described in his book *The Civilizing Process* (1994) where each of us interacts with our own intentions, desires and values, but where the outcome of such interactions cannot be predicted. And in the NGO B and DfID example, with the help of Elias, one can see that there is a clear function for each other; DfID needs NGO B for their local links and their expertise in the project managing of water and sanitation projects. Equally, NGO B needs the status and cash that a relationship with DfID can provide. In the departure of one set of DfID staff and the arrival of another, along with the change in country representative for NGO B, power tipped towards DfID in their attempts to impose a particular way of doing the work on NGO B. I want to go on to argue that what is also taking place is a struggle, like a chess game, over different value systems, that what DfID has the power to withhold, in the words of the quotation above, is the ability not to acknowledge the existing sets of relationships between NGO B and the organisations it calls its partners. In so doing I will have to unpack further the process of human relating described by Mead and attempt to explain why this is so critical to the understanding of the relationship between power and values.

Mead and social behaviourism

In *Mind, Self and Society* [1934] (1967), G.H. Mead develops a theory of human communicative interaction that suggests that humans are capable of gesturing or

communicating with others in ways that draw forth the same range of responses in themselves that they expect to draw forth from others. Mead described this gesture-response as a significant symbol. This is how we might intuit how another person might react to the way we are communicating with them. Mead went on to argue that humans are essentially role-playing animals and that it is possible for the body to call forth responses in itself; just as humans can gesture to others and call forth a response with a significant symbol mediated through language, so it is possible for someone to do the same to themselves, and it is this private role-playing of gestures that constitutes mind.

Mead argued that this capacity to have a conversation of gestures with oneself, evolves over time till we are able to take the attitude of many others in a generalized way. Humans engaged in this conversation of gestures can take the attitude of the 'generalized other'. We are able to take the social attitude into account as we gesture and respond. More than this Mead argues that we are able to take the attitude of a generalised other to ourselves.

Because we are able to be an object to ourselves we are capable of comparing the generalized responses of others as a 'me', with ourselves as a unique subject, an 'I':

> The "I" is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others, the "me" is the organised set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. (Mead, 1934: 175)

Mead argues that this is how the self arises, in the dialectic between the spontaneous "I" and a series of "me's" that arise out of a symbolically generalised sense of others' perspectives. Two other things are important in Mead's theory; the first is that he did not think that that there was a predetermined way that the 'I' might respond to the 'me' – the outcome is always potentially unpredictable. There is always a choice and the potential for spontaneity. The other is that this juxtaposition of the 'I' and the 'me' cannot be thought of as happening in separate phases. They both arise together and are formed by and form each other. Human interaction, then, is a continuous process

of gesture and response, located in feeling bodies and mediated by language. We are continuously calling forth responses in ourselves and in others which in turn informs the next response from ourselves and from them; in this process what we call mind and self are arising simultaneously. The spontaneous interactions between bodies, the social, is a continuation of the individual's interaction with herself.

Honneth and Mead

Axel Honneth is a philosopher and Director of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt. In a book entitled *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995) he tries to build on G.H. Mead's and Hegel's ideas of the inter-subjectively formed self to describe a social anthropological theory of mutual recognition as the basis for a moral theory. He argues that these processes arise as self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem in the individual. Drawing on Mead and carefully unpicking his argument, Honneth argues that it is in the I-me dialectic that the constant push to expand one's moral base originates, the constant dialectic between the good, what is good for me, and the right, what everyone else would consider being right, arise simultaneously. In Mead, however, there is no simple association of the good with the 'I' and the right with the 'me', as it would seem that Honneth is implying.

For Mead, this inner friction between the 'I' and the 'me' represents the outline of the conflict - this is supposed to be able to explain the moral development of both individuals and society. As the representative of the community, the 'me' embodies the conventional norms that one must constantly try to expand, in order to give social expression to the impulsiveness and creativity of one's 'I'. For Honneth, Mead thus introduces into the practical relation-to-self a tension between the internalized collective will and the claims of individuation - the tension that has to lead to a moral conflict between the subject and the subject's social environment. (Honneth, 1995: 82)

Although helpfully drawing attention to the debt that Mead owes to Hegel, Honneth nonetheless loses some of the force of the Hegelian dialectic in separating out the 'I' and 'me' as two separate phases of the creation of self. It is

important not to lose sight of the paradox of the process, which I have been trying to draw attention to in the course of this project and not to try and separate them out as distinct phases. This is because I believe that it more nearly approximates to the paradoxes that we have been exploring above, in the voluntary-compulsory nature of values for example, and which the social anthropologists were also drawing attention to but not quite doing justice to. However, I still think it worth persisting with Honneth for a while longer to follow his argument about the importance of recognition as it relates to values.

Honneth goes further in arguing that Mead's dialectic is an engine of what Elias called 'the civilising process', as outlined above. Honneth understands Mead to be saying that because the impulsive 'I', "which cannot be stilled", comes up against the constraints of a normative society generalised in the 'me' it acts to idealize a broader community of acceptance. This idealized broader community would grant greater freedom as compared to the established order. Acceptance of the community is essential, for without it one cannot maintain personal identity, so the 'I' has no choice but to engage with and constantly try to expand the constraints of the community it finds itself in:

> In defending their spontaneously experienced demands, subjects have no option but to secure acceptance, again and again, from a counterfactually posited community that grants them greater freedom, as compared to the established relations of recognition. For Mead, it is the movement stemming from the enormous number of these moral deviations – which blanket the social life process, as it were, with a network of normative ideals – that constitutes the developmental process of society. (Honneth, 1995: 83)

In this way the concept of personal liberation, which for Mead as for Hegel needed to be linked to having these freedoms enshrined in law, is linked to freedom for the community as a whole. With the enrichment of the individual comes the enrichment of the community through a continually expanding mutual struggle of recognition. So Honneth's understanding of Mead is that we are engaged with others in the very act of consciousness and identity formation, and

this is what we bring to the specific encounter with other beings. And because identity is at the heart of our interrelating with others so this interaction can become charged and can appear to challenge the very things that we hold dear.

Rights and solidarity

In my argument so far I have drawn attention to the interrelation of mind, self and society as described by G. H. Mead and tried to explain the emergent and social nature of Mead's theories. I have also shown how Honneth has taken up Mead's theories in order to develop a theory of the evolution of morality in society. In doing so I have also pointed to the fact that Honneth separates out the phases of the I-me dialectic and thus loses some of the potency of the paradox at the heart of the creation of self and identity, and, I would want to argue, values creation. Nevertheless I want to continue to investigate how Honneth takes up Mead since I have found it helpful in drawing attention to the struggle that is at the heart of day to day acts of mutual recognition. I will reprise his (Honneth's) treatment of the three phases of this social act of recognition by addressing how he understands love, rights and solidarity to arise, as I mentioned above. And in particular I will focus on the last two of these, rights and solidarity, to further explore his contention that:

> ..the reproduction of social life is governed by the imperative for mutual
> recognition, because one can develop a practical relation-to-self only
> when one has learned to view oneself, from the normative perspective of
> one's partners in interaction, as their social addressee. (Ibid: 93)

I will do so because rights and solidarity are two terms which are very important in the international development arena and I believe that Honneth can help to uncover a different way of thinking about them. My area of interest is in the fact that I am coming to believe that NGO B's frustration with DfID, and the partners' frustration with both NGO B and DfID, is partly based on the feeling of not being recognised in the way that they see themselves, and on the fact that the recognition between the parties takes different forms. In essence I think the relationship between DfID and NGO B is prioritised on legal recognition and calls forth rights and duties, and the relationship between NGO B and its partners

is prioritised on the solidarity that emanates from values in common, and this is what NGO B has come to mean in the term 'partnership'. I would go further and argue that certain ways of working in organisations and the belief systems that they embody make it harder for individual staff members, such as the one I encountered, to recognise themselves and their values in the way that they have to work.

In the relationship between DfID and NGO B, defined as a legal contract, there is an assumption that there is an agreement between parties on rationally agreed norms; the contingent exceptions of context, culture, ways of working, are currently not being viewed as admissible reasons for failure to adhere to the contract as specified. In signing this contract NGO B has aspired to be a fully recognised citizen with all the respect that will accompany this recognition within the community of development agencies and donors, but it is a community with a particular set of values and assumptions about the way that development can work. The paradox for NGO B is that the relationships of solidarity they have built up with their partners are negated by the very contract that they have signed, which recognises only standardised development outputs, or 'deliverables'.

Honneth contrasts legal recognition with a third form of recognition, solidarity, and argues that the relationship of solidarity presupposes a kind of symmetry or equivalence between the two parties who share the same feeling; that each is trying to accomplish something of worth that is valued by the other. In thinking about Bangladesh and the contractual relationship between DfID and NGO B, and NGO B and its partners, it might be possible to describe them along a number of axes of recognition. DfID recognises NGO B as a rational partner in a mutually agreed undertaking, freely consented to, to scale up their area of activity and to deliver to punishing targets. NGO B is recognised as a full legal partner. In contradistinction, what links NGO B and the partners, in their own terms, is the shared value horizons, the mutual recognition of solidarity, which is as much to do with the way that work gets accomplished as what the work is.

In taking up the Elias' deliberations on power and Mead's theories of the emergence of self, which are two cornerstones of the theories of complex responsive processes of relating, I have used them as a basis for contrasting with other theories currently in use which attempt to explain the dynamics of international development. I have also pursued Honneth as he takes up Mead's theories as a way of trying to understand if they can help to explain the creation of values in the context of every day human interaction that I have described in my narrative. My conclusion is that Honneth's development of Mead's theories is useful, and the concept of mutual recognition is helpful, but has yet to fully capture the paradox in the I-me dialectic or the paradoxical interrelation of individuals and society as described by Elias. In describing social development as a form of continuous and differentiated mutual recognition, Honneth has paved the way to my making greater sense of the relationship between DfID and NGO B.

A return to the narrative

I have wanted to draw on how the theory of complex responsive processes can offer a different way of representing what was happening in my interactions with NGO B and DfID. I think there are important reasons for exploring ways of understanding what was going on since project delay, confusion, and cross-cultural difficulties are endemic in international development. My investigation above is offered as an additional contribution to understanding common occurrences in development practice and common ways of representing them

The paradigm within which DfID operates, which I have termed instrumentalism, idealises planning and control and suggests that, when 'problems' occur, the way to 'solve' them is to exert more control and introduce more planning and policy papers. There is often little thought about the contingent nature of what is happening since managerialism resorts to what is known as 'best practice', that is to say, to tried and tested methods from elsewhere which are supposedly guaranteed to work. So, for example, anxiety on the part of the DfID staff member at the lack of progress led her to exert more and more pressure on the staff in NGO B to perform as they were expected, which in turn led to them wanting to 'speed up' the project by recruiting more partners, bogging them

down in even more preparatory work before they could start implementing. The anxiety at the delay also led the DfID staff member to behave in ways which, even from my brief experience of her, I feel she would consider unacceptable, which she began to admit herself when I offered her the opportunity to reflect upon the situation she found herself in. This made working relationships difficult between DfID and NGO B, as well as between NGO B and the organisations it calls partners and began to call into question the very values that the project was set up to embody – 'empowerment', equity and partnership. Rather than question the assumptions upon which the plan was based DfID employees would choose to question the competence and professionalism of the people they had contracted to do the work. In turn staff in NGO B in Bangladesh had begun to question the nature of their own relationships with organisations they term partners and to unravel the relationship of solidarity that they had had over many years.

Concluding thoughts on this experience and their methodological implications

I want to turn finally to a consideration of what I think the process of writing this project has uncovered. In the course of what was for me a fairly routine piece of consultancy attending to a situation that occurs repeatedly in many countries in the world where development projects are undertaken, that of project delay and the resulting consternation that this causes, I had an encounter with a member of staff from DfID which idealises planning and managerialism – a 'problem-solving approach'. During this encounter gentle probing from me about assumptions behind the ways of working enacted in the project prompted a spontaneous and highly personal sharing of value positions from my co-respondent that I had not expected for most of the interview. She ended up by sharing with me an aspiration for the development process that was not so dissimilar to my own yet had been almost entirely occluded in the preceding conversation. In wanting to make sense of this occurrence I have delved into the development literature to see what explanations different schools of thought in development would apply to the power relationship I found myself in, and the value choices and commitments that were possible in that context. I have also gone on to compare these with the theory of complex responsive processes to

explore similarities and differences with these ways of understanding power-relating as a way of adding to the literature on such very common situations. In doing so I have discussed some of the limitations that I have found in the existing literature and have tried to develop the discussion further by trying to understand the events as potentially transformative, drawing on Honneth's theories of mutual recognition, through the radically social way of relating that is implied in the social behaviourism of G.H. Mead.

I have also become conscious of the way that this experience has the potential to transform me and my practice. In his book *The Genesis of Values* Hans Joas (2000) makes the case, based particularly on William James, John Dewey and Emile Durkheim, that human value commitments do not arise out of rational intent, but out of experiences of self-transformation and affective self-transcendence. Through experience something appears to us to be good or true in a subjectively evident and intense way. I explored in project one how my own transformative experiences have been rooted in a Christian upbringing with predilection for reading Marxist texts when I was a teenager. The experience of being politically engaged, going on demonstrations, working in the Developing World inspired me to think that change was a necessity, was possible, even inevitable. Working alongside colleagues in, for instance, Beirut, has been a very intense and formative experience. Equally intense have been the feelings of disillusionment and disappointment when the organisations I have worked for have seemed to me to fall short of the transformative aspirations that I have had for them; hope and disillusionment have arisen and co-existed together.

I made some remarks above about the methodological approach that was implied by the other schools of thought in the mainstream development literature, and I concluded that what they offered was either transcendentalism, a doctrine of least violence, or some kind of linear incrementalism. What I think the theory of complex responsive processes offers as a method, along with other radically social theories of human relating such as Honneth's, is a process of continuous uncovering and openness to different ways of thinking and acting that subverts the idea of absolutes. I think it is this that Richard Rorty (1999), a philosopher who considers himself in the same tradition as Mead and Dewey, was describing

in his book entitled *Philosophy and Social Hope* in the chapter called *Ethics without Principles*. In this essay Rorty rehearses the Deweyan critique of the authoritarian nature of Kantian ethics, which can appear to be a search for universal truths. What Rorty urges, rather is a substitution of hope for knowledge and certainty. Placing himself firmly in the pragmatic tradition he argues that:

> By thinking of everything as relational through and through, pragmatists attempt to get rid of the contrast between reality and appearance. Pragmatists hope to make it impossible for the sceptic to raise the question 'Is our knowledge adequate to the way things really are?' They substitute for this traditional question the *practical* question, 'Are our ways of describing things, of relating them to other things as to make them fulfil our needs more adequately, as good as possible? Or can we do better? Can our future be made better than our present? (Rorty, 1999: 72)

For Rorty moral progress is not about more and more precise definitions of truth, but of being open to more and more definitions. This resonates for me with my experience of wrestling with the methodology of complex responsive processes; it has been about never being satisfied with the way one has portrayed things, of being prepared to uncover more and more about the experiences one has had and different ways of understanding them. The practice of sharing projects back and forth between learning set members and other outside readers also enacts this methodology. Its constant uncovering and restiveness creates interstices for me as a consultant through which glimmers of hope can appear.

Project 3

Recognising oneself with the other – values, solidarity and the enlarged sense of self

Introduction

In Project 3 I want to continue to explore the themes of values, power, paradox and mutual recognition that I have begun to set out in my earlier projects, as they arise in a three month consultancy I undertook in Palestine. My interest in doing so flows out of my awareness of how my own values led me to work in the sector in the first place, how they are at the forefront of much discussion in the INGO (International NGO) sector, and yet I have a dissatisfaction with the way that values come to be thought of and written about in this sector and beyond. As a consultant I often get into discussions with senior managers about 'organisational values' without either side being very clear about what this might mean for the work we are about to undertake together. We both know that values are important without quite knowing what we might do about them. As a way into this discussion I will briefly explore some of the approaches to values taken up in management literature, particularly that pertaining to INGOs.
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Values as discussed in the literature

Despite the different organisational context, the way values get discussed in development and general management literature is not that different. Development practitioners are the first to acknowledge the difficulties of, on the one hand, espousing explicit values, and on the other putting those values into practice. In project 2 I drew attention to how Edwards and Sen (2002) called for some kind of personal transformation, 'recognising our inner being', as a means of putting the practice of development back on a more equal footing with those it is meant to benefit. Similarly Pasteur and Scott-Villiers (2004) take a very explicit systems perspective, and, drawing on both Argyris (1982) and Senge (1990), assume values, attitudes and behaviours to be the last box in a series of nested boxes that make up an organisation and the people that work in it. The individual sits within a team, which sits within an organisation, which sits within

its environment. It is important, then, to use different 'lenses' to scrutinise what is going on in these different layers in order to fully understand what is happening. Paying attention to one's attitudes and values allows one to 'close the gap' between rhetoric and practice:

> …learning requires ongoing honest reflection on the kinds of personal, organisational and institutional assumptions that underlie programme goals. It involves a deep questioning of personal attitudes and behaviours and whether they are congruent with espoused objectives. It also requires a broader reflection on whether the procedures, cultures, and relationships are supportive of the expressed goals. (2004: 196)

This way of thinking implies that value statements are a tool of management and could be realisable, and places a burden on the individual somehow to get their attitudes and behaviour in alignment with everyone else's and with the explicit policies of the organisation. It implies that some kind of synergy is possible if individuals are 'honest' enough in their enquiry, and their personal enquiry is deep enough. 'Closing the gap' between policy and practice is essentially a problem to be solved on our own; it becomes a matter of conscience and conscientious enquiry to effect a transition to a preconceived standard. It neglects the fact that organisational value statements are idealisations, which by their very nature are unachievable in any direct manner.

A more instrumental view of values is taken by Sachs and Rühli (2005) on the one hand, and Dolan and Richley (2006) on the other. For the former, the new environment for business at the beginning of the millennium implies a broader approach by managers in their strategic thinking towards understanding what stakeholders, as well as shareholders want. By offering incentives to managers to consider a broader constituency, Boards can change their managers' values. Sachs and Rühli seem to be suggesting that simple behavioural psychology can account for changing values, and that categories of people, let's call them managers, will change their values in accordance with a similar stimulus, incentives. Equally, Dolan and Richley (2006) generalise the phenomenon of values and consider them as a thing to be managed; first came management by

instruction, they argue, then management by objectives and now it is time for management by values. In a mixture of complex adaptive systems thinking, chaos theory and pathetic fallacy, the authors describe organisations as 'complex living entities' where values act as a governing principle:

> For individuals, groups, organisations and society, value systems are the strange attractor that determines the general form of their behaviour. (2006: 236)

What the authors seem to be reaching for is exactly what Pasteur and Scott-Villiers point to in their chapter - a way of getting the different 'parts' of an organisation to line up and point in the same direction. Rather than placing the onus on individuals, though, for Dolan and Richley it is for the manager to stand outside what is happening and control things for the good of the firm: 'Thus, today, effective managers should tap into peoples' values as a way of motivating them.' (Ibid: 237) Being a good manager is likened to tapping in to some mysterious energy source, which, once found, can be channelled for the good of the organisation.

Weber (1993) approaches values from the perspective of cognitive psychology and enquires whether it is possible to prove an empirical link between personal values and moral reasoning. He combines Rokeach's (1968, 1973) four personal value orientations with Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) stages of moral development to produce a variety of grids showing the relationship between an individual's values and their ability to take certain kinds of decisions on moral grounds. The utility of this, Weber argues, is that managers could then better predict the likelihood of staff behaving in a particular kind of way, new staff could be recruited who would fit the 'culture' of the recruiting organisation, and the information could assist firms to develop training courses to promote ethical decision-making and behaviour.

It is clear from this very short exploration of different thinking about values in both NGOs and private sector companies that values are clearly thought to be a very important aspect of understanding how and why people come together to

achieve things collectively. However, in project 2 I drew on Joas (2000) who argued that values arose not as a result of rational intent but out of experiences of self-transformation and affective self-transcendence; they are 'voluntary compulsions'. If this is indeed the case then the idea that one can manage and predict other people's values or their behaviour based upon those values, to offer incentives to people to change them, or invite people to align their values more nearly with those of their team and organisation (to share values as it is usually put in the literature) becomes a lot more problematic. How far is it possible to manipulate people's affects so that they experience individual and collective transcendence?

Other ways of thinking about values

In this project I would like to explore the phenomenon of values in the workplace by, on the one hand trying to do justice to the fact that they are an important part of understanding how people work together, but on the other hand questioning how helpful it is to think of organisations as 'having' values and how useful values statements are. I would like to acknowledge that discussions around values can have symbolic value and offer opportunities for expressing solidarity with each other, and can have an uplifting and motivating effect on people, at the same time as exploring how possible it is to achieve the alignment of aspiration and deed that many managers in organisations seem to be seeking. In doing so I will be putting forward the idea that values are inspirational, yet idealised, and also arise in the workaday, daily process of socialising with others because as social beings we cannot but act as moral agents, acting and interpreting those actions against our value of the good. Conflict is as likely as convergence, and value orientations, though cumulative, are also an emergent phenomenon arising in interaction with others. The tensions between my values, the values of others and incidents where collective values have been espoused and idealised, and, I would argue, reified, are likely to produce novelty and difference.

It is not difficult to come across explicit value statements in organisations since most organisational strategic plans start out by stating the organisation's vision, mission and values as an invitation for reflection and loyalty. These statements provide, as I have described in previous projects, the idealised organisational and

sectoral aspirations, and can become what Mead refers to as "cult values" (1914, 1923). A value becomes a cult value when we risk exclusion from the group by not following them. However, my own experience of working with what are described as organisational values, and supporting organisations who ask me to help them produce them, is that they can also be paralysing in their scope and grandeur. Those who ask me to work with them forget that we are dealing with idealisations and talk about them as if they were directly realisable. A critique of this process of the reification and instrumentalisation of values into abstract statements against which employees have to measure themselves, or as a means of motivating staff, is what interests me and could be of interest to other consultants and researchers, since it seems to me that the way values are currently talked about in INGOs and by consultants is as bewildering as it is helpful.

Here is part of an example of a values statement from an INGO quoted by Chambers, whom I introduced in project 2 as being an eminent commentator on development ethics, in his book *Ideas for Development* (2005) which he terms 'a passionate document inspired by outrage. It combines vision, values and realism.' (2005: 79)

Values
ActionAid lives by the following values:

Mutual respect, recognising the innate dignity and worth of all people and the value of diversity;

Equity and justice, requiring us to work to ensure that everyone – irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, class and religion – has equal opportunity for expressing and utilizing their potential;

Honesty and transparency, requiring us to be accountable for the effectiveness of our actions and open in our communications with others;

Chambers describes this as a 'practical document' which contributed to 'a common commitment and organizational culture' (ibid: 75). Whilst I can concur with Chambers that the statement is to some extent visionary and passionate and offers an opportunity for the expression of collective solidarity with the poor, I question whether the statement is realistic and practical, since it seems to me that he has forgotten that it is an idealisation of limited use in the day to day work with others.

In drawing attention to the symbolic importance of value statements, however, there is no doubt that Chambers is pointing to an important phenomenon also noticed by Hannah Arendt, that of the power of collective purpose-making. In *The Human Condition* (1958) Arendt divides human activity into three modes of being; labour, work and action. To take the first of these, action; action is a means of expressing individuality and self in concert with other beings involved in action. Action allows us to begin something new. Because everyone is acting with their own intentions, together and alone, we cannot be certain of the outcome since we are acting into a web of pre-existing relationships. And because of the vagaries of the human heart, we also cannot be certain that we will be tomorrow who we are today. As a hedge against uncertainty, then, Arendt describes the importance of making and keeping promises in the face of the unpredictability that afflicts human life. Collective promises have added power:

> The sovereignty of a body of people bound and kept together, not by an identical will which somehow magically inspires them all, but by an agreed purpose for which alone the promises are valid and binding, shows itself quite clearly in its unquestioned superiority over those who are completely free, unbound by any promises and unkept by any purpose. This superiority derives from the capacity to dispose of the future as though it were the present, that is, the enormous and truly miraculous enlargement of the very dimension in which power can be effective. (1958: 245)

By referring to and distancing herself from the idea of a 'magical' 'identical will', in my view Arendt differentiates her theory of a contingent and contextual

promise made by a body of people from the thinking of Hobbes (1651/1992) and Rousseau (1762/2004), whose social contract theory is based on the idea of a 'collective will' i.e. a phenomenon that arises when individuals voluntarily give up their desires in favour of the collective whole. The importance of an organisational process which brings people together to make collective promises to treat everyone equally, or to act with integrity, is a force to be reckoned with, since it creates an enlarged sense of self and purpose that unites people in a common course of action and solidarity. The enlarged sense of self and group purpose arise at the same time – the individual and the collective are different expressions of the same thing. It can feel like an island of certainty in a sea of unpredictability and assumes a realisable future. However, it is also important to consider the other more limited characteristics of this collective purpose-making that Arendt draws attention to:

> We mentioned before the power generated when people gather together and "act in concert", which disappears the moment they depart. The force that keeps them together, as distinguished from the space of appearances in which they gather and the power which keeps this public space in existence is the force of mutual promise. Sovereignty, which is always spurious if claimed by an isolated single entity, be it the individual entity of the person or the collective entity of a nation, assumes, in the case of many men mutually bound by promises, a certain limited reality. The sovereignty resides in the resulting, limited independence from the incalculability of the future, and its limits are the same as those inherent in the faculty itself of making and keeping promises. (Ibid: 244/5)

The 'sovereignty' that Arendt refers to is limited, partial and temporary, and lasts only as long as people come together to renew their purpose. She also warns of the spuriousness of entities such as nations, claiming sovereignty of action (to take as an example the reified statement from ActionAid ("ActionAid lives by…").

The way INGOs mostly discuss values, to borrow from Arendt's other two modes of human existence, labour and work, is to present them as a product of

work rather than of labour. That is to say, labour, bound as it is to the biological process, has no real beginning or end; no sooner is the cycle completed than it begins again. Work, meanwhile, is about producing finished products which have instrumental value. Humans live in a world of fabricated things which give some limited permanence beyond the temporality of human existence. One might make the case that the discourse about values in development literature and organisations is to portray them as enduring products ascribed to reified entities. They have instrumental value in describing the journey from means to ends. Meanwhile humans also live in the messy daily reality of conflict and compromises that are involved in trying to get along with colleagues. Values are not just grand statements, idealisations, but have to be interpreted and reinterpreted in the minute by minute decisions that we are forced to take in order to achieve things with others. In this everyday context we are always doomed to fall short of such high sounding ideals. The danger of investing too heavily in grand statements alone rather than paying attention to what values might mean for our daily practice is that it would be easy to fall into cynicism or despair when encountering the gulf between what we aspire to and what we achieve, particularly in a sector which aspires to so much; nothing less than global justice.

Rather than just focusing on values for their idealistic and motivational importance I intend in this project to pay attention to the daily process of working alongside others and what this means for the creation and recreation of values. I will be trying to understand values in a practical sense alluded to by Chambers above, and in doing so I will be exploring authors who have specialised in looking at values in practice.

Background to some narratives
In choosing to write about three episodes in a recent consultancy in Palestine I am looking to explore how values come up in the daily practice of working with others. Some of the experiences are every-day events, which might strike a chord with other consultants and researchers, and yet other threads are specific to the context in Palestine, and will, I hope, afford an opportunity to explore how micro-exchanges can be replicated in more global patterns of behaviour.

I was approached by someone who used to be a colleague in my Oxfam days to be part of team evaluating a UN organisation which works with Palestinian refugees in the West Bank and Gaza. The UN organisation has been running an emergency programme since the start of the second Palestinian uprising, or *intifadah*, in 2000 in response to the dire situation that many Palestinians found themselves in, i.e. denied access to work, education and free movement. After five years the senior management team and the major donors, including the US and UK governments, wanted to evaluate the emergency programme and to work on recommendations about what to do next.

I was torn about whether to join this evaluation team. My past experience of such ventures has not been good. I have experienced previous work with large UN-like organisations as being quite narrow and conservative. A great deal of effort is expended on the terms of reference to make it as tight as possible and therefore proscribe the work that is undertaken by consultants. Moreover, there is usually a lot of expectation around the report and the recommendations that it will contain and much less focus, if any, on the way the work is undertaken. The conventional way to undertake such work is to read a lot of documentation at the beginning of the assignment, to carry out a large number of bilateral interviews with the main respondents as identified by the contracting party, then to write a report based closely on the terms of reference which carries specific recommendations for future action.

My reservations about working this way, as further clarified by my time on the D Man, revolve around the assumptions which are both implicit and explicit in the methodology. The methodology is modelled on an empiricist approach that one would be more likely to find in a natural science setting, one which posits the evaluator as an objective observer sifting 'facts' which are there to be discovered. It is this objectivism that Pierre Bourdieu draws attention to in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), contrasting it with his own theory of *habitus*, which I shall explore in more depth below:

> Objectivism constitutes the social world as a spectacle presented to an
> observer who takes up a "point of view" on the action, who stands back

so as to observe it and, transferring into the object the principles of his relation to the object, conceives of it as a totality intended for cognition alone, in which all interactions are reduced to symbolic exchanges. (1977: 96)

There is an emphasis on controlling the 'experiment' that the evaluation is taken to be, of proscribing both the ways of working and the outcome of the work before it has even been undertaken. A benign interpretation of the emphasis placed on what the report should look like would be that the contractor really believes that it is possible to be objective in such circumstances and that they are engaged in an attempt to ensure that consultants actually do the job they are paid to do in a detached manner. Objectivity, then, is about agreeing in advance what the methodology should be in order to avert bias. However, a less benign view would be that it is also a defence mechanism to ensure that outsiders do not turn over any stones that they need not. Following the observations of Mosse (2005) that I described in Project 2, the report becomes another set of representations which will be constrained by what it is, and is not, possible to say, and will be as fiercely contested within the organisation as every other piece of documentation it produces.

In the end, however, because of my long association with the Middle East, I decided to accept the commission to be part of a team. My own particular evaluation brief within the bigger evaluation project seemed to be quite limited and manageable.

There had been very little preparation for the evaluation project. There were to be five of us in the team, six if you include the contract manager from the institution that had originally secured the contract from the UN organisation. We were still agreeing terms and signing contracts within hours of leaving for Palestine. We spent almost no time talking about how we would work together as a team and what we thought the job would involve. Starting out as a conventional evaluation consultancy, then, and one that I had undertaken in lots of different circumstances, this experience afforded me a number of opportunities for

reflection on values and how they come into play when people decide how it is they should work together.

Incident 1 –Establishing a modus vivendi

Three of us started the evaluation in Palestine and ended up undertaking a number of the interviews together, since we all needed to see the respondent we were interviewing. The person who had invited me to join the team started off each of the interviews since he was team leader, and although he would start well he would quickly run out of steam and questions about 20 minutes into the interview. The third member of the team was very quiet, asking nothing, so I felt impelled to keep the interview going by asking some questions of my own. At the end of the day the three of us would meet, I thought, to review the day and pick up on some of the threads of the interviews that we had been having. For two or three evenings I tried to discuss what had interested me about the day's work and was rebuffed by the team leader. He was not prepared to talk about the interviews; he was only prepared to talk about logistics and the documents we had accumulated. Talking about documents and logistics was the subject that interested me least. I began to feel that he was both short tempered with me and critical of the observations I had to offer; one of the subjects I wanted to raise with my colleagues was the concept of 'transparency', or the lack of it, which was a criticism that donors had levelled at the UN organisation. I was interested to explore what my colleagues thought the donors meant by it, what we thought we meant by it, and whether it was useful as a concept in the evaluation we were undertaking. When I offered this as a conversation topic over supper I was quickly rebuffed by the team leader. He told me that I should not jump to conclusions about transparency; transparency was a complicated concept and we would only know what we meant by it by forming a judgement over time and by 'triangulating' our opinions. It was not clear to me, though, when this conversation would actually take place, since it was always being postponed to some distant point in the future. I was irritated at being rebuffed, and I felt frustrated as I experienced us grinding our way painfully through interview after interview.

By the end of three days I had had enough of this way of working and was not enjoying the consultancy, and had even begun to regret accepting the job. I was unused to being denied the opportunity to talk about what was going on, particularly since I had just come off a five day DMan residential where talk was the currency of interaction. An opportunity to broach the subject arose when we were down in Gaza together. The third member of the team had joined up with an old friend leaving the team leader and me together and alone at the dinner table. After yet another unsuccessful attempt to talk about more general themes that were arising out of the work I found myself saying to the team leader that, although I liked and respected him, I was not enjoying the way we were working. I did not want to fall out with him about it, but also I did not want to continue as we were. It simply was not working.

The effect of my intervention was to produce a wave of anger from him. "I've got to be allowed to switch off after work," he exploded. "I need my down time." What followed was a long and tortured explanation about how my team leader had experienced a long period of depression, how this was the first job he had undertaken in the year, and how he felt that he was not 'performing' up to standard. I, however, had been 'insensitive' to his condition, had refused to let go of things when it was obvious he was not up to discussing them and must have known about his condition from mutual friends. I was always 'critical', never satisfied, and rarely able to accept things at face value. After a long day at work, and because he was physically and mentally unfit, he was incapable of sustaining a conversation about anything much, and particularly about the kinds of topics I was fielding. Meanwhile he felt I had been badgering him to continue, and his reaction was to respond grumpily to close down the conversation. Because of my progressive values, he told me, I ought to be interested in mental health issues and the difficult time he had been through.

Reaction to events
My reaction to this outburst was to be overcome with regret at not having recognised what was going on and to accept responsibility for being difficult to work with. I wanted to make things better. On the one hand I was conscious of the fact that I could not have been expected to know about his condition and still

found him irritating to work with, on the other I was concerned not to make things worse, for both of us to survive this consultancy as best we could. I also began to reflect on my own experiences of being managed well and being managed badly, and how critical and lacking in patience I am of the latter experience.

For the rest of the consultancy the conversation that I had had with the team leader acted as a constraint on the way I worked both when he was present and when he was not. From that point forward I felt inhibited from saying what I really thought, was careful to mediate the urge to press for things that I thought were necessary, such as spending more time as a group reflecting together. I was left with the dilemma of wanting to make the consultancy something that I could value as a good piece of work, and at the same time needing to find a way of doing so that did not undermine the team leader and helped us to survive the experience of working together. To a large extent I was trying to anticipate how he might interpret each one of my actions without having a clear sense of his mental state. I was very conscious of the power the team leader had exerted over what was and was not possible to discuss, in the same way that the organisation we were evaluating was likely to do as the consultancy unfolded.

Reflections on incident 1

What I draw from the narrative is that knowing what to do in ordinary working circumstances is not at all obvious, irrespective of whether one is supposed to have 'shared values' with one's working colleagues or not. It is more often the case that values compete. The more complicated the situation the more difficult it is to find one's way through the web of competing values in a practical way. It is interesting that the episode of conflict was triggered by my attempt to address transparency in the organisation we were supposed to be assessing. No doubt both my team leader and I would have liked to treat each other with transparency and honesty since these are terms often used in the INGO environment, and are cited in the ActionAid value statement – but we never explored how we might work together in advance. And even if we had, I will argue below, it would only have taken us so far. In the end each episode of conflicting values is mediated

through power-relating, a topic I will explore more thoroughly in my third narrative below.

Paying attention to values in the everyday is a matter which John Dewey brought alive in a series of essays of reflections on the nature of values. In an essay entitled '*Logic and judgement of practice*' (1915) Dewey builds the argument that 'a judgement of value is simply a case of practical judgement, a judgement about the doing of something' (1915/1998: 243). Values, then, do not reside in objects, or statements; these objects and statements provide the data for evaluation. Nor are values subjective mind states that equate to individual choosing or the fulfilment of desire; they are merely practical reflection upon action, 'a present act determining an act to be done, a present act taking place because the future act is uncertain and incomplete.' (Ibid: 246). Because there is latent uncertainty about the course of action to be taken, values imply both judgement and criticism arising out of reflection, an argument that Dewey takes up in *Experience and Nature* (1929/1958). For Dewey the use of human intelligence, and ultimately the role of philosophy, is the permanent uncovering of and reflection upon value:

> …philosophy is and can be nothing but this critical operation and function become aware of itself and its implications, pursued deliberately and systematically. It starts from actual situations of belief, conduct and appreciative perception which are characterised by immediate qualities of good and bad, and from the modes of critical judgement at any given time in all regions of value; these are its data, its subject-matter. These values, criticisms and critical methods, it subjects to further criticism as comprehensive and consistent as possible. The function is to regulate the further appreciation of goods and bads…. (1929/1958: 403/4)

What I draw from this understanding of values as criticism is also an aperçu into my own practice as a consultant and my way of being as an individual, reflecting back on my team leader's experience of me as overly-critical. As someone who thinks of himself as overtly values-driven I am constantly sifting and evaluating, constantly testing the good and the bad, an exercise which does not leave my

own practice outside the area of enquiry. I can see how others would experience this as my being 'overly-critical', and how exhausting it must seem to others, particularly if they lack the energy, for one reason or another, to apply themselves in the same continuous way. It partly explains, also, why I was so frustrated not to have the opportunity to discuss how we should work together. The model of working was assumed to be a given; as I set out in my introduction, there is an assumption that reading documents and bilateral interviews, with a lot of hard work and furious editing, is enough to put the whole evaluation together. This has become much less of an acceptable model of working for me as I continue in the DMan. I experienced the relationship of power as my team leader exerted his authority, and appealed to my 'progressive values' to rule certain ways of behaving out of bounds, the very ways of behaving, critical enquiry, that made the job worth doing for me in the first place.

In trying to promote the primacy of judgement, and of discussion about method, Dewey also tried to liberate values from the proscriptiveness of Kant, and a rule or model-based approach, to discriminating between the good and the bad, which is the weakness that I perceive in INGO discussions around values, and was also the weakness that I implicitly perceived in the way we undertook the work in Palestine. Dewey did this in two ways. The first was to develop an emergent theory of values, challenging the relevance of past experience to the dilemmas of the present, and the second was to highlight the importance of mutual sympathy as a constituent part of giving value to action. In both, Dewey sets the practical judgements that are necessary in day to day life within a living moral framework.

To take emergent values first, Dewey leads, as usual, by idealising intelligent reflection on lived experience as a means to further values. In encouraging reflection Dewey is no different from Pasteur and Scott-Villiers above. However, the conclusions that he draws from the process of reflection are very different. The danger that he perceives is that we lose our moral vitality if we try to apply rules that are irrelevant to the circumstances and thus deprive ourselves of the faculty of judgement:

> The more completely the notion of the model is formed outside and irrespective of the specific conditions which the situation of action presents, the less intelligent is the act. …. The man who is not accessible to such change in the case of moral situation has ceased to be a moral agent and has become a reacting machine. In short, the standard of valuation is formed in the process of practical judgement or valuation. It is not something taken from outside and applied within it – such application means there is no judgement. (1915/1998: 248)

This is not to argue that we should not learn from experience, merely that we also have to weigh whether that particular experience applies in the situations which we encounter.

> …the attempt to bring over from past objects the elements of a standard for valuing future consequences is a hopeless one. The express object of a valuation-judgement is to release factors which, being new, cannot be measured on the basis of the past alone. (Ibid: 250)

Dewey proposes that to presuppose a model for moral action irrespective of the situation in which one finds oneself is to misunderstand scientific method, which is driven by formulas, or principles, rather than models. The distinction is that the former describes a way that conclusions have been reached rather than the conclusions themselves. For Dewey, exercising judgement is a vital act. In Palestine the work lacked vitality for me and caused me great frustration, mirroring the very lack of vitality that my team leader experienced through mental illness.

As for the second thread of Dewey's argument about the application of judgement in the decision about goods, in an essay entitled '*Moral judgement and knowledge'* (1932) Dewey starts from the position that affection, or rather mutual affection, is at the bottom of values that influence behaviour. The following is from a section entitled "*Sensitivity and thoughtfulness*":

Sympathy is the animating mold of moral judgement not because its dictates take precedence in action over those of other impulses (which they do not do), but because it furnishes the most efficacious *intellectual* standpoint. It is the tool, *par excellence,* for resolving complex situations. Then when it passes over into active and overt conduct, it does so *fused* with other impulses and not in isolation and is thus protected from sentimentality. In the fusion there is broad and objective survey of all desires and projects because there is an expanded personality. Through sympathy the cold calculation of utilitarianism and the formal law of Kant are transported into vital and moving realities. (1932/1998: 333).

There are a number of works which have compared the American pragmatists with Buddhism (Ames, 1962; Odin, 1996), and it is in this passage that Dewey comes closest to what Buddhists would understand by 'right intention'. Although we cannot foresee the consequences of acting, nonetheless, by entering into a situation taking the attitude of the other is at least a way of complicating our first responses to things, contributing to what Dewey calls perplexity, which stops us in our tracks and forces us to ponder on things and turn them over in our minds. Although I cannot go all the way with Dewey that sympathy is a tool for **resolving** complex situations I am, nonetheless, interested in the idea of mutuality, of mutual recognition which I partially explored taking up Honneth (1995) in the last project, and which I want to explore further.

Returning to the incident which I describe I was unable to take up the theme of transparency with my colleagues and with my team leader in particular, partly because we had spent no time talking about our working relationship. I was behaving in a way that assumed an environment where work issues could be shared; he was behaving in a way that precluded them from being aired. The basis for restarting the failing relationship was with an appeal to sympathy and solidarity, although this was mostly an appeal to my sympathy towards him. The implications for my practice as a consultant are that I realise how many are the assumptions that I bring to my engagement with others about what appropriate ways of working are. Equally, those working with me are bringing their own assumptions – there is no necessary resolution to the differences that we bring.

My practice, then, is about being alive to these differences and looking for opportunities to work with them. The difference between this method of enquiry and that advocated by some of the other authors at the beginning of this paper, is that it expects to find divergence and difference and would not start out from a suggestion that resolution, or alignment is necessarily possible. Dewey in particular would expect to proceed from an acknowledgement of difference, however, and a sympathetic appreciation of that difference.

Incident 2 – joining with others: seeking solidarity through transcendence

We finally met as a group of six after the first trip to Palestine in the team leader's house in Oxford and we spent a good time planning and getting to know each other. The only Arab member of the team, a doctor, let's call her Y, who had spent a lot of time in North America, managed to say her piece just before we broke up as a group. Rather than telling us how she intended to undertake the work she gave us a summary of the values that she thought that she was bringing to it. She told us that she thought it was important to put hope at the centre of what we were doing together; that it was important to encourage people to speak from the heart, to dream and to experience being listened to. I found myself generally uplifted by what she had to say, which she had chosen to say without being invited to do so, and at the time I thought she had made a significant invitation to the group to reflect on how we might work together.

In Palestine ten days later it became evident what she meant by encouraging people to speak from the heart. We were due to meet a group of departmental directors. Y had assumed responsibility for running the meeting. Although it was only to be an hour and a half long she had arranged a forty minute presentation including all the photographs that she had taken since being in Palestine. She intended starting the meeting off by tossing around a red plastic heart with the words 'I love you' written on it. Participants would introduce themselves, talk about their hopes and dreams and throw the heart to someone else. The idea of using the heart as a facilitation aid was to encourage people to speak from the heart.

My two other colleagues were clearly uneasy about how this meeting was going to work out and approached it with a natural British reserve and queasiness. They struggled both with their own anxiety about what Y was proposing and with the means that they were going to tell her that they were feeling uneasy. They were clearly looking to me, as the person who had equal experience of working with groups to Y, to be the person who would bell the cat. On the one hand I was just as uneasy as were they about what was being proposed; on the other, I was clear that I did not want to take a leading role in dissuading her from her intentions.

The way this tension eventually played itself out was partially comic. Y, exuberant and full of energy, leapt up and down between our table and the next where her lap top was set up. She would also dash off to say hello to friends passing in the hotel, or up to her room to fetch something. So we discussed the issue together and apart. Without wanting to collude in her absence the determination of my colleagues hardened when we discussed the issue, and by the time she finally appeared for dinner they seemed quite determined to have no truck with her approach. Sensing this, Y seemed to cave in and said that she would run the meeting with us in any way that we chose. In the event she cried off the meeting altogether and took to her bed sick for the duration of the meeting.

Reflections on the second incident

My colleague Y clearly had strong values, about the importance of pointing to openness and affect in the dealings of human beings with each other. Perhaps her naivety lies in the fact that she thinks it is enough just to ask for something to happen, for people to 'speak from the heart', for them to proceed to do so. If the reaction of my other colleagues on the team was anything to go by, then her intentions were only going to be partially fulfilled. One can nonetheless sympathise with what she sets out to do, since affect is often an undiscussable area in the realm of organisational work. The interesting irony here is that she found her own ways of working very hard to discuss and we all found it very difficult to 'speak from the heart' about what we felt about the way she wanted to work. There were lots of cross-cultural power dynamics, too, in the exchange; Y

was Palestinian and the only Arabic speaker along with me. Surely she should know her own people? Who were we to contradict her?

In the paragraphs above I have begun to describe the exercise of values, in Deweyan terms, as a kind of daily practical, sympathetic and vital judgement-making at those junctures in human exchange where the way ahead is unclear and there is competition between different goods. This was particularly the case in the situation I have described above since there was more of an equivalence in the power relationships between us in the team leader's absence, although, as I have mentioned above, it was not without its complications. What this seems to call for is a much more sophisticated theory of practice, a theory of values in action, than the apparently one-sided intentionality of value statements or my colleague Y's enthusiasm. What the latter implies is a simple cause-effect linearity that we simply do not experience in the daily practice of living and working together. What for Chambers is a practical set of values is for me an important but merely intentional set of aspirations easier to state than to effect. The energy and vitality is for me not found in the statement itself, but in the day to day reflection and difference that I find in encountering experience in the light of those values. In order to start to unpick what it is that we are dealing with it seems to me that we have to return to G.H. Mead (1934), and his concept of gesture and response, where the meaning of a gesture can only be understood in the context of the response, or series of responses, from those engaged in meaning-making. The reason for doing so is to try and understand that whatever our intentions, the meaning of what we are engaged in can only unfold in a social process that takes others into account.

As a way into this I would like to explore the concept of gesture and response from different points of view. This understanding of the circularity of gesture and response is also something that interested Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990), who, drawing on Mead amongst others, was keen to develop a theory of practice that overcame the dualisms of subjective/objective and rule-based linear intentionality. Making the transition from anthropologist to sociologist, Bourdieu tried to counter what he considered to be the lifeless formalism of 'scientistic' accounts of human exchange at the same time as rejecting the lack of grounding

of subjective interpretation. In so doing he developed a theory of *habitus* which bears many similarities with the thinking of both Mead and Elias (2000). All three were interested in explaining how continuity and change occur in society, which appears both ordered and disordered at the same time, beyond assuming that it is the narrow intentionality and will of individuals or some kind of collective and ordered goal setting.

Bourdieu offers his definition of *habitus* thus:

> In short, the habitus, the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history. The system of dispositions – a past which survives in the present and tends to perpetuate itself into the future by making itself present in practices structured according to its principles, an internal law relaying the continuous exercise of the law of external necessities (irreducible to immediate conjunctural constraints) – is the principle of continuity and regularity which objectivism discerns in the social world without being able to give them a rational basis. And it is at the same time the principle of the transformations and regulated revolutions which neither the extrinsic and instantaneous determinisms of a mechanistic sociologism nor the purely internal but equally punctual determination of voluntarist or spontaneist subjectivism are capable of accounting for. (1977: 82)

While for Mead there is still room in the round of gesture/response for spontaneous and creative individual variation, Bourdieu is more deterministic; for him, the individual's 'cognitive and motivating structures' cannot stand outside the objective structures of history which an individual is both forming and being formed by at the same time. We are products of our cultural and class history just as we are contributing to the creation of that history at the same time. Because the two are inextricably linked, it is impossible to say that one is logically derived from the other, to imply that having X intention will result in Y, because it implies cutting the action out of its iterative and circular temporality. By analysing the rituals of the Kabyle people in Algeria, Bourdieu concluded

that the practical judgement that I quoted Dewey referring to above, occurs with improvisation on and around the *habitus*:

> …only a virtuoso with perfect command of his 'art of living' can play on all the resources inherent in the ambiguities and uncertainties of behaviour and situation in order to produce the actions appropriate to each case, to do that of which people will say "There was nothing else to be done", and do it the right way. We are a long way too from norms and rules: doubtless there are slips, mistakes, and moments of clumsiness to be observed here as elsewhere; and also grammarians of decorum able to state (and elegantly too) what is right to do and say, but never presuming to encompass in a catalogue of recurrent situations and appropriate conduct, still less in a fatalistic model, the art of the *necessary improvisation* which defines excellence. (Bourdieu, 1977: 8)

Both writers are setting out slightly different theses of emergence, a theory of unplanned emergent novelty grounded in paradox, which is located in a very different concept of time, which Bourdieu counterposes with a scientific understanding of time:

> Science has a time which is not that of practice…Scientific practice is so "detemporalised" that it tends to exclude even the idea of what it excludes: because science is possible only in relation to time which is opposed to that of practice, it tends to ignore time and, in doing so, to reify practices. (Ibid: 9)

For Bourdieu, as for Mead, this improvisation, or in Mead's case spontaneity, is never something one can get on top of and master. It becomes aware of itself only through reflexivity, after the event:

> The idea of a practical logic, a 'logic in itself', without the conscious reflexion of logical control, is a contradiction in terms, which defies logical logic. This paradoxical logic is that of all practice, or rather of practical sense. Caught up in 'the matter in hand', totally present in the

present and in the practical functions that it finds there in the form of objective potentialities they contain; it can only discover them by enacting them, unfolding them in time. (Bourdieu, 1990: 92)

Commenting on similar situations, where events present to us problematics that are not resolvable with our usual responses, Mead draws attention to a reflexivity that makes sense post factum. In the moment there is only paradox and movement, both one thing and another at the same time. However, rather than being located in fluctuations of power in the structural interaction of capital, class and race, as it is for Bourdieu, Mead's interaction takes place on the level of one human being's engagement with another. This communicative sense-making for Mead is also a theory of mind, the root of what makes us self-consciously human:

> It is by means of reflexiveness – the turning back of the experience of the individual upon himself – that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential condition, within the social process, for the development of mind. (Mead,1934: 134)

For Mead, because we are inherently social, we cannot but respond to others. Both Bourdieu and Mead would suggest that we cannot be aware of how we will respond until after we have responded, which in turn informs the next response in an endless chain of interactions, the genesis of which cannot be identified in terms of which gesture led to which response. To respond to others is to make evaluative judgements which we are not conscious of in the moment, although they will be informed by past judgements and the habitus in which we find ourselves. Although absolutely any response is impossible, what the actual response will be is unpredictable, even to ourselves. But the making of such

judgements, the exercise of value-creation, is what makes us human since it is part of the formation of mind and self-consciousness.

This retrospective sense-making represents a very different way of understanding what happens between people than that presented in some of the literature quoted at the beginning of this paper, where there is an implication that through reflection, or incentives, or management manipulation, it is possible to bring about a more predictable outcome with the engagement with values, in advance of taking action. First there is reflection or intention, then there is action. With a more social understanding of values, the outcome of interactions and the evaluative judgements that have informed them can only be understood together with others in consideration of how our interweaving intentionalities have patterned themselves. The cause-effect linearity of intention to action has been broken. Causality becomes a matter of inter-subjective interpretation.[1]

While I have acknowledged above the importance of occasions for convergent value-making, such as the organisational value statements illustrated by ActionAid, I would also like to draw attention to Elias' theory of habitus in which conflict contributes to social progress at the same time. In the *Civilising Process* (1939/1990), Elias sets out his own understanding of habitus, how societies keep their characteristics of continuity, and yet change, at the same time:

> …plans and actions, the emotional and rational impulses of individual peoples, constantly interweave in a friendly or hostile way. This basic tissue resulting from many single plans and actions of people can give rise to changes and patterns that no individual person has planned or created. From this interdependence of people arises an order sui generis, an order more compelling and stronger than the will and reason of the individual people composing it. It is this order of interweaving human

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[1] This argument about the inter-subjectivity of interpretation also undercuts the idea of 'mental models', Senge (1990), which suggests that human interaction unfolds from the basis of the intentions of individuals stored in 'inner' mental models.

impulses and strivings, this social order, which determines the course of historical change; it underlies the civilising process. (1990: 366)

Elias' own understanding of what Bourdieu calls the 'objective structures' of history, is that through competition and conflict between individuals there has been increasing differentiation of social function. In this passage Elias is much more explicit about the role of power and conflict than either Bourdieu or Mead, and he goes on to describe how this functional differentiation has led to greater interdependence of people, and thus larger and larger numbers of people need to adjust to others, in Mead's terms (the task of taking the attitude of the 'generalised other'), which becomes a more complex problem:

> The web of actions grows so complex and extensive, the effort to behave 'correctly' becomes so great, that beside the individual's conscious self-control an automatic, blindly functioning apparatus of self-control is firmly established. This seeks to prevent offences to socially acceptable behaviour by a wall of deep-rooted fears, but, just because it operates blindly and by habit, it frequently indirectly produces such collisions with social reality. (Elias: 367/8)

The *Civilising Process* charts the progress of human societies from external threats of violence and control to internal psychological restraint and self-control. Elias argues that in complex societies greater advantages are afforded to those who can moderate their affects. This partly explains why in many complex societies affect is a very difficult subject to discuss and helps explain the very interesting dynamic which ensued when a colleague makes a direct appeal to set self control aside and work 'from the heart'. One way of explaining this is to see it is an appeal to self-conscious spontaneity, which in Mead and Bourdieu's terms is impossible. My colleague Y might be asking for the impossible since in so doing, she is, as Elias would express it, partly asking them to unravel their identity and what makes them who they are, and step outside the cultural and historical process that made them individuals in their particular society.

What I also take from this in reflecting back on the incident, and on the previously-mentioned writers in the INGO field, is that the kind of reflexivity that Mead and Elias are calling for is very different from the 'deep questioning of personal attitudes and behaviours and whether they are congruent with espoused objectives' alluded to by Pasteur and Scott-Villiers (2004), which as I understand it is a call for alignment with an idealised set of values. Rather, Mead and Elias are pointing to a mutual and continuous adjustment that takes place between social beings against a background of objective social conditions. What I take away for my practice from this is the importance of the mutual adjustment process and my possible contribution to helping prolong it while it is taking place. The outcome, though, is unpredictable.

Incident three – values, rights and mutual recognition

I had just returned from a number of interviews to the hotel where we were all staying and I happened to bump into the team leader who was on his way to interview someone from the Israeli Foreign Ministry about his views on the performance of the UN organization we were evaluating. In many ways it is impossible to understand the context of the UN organization without asking for an official view from the Israelis since they control so much about what is and is not allowed, to happen in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs). The team leader invited me to go along with him, and I decided in the moment to accompany him since I was partly intrigued and partly wanted to be supportive of the team leader.

Going to talk to Israeli officials when you are working with organizations which deliver services to the Palestinians is a complicated act. It is impossible not to get caught up in the mutual suspicion and sometimes resultant hostility which anyone who has traveled in and out of Ben Gurion airport will have experienced. In anticipation of this experience we discussed in the taxi on the way there that both of our expectations were low about what we might learn from the encounter and that we did not mean to treat it as any more than a formality.

It is with this slightly anxious expectation, about the level of scrutiny that we would be subjected to, and yet the lack of anticipation of finding out much that

we did not already know that we entered the Foreign Ministry. There was a delay during the elaborate security procedures for getting into the building since my name was not on the list of expected visitors as I had only made up my mind to come at the last minute. The official we were going to see could not have been more solicitous; he met us at the lobby and facilitated our entrance to the building talking about the security procedures as if they were tiresome but a necessary evil.

We chatted as we walked through the building and discovered that he was a British person, like us, who had come to Israel aged 18 and had made his life there. We shared a language and some culture in common. Things between us felt easy.

When we reached the floor where his office was he ushered us into a meeting room which was a long modern room with minimal furniture in it and a huge poster on one wall at the end where we took our seats which contained the Berlin Declaration (2004) which is a UN statement against anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination the most pertinent lines of which are as follows:

> …condemn without reservation all manifestations of anti-Semitism, and all other acts of intolerance, incitement, harassment or violence against persons or communities based on ethnic origin or religious belief, wherever they occur.

The team leader found a gentle way into the conversation by going through the usual pleasantries and sharing of commonalities that he was good at, until he got into some more direct questions about the way the Foreign Ministry viewed the work of the UN organization we were evaluating. The conversation quickly took a less gentle turn whereby the Israeli official began asserting things about the situation in the occupied Palestinian Territories and about Palestinians. Some of the things he said so contradicted my experience of the previous few days I had been working there, and of my understanding of recent history, that I immediately felt my hackles rise, and noticed my team leader become more alive to the conversation too. He was shaken out of his usual mellifluous style and

found himself arguing with what the official was saying. It was something neither of us had intended.

For example the Israeli civil servant asserted that it was because the Palestinians perpetrated atrocities that there had been no progress made in the peace process. My team leader suggested, relatively gently, that another interpretation might draw attention to the prior fact of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land that had also contributed to lack of progress on peace. The official immediately countered with this: "I don't subscribe to theory of the cycle of violence. But if I did I would say that the cycle started with Palestinian atrocities committed against the Israeli people."

Despite ourselves, the conversation became heated. He then went on to state, amongst other things, that the Israelis felt no moral responsibility towards the situation the Palestinians found themselves in, i.e. could never accept Palestinian refugees currently living in Arab countries to live in Israel and would always condition what the Palestinians could do against an assessment of Israeli security, the definition of which would always lie with Israelis.

The interview, if that is still an accurate description of it, lasted only an hour and then we beat a hasty retreat.

Reflections of incident 3

What I experienced in the situation was a very real sense of having the ground of meaning being taken forcibly out from under my feet to the extent that there was almost nowhere to stand that was not contested. The entirety of the experience, from the room with the poster about anti-Semitism, through to the way the interview developed into an argument, arose in the context of as naked a struggle over meaning as I have encountered in a long time. In that sense it is a clear example of the conflict over values which is replicated at the global scale between Israelis and Palestinians.

In Palestine at the moment there are lots of physical manifestations of a lack of mutuality between Israelis and Palestinians, not least in their ability to inflict

violence on each other. In the case set out above, the employee in the Israeli Foreign Ministry was somehow incapable of seeing that the discrimination his people had suffered through anti-Semitism had somehow prevented them from recognizing the discriminatory practices of an ethnic state towards people from a different ethnicity. Similarly, the current Israeli government has decided over the last period that it does not have an adequate negotiating partner and has gone ahead, unilaterally, to make its own decisions irrespective of what the Palestinians think and want.

For Dewey the starting point for mutuality was sympathy for and sensitivity to the position of the other. In thinking through the consequences for his concept of gesture/response of having conflicting interests, Mead (1934) suggests a form of self-sacrifice:

> We are definitely identified with our own interests. One is constituted out of his own interests; and when those interests are frustrated, what is called for then is in some sense a sacrifice of this narrow self. This should lead to the development of a larger self which can be identified with the interests of others. I think all of us feel that one must be ready to recognize the interests of others even when they run counter to our own, but that the person who does that does not really sacrifice himself, but becomes a larger self. (1934: 386)

There is an echo here of the enlarged personality that Dewey refers to in reflecting on the idealizing and self-unifying role of values. Mead explores the theme further in a series of essays in the *Philosophy of the Act* (1938) where he investigates the process of changing and being changed at the same time by the social order. In these circumstances, he asks how should we uphold and develop social values? His response is that only through mutuality, the mutual recognition of different value positions, is it possible to make progress:

> You take into account, in other words, all the values that arise, even when you reject certain values for the sake of others. You have to bring them all into the account. Your position in this field is like the position in the

scientific field, where you have to take all the facts into account. The scientist that does not do that is morally wrong. On the valuational side, too, you must take into account all the values; you are morally wrong there if you refuse to consider certain ones. So the imperative you are under is to take into account all the values involved in the problem as far as it appears. (1938: essay 24, 462)

Only reflective thinking, Mead argues, allows us to bring all the value positions into the ring for consideration; reflection is the route to living a fuller life as a means of preserving as many of the values as are presented in the situation.

Mead undoubtedly took his understanding of the need for the mutuality of recognition in ethics from Hegel, as explored in published lectures entitled *Suffering from Indeterminacy* by Axel Honneth (1999). Here reflexivity, and the ability to discourse with others, ensure not only the freedom of the self, but also the freedom of the other:

> The sphere of morality, Hegel means to say, makes us aware by turning our attention inward that we have to understand freedom as always a specific form of self-relation as well: only where an individual engages in reflexive examination as to how he is to act, can we truly speak of freedom of the individual. (1999: 53)

A constructive relation to others is predicated on a constructive relation to self; the act of recognition is a mirror of the act of reflection, reflection being a means for the recognition of self. In reinterpreting Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1820/1991) Honneth argues that the law on its own is not enough unless it can also guarantee the means by which individuals can come together to mutually explore their rights in law in relation to each other. Individual rights will only pertain through the guarantee of social means of their investigation; the description of rights in individual legal terms leaves us insufficiently grounded in the needs of others, in a state of 'indeterminacy' in Hegel's terms, where we refer only to ourselves and our rights.

My experience in Palestine threw up a number of examples where it was hard for me and colleagues to reflect on our actions and come back to ourselves through the recognition of the situation of others. In the first situation with my Team Leader I was asked to acknowledge his difficulties without my own perspective being allowed much voice. With colleagues, we struggled to recognize the values that each was bringing to the work we were undertaking. This lack of recognition was taking place in a country where the same dynamic is unfolding on a grand scale; Israel demands of the Palestinians, whilst they are in a subservient position of being occupied, that they recognize Israel and what it stands for, without realizing, in Hegel's terms, that that recognition will be worthless as long as the Palestinians are in a subservient position. The paradox here is that if the recognition is forthcoming, it will be from a people the Israelis do not consider as equals.

In bringing this series of incidents back to my practice I realize that I cannot effectively work with contractors who have different ideas to my own, unless I also engage in taking their ideas seriously, as most of them do differ from me. In the coming together of different value appreciations, there must also be a struggle for mutual recognition and respect.

Conclusions

In this project I have deepened my explorations of values and how they are actualized in the daily practice of working with others. In so doing I have argued that the value statements published by INGOs are a necessary part of binding people together in the process of solidarity and committing to work together but are inadequate as they stand to fully account for the inevitable conflicts, power struggles and paradoxes that arise in daily life. More, I could make the case that such statements are so abstracted from daily practice that they create an illusion of convergence where none exists. In taking them up, people forget that they are idealizations. Although they have significant motivational and symbolic value, in many ways it makes no sense to ascribe values to organizations, or to consider them to be any more than an invitation to explore what those values might mean in the day to day practice of trying to achieve things together.

In current management literature much emphasis is placed on 'sharing values', or in making them an instrument of management, whereas, in my experience, even in a group of colleagues who nominally share values, conflicts over competing goods are inevitable. In taking up Mead, Dewey and Bourdieu I have tried to demonstrate that values are the medium for practical, day to day judgment-making where we are faced with novel situations. Central to this process is reflection and critical awareness, a deeper understanding of practice and a more complex understanding of time in human interaction than the simple linearity that we are often presented with. In thinking with Hegel and exploring the importance of mutual recognition I have tried to demonstrate that in the exercise of our evaluative choices we become ourselves with others, or in Hegel's term, in the other. This is particularly poignant in the country where most of my consultancy work was undertaken this time, Palestine, where there is a lack of mutual recognition between Palestinians and Israelis. The exercise of values is not an activity locked up in one individual, or a process where the individual surrenders his/her individuality to the collective will, but is a deeply social activity where I demonstrate individuality with others engaged in the same process.

In considering the implications of the above for my practice, I can now better understand the genesis of what is perceived to be my critical approach to any work I undertake, and how future work with colleagues will involve my looking for opportunities to recognize others in the way that I myself expect to be recognized.

Project 4

Promises of transformation – reconsidering ethical aspects of consultancy practice

Introduction

In my first three projects to date I have been developing a discussion about how values are taken up in INGOs (International non-governmental organisations), organisations which commit themselves to overtly moral ends. These days it is much more common for staff in many organisations to talk about values explicitly, and to speak as if it were possible for an organisation to 'have' values. What is unique about INGOs, however, is that, given the social and moral nature of the claim that staff in INGOs work for justice and the alleviation of poverty and suffering, discussions around values are much more frequent and enduring than in many companies. When matters of strategy or direction get taken up with staff in the crucible of such grand aims, what is and is not possible to say and do seems to me to become much more fraught and constrained. This affects my work as a consultant since I am also constrained by the dynamic that I am caught up in along with everyone else.

In this current project I will be taking this argument further. I will point to what I see as a trend for senior managers in large scale organisations to use an appeal to organisational values as a managerial instrument to bring about conformity and obedience, and to encourage group euphoria that covers over the difficulties inherent in the work. In organisations that are publicly committed to doing good, senior managers get drawn into grandiose statements that over-promise the results of developmental intervention and understate the difficulty of achieving the good to which they aspire. In effect, employees are invited to 'believe' and have 'faith' in the developmental mission and deny the difficulty and complexity of doing their jobs. The danger of them doing this, ignoring their daily experience, is that staff are then doomed to repeat the ways of working that have led to these difficulties in the first place. In this project I will be reflecting on what these dynamics mean for my practice as a consultant, given that I am sometimes employed by senior managers to help them manage these events, and

will consequently be developing some new understandings of ethical problems facing consultancy practitioners in these sorts of situations. I will be encouraging a radical engagement with the very issues that metaphysical appeals to values attempt to cover over on the part of consultancy practitioners and those they work with. By drawing on two particular incidents, in an INGO setting and with a private company, I will also attempt to demonstrate that the trends I mention above are not unique to INGOs but are to be found in private sector organisations too.

The promise of transformation I

Following a series of unplanned circumstances I was invited by a large UK INGO to facilitate a three day workshop to produce a global gender strategy, with 25 people coming from all over the world. 'Gender' is a term widely used in INGOs and funding bodies to describe paying attention to the relations between men and women, where the power relationship is usually tilted heavily in favour of men. When designing and implementing a development project, great care needs to be taken to make sure that this gender inequality does not become worse.

The organiser for the event told me that there was a lot of expectation hanging on the strategy because the chief executive, herself a woman, was keen to be seen to be making 'progress' on the issue. She had already indicated that she felt the organisation was stuck and drifting, and had said that she would like one of the threads of the strategy to be about women in leadership, since she felt, as a woman leader, that that was something she could champion. On meeting the team I was to work with I was struck by the high level of anxiety they exhibited that the strategy and strategy process should be seen as a success. I spent some time with them trying to explore what 'a success' would look like and was intrigued to see that of the three days we were to spend together, two and a half were dedicated to drafting the strategy document and presenting it at the end to senior managers and the chief executive. I was conscious that too little time had been dedicated to talking about practice, about the day to day work of trying to do gender projects in Oxfam. The document they were producing, as a strategy, was supposed to be forward looking, but I wondered what it could be based on if

they had not developed a thorough-going understanding of what they took their gender practice to be. I made an argument that more time should be spent discussing practice, but the team leader told me that he had used this particular format for a workshop before and it had worked. I felt I had no option, then, but to see how I could influence things as we went along.

As the workshop unfolded practitioners from the field inevitably wanted to talk about their practice. Some of them were very experienced and had witnessed the staff struggling with the issues over the years. Some of the problems that arose were the same as they always had been; managers, particularly male managers, either not seeing, or refusing to see the importance of gender to the work that they were doing. Field staff were unable to implement what they were being asked to do because they did not fully understand it; whole departments in HQ were choosing to prioritise other issues than gender because they were either unconvinced or uninterested in the implications. This phenomenon was also mirrored in the workshop since some regions of the world had not been able to find someone to send, or had prevented their representative from coming. Some senior managers from the UK who were supposed to come did not show up, or came late. One senior manager came in and out of the workshop and would launch into the discussion without always waiting to hear what had gone on prior to her entry.

Another senior manager kept repeating a phrase, like a mantra, over and over again to guide people to understand the process in a particular way: 'just think of the change that you want to bring about, and work backwards from there.' Although I did not feel compromised by what she was saying, I had profound difficulties with it because I thought it was distracting them from what seemed most to animate them and what they needed to be concentrating on: the day to day practice of trying to do gender projects with each other. So they got on and did the work in the way that she encouraged them to do it. I did, however, try to influence things in small ways, by making suggestions here and encouraging them to bring in their observations from the first day there. I engaged actively with participants in the coffee breaks and talked to them about what I thought was happening, some of the difficulties of what we were attempting and engaged

their views too. In session, I also negotiated with them continuously about what order they wanted to take things in and what they really wanted to talk about where the way ahead did not seem clear and where there was a difference of view about what we should be doing and how we should be doing it. I felt impelled to respond to the variety of views about what was important.

The final session was the most interesting of all for me at the time, since it involved the CEO of the charity who had come in to the meeting to be convinced or otherwise about the success of the strategising. Where up to this point I had been central to the proceedings, in terms of being, to some extent, the master of ceremonies, in the final session I sat out of the circle and promised myself I would not intervene. My influence on this session was mostly in the way the group had chosen to do their presentation rather than the content, which looked to me like many similar strategies I had encountered in other organisations; a mixture of some things they were doing and some things they thought they ought to be doing.

Reaction to events

What most astonished me was the extraordinary hubris of the strategy that the global gender lead had produced on behalf of the group, promising to 'transform the lives of millions of poor women' in three years, and the way the meeting unfolded with the CEO who, having listened to the presentation, kept encouraging people to accentuate and give credibility to this ambition. She kept saying, over and over, that the gender programme needed to be seen as exciting, so that people would want to be part of it. The image that she used was to say that 'the gender programme is like a train leaving from the station. It's going somewhere exciting and you need to be on board.' This, she said, was the only way to move forward. Two other senior members chimed in to say that they had experienced people complaining about how hard it was to do gender work. They felt that the complaints were not always entirely helpful since complaining did not accentuate the positive. People began to compete with each other in the room not to be seen to be negative. Chastised by criticism and lifted up by the leader's excitement they then proceeded to qualify their previous negative comments and to tell everyone how excited they were by what was being proposed. I began to

feel uncomfortable, since this denial of experience seemed to me so central to the question of why doing gender work was difficult. In the end I did intervene to point out to the CEO that the flip side of whipping up enthusiasm and excitement for this very ambitious strategy was the concomitant disappointment if it was not realised. She did not seem to fully understand what I was saying since she replied that she was not worried about disappointment so much as resistance.

Reflections on this narrative

When I am engaged by a large INGO I am conscious of the huge expectations and anxiety that I am caught up in, which often has to do with circumstances about which I know very little and over which I feel I have minimal control. This points to the irony for me of, on the one hand, having little idea about some of the things my contractors are drawing my attention to, whilst on the other hand being expected somehow to seize hold of this event and steer it towards a positive and productive outcome.

In Project 1 I reflected on the expectations that arise around what a consultant can and should do, particularly in a group situation such as a strategy workshop, where there is an anticipation that a consultant can work some kind of magic. I want to spend a bit more time reflecting in a first section on the matter of the process of groups including the issue of power and social 'magic' in the complex social situation that was the gender strategy workshop in a way that offers different explanations for what is going than Kroeber's (1952), whom I mentioned in Project 1. In a second section I will then take up the question of my own power in these circumstances.

Three ways of thinking about groups

I will briefly review how Mead, Elias and Bourdieu explore what happens when people come together to try and achieve things in groups as a way of thinking about what it is I am dealing with as a consultant.

G.H. Mead and 'life-process'

G.H. Mead was acutely conscious of the complexity of social exchange and the necessity of engaging with this complexity as a means of more creative

interaction. In Project 3 I drew attention to how Mead (1934) considered the importance of taking the attitude of the other as the means of empathetic discourse, of becoming an enlarged self. In an essay which demonstrates his interest in how nations can develop more creative ways of collaboration, to gain an enlarged sense of their obligations to others rather than resorting to animosity and war, Mead (1925) reflects upon the social circumstances in which the self arises with others through interactions by way of what he refers to as a 'social object'.

> I mean by a social object one that answers to all the parts of the complex act, though these parts are found in the conduct of different individuals. The objective of the act is then found in the life-process of the group, not in those of the separate individuals alone. (1925: 263/4)

Already a social act is a complex social process, one where the individual is able to take the attitude of a 'generalised other' towards himself (1934: 156). By this Mead means that thinking and acting is only possible through our being able to internalise a conversation of gestures where we become an object to ourselves. We are able to first organise, then generalise the attitude of others to ourselves and thus act in a way that would be deemed to be socially intelligible by others, a process I have explored elsewhere drawing on Mead's idea of the 'I/me' dialectic. A social object is even more complex, then, since it is made up of the social acts of individuals, who are already socialised and becomes a process which no individual controls. A social object is the nexus of multi-faceted reflexivity, where emerging social individuals interact in a process of gesture and response and adaptation. Mead continues:

> The human individual is a self only in so far as he takes the attitude of another towards himself. In so far as this attitude is a number of others, and in so far as he can assume the organized attitudes to a number that are cooperating in a common activity, he takes the attitude of the group towards himself, and in taking this or these attitudes he is defining the object of the group, that which defines and controls the response. Social control, then, will depend upon the degree to which the individual does

assume the attitudes of those in the group who are involved with him in his social activities. (1925: 274)

Mead was not necessarily pessimistic that social objects need exercise repressive control and be rigidly conservative, indeed he is clear that 'without the organized social attitudes and activities by which social institutions are constituted, there could be no fully mature individual selves or personalities at all;' (1934: 262). In the essay from which I have been quoting he was optimistic about the possibilities for European cooperation and the newly-created League of Nations, provided that people could find themselves through collaboration with others.

Elias – Inter-dependent people and group belonging

What becomes apparent from Mead's descriptions, though, is the fluidity of social objects, which, on the one hand are shaped by individuals' past experiences of similar interactions, but which, on the other hand will be influenced by the continuous process of adjustment that takes place as the social object is negotiated through intense engagement. How far will individual members of the group adopt the attitudes of others involved with them in their social activities? There can be no surprise that social objects such as the gender workshop are sites of contestation and struggle, where participants with different abilities to influence the outcome that no single person controls vie with each other to influence the 'life-process of the group'. This is exactly the process that Norbert Elias pointed to in his figurational sociology, where he described his view of the course of social change:

> As the moves of interdependent players intertwine, no single
> player nor any group of players acting alone can determine the
> course of the game no matter how powerful they may be. ... It
> involves a partly self-regulating change in a partly self-organizing
> and self-reproducing figuration of interdependent people, whole
> processes tending in a certain direction. (Elias, 1991: 146/7)

It is not that any outcome is possible, since processes tend in a particular direction. However, knowing exactly how things will turn out is uncertain. It was also Elias' view that the power of different actors to affect change is

unequal. For Elias there is a dynamic inherent in the process of relating which nonetheless can be influenced by the different actors, who are forming and being formed by it at the same time.

One of the ways that individuals in groups do this, both within the group and between one group and another, is through the use of language, or more particularly, though gossip; the ways members of groups talk about themselves and others. Having undertaken research in Winston Parva (1994), Elias and Scotson noticed how members of a more powerful community talked about themselves to create a 'we identity' that ascribed to themselves charismatic and heroic attributes, in contradistinction to another group who were ascribed inferior characteristics. This was a way of creating difference with other groups, but also as a way of exercising social control within the group, making it difficult for members to gainsay the heroic characterisation. The self-description of the group creates an emotional bond between the members through which a sense of identity and belonging arises. To act in a way that punctures this we-identity is to risk stigmatisation, shame and exclusion.

Bourdieu - Language and capital accumulation
Pierre Bourdieu also took an interest in the patterning of power relations and how those with more social power maintain themselves over those who have less. In his book entitled Language and Symbolic Power (1991) he also explores the uses of language in different contexts in the struggle over influence and in this sense continues the themes of continuity and change in the process of interrelating taken up by Mead and Elias.

Bourdieu, however, sees the social use of language as being akin to a series of exchanges where the object is the accumulation of social capital. Rather than understanding interaction as Mead does, as being a conversation of gestures and symbols where control is exercised through adjustment to others, for Bourdieu, human interaction is like a market place where we try to extract maximum value and legitimacy from our encounters with others:

> In other words, utterances are not only…signs to be understood and
> deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth* intended to be evaluated and

appreciated, and the *signs of authority* intended to be believed and obeyed. Quite apart from the literary (and especially poetic) uses of language, it is rare in everyday life for language to function as a pure instrument of communication. (Ibid: 66)

The idea of a linguistic marketplace has its own symbolic resonance in increasingly marketised times, and in the process of exchange a seller needs a buyer. This understanding works against a more linear representation of domination where those in power are understood simply to assert what they want and expect to get it. Instead, Bourdieu presents a dynamic where the powerful must persuade and the less powerful must be persuaded:

> The value of the utterance depends on the relation of power that is concretely established between the speakers' linguistic competences, understood both as their capacity for appropriation and appreciation; it depends on the capacity of various agents involved in the exchange to impose the criteria of appreciation most favourable to their own products (Ibid: 67)

In effect, speakers are vying to achieve favourable recognition from amongst the group. Moreover, the suggestion of a linguistic market is also important in understanding the context of the gender workshop and points to one of the frustrations that Bourdieu has with what he calls 'micro-sociology', which 'can lead one purely and simply to miss a 'reality' that does not yield to immediate intuition because it lies in the structures transcending the interaction they inform.' (Ibid: 68). In other words, we cannot reach a full understanding of the implications of the words and actions of senior managers in the gender workshop since they are also responding to processes which they are caught up in, that are raging outside the workshop. INGOs are exposed to pressures arising from the dominance of liberal economic thinking and the marketisation of aid.

When the CEO speaks to the workshop she is also appealing to an audience beyond it, to the community of aid practitioners, including big donors to this INGO like the British government and the World Bank, who understand

international development in a particular way. This community of interest is described by Bourdieu as a 'field of specialised production' where:

> The struggle tends constantly to produce and reproduce the game and its stakes by reproducing, primarily in those who are directly involved, but not in them alone, the practical commitment to the value of the game and its stakes which defines the recognition of legitimacy. (Ibid: 58)

To understand this point is not just of academic value to my practice but defines the scale of what it is that I am taking on should I oppose these ways of thinking and speaking. The CEO is herself caught up in a web of 'specialised producers' who have a stake in continuing to describe the world in the way that they do. Pointing to these limitations is not just to challenge her legitimacy in the room, but also her legitimacy in the field of specialized production where such discourse has value, and amongst a community of people who have an interest in maintaining that value.

Coming to terms with Bourdieu's understanding of language's role in creating the *habitus* (1990), what I have explored in earlier projects as the enduring disposition to behave in a particular way also helps me to come to terms with my potential disappointment about the lack of reality convergence of some of the claims that were made in the workshop, that the organisation could 'transform the lives of millions of poor women'. It is clearer to me that the CEO was making a speech to a wider constituency, the kind of speech that a politician would make to convince the unconverted, to mobilise them to her cause.

Towards the end of the workshop there was some talk amongst the senior managers particularly that they considered the INGO to be a 'global player'. They took the view that the organisation could 'compete with the best'. This ability to talk themselves up and believe their own rhetoric to a certain extent points to the success of what the CEO had achieved in her mobilising efforts, at least amongst some of the members of the workshop, and probably amongst a good proportion of the INGO's constituency as well. It also reminds us again of the work of Elias and Scotson (1994) mentioned above, who observed members of a community ascribing to themselves heroic attributes to create a charismatic

'we identity'. Following Bourdieu, the INGO derives its legitimacy partly on the basis of the level of support that can be mobilised in support of their representations of the work that they are doing, rather than just the quality of the work itself.

> The truth of a promise or a prognosis depends not only on the truthfulness but also on the authority of the person who utters it – that is, on his capacity to make people believe in his truthfulness and his authority…the words through which the spokesperson endows a group with a will, a plan, a hope or, quire simply, a future, *does what it says* in so far as the addressees recognize themselves in it, conferring on it the symbolic and also material power…which enables the words to come true. (1991: 190-193, emphasis Bourdieu)

When I challenged the CEO in the workshop, despite my intentions to say nothing, I was attempting to draw attention to the feelings of disappointment that people in the INGO might feel if, once again grandiose promises to 'transform' people's lives were not fulfilled. To vie for people's attention INGOs feel they have to offer nothing short of transformation. In doing so they are covering over the very difficulties that employees struggle with in the day to day and which are afforded no recognition, and therefore no value.

Bourdieu would understand this process to be the inevitable response to dominant social trends. In commenting on the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of politics, Bourdieu remarked that:

> …the struggle for the monopoly of the development and circulation of the principles of division of the social world is more and more strictly reserved for professionals and for large units of production and circulation, thus excluding de facto the small independent producers (starting with the 'free intellectuals'). (Ibid: 196)

There is a similar process that has happened to international development over the last 10-15 years, whereby the speed and frequency of conceptual policy changes has accelerated. The field has been professionalized and it is now a locus for career advancement similar to any other – the conceptual debates have broadened and deepened and are much more consonant with other discussions about management and change that one would encounter in any other sector. There is a convergence of understanding about market mechanisms and the process of organisational management across all sectors of the economy.

Summary – 3 views of group process

To sum up, for Mead the 'life-process' of the group involves mutual struggle over the meaning of the activities being undertaken together, the 'object of the group', and the extent to which each member of the group takes the attitudes of the others towards this object. For Elias, the patterning of interaction between interdependent people, not all of whom are equally influential, will propel the group in a particular direction, but not ineluctably so. Groups create we-identities as a form of social control, but also as a means of differentiating themselves from other groups. Meanwhile Bourdieu points to broader social forces that are manifest in day-to-day interactions: 'the body is in the social world, but the social world is in the body' (1982: 38). In this case, he draws attention to the way in which language in a marketised society becomes a form of capital accumulation, where individuals try to establish the criteria for appreciation most favourable to their 'product'. Certain ways of representing the world have greater value than others amongst a greater concentration of professionals who have a stake in maintaining the value of these representations. To a large extent I have also been formed by these representations and am obliged to take them up in my daily discourse. But, here I am at the end of my narrative, sitting outside of the group, having queried the CEO, to some extent an 'independent producer' and 'free intellectual' in Bourdieu's terms, both because I am not employed by the organisation as a staff member so I don't have so much at stake as all the other people in the room, and also because I have a different understanding of what's going on. I find myself in disagreement with much that is being said around me, and yet on the surface I would say that I and my co-participants share the same aims of alleviating inequality, and would probably profess similar values. What,

then, is the scope for 'independent producers' to act in this kind of situation, and what sense can I make out of the way that I participated in the workshop as facilitator and participant? Before embarking on this discussion I would like to explore another narrative since in some ways it presents a very different set of circumstances and yet produces some of the same metaphysical appeals by senior managers that result in group euphoria that covers over the processes of power relating. Similarly, the intervention in the 'life process of the group', to quote Mead again, makes it very difficult for people to talk about what is important to them in the way that I described above.

Promises of transformation II

One of the first people I met when going along to a weekend conference on complexity and organisations was M. He was a tall, good-looking Spaniard who seemed interested in the same questions that I was; yes, this is all very interesting, but how do you use it in day to day practice?

When I finally decided to apply for the course, M was there at the interview day and we reacquainted ourselves with each other. We liked each other; I found him charming, big hearted and good at listening. There was still a six month gap between being accepted on the course and having to commit to it and M and I kept in touch to see whether we would both jump or not. We both encouraged each other. In the end, it was no surprise that we should end up in the same learning set together and it was a great disappointment to me when, within six months of starting the course, M had had to withdraw because he did not feel comfortable with the academic discipline that was required of him. He was simply unable to reflect systematically upon the way he worked and the theories that underpinned it.

Despite this we kept in touch and M was always asking me to go and work with him. Having turned him down on at least two separate occasions I felt unable to turn him down a third time when he asked me to be part of a team doing a workshop with a large European company. I was not quite clear what he wanted me to do, but I trusted him enough to venture to go. Although the event was only to be for two and half days I was obliged to go for two preparatory days, and two

subsequent debrief days.

M sent me some of the preliminary literature to proof read before the event and it was full of the usual exuberance and hyperbole that I had come to expect from M. There was a lot of emphasis on playfulness and creativity, and how exciting the event was going to be. I began to feel quite excited myself. The event was intended as a way of exploring ways of working following the takeover of many smaller banks in different countries by a large Spanish bank. There was an intention to set up a central training centre which was to provide management training throughout the new group. One of the themes of the event was how to acknowledge unity through diversity.

Although it was not clear for some time what it was that I was supposed to be doing, particularly as there was another native speaker of English who had been brought in and told that she had the same job as mine, I soon began to pick up from the other six team members some general things would be expected of me. In a kind but firm way they began to tell me, directly and indirectly that as a member of the 'krew' (sic) I was obliged to act as a member of the 'krew' and do what they did.[2] M was the boss and we were to do what he said. I had very few tasks to undertake during the two set up days, but it was quite interesting to see the preparation that was being undertaken; flowers and plants arrived, special furniture was delivered which had been designed to influence the interaction. All of this needed assembling and arranging, then rearranging, then rearranging again since M was very focused on the idea that the environment would have a huge impact on what took place in the rooms. The whole exercise was like the creation of an elaborate film set with lighting, sound, furniture, books, sporting articles and toys distributed throughout two rooms in the 17c palace. The 'krew' stayed up late the night before the event arranging and rearranging the furniture and I was co-opted into writing the schedule for the day which M referred to as the 'script'.

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[2] *M was a franchisee of a particular method of working with groups the copyright of which has since been bought by one of the world's largest consulting firms. The method, used with organisations across the US and Europe, is explained in a manual and glossary of terms, many of which have popular or mystical connotations or spellings.*

We were all told that we were to have an early start on the morning of the first day. M and some of the 'krew' had been up till 2 am the previous night rearranging things, although what had been rearranged was not immediately apparent to me. The next two and half days passed in a flurry of activity with M nervously deciding the next activity sometimes half an hour ahead of the participants carrying it out. They were rushed from one activity to the next with almost no time for reflection and they were told constantly that they were being asked to do challenging but immensely creative things. Most of these activities comprised building models of things from card, pipe cleaners, balloons and other bits of plastic, and teams always had to report back to the whole group, accompanied by Mission Impossible music, where their presentation was greeted with claps and cheers from others. When "modelling" the values of the new training organisation groups came up with symbols such as circles and hearts with accompanying slogans such as "We are one!", "Just do it!"

An exercise could be the opposite of a previous one; so the participants might be asked to build a model of their department in the future; later on they would be told that this model had not worked and they were to demonstrate what had gone wrong and build a different model of the corrected version. Throughout these exercises groups were not allowed to talk to each other, nor were the 'krew' allowed to talk to the participants. When meal times came round groups were escorted one after the other to and from their tables carrying their plates of food. All the time they were being photographed and filmed and these photographs would appear on the notice boards throughout the two and half days alongside what were deemed to be uplifting and motivating quotations. The entire event was being recorded verbatim, through sound, pictures and words and would be given back to the senior management team at the end of the event in the form of a DVD and a weblog. Every presentation, every whiteboard, every speech was captured for them.

Everybody was entirely quiescent throughout the two and half days, even when what M asked them to do seemed to me to be entirely unreasonable, pointless or even foolish and contradictory, until a point late on in the second afternoon. Participants had been gathered in a circle and were being asked a series of

scripted questions by M which he had agonised over (M was exercised throughout about whether he had found 'the right questions' to ask people). After about ten minutes of this some bolder participants began to ignore M and started asking the senior manager present the questions that were really on their mind. Would they have job in the new centre? Might they have to move? What did the new programme of work mean for the work that they were already undertaking? These were clearly the issues that had been bothering them from day one. The question and answer lasted about 40 minutes and was the only occasion when participants did not do exactly as told.

As for me, the hours wore on when I was not allowed to talk to the participants and I had little to do. I grew more and more angry at the way I, and everyone else including the 'krew', were being treated. I felt as though we were all at the command of a capricious and dictatorial martinet. There seemed no logic to the sequence of things we were supposed to be doing, and they militated against what I considered the group to be needing, which was simply to find time to reflect together on how they might work together in their new circumstances, to establish what they knew and did not know, and to plan. We were all denied a voice, except in the very proscribed circumstances that M would allow. I grew more and more restless and more and more subversive. If this was a play, then I was determined not to say my lines and to act my part. I was astonished to find participants so obedient, and even to find them talking about what they were going through as if it was a wonderful experience, which they themselves would need to be trained in, in order to be effective. Meanwhile, M confessed to me in a break that he did not think he had a method and always refused to train people who sought it. I was also profoundly disappointed in M, not just because of the superficiality of much what we were doing in contrast to the grand claims that were being made for it, but also because I was experiencing someone that I knew to be kind and thoughtful working in a way that alienated people from themselves and could only be characterised as manipulative i.e. resulting in unreflected conformity.

Reflections on this narrative

The consultancy experience in Madrid was very different from my work with the INGO in the UK in the sense that the consultancy team had made a very definite bid for influencing the 'life-force of the group' in Mead's terms. However, there are similarities with the narrative drawn from my experience with the British INGO, particularly around the discussion of values. The rush from one activity to the next excluded the opportunity for discovering difference as well as diversity, just as the workshop in the INGO denied people's previous rooted experience of struggling with gender in the organisation. Prevented from exploring the nuances and grist of working with others from different cultural backgrounds, participants were reduced to producing idealised advertising slogans to describe what the future organisation would be like. The process excluded reflection and reflexivity, the room to ask 'what does this really mean for me?' leaving participants little scope for recognising themselves with others, but forcing them to fall back on platitudes. It was also a denial of people's very real anxieties about what working in the new organisation would be like until people seized the opportunity to break out of the straitjacket that had been placed upon them and put their doubts and fears forward. Because of the pace of activities the we-identity of the group could only be upbeat, positive and unified; no one was prepared to take the risk of gainsaying the process. In such a frenetic environment it was almost impossible to break ranks because of the need to belong. This is exactly what Elias points to when he describes the power relations between people based on differentiated interdependence in his figurational sociology:

> We depend on others; others depend on us. In so far as we are more dependent on others than they are on us, more reliant on others than the are on 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. (Elias, 1998: 132)

In the environment of the company workshop, no-one would be prepared to admit that perhaps they did not belong, particularly in such an uncertain

atmosphere. The process was no less ideological than the INGO, taking Dalal's definition of ideology to mean 'preserving the current social order by making it seem natural, unquestionable by *convincing* all the participants that it is so' (1998, 116). In an environment where huge structural change had been imposed on the organisation and participants were very uncertain about what the future might mean for them, the dominant way of describing this change was in upbeat and positive terms.

It strikes me that this phenomenon should be of concern for everyone who has an interest in working with employees in organisations to help change patterns of behaviour that seem to avoid the very problems that need addressing. Rather than being able to discuss what was new and different about their situation, no matter how uncertain they were about it, participants were obliged to take part in ritualised idealisations that promised harmony and transformation.

What the contrast between the two narratives highlights is the different ways in which key players try to influence the 'life-process of the group', and the tangible effect this can have on participants. The force of the dynamic in both the situations I describe is palpable and a warning to the unwary. Participants in such experiences can find themselves, as in the first narrative, arguing against the position that they have previously taken up in order not to swim against the flow of the group and risk stigmatisation, or they can, as in the second narrative, find themselves being manipulated into not talking or interacting with other people, going to bed when they are told, or undertaking one pointless task after another. Both processes exhibit visible and less visible forms of social control that attempt to forge a euphoric we-identity. Where do I stand in all of this as a contractor brought into the situation with a remit to facilitate the exchange between participants? How can I do a good job for my contractor and live with myself at the same time?

Re-evaluating ethical consultancy practice
Having drawn on different understandings about what happens when people come together to try and achieve things collectively, I now want to turn to exploring my own practice by examining three different attempts to look at consultancy practice in the literature on consultancy. Any kind of categorisation

will inevitably obscure as much as it reveals, particularly in a field where there is already much contestation. However, I would put forward the case that the three approaches I have chosen would be broadly accepted in the wider community of organisational consultants as to some extent typifying an organisational development approach (OD), managerialism and post modernism. There is of course a case that OD shares many of the preoccupations with managerialism, and that post-modernism, by its very nature, defies easy categorisation. However, I have chosen three works by authors who are widely referred to in consultancy practice, and who might even describe themselves in the same way that I have, as a method of comparing and contrasting the different approaches to practice and ethics that arises in their work.

I intend to do this to discover both current and past trends in thinking about consultancy intervention as a way of discovering similarities and differences with an emerging understanding of my own role as a consultant. I am concerned to do this in the light of the situations I am encountering in organisations which I describe above, which seem to me to work against the very things that a consultant should be doing with the people who contract her, dealing with the issues that are most concerning to contractors and which seem to offer the biggest impediment to helping them to plan their next steps together. Rather than being encouraged to deal with difficulties, participants in group processes are persuaded to believe in idealisations and fantasies about wholesale change. This presents an acute ethical challenge for consultancy practitioners, and I am particularly interested in the practical value choices that different commentators think consultants should exercise in their work and the ethical issues that these raise. Since the exercise of value choices is constrained and enabled by power, I am also concerned to explore how they understand power relationships between consultants and their clients. I have discovered in the reading of the literature, that a number of commentators refer to what they consider to be 'authentic' practice. I will attempt, after exploring these three schools of thought, to try and draw out what authentic practice might mean for me, particularly in the kinds of contexts that I have described above, and will argue that it is only through an intensive engagement with the arguments of others that I can discover what is 'authentic' to me.

Organisational development

Edgar Schein (1987) has made a significant contribution to OD literature with his two volumes on process consulting. Schein sets out three models of consultation, the expert, the doctor-patient relationship, and the process consultation. In the first, the client buys a piece of expertise and is not involved in the process; an analogy in organisational terms would be to hire a facilities technician to come and fix your server. The second model presents a medicalised understanding based on the doctor/patient relationship, where there is a greater responsibility on the part of the patient to correctly identify the 'sick' areas and a responsibility on the doctor to 'diagnose' the 'problems', but where there is nonetheless some trial and error between doctor and patient about diagnosis, sickness and treatment. The third and preferred model that Schein is proposing is that the 'problem' never ceases to be the client's; any diagnosis is a joint diagnosis and any choice of treatment is the responsibility of the client, even if the consultant is engaged to effect the 'treatment'. Already from this starting definition it is clear in the imagery that Schein starts from a premise that organisations are healthy or unhealthy, and of interventions involving some kind of diagnosis with all the implications that this brings with it of being able to stand apart from the 'problems' themselves:

> The process consultant seeks to help the client gain insight into what is going on around him and teaches him how to intervene in those events in such a manner as to increase that insight and to improve the situation to meet the client's goals. The events to be observed and intervened in are the various human actions that occur in the normal flow of work, in the conduct of meetings, and in the formal and informal encounters between members of the organisation. Of particular relevance are the client's own actions and their impact on other people. (1987: 34-35)

What is useful in this approach is that it focuses on, and treats seriously, exactly the day to day interactions between people which have become the focus of my own study over the course of my projects. Schein is encouraging reflexivity in order to gain insight, which has been a one of the important running themes in

my own research. Where I begin to have difficulty with what Schein is proposing is in the suggestion that this insight will be of a kind which enables client and consultant to know 'the' right way to intervene. There is a body of received knowledge, then, which one can apply to tilt process in the direction of predetermined goals, as though the very process of intervention itself will not have consequences that one cannot foresee and is separate from the processes one is describing.

Mead, Elias and Bourdieu all use the analogy of a game to describe how people get caught up in processes of relating in ways that do not, Bourdieu would argue cannot, at the same time question the rules of the game that one is busy playing. Schein uses instead the image of drama, drawing on Goffman (1959) to illustrate how he understands human exchange, which neatly demonstrates the separation that is inherent for him between the consultant and the processes s/he is helping with:

> … we note that the helping process can be thought of as a complex reciprocal play in which the person seeking help is initially the actor and the potential helper is initially in an audience role. The client takes the stage and spells out his problem, often in painful detail, while the potential helper must listen like an attentive audience…The process consultant keeps the client on centre stage and helps him to continue there by "forcing" him or benignly manipulating him into starting to work on his own problem. (Schein, 1987 vol. II: 83)

Although Schein understands the play to be reciprocal, he nonetheless separates out the role of actor and audience – the consultant is a detached observer, in the position of the scientist observing an experiment. He is not afraid to 'manipulate', however benign he assumes the consultant's intentions to be, all the time presuming that, as director of this scene he can 'create the right scenes and manage the process towards desirable outcomes' (ibid: 83). One is tempted to ask where is the centre stage? Although drawing on Goffman, Schein introduces a knowing awareness on the part of his consultant-actor that all are engaged in a drama which is not assumed in Goffman's work as social actors go

about their business – indeed, Goffman (op. cit.) argues that social situations can unravel when one of the participants draws attention to the fact that everyone is engaged in a play, since the drama of everyday life is mostly sustained by a suspension of disbelief.

Schein's work is informed by an ethical concern for supporting the client in a way that is non-humiliating. For example, if a consultant has more expertise than the client, then it may be hard for the latter to accept the former's advice. It is aimed at getting the best solution for the client's problem, one that the client has designed themselves and is also fundamentally naïve about the possibility of controlling processes of which the consultant is part, and overstates the power of the consultant. In essence the consultant is more powerful than the client because he sits outside the dynamic and is in a better position to 'diagnose' what is happening and to recommend how to proceed. According to Schein, although she is more powerful than the client, the consultant tries to pretend not to be. The ethical considerations that engage her are fundamentally consultant-centric – the consultant should remain unsullied by the problems that afflict the client and should guard against 'role-drift', by which he means doing the manager's job for him. The nature of the problem is less important that the relationship between consultant and client, which is based upon constantly reminding the client that they are in charge. Meanwhile, the consultant should remain as detached as possible and like a benign puppet-master, be able to manipulate proceedings for the client's own good. In a sense, Schein is trying to disengage from ethical concerns by keeping a distance from them.

Schein has described a level of detachment from the substance of the client's concerns that I did not share in the gender strategy workshop – I have fundamental disagreements with both the style and content of some of the staff of the organisation with whom I am working, and find it impossible to detach myself from them. I believe that the way they work could bring about the opposite of what they say they want to achieve. However, to some extent I can recognise the power of the processes that we are all caught up in and have no illusion that by being detached I can somehow intervene to point this out to them and make them realise some higher truth. I do not share Schein's optimism about

the power of the consultant to divert processes towards an anticipated outcome.[3]
I will go on later to talk about what I think I did achieve in the workshop,
although my one small intervention with the CEO was brushed aside.

Managerialism

Peter Block (2000) has written probably the best-selling and most widely used
treatise on consulting which he has entitled *Flawless Consulting*. Block writes
into a more orthodox managerialist understanding of how organisations function,
what managers do, and thus what the task of a consultant should be. There is
good practice and bad practice, and consultants should tend towards the former
and away from the latter. At the beginning of the book he explains why he thinks
that perfect consulting is a possibility:

> My using the term *flawless consulting* may sound presumptuous, but it
> is not accidental. A basic value underlying the book is that there is in
> each of us the possibility of perfection. There is a consulting "pro"
> inside each of us, and our task is to allow that flawless consultant to
> emerge. On the surface, this book is about methods and techniques. But
> each technique carries a consistent message more important than any
> method – that each act that expresses trust in ourselves and belief in the
> validity of our own experience is always the right path to follow. Each
> act that is manipulative or filled with pretense is always self-
> destructive. (2000: 11)

Although the book is filled with techniques and frameworks and offers the usual
separation between 'task' and 'process', which we also encountered with Schein,
Block's principle appeal is to the consultant's sense of 'authenticity'; by acting in
consonance with our true selves, he argues, we can build trust and maximise our
leverage with the client and on the problem we have in hand. It is not clear what
Block makes of Schein's reference to 'benign manipulation', although he draws
on him in the course of the book. Block puts the case that consultants should

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[3] Schein's emphasis on design, models and representations that detract from the complex unpredictability of
the incidents themselves and focuses the attention on engineering new outcomes has been thoroughly
critiqued by Shaw (2002).

learn to be comfortable with tension and difficulty and should not fall back on action lists and plans as a way of avoiding these tensions. He enjoins us to watch for changes in the moments that they are happening, through attention and reflection, and to be prepared to change ourselves first, and in doing so he invites us into metaphysical territory:

> If you look at the great leaders through history, you see a consciousness of their own limitations that was essential to their greatness. From Confucius, Buddha, and Christ, to Lincoln, Gandhi and Martin Luther King – all touched lives because of their presence more than their position. They became archetypes for the right use of power, and one source of their power was their own humility. (2000: 341-342)

Block, like Schein, is concerned with the ethical challenges of being a consultant, and argues that consultants should be values-driven. Rather than sidestepping power as does Schein, however, Block would have us believe that we can choose to give up our power for the good. Block implies that we can aspire to the greatness of religious and world leaders by so doing, although one might argue that he has misunderstood and underestimated both Gandhi and King in respect of their own understanding of power. Although enjoining us to be comfortable with uncertainty and not knowing, on issues of power and values Block himself inhabits a manichean world, one where there is good practice and bad practice, power for the good and power for the bad. We can have insight into which is which by appealing to our 'inner selves' and trusting our experience.

Both Griffin (2002) and Stacey, (Griffin and Stacey, 2005) have drawn attention to the tendency in current management literature to enjoin obedience to a mystical whole, to give up our bad selves for the sake of the greater good, and this thread is also clear in Block's work. Rather than understanding power as the currency of human relating he writes about it as a disposition that one can choose to use or not use. Moreover, Block pays scant attention to the processes that the consultant, the client and everyone that one is working with are caught up in, beyond the incidence of our relating. In this way Block only offers me the indeterminacy that I referred to in my third project, drawing on Hegel

(1820/1991) and Honneth (2004), dependent upon myself and my 'authenticity', or dependent upon obedience to some transcendental state of humility. It also seems unclear to me as to whether giving up one's power, if this indeed were possible, would necessarily result in the good. There are certain aspects of this tendency that one can detect in the work of M, described in the second narrative above, in the sense that he trusted very much to his 'inner' authentic voice in making the choices that he did about what to do when. The principle difference, however, is that to orchestrate such an event as the one in Madrid does not speak to any sense of humility, or giving up of power, but rather to a dependence on it.

Post-structuralism

Taket and White (2000) take an explicitly post-modern approach to understanding what consultants do, although it might be argued that it is more of an omnivorous approach. Drawing on Wittgenstein (1969), Rorty (1989), Luhmann (1995) and Freire (1972), philosophers and sociologists from very different schools of thought, Taket and White make a virtue of casting around very widely for their theoretical underpinnings:

> The charge of relativism has been repeatedly made to our position, but to us this weakness is a strength, in that it frees us from 'intellectual myopia' that is common in research and critical reflection and argues against 'standard write-ups and 'normal science' whose ultimate aim is a regulation of texts. Thus we embrace relativism, since as intervenors we recognise that no cultural structure can analytically encompass the language of another cultural structure, since to encompass the 'other' it would have the effect of silencing the 'other'. (2000: 70)

Taket and White refer to their position as 'pragmatic pluralism' by which they seem to mean that they will accept any argument that feels right to them: 'So our pluralism is not 'anything goes'…, but 'doing what feels good' (ibid: 72). Although they claim to take a theoretically pluralist approach their framework for undertaking work with organisations, PANDA, Participatory Appraisal of Needs and the Development of Action, does not look so very different from the participatory approach to consultancy adopted by Block, or any number of other methodologies which categorise human interaction broken down into analysis

and design phases. In the initial phase of PANDA participants come together to 'diagnose the problem', they develop options together, they intervene on the 'problem' and monitor what happens, and evaluate in the final phase. This method has all the hallmarks of systemic thinking, with its dependence on a similar kind of logical causality, and its separation of task and process, although the understanding of 'process' is far more nuanced and rooted in a more greatly emphasised reflexivity.

As for their understanding of relationships of power, here are Taket and White's reflections on the same text from Bourdieu that I was discussing above along with Foucault's *History of Sexuality* (1976):

> What we particularly draw from their work *(Bourdieu and Foucault)* in this chapter is the insufficiency of asking the question 'who possesses or exercises power'?' with its corresponding hierarchical view…and the usefulness as well of a view of power as non-hierarchical, exercised through a multiplicity of sites and simultaneously productive and repressive, or in other words that any point of exercise of power is also an opportunity for resistance and subversion. (Taket and White, 2000: 150)

What I take from Taket and White is a more complex understanding of power than I found in Block or Schein, but nonetheless to me a confused one, since my interpretation of what Bourdieu is saying is very different from theirs. The fact of the opportunity for subversion and resistance to inequality of power relations does not take away the hierarchical lack of equivalence. According to my own understanding of Bourdieu, he seems to me to be in no doubt about the limited opportunity for subversion on most occasions and the objective social relations that contributed to the power inequalities that stand behind any one manifestation of that inequality. However, by drawing on such a multiplicity of sources they end up by not doing justice to any of them; by embracing all positions, they find themselves taking up none. For example, at the same time as endorsing Bourdieu's criticism of Habermas at one point in the book, they later on draw on Habermas' four validity checks for communicative competence (1985). They are alert to conflict, yet feel impelled to resolve it. They are alive to the fact that ethical considerations arise in every moment of consultation, yet are unspecific

about how they act in relation to those moments, except to decide in a way what 'feels good'. Fearing that they will do 'violence' to the position of the other in trying to engage with it, they fall back instead on solipsism. Ultimately, it seems to me that Taket and White bring little that is new to an understanding of the particular power relations that I find myself caught up in, in INGOs. Although aware that there are issues of justice and inequality in a room full of people concerned to discuss matters of justice and inequality, they drown out their own approach in a Babel of voices.

Summary – the ethics of consultancy

All of the writers on consultancy above are concerned about the ethical dilemmas that arise in the process of consultancy and the value base from which a consultant might operate. They pose the question as to how a consultant might consider themselves able to do a good job for their contractor. They understand the relationship between client and consultant to be a relationship of power, although each of them describes this power-relating differently. For Schein it is most important for the client to act and take responsibility for the work in hand, even if it means the consultant forcing the client to address it. The consultant, then, stands outside the process she is observing and wherever possible directs proceedings towards the client's stated goals. Meanwhile Block enjoins authenticity in the relationship between consultant and client, both in terms of encouraging the client to do what they say they really want to and in reflecting on the consultant's ability to support the process; this may involve following one's 'true self' and giving up power for the good. Taket and White are aware of the many loci of power when people come together to achieve something and suggest that domination leads to subversion and that somehow these are equivalent; they privilege plurality and participation, but since it is impossible to engage with otherness without doing violence to it, it remains for the consultant to decide 'what feels good'.

I want to return to the discussion that I have started in previous projects about the power relationship between me as a practising consultant and the client, with a view to accepting Block's challenge of uncovering what would seem to me to be authentic practice in the context of where I work. And not just authentic practice,

but one where I can support the contractor and her employees in having the necessary conversations to produce a difference for the organisation I am working for. I have already made it clear in my reflections on Bourdieu (1991) above about the scale of the power imbalance that I experience when I work with INGOs who have married their idealism with managerialism. But I find myself agreeing with Charles Taylor in his book about authenticity (1991) when he says the following:

> True, the philosophies of atomism and instrumentalism have a head start in the world. But it is still the case that there are many points of resistance, and that these are constantly being generated…We don't want to exaggerate our degrees of freedom. But they are not zero. (1991: 99-101)

What Taylor points to in the book is the ascendancy of positivist descriptions of the world which have at the same time a tendency to atomise our response to them by appealing to our individualism. The response of the individual is privileged at the expense of the demands that come from beyond our own desires, such as from history, tradition, society or nature – this is often encapsulated in the idea of 'individual choice' which has become a mantra for the British government in particular.

> In a flattened world, where the horizons of meaning become fainter, the idea of self-determining freedom comes to exercise a more powerful attraction. It seems that significance can be conferred by *choice*, when all other sources fail. Self-determining freedom is in part the default solution of the culture of authenticity, while at the same time it is its bane, since it further intensifies anthropocentrism. This sets up a vicious circle that heads us towards a point where our major remaining value is choice itself. (Ibid: 69)

One of Taylor's achievements in *The Ethics of Authenticity* is his uncovering of the 'rich moral background' of the different ways of understanding human experience, even those he criticises. Deepening our understanding makes dialogic exchange possible. What I found myself doing a lot of in the three days

that I worked with the participants in the INGO workshop was negotiating with them what we should do next; how we might go on together, and uncovering what the different arguments were for doing one thing or another. I had no participative formula for doing this, and it was not always clear to me when it needed to happen or how we might resolve differences, which is different from the kind of frameworks that one finds in books on consultancy which conceive of participation in certain ways and at certain 'stages'. The risk of taking this approach is that one can be accused of not having a plan, of not having prepared enough and of not being in control. What it did allow for, however, was the mutual exchange of views about what was important about what we were doing in the interstices of a bigger process which we were not allowed to negotiate. One of the frustrations of working in the workshop in Madrid was not having the ability to engage in this negotiation. The former process of negotiation allowed the discovery of otherness, the importance of which Taylor draws attention to in an essay on Gadamer (2002):

> The analogous point here is that in coming to see the other correctly, we inescapably alter our understanding of ourselves. Taking in the other will involve an identity shift in us. That is why it is so often resisted and rejected. We have a deep identity investment in the distorted images we cherish of others. (2002: 295)

I noticed that even the senior managers present were actively engaged in this process of negotiation and sometimes found themselves ceding ground to others when they came to understand better the other's standpoint. In my intensive engagement with participants over lunch, or during the coffee breaks, I had not set out to be intentionally subversive, but found myself compelled to enter into discussions with others about what had happened and what was going to happen. In this way I noticed themes from the discussions I had had with others reappearing in other conversations that took place subsequently, and even in the final presentation to the CEO at the end of the workshop. It did not significantly affect the outcome of the final strategic declaration, but the differences that emerged were evident in the detail of the final texts.

The ethical and performative challenge for the consultant seems to me to reside

in these junctures of negotiation, where we have a genuine opportunity for the recognition of others and alternative understandings of what is possible.

Engagement as ethical practice

I want to return to the aspect of mutual recognition outlined by Taylor above, i.e. how, if we are open to others we develop a different understanding of the self through our engagement with them, something to which Ricoeur (2005) refers to as follows:

> The investigation of mutual recognition can be summed up as a struggle against the misrecognition of others at the same time that it is a struggle for recognition of oneself by others. (2005: 258)

Part of the process of being recognised by others involves my recognising myself, which is part and parcel of the investigation that I have started in pursuing the DMan. In taking my experience seriously my aim is to deepen my understanding of my own practice in pursuit of being clearer about what it involves and how it evolves, but also to grapple seriously with the ethical task of doing a good job for my contractors, which my analysis of the trends I draw attention to above, make it difficult to do. Taking the self seriously is something that Richard Kearney (2003) points to in his latest reflections on otherness. Drawing on phenomenologists like Ricoeur, Kearney argues for what he calls diacritical hermeneutics. By this he means an alternative to what he deems the romanticism of Gadamer (1975), who tends towards a 'fusion of horizons', a merging of difference between the self and other, and the post-structuralists, such as Taket and White encountered above, who privilege the other over the self, arguing that the two can never be reconciled without violence. Through diacritical hermeneutics, Kearney argues, we can maintain a genuine openness to other, a genuinely 'hospitable' relationship to other:

> By refusing to treat the other as so exterior or estranged that it becomes utterly alien, hermeneutics not only alters the ego into a self-as-another but guarantees that the other, for its part, retains a basic fluidity and equivocity. …. Indeed I would argue that it is because of this ethical contact, always striving to make the other a little less alien, that we can

tender (however provisionally) different interpretations of this or that other. (2003: 81)

This diacritical hermeneutics is only possible on the basis of recognizing oneself as another, and of having some quality of continuity as a narrative self:

> A minimal quotient of self-esteem is, I would argue, indispensable to ethics. For without it I could not be a moral agent capable of keeping my promises to others. If I did not possess some sense of self-identity and self-constancy, I would be unable to recollect myself from my past memories or project myself into a future such that my pledges to the other (made in the past) might be realized (in the future). …How is one to be faithful to the other, after all, if there is no *self* to be faithful? (Ibid: 79, emphasis Kearney)

My reflexive exploration of my practice as part of the DMan is part of this minimal sense of self that Kearney puts forward as being essential to ethical exchange, of being able to keep our promises. Since I have been critical of leaders and consultants for over-promising in group situations, it is essential for me to come to terms with how I might exercise leadership ethically in such situations, whilst not getting drawn into charismatic over-promising. As a practitioner I have an ethical duty to reflect on my practice, to develop theories about it, to further reflect and develop these theories, and in so doing I will have a better developed sense of self. A better developed sense of self enables me, paradoxically, a fuller exchange with the other. This process of self-recognition is a long and difficult process for me, since my habit is to denigrate the self, to absent myself or to submit to the other, which one might argue is also a process of not taking the other seriously. By acknowledging and taking seriously the situation my contractor is in I will create more space for me to act differently, to work against the forces that I and everybody else are caught up in, with the intention of doing a good job for the client whilst learning to live with myself by so doing.

Conclusions

In the course of this project I have tried to uncover why it is that groups of people coming together to achieve things are so contested and fraught, and I have asked the question about what my role as a consultant practitioner is in this context. In doing so I have looked at three theories of power relating that explore the process of domination and control in groups. I have argued that currently there is a trend in organizations for managers to instrumentalise values as a way of inducing group euphoria in an attempt to divert employees from the things which they are most concerned about and which constrain their daily working lives. Senior managers are drawn into over-promising, offering idealized transformation as a way of dealing with the complexities of day to day practice, because this has become an accepted way of talking about the work they are doing in the field of specialized practitioners to which they belong. Since this charismatic trend impacts directly on the work I am asked to undertake with managers, where I am asked to 'facilitate', or support the discussion between employees, I find that I cannot remain silent when I feel that employees are prevented from discussing the very things they should be focusing on. Nor can I be the kind of charismatic facilitator that groups often expect me to become. This has led me to review different theories about what consultants do, and the ethical concerns that underpin consultancy practice in order to broaden my understanding of how other commentators understand the power relationship between client and consultant. In the course of this exploration I have found that, despite the powerful processes I describe above, I recognize that I am not totally powerless. What I find myself doing is to be part of an ongoing process of negotiation that recognizes both me as a practitioner, worthy of being taken seriously as such, as well the views of others who are engaged with me. What we are doing together is legitimizing and giving group sanction to the process of negotiating with each other in mutual recognition of our different value positions. By recognizing each others' value horizons we engage in a process of struggle, but one which, nevertheless, keeps us in conversational touch with each other so that we do not become alien to each other, and to ourselves. It is in this process that the leadership role of the consultant becomes most manifest, when s/he contributes directly to, and thus tries to legitimize, the process of negotiation. I offer this as an alternative to submitting to overt manipulation and control of the life-process of the group and avoiding promises of transformation.

Synopsis

Introduction – on history

In the course of my research I have been exploring how values get taken up in organisations, particularly international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), where I derive most of my work. In paying attention to values I have also found myself caught up in reflection upon my own values and how these come into play in the interaction between me and the people I am engaged with. This has sometimes been a source of turbulence as some of the tacit understandings about the role of values in organisational life become visible and therefore subject to challenge.

I have now reached the stage of making sense of my research and to sum it up, describing what contribution I have made to my field of practice. At the risk of pre-empting the subsequent section on methodology, I also understand this partly as a gesture to uncover the history of my research as well as the findings. In order to do justice to this I find myself needing to explain the historical process of uncovering what I have been through in developing my arguments over time. I feel impelled first to reach for metaphor, rather than a structure, to support my argument in order to acknowledge the contingency of the way in which it has developed. For my research has been a process of revealing, bound by time and circumstance, which puts me in mind of the delayering of an onion, although there is no heart of truth to be found at the centre, rather further delayering. Perhaps the process is closer to what Foucault (1969) describes in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. In contrasting his own 'archaeological' approach to knowledge with a more orthodox history of ideas, Foucault argues that he is interested in diversity as much as unity, contrast as much as similarity:

> Archaeology is much more willing than the history of ideas to speak of discontinuities, ruptures, gaps, entirely new forms of positivity, and sudden redistributions…it seeks rather to untie all those knots that historians have patiently tied; it increases differences, blurs the lines of communication and tries to make it more difficult to pass from one thing to another. (1969: 187)

Although I do not share Foucault's apparently wilful mischievousness in problematising for the sake of doing so, what I take from his argument is how, if we are open minded, new discoveries can help us reconceptualise our understandings of the past and of the present. Through patient digging we can find ourselves dusting off new treasures which radically undermine our understanding of how we thought one thing led to another. Without acknowledging this process, we are left with a lifeless artefact, passive knowledge rather than the active process of uncovering to which Foucault alludes and which is closer to my experience of being a participant on the DMan. Later on in the methodology section I will contrast Foucault's genealogical approach to history, derived from Nietzsche (1888/1969), with the more reflexive methods of the pragmatists and Bourdieu, but for now what I draw from Foucault is the importance of a processual and emergent understanding of history:

> The world we know is not this ultimately simple configuration where events are reduced to accentuate their essential traits, their final meaning, or their initial and final value. On the contrary, it is a profusion of entangled events. (Foucault, 1991: 89)

It behoves me to make some sense of these 'entangled events' in order to demonstrate my contribution to my field of practice, but I intend to do so at the same time as trying to honour the tradition in which I have studied. This will involve describing a process I have been through, but being cautious about assigning any 'final value' to my discussion of values; it will be, merely, the best summary I can make for the time being. I also need to draw attention to the fact that my exposition of my research is also immersed in entanglements. In taking up the theme of values I find it has permeated all aspects of what I have considered, making it extremely difficult to separate out one theme from another, although I will endeavour to do so.

Investigating values as an unfinished project

As an example of what I wrote about above, how every day working experience and reflection can crack open any solid sense of stasis or finality in my thinking,

I recently facilitated a four day workshop in Latin America for a large British INGO drawing in 30 people from around the globe. The workshop was intended to develop the organisation's strategic aims which they had entitled 'the right to be heard', by which they meant the right of poor people to articulate their needs and be recognised by authorities who had a duty of care towards them. I had been contracted to do this work because I was judged to have handled a previous similar workshop on gender for the same organisation well. I wrote about the events in this workshop in Project 4. In this project I described how I had spent my time negotiating intensely every step of the way with the participants and how through this negotiation small opportunities had opened up for discussing things differently. I did not feel that the outcome of the three days was significantly affected by the way I had worked, at least in the shape and tenor of the concluding strategic statements, but I could see at least the glimmerings of difference that had emerged both through things that were included in the statement and the way participants joined in, in the final session.

As a result of this experience I proceeded to carry out my role in a similar way in Latin America, negotiating very mildly on the first day about the extension of an activity which some of the participants had not completed. It seemed to me that a number of the participants, particularly the African members of staff, had not had a chance to be heard. The very act of rescheduling, however, seemed to trigger enormous anxiety in a vocal minority of the participants that we would not 'produce our outputs' on time. This manifested itself in their criticising the way the workshop had been planned in general, and my role as a facilitator in particular. Although I thought I had acted to open up possibilities for the participants themselves to exercise influence, they seemed viscerally opposed to doing so. Their criticism was couched in terms of my not being in control of the workshop. The remaining days turned into a struggle over the way I did my job, with participants seeming to want me to set them tighter and tighter objectives with less and less time to fulfil them. As I did so, guided by my contractor, they seemed to react to the increasing constraints by acting out in ill-disciplined ways, turning up late in the mornings for the start of proceedings, talking over each other and not keeping to time despite their requests that I should be a more disciplined time keeper. What I was tempted to do, but was prevented by my

contractor, was to draw attention to what was happening in the room in the light of the reason we had come together in the workshop; to discuss the right to be heard. My contractor thought that to do so would be 'unfair' to the participants, since they were not accustomed to reflecting on their own actions.

I will comment below on the ways in which I feel that values get caught up in power relating in human interaction and how they come to be used as forms of social control in organisations, but for now I am simply drawing attention to how this experience, and others like it, problematise my ability to make clear and final statements about the role of values in practice as organisational life.

Structure of the synopsis
Before opening up a discussion about power relating and organisations, however, I think it is important to clarify how values commonly get taken up by managers and leaders in INGOs and the development management literature, and show how this is very similar to views expressed in the orthodox literature.

After this I will set out an alternative understanding of values that I am still developing, having reflected on my experience and probed how far I have found orthodox approaches to values helpful. After that I want to set out some of the ways I have experienced values taken up as forms of social control in both the development and private sectors and will offer some reasons why I think this happens. Thereafter I will draw attention to the way that leaders and managers take up values and how this has implications for the practice of consultancy. I will investigate how more orthodox management texts understand the issue of ethics and consultancy practice, then set out an alternative theory for managers and consultants as they take up values together.

After each of these sections I will attempt a summary of the main points of my argument.

Towards the end of this synopsis I will then briefly locate my argument in the broader literature, make an assessment of my method and then summarise my

overall contribution to my field of practice in terms of knowledge. I will conclude with some observations on the development of my practice.

What does it mean to talk about values in organisations? Values in development management and beyond.

Throughout my research I have engaged with the way my contractors understand values which is predominantly as a kind of unifying process, binding staff together in a common enterprise. It is clearly a very important and powerful process since so many organisations I work with allude to it and try to enlist my support in bringing it about. The word that is often used for this unifying process is 'alignment', where employees are considered constituent parts of an organisation and are encouraged to line up and pull together in the same direction. In Project 1 I described how I understood this to be an allusion to the conceptual underpinning of most orthodox contemporary understandings of management theory and strategic planning exercises, i.e. systems dynamics, which is a development of first and second order cybernetic systems theory (Wiener, 1948, Stacey, 2007). A cybernetic system is a target-seeking, self-regulating system that can maintain its equilibrium within its own environment. A common example of a cybernetic system would be something like a heating system with a thermostat; an agent outside the system sets the control, a temperature in the case of a heating system, and the system then continuously corrects itself through negative feedback to the target temperature which has already been determined. Wiener originally had his insight into negative feedback when he was working on anti-aircraft guns trying to hit a target.

The further development of systems dynamics is that, rather than just depending upon machine analogies, it gives pride of place to people and their perceptions, values and beliefs. One manifestation of systems dynamics is a process known as 'idealised design' (Ackoff, 1999) which is very commonly adopted in strategic planning methods, particularly in INGOs. It would be a brave, if not self-destructive, INGO leader indeed who was prepared to produce a strategic planning document that did not encapsulate the vision, mission and values of the organisation, with the implicit assumption that values need to be shared, derived from some kind of participative planning process:

The aim of idealised design is to enthuse the participants with a vision of what their organisations might be like and to endow them with a mission to create the future on this basis. The process is meant to generate consensus, mobilize the stakeholders with a crusading zeal, and reveal that only the participants' limited imaginations prevent them getting the future they most desire, right here, right now. (Jackson, 2000: 244)

The process encourages participants to imagine 'whole' change of the organisation, of a community, or sometimes of whole societies. The society, community or organisation is conceived as a system, an idealised whole with a boundary, comprising separate sub-systems; so an organisation contains departments, which comprise teams, which consist of individuals, like a series of nested boxes. This systems-theoretical paradigm often goes hand-in-hand with a cognitive representation of values as a sub-system of an individual. The process of alignment to which I refer above, then, is about the individual arranging his or her values in such a way that the sub-systems can line up to map over each other in a way that completes the whole which is being idealised. I explored the ramifications for the way that strategy gets taken up as practice in an article which has been accepted by Development in Practice (Mowles, forthcoming 2008 – see appendix).

The following is an example of the alignment process I have been referring to, which I set out in Project 3. Pasteur and Scott-Villiers (2004) take a very explicit systems perspective, and, drawing on both Argyris (1990) and Senge (1990) who both assume values, attitudes and behaviours to be the last box in a series of nested boxes that make up an organisation and the people who work in it. It is important, then, to use different 'lenses' to scrutinise what is going on in these different layers in order to fully understand what is happening. Paying attention to one's attitudes and values allows one to 'close the gap' between rhetoric and practice:

…learning requires ongoing honest reflection on the kinds of personal, organisational and institutional assumptions that underlie programme

goals. It involves a deep questioning of personal attitudes and behaviours and whether they are congruent with espoused objectives. It also requires a broader reflection on whether the procedures, cultures, and relationships are supportive of the expressed goals. (Pasteur and Scott-Villiers, 2004: 196)

Through honesty and reflection we are enjoined to aspire to congruence with organisational objectives. What is interesting about this is the individualisation of values within a cognitive paradigm, where the individual, as monad, is deemed to be in control of shaping and arranging her values according to the requirements of the organisation she serves. As I set out in an article to the Journal of International Development based on this project 3 (Mowles, 2007 – see appendix), commentators in the literature on management development are equally explicit that values are an individual phenomenon. For example, Padaki (2000) is forthright in his belief that values are located 'in' an individual:

Since the basis is in the organisation of an individual's belief system, the correct and precise meaning of the term value is as an *individual* attribute. It is formed in the individual, and is assessable, too, as an individual attribute (for example as materialistic value, religious value, or altruistic value). (2000: 422)

There is little explanation as to how, exactly, these values are formed in the individual, and for Padaki, an organisational 'value system' is one where the sets of individual values map over each other to form a small number of overlapping values. Despite describing values as an individual attribute, Padaki later goes on to assert that values are also located 'in' organisations, which seem to demonstrate similar characteristics to an individual, both having 'terminal' and 'instrumental' values. His article develops a number of grids and matrices for understanding the prevailing 'value system' in an organisation as a means for thinking about how it can be changed for the better performance of the organisation.

This way of understanding poses a number of dualisms expressed in 'both/and' terms which exist in a world of causal rationality and are taken for granted; an employee can be both an individual and a part of an aligned whole; values can be both 'in' and individual and 'in' an organisation; an individual can have values and decide to change them. This both/and presentation obviates the need for an investigation of conflict, and of power relating about which there is little discussion, since any potential antagonisms are separated off into both/and corners. There is a presumption of control and that improvement and the good can be realised through rationality.

Summary of how values are understood in development management

Predominantly, then, commentators on development management assume that values are an individual attribute, that they are a priori, that they can be changed at will (either the individual's or the manager's), and that they should be shared and aligned with what are considered to be the organisation's values. There is a further implication, which I will explore more fully below in my discussion about power and social control, that once this statement of values has been agreed it is the individual's duty to police herself to ensure that her values are congruent with those of the organisation, and that managers also have a duty to insist on this conformity. The agreement about the organisation's values will be sufficient for knowing how to go on together. There is very little mention of conflict around this process of conforming, except in Padaki's case to mention that any conflict that does arise should be managed for the good of the organisation. Individuals will somehow know how to be true to their values and true to the organisation's values, or managers will be in a position to judge whether values have or have not been adhered to. Chambers (2005) makes the case that values, once defined, should be a set of rules which are 'non-negotiable' for example, and Hailey (2000) argues that managers should 'audit' the realisation of their values if INGOs are to maintain their distinct advantage over other organisations in the marketplace for aid. A number of scholars have tried to make the same case that it is the domain of values that most distinguishes INGOs from other organisations and give them their distinct advantage. For example, Thomas (1996, 1999) argues that in development organisations managers should be concerned to bring about progressive social ends. This is

most likely to distinguish managers in INGOs as different from private sector managers, whose concern is rather to create profit.

The irony of this position, that INGOs are somehow unique in their values and that they can align employees values for the good, is that in general there is a great similarity in the way that scholars in the mainstream management literature talk about values, as an individual attribute which can be measured, shaped and changed to suit organisational culture (Weber, 1993; Sachs and Rühli, 2005), or as an instrument of management (Dolan and Richley, 2006) to bring about organisational alignment through managers 'tapping into' them as a source of employee motivation. I draw attention to this both in Project 3 and in my article for the Journal of International Development (2007). In both sectors a convergence can be found that organisations, whether private or voluntary sector, are set up to 'do good' and that having specific value commitments will help bring this about through sharing and shaping values. Later on in this synopsis I will try and locate my argument in a wider tradition of development management and mainstream management literature and point to other commentators who do not necessarily share the preoccupations of the dominant way of thinking about values. In the meantime, however, I will set out an alternative understanding of values that I have developed as a result of reflecting on my experience as a consultant working with INGOs around values.

The practice of values – an alternative understanding
Throughout my research and my reflections on my working experience I have discovered that, far from always being a unifying experience, working with values with colleagues can be an enormous cause of conflict and dissonance, particularly when working situations are complicated. For example, right from my initial narratives in Project 2 I described how a colleague I had been working alongside in a big donor agency had clearly had to suppress her values in order to undertake her job in the way that she thought her agency wanted her to. Although she knew from her own working experience that development is difficult, incremental and messy, she nonetheless felt that she had to ignore the contingencies of the very real constraints that an organisation in receipt of her organisation's funds had experienced and insist that unrealistic 'outputs' be

achieved. Later on, while working alongside colleagues, in Project 3 I describe how an appeal from a Palestinian colleague to 'work from the heart' produced completely the opposite effect in me and her team-mates, as we struggled unsuccessfully to come to terms with telling her that we did not want to work in the way that she had described. We were completely unable to 'speak from the heart'. In the same project I gave examples of how an appeal to shared values, that is to say sympathy, towards a colleague's mental health problems, or an encounter with an Israeli civil servant, played out as a struggle over dominance and control which had the effect of silencing me. My experience of values in practice has been far more problematic than the dominant way of understanding values in organisational life would have led me to expect. This led me to research alternative points of view to uncover what it is that is happening when values arise in human interaction and I found myself turning in particular to the pragmatists and writers in the phenomenological hermeneutic tradition because of their attention to everyday experience. I became interested in how values arise and how we take them up in the experience of working together.

Values: practical, social and imaginative

In *The Genesis of Values*, for example, Hans Joas (2000) commits himself to the task of understanding better how values arise in human experience. In doing so he draws in particular on John Dewey (1934), and sets out a distinction between norms and values; norms are obligatory and constraining and provide moral criteria for assessing what ought to be done, while values are paradoxically both compelling (in a voluntary sense) and uplifting at the same time, since they are freely chosen. Joas describes them as being the difference between the good, what I hold to be of value, and the right, what we agree is morally correct. It is important to understand the paradoxical nature of values as Joas describes them since he presents them as the highest expression of our free will; they combine commitment and compulsion at the same time; they are 'voluntary compulsions'. Through the creative intervention of the imagination we experience affective moments of self-transcendence in the daily acts of encounter with others. Our values influence us to act for the good in these situations and contribute to our sense of self. Dewey would argue:

> The idealising imagination seizes upon the most precious things found in climacteric moments of experience and projects them. We need no external criterion and guarantees for their goodness. They are had, they exist as good, and out of them we frame our ideal ends. (1934: 38)

Within all our contradictions and anguish we are able to imagine a wholeness that never existed and never will exist, yet which seems to us more real than all our partial realisations. It is important to emphasise the affective and social nature of values and the role of the imagination in their generation. It is in our communicative interaction with others that we are opened up to the circumstances in which value commitments become a possibility; we experience ourselves through others and are transformed by the interaction. If we accept this understanding of values then by their very nature they will not be durably changed by management techniques and 'tools', or even by an invitation to reflect on one's values and change them by rationality alone. The kind of imaginative transformation that Dewey and, after him, Joas are describing is not an engineering process trying to bring about alignment.

Though transcendent, they are also a means of daily, practical judgement-making as we try to decide with others how to go on together. In an essay entitled '*Logic and judgement of practice'* (1915) Dewey builds the argument that 'a judgement of value is simply a case of practical judgement, a judgement about the doing of something' (1915/1998: 243). Values, then, do not reside in objects, or statements; these objects and statements provide the data for evaluation. Nor are values subjective mind states that equate to individual choosing or the fulfilment of desire; they are merely practical reflection upon action, 'a present act determining an act to be done, a present act taking place because the future act is uncertain and incomplete.' (Ibid: 246).

In sketching out an alternative theory of the genesis and practice of values in organisational life it is important not to lose sight of the importance of what development management practitioners are drawing attention to. For the process of bringing groups of employees together and getting them mutually to commit

to a common enterprise is a very powerful phenomenon, as Hannah Arendt noticed in *The Human Condition (1958)*:

> The sovereignty of a body of people bound and kept together, not by an identical will which somehow magically inspires them all, but by an agreed purpose for which alone the promises are valid and binding, shows itself quite clearly in its unquestioned superiority over those who are completely free, unbound by any promises and unkept by any purpose. This superiority derives from the capacity to dispose of the future as though it were the present, that is, the enormous and truly miraculous enlargement of the very dimension in which power can be effective. (1958: 245)

For Arendt, however, the power of a collective enterprise is in the power of the imagination and the quality of a promise which pertains long after people have departed. The 'sovereignty' that Arendt refers to, is limited, partial and temporary, and lasts only as long as people come together to renew their purpose. It is an episodic moment of mutual adjustment which will need repeating if it is to continue to have significance for the group in terms of their feeling emboldened to dispose of the future.

Both Dewey and his close friend and colleague G.H. Mead were interested in this process of mutual adjustment, and I noted previously, and regarded it as a phenomenon that makes us both human and humane. In an essay entitled '*Moral judgement and knowledge*' (1932) Dewey starts from the position that affection, or rather mutual affection, is the stimulus for values that influence behaviour:

> Sympathy is the animating mold of moral judgement not because its dictates take precedence in action over those of other impulses (which they do not do), but because it furnishes the most efficacious *intellectual* standpoint. It is the tool, *par excellence*, for resolving complex situations. Then when it passes over into active and overt conduct, it does so *fused* with other impulses and not in isolation and is thus protected from sentimentality. In the fusion there is broad and objective survey of all

desires and projects because there is an expanded personality. (1932/1998: 333).

Dewey, like Arendt, made the case that collective promise-making cannot be a one-off phenomenon, but is a daily act of mutual reconciliation with others. Past agreements are no guarantee that we have sufficient understanding to deal with today's problems which may need renegotiating. For Mead, too, mutual adjustment is an inevitable consequence of his theory of social behaviourism (1934), where, through the continuous iteration of gesture and response, the meaning of a gesture can only be understood in the context of the response, or series of responses, from those engaged in meaning-making. The meaning of what we are engaged in unfolds in a social process that must take others into account. Mead's equivalent of Dewey's expanded personality and Arendt's 'miraculous enlargement' is a phenomenon he refers to as 'a larger self':

> We are definitely identified with our own interests. One is constituted out of his own interests; and when those interests are frustrated, what is called for then is in some sense a sacrifice of this narrow self. This should lead to the development of a larger self which can be identified with the interests of others. I think all of us feel that one must be ready to recognize the interests of others even when they run counter to our own, but that the person who does that does not really sacrifice himself, but becomes a larger self. (Mead, 1934: 386)

In the *Philosophy of the Act* (1938), Mead describes how he considers the review of all others' value positions and the adjustment to these to be a moral imperative. Recognising the value positions of others inevitably brings about a shift in one's own values, an enlargement of self leading to an expanded personality. Through mutuality comes self-sacrifice. To do otherwise would be to act, in Dewey's terms, unintelligently: 'The more completely the notion of the model is formed outside and irrespective of the specific conditions which the situation of action presents, the less intelligent is the act…'(Dewey, 1915/1999: 248). In Mead's terms this would be to act unscientifically (Mead, 1938, essay 24: 462).

Summary – contrasting orthodox and social understandings of values

I outlined above some of the arguments to be found in the development management literature which understand values to be individual a priori attributes open to rational intervention by the individual or her manager for the greater good of the organisation. Values are taken up in meetings, often in planning meetings informed by idealised design methods, where the overall intention is to unify them and bring about alignment with the organisation's objectives, which can be subsequently supervised and monitored. This alignment is thought to occur by ensuring that the values 'in' an individual sufficiently fit the values 'in' an organisation like a series of Russian dolls. Employees are expected to hold on to the dualism of their situation as an individual with values aligned in a whole with values by swapping back and forth between the two positions, that first one thing and then the other are true. Once agreed and shared, these values are considered to be normalised and can be measured and supervised whereby the actions of employees can be compared against the prior statement of values. Some commentators on development management have argued that they consider the taking up of values in INGOs, and the nature of these values, to be distinctive characteristics of development organisations.

As an alternative in my projects for the DMan and in articles submitted to development journals based on these projects I have been developing a theory of values that regards them as radically social phenomena which arise in the process of communicative interaction with others. Following Joas and Dewey, I put the case that they are distinct from norms, being paradoxical, affective and imaginative idealisations which are temporally bound. They are paradoxical rather than dualistic; the distinction I am making is that we do not choose, and then feel compelled, swapping back and forth between the two states, but we choose to feel compelled at the same time. This is the nature of the paradox. Since they are affective they are impervious to rational interventions alone. As idealisations they describe for us an uplifting future, particularly when we come together with others, but this can only sustain, following Arendt, for the time that

we come together to imagine it. The resonance of our collective disposal of the future in the present is carried forward when we are no longer together in the shape of a mutual promise. This promise, however, has only limited 'sovereignty', and its limitations are due to our fallibility and the price we pay for being human. Dewey and Mead understand the phenomenon that Arendt describes as a social process of mutual adjustment, the highest manifestation of which is when we can open ourselves to the value positions of others and by doing so, become an enlarged self. This adjustment is ongoing, so rather than being fixed and normalised, values are, rather, an emergent phenomenon. This is not to argue that we do not build up judgement and traditions based on our shared experience of discussing values, merely that this previous experience may not be enough in each new circumstance for us to know how to go on together. I have also begun to make the case that there are similarities between the voluntary and private sectors in the way the literature deals with values and I began to set out this argument in Project 4 and developed it further in the article I submitted to the Journal of International Development (2007, see appendix).

What difference does it make to set out an alternative account of the phenomenon of values in organisations? I am beginning to develop a position that to misunderstand the way values arise between people, to regard them as an instrument of management or a phenomenon to be enlisted in support of the organisation's objectives is to enter into the territory of what MacIntyre (1981) refers to as manipulative social relations. He makes the case that we live in an age which has an impoverished moral context, or rather, the social space for the discussion of morality has shrunk substantially. This has implications for organisational life since we live in a post-Weberian world (1998) where managerial effectiveness receives the highest valorisation. It is a bureaucratic age, but also an individualist age where individual valuations of what is right and good are considered subjective and thus exempt from social examination. This he describes as a period of 'emotivism', where moral arguments are thought to be impervious to rational discussion, your moral valuations being considered equal to mine:

But moral judgements, being expressions of attitude or feeling, are neither true nor false, and agreement in moral judgement is not to be secured by any rational method, for there are none. We use moral judgements not only to express our own feelings and attitudes, but also precisely to produce such effects in others. (1981: 12)

MacIntyre argues that in a context where bureaucratic efficiency is privileged, and where valuations are considered to be merely subjective, there is no ethical problem about trying to convince others of one's own moral 'vision', if it results in fulfilling organisational goals. 'The organisation is characteristically engaged in a competitive struggle for scarce resources to put to the service of predetermined ends' (ibid: 25). Manipulative social relations arise, then, where employees become for managers solely the means of fulfilling these predetermined ends and discussion about what happens in this process is precluded, since it is deemed irrelevant. MacIntyre develops this point in an essay entitled 'Social science methodology as ideology' (1998), where he makes the case that managers are behaving ideologically when they deny the inherent rivalry and the centrality of conflict to be found in organisations:

For it is the characteristic of the adherents of rival social interpretations embodied in complex social practice to deny the reality of rivalry in the interest of the claim that there is an incontestable underlying structure; social victory at this deep level is the achievement of inducing those who participate in the practice to agree in conceptualising their activities in such a way that one of the contestable interpretations no longer appears contestable, but simply how things are – 'the facts'. (1998: 59)

I found many of the phenomena that MacIntyre points to in the literature that I quote above; the individualisation of values, acceptance of the idea that values should be an instrument of management, and the argument that a manager's predominant interest in employee values is for these to be shared and aligned with the organisational mission.

I want to explore this idea further in the next section since I regard the accusation of manipulation to be a serious charge to be laid at the door of managers, which I need to justify carefully if I am going to make it. I would like to examine some of the ways in which I consider this manipulation to be taking place, to offer some reasons for it, and to put forward some alternatives. It is also important to bear in mind what Willmott (2003) argues in an article which is equally critical of contemporary management theory and practice, that employees will not always contest the demands of managers and may even actively support their priorities without being accused of 'false consciousness'. As MacIntyre argues in his essay on methodology as ideology quoted above, in order to function as a theory an ideology must express a partial truth. I need to set out my explorations of the 'magical' crucible of coming together with others to decide how to go on together, and how values get taken up by managers and leaders. How helpful is the way they deal with them in the context of the overtly moral mission that INGOs assign to themselves?

Promises of transformation – how values get taken up as a means of social control

About a year ago I was intrigued by some stories that appeared in the business sections of the newspapers about the fact that Marks and Spencer, a large British retail company, had employed an America motivation 'guru' to come and organise some workshops for the company's employees. Staff were invited to dress up, were encouraged to dance and sing, and play games together. One of the games involved passing around an envelope with a dollar bill in it. When the music stopped the person holding the envelope was obliged to open it – the moral of the game was that the buck stopped with you. The implicit assumption behind this form of event seems to be that staff need to be swept up emotionally, in this case bodily, by being obliged to sing, dance and play games, before they will become motivated.

Not long afterwards I was myself involved in two organisational workshops which I describe in Project 4, one in an INGO and the other for a very large European bank where I found myself caught up in a similar kind of orchestrated euphoria, the intention of which seemed to be aimed at encouraging the kind of

motivation or commitment that Marks and Spencer's senior managers were clearly looking for. In the first case, the director attended the last afternoon of a strategy workshop to approve the strategy that the group had been working on for the previous three days. The last strategy was deemed to be unsuccessful because it had been 'unambitious'; this time, the Director said, the only way to get people motivated was to promise something very exciting. She said that the organisation would promise to 'transform the lives of millions of poor women in the less developed world.' To my astonishment, staff who had been describing the difficulties that they had encountered implementing the last, more modest strategy, started competing with each other not to appear negative and claiming that they were excited by the prospect of transformation too.

In the second case I was a largely passive member of a team following a widely-used method for group problem-solving franchised by one of the largest consultancy firms. I say 'passive' advisedly, since the workshop was run by a charismatic and capricious team leader who wanted to control every aspect of what both the participants and the facilitation team were allowed to do; the facilitation team were not allowed to talk to participants, participants were escorted to lunch and back again, they were not allowed to take breaks and were told when they could go to bed. The three days consisted of lots of what seemed to me pointless games which were accompanied by music and flashing lights, where teams congratulated each other on their achievements, no matter how paltry, with whoops and claps. Ostensibly organised to talk through the difficulties of amalgamating a number of smaller banks, the workshop was designed in a way that prevented participants from ever dwelling on difference and difficulty, but instead was geared towards relentless optimism and celebration. Amalgamation and working with cultural diversity would be painless because 'we are one!''.

A number of dynamics are in play here, some of them are more overt than others. I want to return to the scepticism Mead expressed towards values ascribed to idealised wholes by drawing attention to the theory of 'cult values' (which I refer to first in Project 1) which he developed in response to his reflections upon the fact that opposing nations could both deem themselves to represent the good and

the right in the build-up to the First World War. In two essays written in 1914 and 1923, Mead argued that when countries or institutions think of themselves as if they were wholes they then can start to ascribe to all the members of that idealised group values that become universal and overriding norms. These values are an important part of who we are and where we come from, but ethical issues arise when the values of an idealised group become norms to which individuals must subscribe if they are not to be deemed sinful or selfish, i.e. they become a cult which can exclude or include according to the level of adherence to the norms. They have confused the distinction between values and norms that Joas (2000) made, which I set out above. A cult also provides the feeling of an enlarged personality in which individuals participate and from which they derive their meaning as persons. However, the condition of voluntarism that makes values the highest expression of our free will is undermined by the manipulation that accompanies the membership of the group. Both Griffin (2002) and Stacey, (Griffin and Stacey (eds.) (2005) have drawn attention to this phenomenon in current management literature and practice where appeals to an organisation's mission and values enjoins obedience to a mystical whole, to give up our bad selves for the sake of the greater good. And in a seminal article on what he calls the 'corporate culturism' Willmott (1993) makes the case that the literature that argues for individualised values on the one hand, but conformity with corporate values on the other indulges in a kind of double-think[4] since it holds out the promise of 'autonomy', but really hopes employees will:

> …discipline themselves with feelings of anxiety, shame and guilt that are aroused when they sense themselves to impugn or fall short of the hallowed values of the corporation. (1993: 523)

Rather than choosing our compulsions freely we are shamed into agreeing with everyone else through fear of exclusion. Moreover, Mead also argued that the exercise of cult values can distract our attention from the daily exercise of ethical choices in the here and now and sometimes seeks to justify immoral behaviour undertaken for the idealised collective good. A good example of this would be the way that President Bush acted during the years which followed the terrorist

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[4] The 'double think' that Willmott refers to is an allusion to George Orwell's *Animal Farm.*

attack of 9/11, justifying all manner of excesses like the Guantanamo Bay prison camp on the basis of appeals to 'freedom and democracy'.

I certainly am not implying that the director of the INGO or the facilitator of the bank workshop were acting consciously to manipulate, nor am I against excitement or motivation in organisations. However, I made the case in Project 4, and in my second article for Development in Practice on strategy (2008) that in creating cults around the themes of exciting transformation or unity through diversity they made it that much harder for their employees to express their doubts and difficulties about what was being proposed. I explore the idea that in acting in this way managers may bring about the opposite of what they intend, encouraging disappointment in proportion to the level of excitement that they think is necessary to motivate people. I would also argue that in the process of working their staff up into a frenzy of uncritical support, they distract and detract from their employees' day to day experience which comprises the uplifting and the mundane, the positive and the downright difficult. As such they are bringing about a kind of engineered consent which is bound to be fragile, particularly since it promises a utopia which is unreachable, which, as a double-bind, must be apparent to their staff even as they find themselves yearning for it.

Two types of social control – Mead and Elias
Mead had more to say about the process of social control in groups and in Project 4 I took up his ideas and compared and contrasted them with the thinking of Elias and Bourdieu to develop a way of understanding what I thought was happening in the circumstances I describe above. I did so as a way of drawing attention to what I consider to be the taken for granted way of talking about values and the work.

Extending his research into how human beings can come to agree how to go on together, Mead demonstrated an interest in how nations might develop more creative ways of collaboration, to gain an enlarged sense of their obligations to others, rather than resorting to animosity and war. In an essay written in 1925 he reflects upon the social circumstances in which the self arises with others through interactions by way of what he refers to as a 'social object'.

> I mean by a social object one that answers to all the parts of the complex act, though these parts are found in the conduct of different individuals. The objective of the act is then found in the life-process of the group, not in those of the separate individuals alone. (1925: 263-4)

Already a social act is a complex social process, one where the individual is able to take the attitude of a 'generalised other' towards himself (1934: 156). By this Mead means that thinking and acting are only possible through our being able to internalise a conversation of gestures where we become an object to ourselves. We are able to first organise, then generalise the attitude of others to ourselves and thus act in a way that would be deemed to be socially intelligible by others. A social object is even more complex, then, since it is made up of the social acts of individuals who are already socialised and it becomes a process which no individual controls. A social object is the nexus of multi-faceted reflexivity, where emerging social individuals interact in a process of mutual struggle and adaptation. Mead continues:

> The human individual is a self only in so far as he takes the attitude of another towards himself. In so far as this attitude is a number of others, and in so far as he can assume the organized attitudes to a number that are cooperating in a common activity, he takes the attitude of the group towards himself, and in taking this or these attitudes he is defining the object of the group, that which defines and controls the response. Social control, then, will depend upon the degree to which the individual does assume the attitudes of those in the group who are involved with him in his social activities. (1925: 274)

Rather than seeing the group as being a natural place for agreement and conformity, according to Mead in any group there is a struggle over the 'life process'. And where matters are hotly contested, such as in the domain of international development, there can be no surprise that there will be different points of view and a fluidity of group process as group members continuously adjust to each other. Not all members of a group are equally influential, but no one member of the group can ensure the outcome that they themselves want,

which is a point taken up Norbert Elias in his figurational sociology. For Elias all human relating is based on power:

> As the moves of interdependent players intertwine, no single player nor any group of players acting alone can determine the course of the game no matter how powerful they may be. ... It involves a partly self-regulating change in a partly self-organizing and self-reproducing figuration of interdependent people, whole processes tending in a certain direction. (Elias, 1991: 146/7)

It is not that any outcome is possible, since processes tend in a particular direction. However, knowing exactly how things will turn out is uncertain. It was also Elias' view that the power of different actors to affect change is unequal. For Elias there is a dynamic inherent in the process of relating which nonetheless can be influenced by the different actors, who are forming and being formed by it at the same time.

One of the ways that individuals in groups do this, both within the group and between one group and another, is through the use of language, or more particularly, through gossip; i.e. the ways members of groups talk about themselves and others. Having undertaken research in Winston Parva (1994), Elias and Scotson noticed how members of a more powerful community talked about themselves to create a 'we identity' that ascribed to themselves charismatic and heroic attributes, in contradistinction to another group who were ascribed inferior characteristics. This was a way of creating difference with other groups, but also a way of exercising social control within the group, making it difficult for members to gainsay the heroic characterisation. The self-description of the group creates an emotional bond between the members through which a sense of identity and belonging arises. To act in a way that punctures this we-identity is to risk stigmatisation, shame and exclusion.

I consider that in both the narratives I set out at the beginning of this section, about the strategy workshop and the bank; there was an intention by both leader and facilitator to encourage participants to imagine a heroic and idealised future which was free from constraint and difficulty. In doing so they created euphoric

and charismatic conditions where the we-identity of the group was profoundly upbeat. Participants were drawn into accepting over-promising what was possible in an environment where it would have been extremely difficult to put forward one's reservations and doubts. Who could voice difficulties about 'transforming' millions of people's lives without appearing to be against such an outcome, even though participants' own experience had taught them that their recent attempts to implement a more modest strategy had been fraught and difficult? I consider that this over-promising by managers and leaders is in danger of privileging idealisation over the much more uncertain and potentially less rewarding task of picking over the difficulties that staff had experienced and starting from there. It is almost as if there is a tendency to cover over complexity and wish it away.

One explanation of what might be happening – Bourdieu on the social marketplace

In Project 4 I put forward one reason for senior managers getting drawn into using idealisations to induce conformity, encouraging employees to get caught up and have 'faith' in organisational mission and values. I argued that it is because of the increased globalisation and marketisation of all organisations, including INGOs. Even though some commentators on INGOs believe them to be ideologically different, they are actually caught up in pressures similar to those of commercial organisations. I did so by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu (1991), who took up the theme of the economic and structural basis of human relating throughout his work, and was particularly interested to demonstrate how our behaviour is located in the socio-economic conditions in which we find ourselves. Bourdieu argues that we cannot reach a full understanding of the implications of the words and actions of senior managers in these workshops by considering their words and actions alone, since they are also responding to processes which they are caught up in that are raging outside the workshop. INGOs are exposed to pressures arising from the dominance of liberal economic thinking and the marketisation of aid.

Senior managers and leaders are caught up in a 'game' of 'specialised producers' (Bourdieu, 1991) who have a stake in continuing to describe the world in the way that they do. To call into question the legitimacy of this way of working is also to

criticise other practitioners in the field of specialized production where such discourse has value, and amongst the community of people who have an interest in maintaining the value of the 'game' that is being played.

For any professional it is hard to come to terms with the lack of reality convergence of some of the claims that were made in both workshops, that an organisation could 'transform the lives of millions of poor people' for example. But the CEO was making a speech to a wider constituency, the kind of speech that a politician would make to convince the unconverted. This is how Bourdieu understands the language of politicians and their relation to their constituency:

> …the politician derives his political power from the trust that the group places in him. He derives his truly magical power over the group from faith in the representation that he gives to the group and which is a representation of the group itself and of its relation to other groups. (Ibid: 188)

Interestingly, Bourdieu also draws attention to the 'faith' and 'magic' that is required to keep these promises aloft, which is exactly the dynamic I have been pointing to, where employees are invited to believe in organisational values. The politician, according to Bourdieu, is less interested in truth than she is in mobilising support, and she does so on behalf of the institution she represents. INGOs in particular derive their legitimacy partly on the basis of the number of people that can be mobilised in support of their representations of the work that they are doing, rather than just the quality of the work itself. To vie for people's attention INGOs feel they have to offer nothing short of transformation; it is from this promise that they feel they derive their power.

In commenting on the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of politics, Bourdieu remarked that:

> …the struggle for the monopoly of the development and circulation of the principles of division of the social world is more and more strictly reserved for professionals and for large units of production and

circulation, thus excluding de facto the small independent producers (starting with the 'free intellectuals'). (Ibid: 196)

International development has also been caught up in this process of professionalisation over the last 10-15 years (Mosse, 2005; Cooke and Kothari, 2001), whereby the space for independent thought separate from the dominant discourse has greatly diminished. The field has been professionalized and it is now a locus for career advancement as any other profession – there is a much greater and more standardised consensus not just on the meaning of development, but the way it should be undertaken, and a professionalized elite that has an interest in the perpetuation of these ways of understanding. This convergence of view about market mechanisms and the process of organisational management stretches across all sectors of the economy and has created further processes of competition and rivalry that bring with them their own dynamics, such as feeling the need to over-promise.

Summary – social control and its implications
Throughout my projects I have been developing an undertstanding of the way that values get taken up as a form of power relating between staff and consultants so it behoves me to explain further my understanding of power in order to locate my approach with a broader discourse of thought.

In his seminal work on power, sociologist Steven Lukes (1974/2005) describes three dimensions of power relating which have been developed by scholars engaged with the subject. In setting out the one dimensional view, Lukes adduces researchers whose understanding of power is based on observable conflict of interests. His second dimensional approach broadens the concept of power by allowing for consideration of potential conflict of interests in the way that decisions are prevented from being taken, but is still tied to the idea that conflict over political interests should be observable. In offering a third dimension of power, Lukes offers a critique of the first two approaches as being too individualistically conceived and too dependent on the observation of behavioural exchanges. Going on to develop his own 'radical' view, Lukes contends that:

> …people's wants may themselves be a product of a system which works against their interests, and, in such cases, relates the latter to what they would want and prefer, were they able to make the choice. (2005: 38)

It is in this third dimension of power that I locate most of my argument about power relating and would agree with Lukes that conflict is not always observable, but is constrained and enabled by the context that people find themselves in, which also includes socio-economic conditions. Citing Foucault and Bourdieu in support of his radical view , Lukes goes on to demonstrate different forms of social power relating, exercised as a kind of domination that conditions people's behaviour and sometimes prevents them from achieving their best interests, even if they are not fully aware of what these best interests might be because of their more general acceptance of the forms of domination to which they have been subjected.

It is also important to accept Lukes' caution about concepts of power which he describes as an essentially contested concept, i.e. one which will always involve disputes over the proper use on the part of its users, and he gives plentiful examples where scholars have adduced theories of power which support their existing social theses. In recognising the critics of the first edition of his book, Lukes acknowledges that the very premise of a third dimension of power implies an external view: '…to speak of the third dimension of such power is to speak of interests imputed to and unrecognised by the actors.' (2005, 146). Fending off the accusation of arrogance, however, that would see the observer as claiming access to some kind of privileged truth not available to those being observed, or that there is a patronising assumption that people are unaware of the way they are being oppressed, Lukes makes the following observation:

> 'False consciousness' is an expression that carries a weight of unwelcome historical baggage. But that weight can be removed if one understands it to refer, not to the arrogant assertion of a privileged access to *truths* presumed unavailable to others, but rather to a cognitive power of

considerable significance and scope: namely *the power to mislead*. It takes many forms…from straightforward censorship and disinformation to the variously institutionalised and personal ways that there are of infantilising judgement, and the promotion and sustenance of all kinds of failures of rationality and illusory thinking, among them the 'naturalisation' of what could be otherwise and the misrecognition of the sources of desire and belief. (2005: 149)

I am aware that in some of my narratives I too could be considered to be taking a patronising attitude to the people I write about if it were thought that I am claiming access to a higher truth which is somehow beyond the understanding of the people I am writing about. In this respect I would take refuge in Lukes' defence, that I am merely drawing attention to the potential for manipulating or coercing people which many scholars would accept.

In doing so I draw on sociologists and philosophers whom Lukes also adduces in support of his radical third dimension of power, such as Foucault and Bourdieu, although I also bring in Mead and Elias, neither of whom Lukes mentions. Both Mead and Elias seem to me to be important contributors to the discussion of power, the former because of his particular interest in the way that humans interrelate in the day to day, and the latter because he has carefully developed a sophisticated thesis explaining the civilising process throughout his body of work, which is predicated on power-relating. My own work tries to make sense of how people come together in every day contexts to achieve things, so it would seem particularly appropriate to adduce scholars who have shared a similar interest. I am also conscious, however, that I could still be accused of bringing in only those researchers who support my pre-existing thesis in the way that Lukes cautions against, but would argue that, because of the contested nature of the concept of power, it is to a certain extent inevitable.

In the section above I have tried to justify my claim that managers are in danger of entering into manipulative social relations with their employees when they make charismatic appeals to them, or create euphoric conditions where employees are drawn into committing to their over-promising, otherwise risking

exclusion. By drawing on Mead and Elias I have tried to explain why groups might be sites of contestation and struggle, and also why participants might feel silenced rather than enabled to speak up with their reservations because of their need to belong:

> We depend on others; others depend on us. In so far as we are more dependent on others than they are on us, more reliant on others than the are on 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. (Elias, 1998: 132)

Trying to encourage employees to commit to organisational objectives is not a new phenomenon and by bringing in Bourdieu I have tried to point to the wider specific dynamics of standardisation and professionalisation that I think have been affecting leaders and managers in INGOs in the late 20th and early 21st century that range beyond the specific narratives that I have adduced to reflect upon. We are all caught up in the marketisation of relations and ways of understanding what we experience together which are self-reinforcing and which are very difficult to escape. They create constraints on what it is possible to do and say which are sometimes so strong as to perpetuate existing patterns of behaviour rather than moving them on, as I drew attention to in the example from South America at the very beginning of this synopsis.

Throughout my projects I have explored the implications of some common dynamics in INGOs for the practice of consultancy. I began to point to some of the ethical implications that arise from the potentially manipulative relations between managers and their staff, and I would like to reprise these arguments here since the process of doing so may indicate different ways of thinking and acting. I have made the case in Project 3 that the situation where an employee is forced to choose between the individualisation of values or their reification in the guise of an idealised whole to which they must submit, creates a state of what Hegel (1807/1979) referred to as 'indeterminacy'. By this he means that individuals become lost in the self, or lost in the other. In other words, the individualisation process leaves us insufficiently grounded in the needs of others,

unable to bring about the enlargement of self to which Mead, Dewey and Arendt refer, or lost to ourselves, unable to recognise ourselves in the abstract reification of the organisation and caught up in the dynamics of a cult.

If we accept these evaluations of the shortcomings of current ways of understanding how values get taken up in organisations it would appear that managers in INGOs are putting themselves and their staff in an impossible position. Motivated by the stated moral aims of INGOs, to bring about greater social justice, employees will probably find themselves continuously falling short of their employer's highly idealised aspirations, and unable to voice their reservations and difficulties for fear of being thought selfish and difficult, as one of the narratives I quoted above illustrated.

What kinds of alternatives can I offer to these ways of understanding values in organisations and what are the implications for management practice and my own practice as a consultant?

An alternative understanding of management and consultancy practice
I explored the concept of gesture and response from different points of view, particularly in Project 3. This understanding of the circularity of gesture and response is also something that interested Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990), who, drawing on Mead amongst others, was keen to develop a theory of practice that overcame the dualisms of subjective/objective and rule-based linear intentionality. Making the transition from anthropologist to sociologist, Bourdieu tried to counter what he considered to be the lifeless formalism of 'scientistic' accounts of human exchange at the same time as rejecting the lack of grounding of subjective interpretation. In so doing he developed a theory of *habitus* which bears many similarities with the thinking of both Mead (1934) and Elias (2000). All three were interested in explaining how continuity and change occur in society, which appears both ordered and disordered at the same time, beyond assuming that it is the narrow intention and will of individuals or some kind of collective and ordered goal setting.

For Bourdieu, 'habitus' is a set of enduring dispositions formed by historical and social context. While for Mead there is still room in the iterations of gesture/response for spontaneous and creative individual variation, Bourdieu is more deterministic; for him, the individual's 'cognitive and motivating structures' cannot be seen independently from the objective structures of history which an individual is both forming and being formed by at the same time. We are products of our cultural and class history just as we are contributing to the creation of that history at the same time. Because the two are inextricably linked, it is impossible to say that one is logically derived from the other, to imply that having X intention will result in Y, because this would imply cutting the action out of its iterative and circular temporality. By analysing the rituals of the Kabyle people in Algeria, Bourdieu concluded that the practical judgement that I quoted Dewey referring to above, occurs with improvisation on and around the *habitus*:

> …only a virtuoso with perfect command of his 'art of living' can play on all the resources inherent in the ambiguities and uncertainties of behaviour and situation in order to produce the actions appropriate to each case, to do that of which people will say "There was nothing else to be done", and do it the right way…the 'art' of the *necessary improvisation* which defines excellence. (Bourdieu, 1977: 8).

Both writers are setting out slightly different theses of emergence, a theory of unplanned emergent novelty grounded in paradox, which is located in a very different concept of time, which Bourdieu counterposes with a scientific understanding of time:

> Science has a time which is not that of practice…Scientific practice is so "detemporalised" that it tends to exclude even the idea of what it excludes: because science is possible only in relation to time which is opposed to that of practice, it tends to ignore time and, in doing so, to reify practices. (Ibid: 9)

Bourdieu's idea of the time of practice is very close to St Augustine's [354-430] (1998) 'present of the past, present of the present and present of the future'

(Book X, Memory and Book XI, Time and Eternity) where it is difficult to disentangle the meaning of an act cut out from the complex background of history and a future which the act provokes. Science, however, describes an act as a phenomenon singled out from this background. For Bourdieu, as for Mead, improvisation, or in Mead's case spontaneity, which is a response in the present drawing on the past and anticipating the future, is never something one can get on top of and master. It becomes aware of itself only through reflexivity, after the event:

> The idea of a practical logic, a 'logic in itself', without the conscious reflexion of logical control, is a contradiction in terms, which defies logical logic. This paradoxical logic is that of all practice, or rather of practical sense. Caught up in 'the matter in hand', totally present in the present and in the practical functions that it finds there in the form of objective potentialities they contain; it can only discover them by enacting them, unfolding them in time. (Bourdieu, 1990: 92)

Commenting on similar situations, where events present to us constraints that are not resolvable with our usual responses, Mead draws attention to a reflexivity that makes sense post factum. In the moment there is only paradox and movement, both one thing and another at the same time. However, rather than being located in fluctuations of power in the structural interaction of capital, class and race, as it is for Bourdieu, Mead's interaction takes place on the level of one human being's engagement with another. This communicative sense-making for Mead is also a theory of mind, the root of what makes us self-consciously human:

> It is by means of reflexiveness – the turning back of the experience of the individual upon himself – that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it; it is by such means, which enable the individual to take the attitude of the other toward himself, that the individual is able consciously to adjust himself to that process, and to modify the resultant of that process in any given social act in terms of his adjustment to it. Reflexiveness, then, is the essential

condition, within the social process, for the development of mind. (1932: 134)

For Mead, because we are inherently social, we are impelled to respond to others. Both Bourdieu and Mead would suggest, however, that we cannot be aware of how we will respond until after we have responded, which in turn informs the next response in an endless chain of interactions, the genesis of which cannot be identified in terms of which gesture led to which response. To respond to others is to make evaluative judgements of which we are not conscious in the moment, although they will be informed by past judgements and the habitus in which we find ourselves. Although absolutely any response is impossible, what the actual response will be is unpredictable, even to ourselves. But the making of such judgements, the exercise of value-creation, is what makes us human since it is part of the formation of mind and self-consciousness.

This retrospective sense-making represents a very different way of understanding what happens between people than that presented in some of the literature quoted at the beginning of this paper, where there is an implication that through reflection, or incentives, or management manipulation it is possible to bring about more predictable outcomes with the engagement with values, in advance of taking action. First there is reflection or intention, then there is action. With a more social understanding of values, the outcome of interactions and the evaluative judgements that have informed them can only be understood together with others in consideration of how our interweaving intentions have patterned themselves. The cause-effect linearity of intention to action has been broken.

In my projects I have explored how for Bourdieu, practice involves the creative improvisation of practitioners around enduring objective social dispositions. For Mead and Elias, practice is a form of mutual adjustment that takes place between social beings against a background of historically informed social conditions. And Elias has a much more explicit understanding that practice takes place within the process of power relating that inevitably occurs between people. A given stimulus will not necessarily result in a particular response but will be conditioned instead by the specific power relationship that pertains between the

actors. In all cases, it is not that any outcome is possible, since the social conditions in which we operate constrain us. The exact outcome is unpredictable.

Summing up alternative thoughts on practice

I have been contributing to my evolving ideas about the deeply social nature of human interaction by suggesting that the meaning of practice only arises in the iterative gesture and response between practitioners. We are able to be objects to ourselves through the process of reflection, to realise ourselves through the interaction with others. The patterning of gesture and response presents time differently rather than just in an A to B causality since we are caught up with others in a sequence of gesture and response where it is difficult to disentangle what led to what. Though based on generalisations, for Mead the 'generalised other' and for Bourdieu a profound understanding of the habitus, we find ourselves improvising with each other around the 'rules'. It is this improvisation that affords the greatest opportunity for novelty which can be surprising to ourselves and others.

The ethics of consultancy practice – the importance of recognition, struggle and communication

In some of the preceding paragraphs I have tried to point to the potential danger of manipulative social relations between managers and their staff, and by implication consultants too, since they are often invited to help managers design workshops where such manipulation becomes possible.

It would not do justice to the substantial literature on facilitation and consultancy to suggest that all books are the same; however there are some popular and pervasive understandings about what facilitators and consultants should do and how they demonstrate competence by 'controlling' groups, which I set out in Project 1. My exposition on practice above, and the case I described in South America at the beginning of the synopis, would indicate to the reader that I would consider these understandings of what a consultant facilitator does to be naïve. However, there is no doubt that a consultant can be a powerful figure in an organisational setting which leaves me with the question as to how a consultant should act, and what the ethical implications of this action are.

In my research for Project 4 I came across three broad approaches to consultancy which I termed: managerialist (Block, 2000; Schwarz, 2000), which supports the dominant realist paradigm of consultancy; organisational development (Schein, 1987; Harrison, 1995), which focuses on a concept of 'organisational culture', positing a separation between 'task' and 'process' and believes that the proper role of the consultant is guardian of process; and post-modern (Taket and White, 2000), which draws self-consciously on a wide range of literature as a way of disrupting any 'totalising' discourses. All three have been concerned to deal with the ethics of consultancy practice acknowledging that the consultant is in a contractual relationship, and should therefore do her best for the contractor, as well as being explicit about the relationship of power that exists between contractor and consultant, consultant and staff members. Writers in all three schools appeal to the idea of an 'authentic' consultancy practice, which has provoked me to consider what authenticity means to me.

For Block (2000), one of the best selling authors on consultancy practice, authenticity involves 'listening to our inner selves' and in doing so, giving up power for the good when the situation demands. Schein (1987) draws on medical analogies where the consultant analyses the organisation's sickness and works out a treatment, and dramaturgical analogies, where the consultant is a detached observer in the audience, watching the play of interaction in order to explain his understanding of the consultant's role. The nature of the problem is less important than the relationship between consultant and client, which is based upon constantly reminding the client that they are in charge, even if it means manipulating them to take responsibility (Schein, 1987 vol. II: 83).
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Taket and White (2000) are perhaps more aware of the many loci of power when people come together to achieve something than either Block or Schein. Authenticity for Taket and White is not so dissimilar to Block's understanding, where there is a heavy dependency on subjectivity. Taket and White seem to be suggesting a kind of pluralism which treats all points of view as equivalent, where everything and nothing are equal.

In putting forward an alternative to these ways of understanding the power relationships between managers, consultants and staff and the ethical implications that arise as a consequence, I need to return to and investigate further the ideas of mutual adjustment set out by Dewey, Mead and Arendt that I was exploring, as well as incorporating the theme of practice as social improvisation that I set out above. In developing the theory of social behaviourism based on the notion of the 'I/me dialectic', Mead owes a great debt to Hegel. Alan Wood (1990) explores this same theme, the process of mutual adjustment, in greater depth in his treatise on Hegel's ethics, particularly when he takes up the master/servant relationship in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) which is an attempt to unravel the dynamics of power and their impact on ethics and mutual recognition. Proper mutual recognition presumes a degree of equivalence: I can only be certain of my own self-sufficiency, or freedom, by making certain of the self-sufficiency of others.

How do we work to create a free self amongst a community of free selves, striving to act against the tendency to manipulate and control, even if that manipulation is conceived as being for the overall good? A number of philosophers, particularly from the hermeneutic tradition would argue that it is through the process of struggle embodied in dialogic exchange. Recognition of self is shifted through the recognition of others, according to Paul Ricoeur:

> The investigation of mutual recognition can be summed up as a struggle against the misrecognition of others at the same time that it is a struggle for recognition of oneself by others. (2005: 258)

We cannot treat others as equals if we move to silence them, through 'controlling the process' of a workshop or by charismatic appeals to believe in what we are doing. By implication, we also need to take ourselves seriously in order to take the other seriously, a point made by Richard Kearney (2003), who draws on Gadamer and Ricoeur. Kearney argues for what he calls diacritical hermeneutics. By this he means an alternative to what he deems the romanticism of Gadamer, who tends towards a 'fusion of horizons', a merging of difference between the self and other, and the post-structuralists, such as Taket and White encountered above, who privilege the other over the self, arguing that the two can never be

reconciled without violence. Through diacritical hermeneutics, Kearney argues, we can maintain a genuine openness to other, a genuinely 'hospitable' relationship to other:

> By refusing to treat the other as so exterior or estranged that it becomes utterly alien, hermeneutics not only alters the ego into a self-as-another but guarantees that the other, for its part, retains a basic fluidity and equivocity. …Indeed I would argue that it is because of this ethical contact, always striving to make the other a little less alien, that we can tender (however provisionally) different interpretations of this or that other. (2003: 81)

This diacritical hermeneutics is only possible on the basis of recognizing oneself as another, and of having some quality of continuity as a narrative self.

Richard Bernstein (1991), exploring a similar vein, calls for what he describes as 'engaged, fallibilistic pluralism' (1991: 336), by which he means the ability to hold onto what we believe and yet stay radically open to the views of others, I believe that to take such a view, that the struggle of practice is to maintain an engaged relationship with the other, irrespective of how alien that other might appear, has profound implications for our understanding of management and consultancy. Rather than leading us to try and bring about value conformity it would impel us rather to explore the paradox of realising oneself through the other. Nor does it imply some kind of relativistic value pluralism, all valuations being considered equal. Rather, the commitment to self and the other at the same time allows for a degree of constancy to self; one should not lose oneself in the other, nor lose oneself in oneself with metaphysical appeals to one's 'true self' or 'inner being'. It could be possible to exercise leadership, to set out value positions as a way of actively and dynamically engaging others, not in order to seek some idealised state of 'balance', which is often what orthodox management literature would aspire to. Instead, one's commitment would be to the constant movement of thought which in turn would lead to attempts not to 'essentialise' the other, not to consider it one homogenous block of not-self.

Summary – practice as ethics

In setting out some other voices on the practice of consultancy I have tried to show that other commentators take seriously the ethical implications of the relationship of power that exists between consultant and contractor, and between both of these and the community of practitioners that they work with. Following on from this I explored an alternative to propositions of 'giving up power for the good', 'benign manipulation' or value pluralism. My own alternative starts from the idea of the importance of mutual adjustment through recognition, but nonetheless stresses the need for constancy to self as a necessary factor in the exploration of the other.

The implications for leadership, by managers or by consultants in their role as group facilitators, is to undermine the idea that leaders should primarily control and manipulate, either through metaphysical appeals or by investing in ways of working that are silencing. Instead, I am recommending that managers and consultants can lead by striving to engage with others in processes which privilege the exploration of similarity and difference and continuity and change in a shared tradition of discovery of the good. In this way we make ourselves more accountable to each other by opening up our claims to scrutiny and debate. I will pick up this theme of engagement with others in the following reflections on method, since it is inseparable from the way that my research has evolved. I mentioned at the beginning of this synopsis that my exploration of the way that values get taken up in organisations has permeated every aspect of my practice. At the point that I am recommending opening up our valuations to the scrutiny of others it is appropriate that I open up my own methods to the same kind of scrutiny by writing an overview of the theories that underpin my research.

Thoughts on method

I have started to make the case above that investigating values involves developing theories of practice, and an investigation into the conditions for active judgement as it affects action. In doing so, in my projects I have described a number of incidents that happened with colleagues in narrative form and have used them as the basis for reflection. There has been a process of iteration with colleagues where I refine my narratives and my reflections on them, trying to

locate my reflections in a wider tradition of thought. How far would this approach conform to the requirements of validity, replicability, and generalisability that would normally be demanded of research methods on other courses? What should I do with the fact that the narratives I have drawn on in my projects are incomplete in many ways, and could be deemed misleading and partial? How can I demonstrate that I have made a contribution to knowledge?

Before making an attempt to deal with these questions and to explore the method of iterations of narrative then reflection, then reflection with others on the narrative and reflection, I would also like to dwell on the nature of the questions being posed about method. Since I will go on to make the case that the method I am adopting involves reflexivity, investigating the assumptions I am using in the course of my work, so I feel impelled to engage with the assumptions behind the demonstration of knowledge. For the questions seem to me to be derived at first glance from methods that are drawn from the natural sciences, which as Baert (2005) and Elias (1978) point out, assumes that all natural scientific methods are the same. There is an implication that there is a logic of enquiry that all successful scientific activities have in common. For Baert this is not the case:

> Different disciplines in the natural sciences function according to very different procedures unless the logic of inquiry is spelled out at such a high level that it loses any meaning…It becomes increasingly apparent that those who believe in this unifying methodology erroneously generalize from a few sub-disciplines (mainly in physics) in which the procedures apply. (2005: 148)

There are dangers, then, in generalising. This is not to say that there is nothing one can put forward to demonstrate validity, replicability, generalisability and a contribution to knowledge, but to assume that it is possible to do so and judge the outcome by standards that are themselves problematic starts to draw out the idea of what we are undertaking. Giddens (1993) makes the case for resisting hegemonic claims from both the natural scientists and those who would oppose them:

It is necessary, in fact, to resist the 'claim to universality', with regard to the explanation of human conduct, of the two major competing traditions of philosophy: hermeneutics and positivism. Each aspires to cover the whole range of human behaviour, to accommodate it to its particular logical scheme. According to hermeneutic philosophers all human action has to be 'understood', and is refractory of the nomological type of explanation which characterises the natural sciences; in the eyes of positivistically minded philosophers, on the other hand, the logical form of natural science applies, broadly speaking, in social science also. (1993: 65)

The competing methodological claims seem to present me with exactly the kind of conflict over goods that I have been drawing attention to in my research, and in itself presents me with a methodological challenge. I would like to see if I can stay critically engaged with the orthodoxy that a PhD thesis should demonstrate a contribution to knowledge partly by setting out alternative ways of understanding the exercise, as well as allowing myself to be provoked into trying to provide what is asked for at the end of the section on method where I will try and sum up what I consider to be my contribution to knowledge.

Some alternative views

If human experience is, by its very nature, unrepeatable, it becomes difficult to lay claim to generalisability either for the data one is studying, or for the method of studying it; each episode is likely to produce slightly different results from the last. Gadamer (1975), one of the hermeneutic philosophers to whom Giddens refers, makes the case that scientific enquiry is teleologically driven by knowledge, and as such creates 'an illusion of experience perfected and replaced by knowledge' (1993: 354). By doing this, Gadamer argues, it robs human experience of much of its value, which is to be found in its historicity and the process of dialectic. The idea of scientific enquiry is to create universal and timeless products that enable us to predict and control nature. In contrast, Gadamer idealises not the product but the process of enquiry; to be experienced, he argues, means that one is open to more experience. He draws attention to conversation, and latterly the conversation with a text, with the aim of pointing to

the Socratic process of questioning, the opening up to otherness, to the dialectic of negation, that is not about being in control but about being increasingly undogmatic and questioning further:

> The art of questioning is the art of questioning further – i.e., the art of thinking. It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue. …To conduct a conversation means to allow oneself to be conducted by the subject matter to which the partners in the dialogue are oriented… As against the fixity of opinions, questioning makes the objects and all its possibilities fluid. A person skilled in the 'art' of questioning is a person who can prevent questions from being suppressed by the dominant opinion. (1993: 360/361)

This is not to say that Gadamer is uninterested in truth, merely that he is less interested in truth as a fixed product rather than the truth that is manifest in an ongoing cycle of enquiry. Drawing on Socrates and Hegel, he believes that knowledge arises in the process of question and answer in a way that is driven by the movement between engaged discussants.

There is no end point in Gadamer's method, and he draws attention to the state of not knowing rather than knowing; we become aware of our own finiteness and inability to plan and predict, acting as we do into a web of other people's intentions. If we are involved in a cycle of question, answer and interpretation it becomes much more difficult to find a pausing point and state clearly that 'this is knowledge'.

Dewey, too, wrestled with similar issues when trying to come to terms with what philosophical empiricism might look like, as set out in *Experience and Nature* (1958). In a chapter on the Philosophic Method, Dewey tries to build a theory that reconciles what he terms empirical philosophy with empirical scientific method. Both, he argues, are concerned with refined or secondary objects of study:

The distinction is one between what is experienced as the result of a minimum of incidental reflection and what is experienced in consequence of continued and regulated inquiry. For derived and refined products are experienced only because of the intervention of systematic thinking. The objects of both science and philosophy obviously belong chiefly to the secondary and refined system. (1929/1958:4)

Dewey argues, phenomenologically, that the data of the first reflection on something that occurs in nature then becomes an object itself, something he terms a 'product', which then forms the basis of further inquiry. He draws no distinction between experience and other observable events such as the deflection of light by the mass of the sun, since experience is both 'of' and 'in' nature. These products become objects of reflection, which in turn become objects of reflection, ad infinitum, the idea being that one is engaged in a permanent reflection on the experience of being alive in nature. This process describes a kind of permanent reflexivity, layer upon layer of complexity that mirrors the process of being alive where we exist in the world and reflect on the experience of being in the world.

Dewey answers the validity question raised above by asking whether this reflection on experience fulfils the following:

Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful?...Does it yield enrichment and increase the power of ordinary things which the results of physical science afford when applied in every-day affairs? (Ibid: 7)

Because Dewey regards experience as unified, in the sense that there is 'no division between act and material, subject and object, but (it) contains them both in unanalysed totality' (ibid: 8) he argues against the separating out of the object and the experience of that object. Indeed, the very act of observation is an object to be enquired into itself:

> We primarily observe things, not observations. But the *act* of observation
> may be inquired into and form a subject of study and become thereby a
> refined object…. (Ibid: 12)

Referring back to the narratives that I write in my projects, then, using Dewey's methodology, I can consider them acts of observation which are worthy of being inquired into, not just in terms of the content, but the form as well.

Dewey also offers some thoughts on the partiality of experience, how it can never be captured because of its complexity and ability to surprise: 'gross experience is loaded with the tangled and the complex' (ibid: 26) and he rails against philosophers who search for an intellectual philosopher's stone of absolutely wholesale generalisations (ibid: 27). If experience and the reflection on that experience can never be whole and is always partial and ragged, Dewey makes the case that what we select and how we reflect upon it becomes an evaluative choice, and this choice should not just concern what we consider to be good. We are obliged, if we use the empirical philosophical method, to consider joy and sadness, the 'coarseness and crudity' of life, and in making our choices what to reflect upon, we should be explicit in how we have gone about it:

> Selective emphasis, choice, is inevitable, whenever reflection occurs.
> This is not an evil. Deception comes only when the presence and
> operation of choice is concealed, disguised, denied. (Ibid: 29)

What Dewey is pointing to here is the need for making one's research approach and methods explicit. He developed a theory of 'warrantable assertability' (1941) by which he meant that, given the elusiveness of truth, the validity of any research claim depended on the making explicit of systematic methods of enquiry.

To sum up briefly, I understand the call for validity, replicability and generalisability to be based itself on a generalisation of the scientific method, which, as I have pointed out above, is itself problematic. However, this generalisation would posit the idea that it is possible to observe nature closely, to

develop a general hypothesis about what is observed, to test this hypothesis as to its validity and then replicate it in other circumstances. The method I have adopted on the DMan programme also observes nature closely, but does not separate the experience of observation from observation itself. The experience is also an object of enquiry. The hypothesis that underpins the method is that of complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2000) (Stacey, Griffin and Shaw, 2000) which draws on analogies from complexity sciences and those writers such as G.H Mead (1934) and Norbert Elias (1939/2000) who have most consistently privileged understanding the world using social and relational concepts predicated on conversation, power and interdependence. My attempt to validate the working hypothesis is by writing a narrative, then sharing this narrative with others, both in my learning set and beyond, as well as trying to locate themes that emerge within a wider tradition of philosophy, sociology and management theory. In so doing I am engaging in what Bourdieu calls 'epistemic reflexivity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) by which he means the intention of constantly exposing the method to critical scrutiny. The process aims to expose the description and experience of the object as well as the interpretive assumptions that accompany them at the same time in the company of what Charles Peirce (1902) originally termed 'a community of inquirers.'

Since narrative, and discussion of this narrative in iterative episodes, is so central to the method, I would like to return to it. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992.) also draw attention to the importance of opening up our enquiry to others; when we talk to each other about our projects in hand we:

> …oblige each participant at once and without contradiction, both to particularize her object, to perceive it as a particular case (this, against one of the common fallacies of social science, namely the universalization of the particular case), and to generalize it, to discover, through the application of general questions, the invariant properties that it conceals under the appearance of singularity. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 234)

Bourdieu destabilises the injunction to generalise by pointing to the fractal nature of reality, the particular in the general and the general in the particular: 'the body is in the social world, but the social world is in the body' (1982: 38). Returning to the idea of paradox, which I began to explore above, the idea of the particular in the universal, and vice versa, is at the heart of qualitative, reflexive research.

Summary – differences between pragmatism, Bourdieu and Foucault

It is important to make a distinction, however, between what Bourdieu meant by reflexivity and what a more Pragmatic interpretation might mean, since Bourdieu tended more towards realism than more recent advocates of pragmatism would (Baert, 2005; Rorty, 1989). At the beginning of the synopsis I also mentioned that I would differentiate Foucault's genealogical approach to history from what I have been doing in my research.

Writers in the Pragmatic and hermeneutic tradition are broadly antithetical to the view that reality can be approximated since what we call reality is always a product of a world view bred out of a particular constellation of events and circumstances:

> For the pragmatist, by contrast, "knowledge" is, like "truth", simply a compliment paid to the beliefs which we think so justified that, for the moment, further justification is not needed. An enquiry into knowledge can, on his view, only be a sociohistorical account of how various people have tried to reach agreement on what to believe. (Rorty, 1991: 24)

Rorty sees himself as a member of a community of sceptical practitioners with whom he is always in solidarity through conversation, never at rest in finding new vocabularies. Meanwhile, Bourdieu was at heart an empiricist and tended towards realism. This is what he said in *Science of Science and Reflexivity* (2004) about the need for the 'objectivation of the subject of objectivation':

> To recapitulate, what has to be objectivated is not the lived experience of the knowing subject, but the social conditions of possibility and therefore the effects and limits, of this experience and, among other things, of the

act of objectivation. What has to be mastered is the subjective relation to the object – which, when it is not taken into account, and when it orients choices of object, method etc, is one of the most powerful factors of error…. (2004: 93)

Bourdieu was suspicious of what he considered to be the 'narcissism' of much micro-sociology such as ethnomethodology and for him the objectivation process involved being explicit about the researcher's membership of a social group, the position they occupy among a particular group of specialists or discipline and thirdly their membership of the 'scholastic universe' since the 'sociology of intellectuals brings to light the particular form of interest which is interest in disinterestedness' (ibid: 94). If there are to be any confessions, he argued, they need to be impersonal ones.

Foucault was keen to avert the danger of what he regarded as the 'inhibiting effect of global totalitarian theories' (1980: 80) and pointed to the ruptures, instabilities and contradictions that such totalising discourses cover over. For Foucault, to question is to exercise ethical freedom. However, it is never clear with Foucault how others might engage in this enterprise, how one would choose from the many points of resistance to totalitarianism to which he draws attention. Foucault insists on the importance of taking care of the self, but Bernstein (1991) shows how Foucault's theories are based on an underdeveloped concept of ethics which is weak on demonstrating the connection between self and others and thus any sense of alternative to our present situation:

> For this way of speaking of ethics which is now sharply distinguished from politics *seems* to be radically individualistic and voluntaristic with no consideration of anything or any 'other' beyond one's relationship with oneself. (Bernstein, 1991: 164)

In the end, Bernstein considers Foucault's position to be solipsistic.

The method I have used in the course of my research borrows elements from all three approaches; it is sceptical of what John Dewey ironically called 'the

spectator theory of knowledge' (2005), is interested in instabilities, ruptures and discontinuities, is committed to reflexivity, but ultimately grounds that reflexivity in communicative interaction with a community of practitioners. It is also more patient with personal experience than is Bourdieu.

On narrative and ethics

Although the use of narrative is now broadly accepted in sociological research as an appropriate method for doing justice to the complexity of what it attempts to investigate (Czarniawska, 2004; Tsoukas and Hatch, 2001), nonetheless finding narratives in much management literature is the exception rather than the rule. The method I have used is predicated upon narrative, discussion of narrative, then more discussion in the way that Dewey draws attention to.

I have already set out above how there are several iterations in the writing of projects between the various drafts, both with my learning set and with others who are prepared to read what I have written. There is also an iterative process for me as I start to write; when I begin to write I find myself engaging with both the experience I am describing and the experience of writing about the experience at the same time. I identify some incident that has caught me because of my area of enquiry about values, and as I try to capture it in writing I find myself responding, similarly but in a more detached way than my initial response, to the way I first reacted when the incident happened. By writing, and by catching myself responding to my writing, I begin to draft differently, a process greatly facilitated by word processing software. This process of gesture and response, which I understand as core to the method of this DMan programme based on the work of G.H. Mead, continues with my learning group; I gesture to them with a draft and they respond which calls out a further gesture from me. In a sense the narrative is never finished and is terminated only by the objective constraint of the time deadline for submission of projects.

Constant iteration and refinement points to one of the great strengths and the weaknesses of the method, in that I cannot be sure that the responsive process I am engaged in so refines the narrative that I am writing that it becomes a polished product, a narrative that supports an argument I want to make, rather

than one that is mined from raw data. This distinguishes it from a method using case study which would be looking to produce a narrative which is as polished and complete as possible. There is a paradox here; although taking the attitude of the other seriously is at the heart of the concept of complex responsive processes, what others think about what I am writing, and by others I mean the ones specifically mentioned in my narrative, is never formally included in the project as it would be with, say, ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). It is possible to justify the process in hermeneutic terms, however, as Gadamer does when he points out to the similarities between having a conversation and having a conversation with, or about a text:

> All this shows that a conversation has a spirit of its own, and that the language in which it is conducted bears its own truth within it – i.e. that it allows something to 'emerge' which henceforth exists. (1975: 385)

What Gadamer is arguing here, like Dewey above, is that once I have written a narrative and engaged others in conversation with it, we create a process of truth discovery irrespective of the verisimilitude of the narrative I have written. The conversation stands with its own truth.

There are cases to be made in both directions, however, about the ethical dimension of narrative. MacIntyre (1981) would argue that narrative is a triumph of social science rather than a failure in natural science terms. The fact that it can produce evolving narratives that fail to predict is a testament to its success of a representation of life that is never finished and permanently under construction, where we negotiate with others the meaning of the story. According to MacIntyre although all lives are lived with a goal, the meaning of that goal is constantly being reformulated in the cyclical understanding of time that I have alluded to above, drawing on Mead (1934). 'The unity of life is the unity of a narrative quest' (1981: 219) written in the present, yet confronting the future derived from the past. MacIntyre also makes the case that narrative allows for accountability to and correlation with others; as well as the realisation that others are part of my story, so I am part of theirs. However, this fact of not knowing how I figure in other people's narratives goes to the heart of my ethical difficulty with my

method. Very few get to see what I have actually written and to put their own point of view. This makes me feel uncomfortable, but some of the incidents I describe would be hard to talk through with people who were party to them, particularly if it shows them behaving badly or in distress. Taking a hermeneutic turn on this issue saves me from having to confront this ethical issue but does not mitigate what might be perceived as a failure to seek corroborating evidence from other parties to the incidents described. It still does not challenge a further criticism that could be levelled, however, which would be to argue that my 'data collection', the incidents that I choose to describe, is unsystematic and partial. This has been the charge from readers of my projects who studied under more orthodox conditions, specifically that the data is weak if it is just based upon my own observations.

Summary

In sum, then, I have tried to describe a dialectical method which draws on everyday experience in the pragmatic and hermeneutic phenomenological tradition and subjects it to an iterative, interpretative conversation between myself and others engaged in the same work. I am also engaged in a conversation with my own emerging text, and with the conversation I am having, with others, with a broader tradition of writers and thinkers who have wrestled with similar areas of enquiry. These conversations then get taken up in my practice, which then becomes the object of study again. The 'truth' or 'knowledge' that arises as a result of this method is in the process of movement back and forth between the various discussants, be they living or dead (the conversation is through their texts). In so doing I am undertaking what Giddens (1991) refers to as a 'double hermeneutic', where interpretation of action itself gets taken up in subsequent action, which he argues as the proper goal of sociological enquiry. The weaknesses of this approach could be perceived to be the lack of validation by other actors engaged in the original actions which are treated as data for reflection, as well as the lack of the systematic collection of 'evidence'. This raises both methodological and ethical concerns, but the method stands or falls in the strength or otherwise of the process of enquiry, rather than the evidence being enquired into. The method accepts as inevitable the partiality of experience and the incompleteness of being able to describe it, and as such broadly conforms to

a pragmatic understanding of reflection on human experience and the importance of accounting to others for my reflections, which inevitably leads to an enquiry into assumptions.

Briefly locating my work in the development management literature

In Project 2 I put forward the case that there are broadly three approaches to development management in the literature; the dominant managerialist school (Fowler, 1997, 2000; Edwards, 1999; and Edwards and Hulme, 1992,1995), which accepts much of the current orthodoxy about the instrumental role of managers; the critical school (Escobar, 1995; Esteva and Prakash, 1998, Cowen and Shenton 1996; Cooke and Kothari, 2001, Murphy, 2005 which draw on a Marxist and/or particularly French Post-modernist, tradition which contends that development, and the form of management that accompanies it, are manifestations of liberal capitalism arising out of imperialism; and thirdly a social anthropological school (Eyben, 2006 and 2005; Mosse, 2005; Mosse and Lewis, 2005; Quarles van Ufford and Giri, 2003; Wallace et al, 2006 and Wallace et al, 1997) who bring to their critique of managerialism a reflexivity that also calls into question the assumptions behind their critique.

My own work shares a lot of similarities with the second and third of these schools of thought, since it mounts a critique of the dominant theories of development management as offering an inadequate explanation of what I have experienced. But it has also developed a different understanding of power, paradox and the relationship between self and other. I have made the case in my projects and in the text above that the instrumentalist understanding of power relating between individuals is weak, and I have given examples where writers in this tradition gave a prescription for the discovery of our 'inner selves' as a means of putting the relationship between self and others on a different footing. I described the dangers of this way of understanding as offering a state of indeterminacy. For the post-modernists, the triumph of one side over another is inevitable but can be mitigated with a doctrine of 'least harm'. Foucault is very popular with writers on development who draw particularly on his concept of 'disciplinary power' (1980), which puts individuals under pressure to conform to prevailing norms at the same time as enabling 'points of resistance' to the same

pressure. Although the post-modernist critique destabilises what it regards as 'totalising' discourses, it often gives us no points of reference to discover alternatives. The social anthropological school, has developed a nuanced understanding of power and enjoins a paradoxical understanding of the relationship between self and others but it often tries to resolve the paradox with a reflective incrementalism and an injunction towards balance or homeostasis. In this respect their preferred paradigm seems to be open systems theory where they assume the ideal state to be one of balance, although there are no injunctions about how one would know when one has achieved it. However, there are a number of scholars writing in the social anthropological tradition (Cleaver, 2004, Masaki, 2004) who set out a paradoxical understanding of human relating with whom I would share many similarities.

As an alternative I have located my own argument within the theories of pragmatism, Norbert Elias, Pierre Bourdieu and a broad tradition of hermeneutic philosophy which attempts to overcome the dualism of self and other, individual and organisation through the exploration of paradox and mutually constructed meaning. It considers power to be a condition of all human relating and not a thing to be 'given up', or utilised 'for the good', or even, as is found in Foucault, a disembodied phenomenon that is some kind of mysterious force.

Conclusions – my contribution to knowledge and its consequences for my practice

In choosing to write about values in development management I have pursued what is still a minority interest in the field. The management of development generally receives less attention in the discourse than development itself, and the dominant paradigm for considering organising usually explores an orthodox, realist understanding of the management task, which borrows heavily from concepts developed in the private sector or from a body of thought that would refer to itself as 'organisational development' (Schein, 1987; Senge, 1990; Argyris, 1990; Harrison, 1995). However, there are increasing numbers of colleagues who are writing in a critical way of orthodox ways of understanding the management of development, and it would be inaccurate to describe the literature as monolithic.

In contributing to the growing voices of dissent I have explored the assumptions behind both management orthodoxy and organisational development and have set alongside my critique alternative understandings of organising as complex patterns of human relating, involving the exploration of similarity and difference, continuity and change (Stacey, Griffin and Shaw, 2000). I am no means the first to draw on these analogies since I am borrowing generously from the ideas of scholars, philosophers and sociologists who have preceded me, but I am one of the first to explore what they might mean in the context of international development. I would contend that I am one of the first to mount a critique of the accepted paradigms of management theory in the context of international development, in particular systems dynamics, in my field.

I have developed an emergent, social understanding of values which borrows from Joas (2000) and Dewey (1934), but which develops their argument drawing on Mead (1934) Arendt (1958) and MacIntyre (1981). I would make the case that the originality of my contribution to thinking about values is the particular constellation of philosophers I have adduced in support of my argument, which has developed a strongly critical perspective on more conventional understandings of values in organisational life which draw heavily on cognitive science. Moreover, I would argue that my arguments concerning the exploration of self and other through dialectical engagement are particularly relevant to a domain of work which is actively involved in intervening in other cultures and societies where the emergence of difference is inevitable.

In addressing the way that values get taken up in INGOs I have particularised and added to the contribution of other scholars who have been critical of the way in which management is practiced as a way of coercing or shaming employees into conforming with organisational priorities (Griffin, 2002 and Stacey, in Griffin and Stacey, 2005; Willmott, 1993 and 2003). The difference I have made to this discussion is to draw attention to the explicit theme of morality in INGOs, which are organisations with an explicit moral mission to do good. Leaders and managers believe themselves to be working in a way which is very different from private sector organisations, and yet I have begun to demonstrate how these

leaders instrumentalise values, which leaves them acting in very similar ways to managers and leaders in private sector organisations. By calling on their staff to believe uncritically and have faith in the organisational mission, leaders are amplifying idealism which surges so strongly in INGOs, and which is one of the reasons why employees seek work with the organisations in the first place. My particular contribution is to draw attention to the metaphysical, religious and charismatic underpinnings of some of these appeals which have a way of silencing those present and leave them competing with each other to belong.

In attending to the similarities between INGOs and private sector organisations my argument draws on other scholars who have pointed to the way in which liberal economic and market values have permeated every aspect of human relating (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, 1991; Willmott, 1993, 2003; Mosse, 2005). My contribution is to challenge the orthodoxy that INGOs are somehow different and to probe the ways in which accepted management behaviour has been adopted uncritically by many leaders and managers in INGOs. In so doing I have also opened up a discussion about ethical consultancy practice in the INGO sector to try and develop a particular understanding of consultancy in this context, given that the literature on consultancy practice for INGOs is either thin, or repeats conventional orthodoxy about what good practice might be (Rowley and Rubin, 2006). In critiquing prominent thinkers on consultancy in general, (Schein, 1987; Block, 2000), I have joined with others mounting a similar critique (Shaw, 2000; Nolan, 2005) but have particularised my argument to the INGO sector, where there has always been a strong debate around the ethics of participation. In setting out arguments showing the importance of critical engagement and mutual recognition, I have begun to sketch out how some of the discourse in favour of promoting participation in development should be taken up equally in the management of development and the practice of consultancy. In so doing I have engaged in a discussion about 'authentic practice' and have implied, then, that authenticity in this particular field will have very particular implications. It will involve privileging the exploration of similarity and difference as much as the conventional orientation towards efficiency and effectiveness.

The method I have used, attending to my own practice and deriving from it narratives which I subject to iterative rounds of discussion with a community of enquirers, is uncommon in the sector and has led to my writing three journal articles for peer-reviewed publications, all of which have been accepted (see appendix). I have also presented in conferences where the management of development is taken up. Discussion of narrative and the themes that get taken up in micro-interactions is unusual, though not unique in the sector. There is a reflexive turn amongst scholars in the domain of international development, and my writing will contribute a particular thread to the emerging themes around the consequences of reflexivity for the management of organisations.

A note on my practice

The most marked difference being on the DMan course has made to my practice is that I have been making a transition from uneasy compliance with my contractors' expectations of how I should engage with a piece of work, to a more pronounced confidence to articulate a way of doing things differently. In recent months I have come across a number of colleagues who are employees in INGOs and who have an instinct that many of the dominant ways of thinking and working go against the grain of radical engagement with beneficiaries in the South, but they have found it difficult to mount a sustained critique of the ways they find themselves obliged to work. What they lack is a coherent enough theoretical basis to answer Richard Bernstein's challenge (1991) 'critique in the name of what?' By seeking out colleagues so that we might work together we have found increasing opportunity to support each other in trying to increase the openings for more independent thought and action, for the encouragement of radical doubt. The incident I described at the very beginning of this synopsis, where raising some gentle questions with a group about how to go on together provoked a hostile reaction, shows that it has not always been easy to encourage and participate in this kind of questioning. Nonetheless, just recently I have tendered for work making my approach of trying to engage with day to day practice rather than spend too much time in idealisation, much more explicit and have won the work nonetheless. Whether my contractors fully understand what it is that I am offering or not is open to doubt; however, there is clearly something interesting enough in what I put forward and the way I put it forward, that they

are prepared to take a chance and try something different. Moreover, I have had a number of experiences in the last few months where merely joining with colleagues and contractors to take their day to day experiences seriously has had the effect of our mutually gaining confidence to dwell in what we are doing together, rather than what we might do. It is important not to underestimate the scale of the task of what we are taking on together, but I believe, like Charles Taylor, that: 'We don't want to exaggerate our degrees of freedom. But they are not zero.' (1991: 99-101).

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Appendix 1

Mowles, C. (forthcoming, 2007) 'Promises of transformation: just how different are development INGOs', *Journal of International Development,* Vol. 19 (3).

Promises of transformation. Just how different are development INGOs?

Abstract
This article argues that there is a growing convergence between development INGOs and private sector organisations in the way that values are taken up as an instrument of management. Rather than promoting the exploration of difference, managers encourage employees to set aside their concerns and have faith in the organisational mission. In this way they exercise control without appearing to do so, and avoid dealing with the day to day difficulty of undertaking the work. Instead managers feel obliged to promise transformation, because of the increased marketisation and professionalisation of development. The article offers an alternative understanding of values as a profoundly social phenomenon requiring reflection and negotiation through and with others.

Article length: 5,413 words

Affiliations and background

Chris Mowles has worked in the field of international development for 25 years, the last ten as a consultant to organisations in the area of strategy development and organisational development. He has an M.Phil in political science from St Antony's College, Oxford, and a DMS from Oxford Brookes University and is currently studying for a PhD at the Centre for Complexity Management, University of Hertfordshire.

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Promises of transformation. Just how different are development INGOs?
In contemplating the increased competition for development aid funds and the greater interpenetration of public, private and voluntary sectors, a number of development commentators have tried to set out what is distinctive about INGOs and the values that they espouse. For example, Thomas (1996, 1999) argues that in development organisations managers should be concerned to bring about progressive social ends. This is most likely to distinguish managers in INGOs as different from private sector managers, who are concerned rather to create profit, although he also concludes that:

> The clearest examples of *good* development management will be those which use the enabling and empowerment mode of management to achieve development goals for the relatively powerless. However, the majority of cases will be more ambiguous, with value-based conflicts, contestation over the definition of development itself and power struggles. Development management will often remain an ideal rather than a description of what takes place.

In this article I will attempt to pick up the idea of values as contested ideals and argue that they are emergent and profoundly social phenomena, which can only ever be the domain of struggle and contestation if they are not to become prescriptive and inhibiting of human freedom. In contrast, I will begin to make the case that there is an increasing convergence between the private and INGO sectors in the ways that the theme of values gets taken up by managers in organisations and scholars as a way of instilling obedience and conformity in employees away from this idea of contestation and struggle. Values are confused with organisational norms, or rules, and are taken up by managers as a way of stifling discussion and ensuring compliance. Alternatively they become reified and mystified and taken up in a metaphysical way. In the latter case, employees are invited to 'believe' and have 'faith' in the organisational mission with a quasi-religious submission. In this way leaders cover over the power they are exercising and offer an escape to an idealised future rather than focusing on the day to day complexity that staff face in doing their daily work.

I will review the literature on values from both sectors and draw on my experience as a consultancy practitioner invited to work with organisations in both sectors as they take up values. Finally, I will make the case, drawing on Bourdieu (1991), that the intrumentalisation of values, taking up values as an instrument of management, arises as a direct result of the professionalisation and marketisation of the development domain, where INGOs face very similar pressures to those encountered by private sector companies.

This article contributes in a small way to a growing body of literature on development which is critical of the dominant discourse of managerialism (Eyben, 2006 and 2005; Mosse, 2005; Mosse and Lewis, 2005; Quarles van Ufford and Giri, 2003; Wallace et al, 2006 and Wallace et al, 1997). There are also scholars such as Cooke (2004) and Murphy (2005), who have drawn attention to the way in which the INGO sector gets co-opted into a globalised liberal economic agenda. In their own way these writers on development management fit into a broader tradition of scholars in the more general

management literature, starting with Willmott (1993), who have pointed to the trend in for managers increasingly to insist on conformity and compliance with narrow business objectives dressed up in discussions about 'organisational culture'. This has increasingly led to the development of critical management studies (Fournier and Grey, 2000), which is broadly anti-performative and in favour of a greater turn to reflexivity in the practice of management. My article sits within this tradition of thought.

Values – social processes of inclusion and exclusion
In this article I am using the definition of values drawn from Joas (2000) following the Pragmatic philosopher John Dewey (1934). I am turning to the Pragmatists because of their patient attention to every day human experience. Since values arise daily in our interaction with others, they became a subject of particular interest for both Dewey and G.H. Mead (1934) his friend and colleague. For Dewey values are both compelling (in a voluntary sense) and uplifting at the same time, since they are freely chosen. He considered them to be paradoxical; they are 'voluntary compulsions'. Values arise not as a result of our rational intent but out of experiences of self-transformation and affective self-transcendence; we can experience, both individually and collectively, an idealised wholeness, an idealised way of life to which we aspire, which we can never achieve, but which nonetheless motivates our actions. Through the articulation and rearticulation of our values in our daily experience with others, we are able to regenerate them and take on new ones. This is one of our highest expressions of human agency. The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor argues that this thread of the articulation of our values as they arise in daily experience is constitutive of our identity, (Taylor, 1989).

Values contrast with norms since the latter are obligatory and constraining, providing moral criteria for assessing what ought to be done. To reinforce the distinction between values and norms, Joas describes the difference between the good (what I consider to be good, driven by my values) and the right, which is what the majority of reasonable people would consider to be the right.

Both Dewey and Mead, were convinced of the central importance of values for inspiring human action, at the same time as being wary of them. Idealisations are uplifting, but give very little guide as to what sense we should make of them here and now, in the day to day, as we try to decide how to go on together. An appeal to values can be a way of covering over power relationships and the difficulties that we are having in working out how to go forward. For example, during the First World War, Mead was perplexed by the fact that the opposing governments both attributed to themselves noble values for the war they were waging and encouraged their populations to support them on the basis of the generalised idealisations they were using. Mead argued (1914, 1923) that when countries or institutions think of themselves as if they were wholes they then can start to ascribe to all the members of that idealised group values that are deemed universal and overriding norms. He coined the phrase 'cult values' to describe this ascribing of values to an idealised group. Cult values are an important part of who we are and where we come from, but ethical issues arise when the values of an idealised group become norms to which individuals must subscribe if they are not to be deemed sinful or selfish, i.e. they become a cult which can exclude or

include according to the level of adherence to the values described as norms. A good example of this has arisen over the last few years where it has been impossible for American citizens to criticise the Bush government's actions in Iraq since he had ascribed to his government's actions a defence of 'freedom and democracy'. To oppose the government was tantamount to rejecting freedom and democracy, which, of course, we would all want to support.

According to Mead and Dewey, all values and goals must be able to become objects of reflection and discussion in order to understand how we might functionalise, or make practical, those idealisations in our daily lives, otherwise our ability to express ourselves and explore the nature of our freedom with others, is extremely constrained.

In summary, then, by drawing on the Pragmatic tradition of Dewey and Mead I have tried to make the case that values are affective and transcendent states that enable us to imagine an idealised future. As such they help motivate human action. But I have also pointed to situations where values can get taken up and ascribed to a whole idealised grouping as a way of stifling discussion, potentially excluding those who dare to disagree with the way they are being articulated; they get taken up by leaders as 'cult values'. We are invited to set aside our doubts and believe in the cult, or risk rejection by the idealised group. When leaders take up values in this way they are using them as a form of social control. Dewey and Mead would make the case, rather, that values should be functionalised, made open to reflection and contestation as a way of creating the greatest space for human agency and expression.

Conventional theories of values in the management literature
It is my contention that managers in and commentators on organisations in both private and INGO sectors are interested in the theme of values because they are all concerned that their organisations work towards the good. However, they do so without recognising them as intensely social phenomena, and without acknowledging the power relations that arise when they are addressed. They often confuse values and norms, and treat the former as though they were instruments of management to achieve organisational ends through some process of alignment, producing the dynamic of convergence to which I referred earlier.

Here are just a few examples from the mainstream organisational literature. Dolan and Richley (2006) generalise the phenomenon of values and consider them as a thing to be managed; first came management by instruction, they argue, then management by objectives and now it is time for management by values. In a mixture of complex adaptive systems thinking, chaos theory and pathetic fallacy, the authors describe organisations as 'complex living entities' where values act as a governing principle:

> For individuals, groups, organisations and society, value systems are the strange attractor that determines the general form of their behaviour. (2006: 236)

What the authors seem to be reaching for a way of getting the different 'parts' of an organisation to line up and point in the same direction. Rather than placing the

onus on individuals, though, for Dolan and Richley it is for the manager to stand outside what is happening and control things for the good of the firm: 'Thus, today, effective managers should tap into peoples' values as a way of motivating them.' (ibid: 237) Being a good manager is likened to tapping in to some mysterious energy source, which, once found, can be channelled for the good of the organisation.

Weber (1993) approaches values from the perspective of cognitive psychology and enquires whether it is possible to prove an empirical link between personal values and moral reasoning. He combines Rokeach's (1968, 1973) four personal value orientations with Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) stages of moral development to produce a variety of grids showing the relationship between an individual's values and their ability to take certain kinds of decisions on moral grounds. The utility of this, Weber argues, is that managers could then better predict the likelihood of staff behaving in a particular kind of way, new staff could be recruited who would fit the 'culture' of the recruiting organisation, and the information could assist firms to develop ethical training courses to promote ethical decision-making and behaviour.

Here are some examples of the way that values get taken up in the INGO management literature, which bear some of the same hallmarks as the mainstream literature because the authors draw on the same ways of thinking. In general they consider values to be a cognitive and individualised phenomenon and they reach for a way of using values as an instrument of management to enhance organisational performance. For example, Padaki (2000) is explicit in his belief that values are located 'in' an individual:

> Since the basis is in the organisation of an individual's belief system, the correct and precise meaning of the term value is as an *individual* attribute. It is formed in the individual, and is assessable, too, as an individual attribute (for example as materialistic value, religious value, or altruistic value). (2000, 422)

There is little explanation as to how, exactly, these values are formed in the individual, and for Padaki, an organisational 'value system' is one where the sets of individual values map over each other to form a small number of overlapping values. Despite describing values as an individual attribute, Padaki later goes on to assert that values are also located 'in' organisations, which seem to demonstrate similar characteristics to an individual, both having 'terminal' and 'instrumental' values. His article develops a number of grids and matrices for understanding the prevailing 'value system' in an organisation as a means for thinking about how it can be changed for the better performance of the organisation.

Padaki does acknowledge conflict over values, but believes that this needs to be managed in a 'healthy' way, although we are left unclear about how we would recognise healthy management of values. There is no discussion of power, or of how it is possible for managers to stand outside this process of alignment and manipulate it at the same time.

Hailey (2000), wants INGOs to 'measure' their values and by doing so demonstrate their distinctiveness to funders. The idea that values can be measured gets picked up by both Pasteur and Scott Villiers (2004) and Chambers (2005) and soon leads to the idea for the former that employees should police themselves towards congruence with organisational values, or for the latter as a reason for excluding those who cannot work according to organisational values. Values are 'non-negotiables' (Chambers, 2005, 74).

What is common to all these ways of thinking about values is that they are seen as a legitimate domain for managerial intervention and control, with the conviction that values can be managed for the good. Wanting to achieve the good is shared by writers from both private and INGO sectors, and both are explicit about their ethical concerns, despite some commentators from an INGO background believing themselves to be different. However, in general they fundamentally misunderstand the affective and social nature of values, as described by Joas, Mead and Dewey, which are likely to make them impervious to rational interventions and beyond manipulation and control. Many commentators talk about values in a taken for granted way, as though the confusion between values and norms were shared. By taking a cognitive or instrumental approach to values, scholars forget that they are above all idealisations and ignore their role in power relating in groups. There is often an implicit authoritarianism in the way that they write about values, however, since for many conformity and alignment is all.

Working with organisations on values
I will draw on a couple of examples of consultancy working with organisations from both sectors where the theme of values arose, as a way of drawing attention to the tendencies of managers in both sectors to consider values as a tool for exercising control, wittingly or not.

Narrative 1: the private sector – "We are one!"
I was asked to be part of a facilitation team at an event in Madrid for a large European bank, which had bought up several smaller banks from other European countries in a merger. Employees were invited from the training departments of all the banks concerned to look at how they might manage diversity, and how they might set up a central training resource together. We were to use a method of training called 'Group Genius', carefully selected by the new senior manager, the copyright of which has now been bought by the fifth biggest management consultancy in the world and which is used as a method with companies all over Europe and the United States. Group Genius promises to unleash enormous creativity from participants in problem solving and team building. From the moment participants enter the room, everything is tightly controlled, from when they can take their breaks and meals, who they can talk to, to when they can go to bed. Participants have to take part in lots of high pressure activities that usually involve modelling with pipe cleaners, play-doh, balloons and bits of cardboard. They are rushed from one activity to the next with very little time for reflection or discussion and are made great promises about the levels of creativity they will achieve if they follow instructions.

The new senior manager greeted participants at the beginning of the three days we were to spend together by telling them how excited she was at the prospect of working together and how important it was for everybody to create a unified department, despite the cultural differences. She told them that it was very important to her that they should unite and work together. As the days proceeded the participants were asked to build models and were clearly caught up in what they were doing. They presented their work to each other with much clapping of hands, whistles and shouting. There was an almost constant state of euphoria encouraged by the facilitation team who would play music such as the Mission Impossible theme tune to accompany each presentation. Each of their models summed up a concept expressing the new organisation's values – the slogans the participants chose were things like "We are one", or "Just do it!"

This frenetic activity continued until the afternoon of the second day when participants suddenly subverted the task that they were given and began to ask the new director in a plenary session about what kind of job they would have in the new set up, or if they would have a job at all. They wanted to know where the new training centre would be sited, and if they would have to travel great distances. It clearly took a lot of courage for participants to take part in this discussion, and some of them were clearly nervous in doing so, since the prevailing atmosphere was positive, upbeat and congratulatory.

Narrative 2: INGOs – The promise of transformation
I was asked to facilitate a three day strategy meeting for a leading British INGO. For the first two days the participants had shared their difficulties of undertaking the current strategy. Partly these difficulties had to do with the messiness of all development work, but partly it had to do with the way the organisation had not dealt managerially, practically and in terms of policy, with key aspects of the strategy. In this respect, the INGO was no different from many other organisations working in the sector. Some things had gone well, some things were inadequate.

There were some senior managers present who occasionally intervened in the group to encourage participants not to 'focus on the negatives' but to look forward to the future and be ambitious since the current strategy was considered to be 'too modest'.

During the last session the participants were asked to present to the Chief Executive, who started off by sympathising with participants about how difficult the previous strategy had been to implement and shared some of her own struggles with it. She then proceeded to tell them that in order to launch the new strategy in the organisation it would need to be ambitious and exciting. Excitement was the only way to get people motivated, she said and she used the following image: "There is a train leaving from the station and it's going to a very exciting place, and I want you all to be on it. We are going to transform the lives of millions of poor people over the coming period."

Participants began to get swept up themselves in the excitement and began to compete with each other to say how excited they were at the prospect of transforming the lives of so many people, some even going as far as to distance

themselves from their previous doubts and difficulties and to apologise for being negative.

Reflections on the narratives
Although emerging from very different contexts, the two narratives share similarities, particularly around the way values get taken up by managers in organisations in the group setting, whether they are conscious of doing so or not. The choice of method for the bank workshop which forced participants to rush from one activity to the next excluded the opportunity for discovering difference as well as diversity and left no space for the very real anxieties that employees had about their future. Equally, the INGO workshop ended by distracting from people's previous rooted experience of struggling with the strategy in the organisation. In both cases an idealised future was privileged over current difficulties and in both cases the process excluded reflection and reflexivity. Common to both was the contribution of leaders and managers to creating a 'we' identity of the group which could only be upbeat, positive and unified; more than this, in both instances the leaders had contributed to a feeling of group euphoria that no one was prepared to take the risk of gainsaying. Both created conditions where it became a 'cult value', drawing on G.H. Mead, to be hyperbolically positive and to be otherwise was to risk exclusion. In two such euphoric environments it was almost impossible to break ranks because of the need to belong. What I am pointing to here is the tendency of both leaders to privilege the idealised future over dealing with the very real anxieties and difficulties that staff had articulated or wanted to articulate about their every day working experiences. I consider this to be a missed opportunity to deal with difficulty and difference and fear that both leaders are avoiding the possibility of breaking the patterns of the past.

I want to make it clear at this point that I am not against excitement in organisations, nor am I against managers motivating their staff. What I am drawing attention to is the unreflective way in which idealised values get taken up in organisations, which is common to both sectors, in a way that threatens to alienate employees from their own experience. Moreover, it leads to managers over-promising – it is no more possible to make a new organisation unified simply by declaring it so than it is to 'transform' the lives of millions of poor people over the short life of a strategy. Change is too difficult, incremental and painful for that. Wittingly or not, managers are creating conditions which make a powerful gesture towards closing down on dissent and difference.

I will now make a case that one reason for senior managers getting drawn into using idealisations to induce conformity, encouraging employees to 'believe' and have 'faith' in organisational mission and values, is because of the increased globalisation and marketisation of all organisations, including INGOs. Even though some commentators on INGOs believe them to be ideologically different, they are actually caught up in similar pressures to commercial organisations.

Pierre Bourdieu, took up the theme of the economic and structural basis of human relating throughout his work, and was particularly interested to demonstrate how our behaviour is located in the socio-economic conditions in which we find ourselves. Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991),

compares linguistic interaction to a market place where we try to extract maximum value and legitimacy in our encounters with others. In doing so he is pointing to issues of power in human relating:

> In other words, utterances are not only…signs to be understood and deciphered; they are also *signs of wealth* intended to be evaluated and appreciated, and the *signs of authority* intended to be believed and obeyed. Quite apart from the literary (and especially poetic) uses of language, it is rare in everyday life for language to function as a pure instrument of communication. (1991: 66)

We cannot reach a full understanding of the implications of the words and actions of senior managers in these workshops by considering their words and actions alone, since they are also responding to processes which they are caught up in that are raging outside the workshop. INGOs are exposed to pressures arising from the dominance of liberal economic thinking and the marketisation of aid. When both senior managers speak to their employees they are also appealing to an audience beyond it, to other banks who are watching to see whether this new bank will succeed or not, to the community of aid practitioners, including big donors to this INGO like the British government and the World Bank, who understand international development in a particular way. This community of interest is described by Bourdieu as a 'field of specialised production' where:

> The struggle tends constantly to produce and reproduce the game and its stakes by reproducing, primarily in those who are directly involved, but not in them alone, the practical commitment to the value of the game and its stakes which defines the recognition of legitimacy. (Bourdieu, 1991: 58)

Both senior managers are caught up in a 'game' of 'specialised producers' who have a stake in continuing to describe the world in the way that they do. To call into question the legitimacy of this way of working is also to criticise other practitioners in the field of specialized production where such discourse has value, and amongst community of people who have an interest in maintaining the value of the game.

For any professional it is hard to come to terms with the lack of reality convergence of some of the claims that were made in both workshops, that an organisation could 'transform the lives of millions of poor people' for example. But the CEO was making a speech to a wider constituency, the kind of speech that a politician would make to convince the unconverted. This is how Bourdieu understands the language of the politician and their relation to their constituency:

> …the politician derives his political power from the trust that the group places in him. He derives his truly magical power over the group from faith in the representation that he gives to the group and which is a representation of the group itself and of its relation to other groups. (Ibid: 188)

Interestingly, Bourdieu draws attention to the 'faith' and 'magic' that is required to keep these promises aloft, which is exactly the dynamic I have been pointing to, where employees are invited to believe in organisational values. The politician, according to Bourdieu, is less interested in truth than she is in mobilising support, and she does so on behalf of the institution she represents. INGOs in particular derive their legitimacy partly on the basis of the number of people that can be mobilised in support of their representations of the work that they are doing, rather than just the quality of the work itself. And it seems to me that INGOs, like many other organisations, are also caught up in global processes of marketisation and competition that make their appeals for support more frenetic and their claims more outrageous, like the competing claims of rival brands of soda. To vie for people's attention INGOs feel they have to offer nothing short of transformation; it is from this promise that they feel they derive their power.

In commenting on the professionalisation and bureaucratisation of politics, Bourdieu remarked that:

> …the struggle for the monopoly of the development and circulation of the principles of division of the social world is more and more strictly reserved for professionals and for large units of production and circulation, thus excluding de facto the small independent producers (starting with the 'free intellectuals'). (Ibid:196)

I would argue with others (Wallace et al,1997, Mosse, 2005, Mosse and Lewis, 2005) that international development has also been caught up in this process over the last 10-15 years, whereby the space for independent thought separate from the dominant discourse has greatly diminished. The field has been professionalized and it is now a locus for career advancement as any other – there is a much greater and more standardised consensus not just on the meaning of development, but the way it should be undertaken, and a professionalized elite that has an interest in the perpetuation of these ways of understanding. This convergence of view about market mechanisms and the process of organisational management stretches across all sectors of the economy and has created further processes of competition and rivalry that bring with them their own dynamics, such as the need to over-promise.

Conclusions

In this article I have tried to make the case that, despite the desire on the part of some commentators to portray INGOs as having a different ideology from commercial organisations, and of having different values, they are caught up in many of the same competitive dynamics which lead managers in INGOs to behave in similar ways to those in private sector organisations. International development work has become internationalised and professionalized which leads to a convergence in thinking about how to manage. I use as an example the way that values get taken up in organisations, not as domains of discussion, negotiation and reflection, but as a way of inducing obedience and conformity. Managers confuse values and norms and end up by inviting their employees to 'believe' and have 'faith' in the organisational values, which often leads them

into hyperbolic over promising. Either this or they try to instrumentalise values to encourage obedience often at the expense of employees' own grounded understanding of their day to day experience. An alternative to this way of thinking is to understand values as, above all, idealisations that are intensely social phenomena requiring constant renewal and negotiation.

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Appendix II

Mowles, C. (2008) "Values in organisations – negotiating non-negotiables", *Development in Practice*, Vol 18 (1)

Values in organisations – negotiating non-negotiables

Abstract
Values are an important theme in discussions in International NGOs (INGOs) and help to create the conditions for solidarity amongst staff. But at the same time they are also frequently the source of demoralisation and destructive conflict. This is because the way values have come to be thought about, as instruments of management or as part of some inchoate mystical whole, renders the power relationship between staff and managers undiscussable. Values need not be thought of as an instrument of management but are above all idealisations. An alternative theory of values is that they are an emergent, and an intensely social phenomenon that arises daily between people engaged in a collective enterprise. They are idealisations, but ones which have to be discussed in the every day. Conflict is inevitable, but the exploration of the nature of this conflict in daily practice is the only way of returning the discussion of values into an enlivening process.

Key words: values; systems theory; emergence; idealisation.

Word count, including abstract and references: 6498

Affiliations and background

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Why values?
As a consultant to INGOs I often get asked to work with values by staff and managers. A number of patterns repeat themselves in the interchanges between us, and there are unspoken assumptions about the role of values in organisational life which I am expected to share. The principal of these is that an organisation can 'have' values and that these should be fully shared by the employees; the way to undertake strategy, then, is to have a strong vision for the organisation, which is a way of realising the organisation's mission and values and to find ways of airing this vision so that employees can commit to it. Often I am enjoined to help staff and managers 'close the gap' in practice between what they aspire to and what they find themselves doing. A large part of this process is about trying to inspire and motivate employees, which I explore below, but there is also a dynamic which is less discussed about power and obedience. In one large British INGO I was told that the Director had commanded that some organisational values be 'non-negotiable', by which I think she meant that employees are supposed to obey without dissent. The idea of anything being non-negotiable in as rich and contested a domain as international development is for me an interesting proposition.

Over the last ten years I have been struck by how often values, which are supposed to be a source of organisational solidarity and motivation, end up being cited by managers and staff alike as being one of the principle causes of their discontent with each other, or for partner organisations with INGOs. For example, I was contracted by a British INGO to work with their staff in Bangladesh because they had argued themselves to a standstill over how to proceed with a series of new projects. For the managers, the important organisational values were to do with working as efficiently as possible for the beneficiaries; the staff, on the other hand complained that the organisation's values of inclusiveness and consultation did not seem to apply to them – they did not feel 'valued' by the managers. In a small children's charity I worked for in London, the first task the incoming director addressed himself to was the 'rebranding' of the organisation which involved rewriting the mission statement and revisiting the values. He did this in a way that so alienated the staff that he eventually parted company with the organisation after a few months. How is it, then, that in organisations with such explicit values oriented to doing good in the world that staff can end up feeling undervalued, or that organisational value statements can become a source of frustration and demoralisation? How do staff and managers working in organisations with an overtly moral mission tend to explain and exercise that morality with regard to each other?

In what follows I will investigate briefly what Northern and Southern writers are currently saying about values in INGOs, and I will go on to explore how organisational theory has developed to include values principally from a Northern perspective. I will offer a critique of the dominant paradigm of understanding organisations also from within a Northern sociological and philosophical tradition, conscious of my own ignorance of rich Southern philosophical traditions, which for this article at least, remain largely untapped.

Current ways of thinking about values
In recent years a number of prominent development writers have drawn attention to the need to rediscover values and find new ways of talking about them, to rediscover development INGOs' moral mission. In talking about values themselves, these writers reveal their own assumptions about the genesis of values and their purpose in organisational life. Broadly speaking, either they consider values to be another instrument of management and forget their symbolic significance, or they overstate their symbolic significance to the extent of straying into transcendental explanations. They describe them either in systems terms, or by appeals to the metaphysical, and I will go on to explain why there is great synergy between systems thinking, which idealises the 'whole organisation', and metaphysical explanations that invite obedience. In reducing values to a rational instrument of management, or of elevating them to a metaphysical plane, the inevitable power struggles over meaning and interpretation are rendered undiscussable. It becomes risky for managers and staff alike to try to negotiate the non-negotiable.

By metaphysical explanations I mean those that offer descriptions or a causality of events that transcend the everyday, often hinting at supernatural teleology. Describing organisations as 'living, breathing wholes', or as places of spiritual transformation is increasingly common in management literature, and particularly in INGOs.

By systems explanations I mean the tendency to think of an organisation as an idealised whole, a system. Systems theory was first imported into organisational theory from engineering and the biological sciences in the 1950s and began with first order systems theory, or cybernetics (Wiener, 1948). Cybernetics works on the principle of negative feedback which brings a system back into equilibrium, usually a set of predetermined standards; anyone who has used the log frame approach (LFA) in development will recognise it as a cybernetic system with the predetermined standards as the milestones. Latterly, systems thinking has developed into systems dynamics and beyond, to include theories of emergence and complexity, such as complex adaptive systems theory (Jackson, 2000). Systems dynamics includes the idea of both positive and negative feedback, and has been popularised by writers such as Peter Senge (1990), Chris Argyris (1982), and Donald Schön (1991). Systems thinking often gets written about as if it were just one theory, rather than one with very many different and evolving manifestations.

Since it is based on the idea of a bounded whole, systems thinking usually expresses itself in spatial metaphors, so organisations are thought of as having an inside and an outside and of being organised on different levels; at the 'highest level' there is the organisation, while departments sit at the next level down, which comprise teams, which comprise individuals. To make an intervention into an organisation, or to undertake strategy, means to manipulate the parts so that the whole imagined shape is altered. The parts and the whole are intrinsically interrelated. Equally an individual, as the lowest component in the organisational system, has sub-systems, and one of these is their values. From a systems

perspective it is possible to think of organisations as 'having' values and for these to permeate all the 'levels'.

To give two examples of the metaphysical perspective, in an essay on NGOs and social change Edwards and Sen (2002) criticise INGOs for having forgotten their values:

> The claim that development NGOs are explicitly "values-based" organisations is an article of faith these days. However, there is less evidence that NGOs put these values into practice in their organisational structures and behaviour, or even that they are clear what their core values are. (2002: 47)

Aware of the slippage between overtly value-driven organisations and their practice, Edwards and Sen see a call for personal transformation as a remedy:

> It is fascinating to recognise that the core of religious teaching concerns our feelings towards each other – a deeply social statement as much as it is profoundly personal. But to love our neighbours as ourselves, we must come to understand our inner being, to recognise that in our deepest essence we are compassionate, capable of giving love and worthy of receiving it. (2002: 43)

In their consideration of 'organisational values' Edwards and Sen seem primarily interested in the individual and in our mutual feelings for each other. Paradoxically, although both authors call for a greater recognition of interdependence and decry selfishness, their solution lies in the direction of personal transformation and discovering one's "inner essence". However, there seems to be no clear way of knowing how one might discover this 'essence', bridging the inner and outer, or of understanding how this inner transformation would take place except through transcendental means.

Giri and Quarles van Ufford (2003), also argue for personal transcendence as a means of rediscovering development's moral mission. Much more critical than Edwards and Sen of the neo-liberal managerialism that pervades modern INGOs and the way they conceive of development, the authors call for a more nuanced, contextualised vision of development, where particular individuals work together in a more explicitly mutual enterprise. We begin to stray into transcendental territory, though, when they call for a kind of personal moral re-education through the cultivation of 'appropriate virtues':

> A transcendental awareness makes us much more modest in our claims, respects the contingencies of life but does not treat them as accidentality, and seeks to relate contingencies to a web of connectedness, an experience of the whole – a whole which however is not hegemonic nor totalitarian. Transcendentality is also an aspect of our day-to-day and embodied experience, which helps us to understand the limitations of any particular location, position, worldview and to be open to another self, worldview and another world. (2003: 269)

Although acknowledging interdependence, and what begins to be a subtle exposition of the difficulties of putting values into action within an exploration of interdependence, the authors finally resort to a call for the 'transcendental inspiration of unconditional love' to put development back on a more moral footing. Somehow the 'grammar of paradox' that the authors refer to in the essay, the self and other, the giver and receiver, the individual in the organisation, cannot be sustained without metaphysical absolutes, an appeal to a 'non-hegemonic whole', whatever the authors mean by this, and it loses its generative power. It is not difficult to pick up the religious undertones to this approach.

To give two examples of systems approaches to values, Pasteur and Scott-Villiers (2004) are aware of the 'gap' between espoused values and practice. Taking a very explicit systems perspective, and drawing on both Argyris (1982) and Senge (1990), they assume that values, attitudes and behaviours to be the last box in a series of nested boxes that make up an organisation and the people that work in it. The individual sits within a team, which sits within an organisation, which sits within its environment. It is important, then, to use different 'lenses' to scrutinise what is going on in these different layers in order to fully understand what is happening. Paying attention to one's attitudes and values allows one to 'close the gap' between rhetoric and practice:

> …learning requires ongoing honest reflection on the kinds of personal, organisational and institutional assumptions that underlie programme goals. It involves a deep questioning of personal attitudes and behaviours and whether they are congruent with espoused objectives. It also requires a broader reflection on whether the procedures, cultures, and relationships are supportive of the expressed goals. (2004: 196)

This way of thinking implies that organisational value statements could be realisable, and places a burden on the individual somehow to get their attitudes and behaviour in alignment with everyone else's and with the explicit policies of the organisation. It implies that some kind of synergy is possible if individuals are 'honest' enough in their enquiry, and their personal enquiry is deep enough. 'Closing the gap' between policy and practice is essentially a problem to be solved on our own; it becomes a matter of conscience and conscientious enquiry to effect a transition to a preconceived standard. Individuals are part of the 'system', but are also expected to step outside it and observe and correct their own behaviour. This is close to a cybernetic approach to values where individuals reflect upon their own action to correct themselves towards the known standard of organisational values. It also uses the familiar spatial metaphors of gap closing, an inner and an outer.

Meanwhile Chambers (2005) talks of the need for a 'congruent culture' where the values of the individual line up with the values of the organisation. In his book *Ideas for Development* he quotes the ActionAid values statement thus:

> ActionAid lives by the following values:
> > *Mutual respect*, recognising the innate dignity and worth of all people and the value of diversity

> *Equity and justice,* requiring us to work to ensure that everyone –
> irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, class and religion – has
> equal opportunity for expressing and utlizing their potential;
>
> *Honesty and transparency*, requiring us to be accountable for the
> effectiveness of our actions and open in our communications with
> others;

Chambers describes this as a 'practical document' which contributed to 'a common commitment and organizational culture'. He has neglected the fact that it is an idealisation. He considers it 'passionate' and 'inspired by outrage. It combines vision, values and realism.' (2005: 79). What we notice here again is the idea that all the 'levels' of an organisation need to be in equilibrium; there should be alignment between the values of the individual and the espoused values of the organisation, in addition to which the organisation has become reified, as if it were itself a person which could itself live by these expressed values. He is also explicit in his assertion that those who do not share this set of values, whatever they might mean on the day to day, should work elsewhere. Earlier on in the chapter he argues how setting out 'non-negotiables' is a means for establishing and clarifying mutual values. At the same time as pointing out how values can be both motivational and inspirational, Chambers also turns them into an instrument of management and control.

As a consultant working with INGOs I am constantly reminded of how important the value-base of development work is, since a lot of the people who work for and with INGOs are motivated by feelings of solidarity with each other and with beneficiaries. But it is also important to consider their limitations, and in exploring these, particularly if we conceive of organisations, or movements as idealised wholes, we immediately bump up against compulsion, power and potential exclusion. We also need to start to disentangle ourselves from metaphysical and transcendental explanations of the role of values in organisational work. It is clear that many people are also motivated to join INGOs for religious or political reasons, and these should be respected, but there are other ways of thinking about the role of values in organisations that keep the argument more inclusively in the day-to-day.

What are values?
To look for a definition of values, I will draw on Hans Joas' book *The Genesis of Values* (2000) in which he makes a distinction, drawing on Dewey (1934), between norms and values; norms are obligatory and constraining and provide moral criteria for assessing what ought to be done, while values are paradoxically both compelling (in a voluntary sense) and uplifting at the same time, since they are freely chosen. It is important to understand the paradoxical nature of values as Joas describes them since he presents them as the highest expression of our free will; they combine commitment and voluntary compulsion at the same time; they are 'voluntary compulsions'. Through the creative intervention of the imagination we experience affective moments of self-transcendence in the daily acts of encounter with others. Our values influence us to act for the good in these situations and contribute to our sense of self, Dewey would argue:

> The idealising imagination seizes upon the most precious things found in climacteric moments of experience and projects them. We need no external criterion and guarantees for their goodness. They are had, they exist as good, and out of them we frame our ideal ends. (1934: 38)

Within all our contradictions and anguish we are able to imagine a wholeness that never existed and never will exist, yet which seems to us more real than all our partial realisations. It is in our communicative interaction with others that we are opened up to the circumstances in which value commitments become a possibility; we experience ourselves through others and are transformed by the interaction.

It is important to emphasise the affective and social nature of values and the role of the imagination in their generation. Since these moments of self-transcendence are creative they cannot be willed or engineered in any way. In a managerial age it is often the case that everything we deal with becomes portrayed as a 'problem' to be 'solved' with rational and analytical tools. As a consultant I encounter a lot of managers' impatience around paradoxes when they refuse to accept that some aspects of living and working together are either unresolvable or appear to defy rationality; by its very nature a paradox cannot be resolved, it can only be endlessly assessed and moved around through enquiry. By their very nature values are durably unchanged by management techniques and 'tools', or even by an invitation to reflect on one's values and change them by rationality alone.

Joas also helps us understand how, when we talk of values, we may also find ourselves contemplating the metaphysical. Rather than ascribing our experiences of self-transcendence to our daily lived experience with others, it is possible to attribute it to some outside metaphysical force. Drawing on the works of James [1902] (1983) and Durkheim [1912] (2001) he makes the link between the origin of values and their similarity to religious experience. Both philosophers, according to Joas, draw attention the fact that religious experience also involves a transcendence of the self in some greater whole, and Durkheim in particular noted the group dynamic of religious belief, with belief as a form of collective ecstasy.

Some problems with the way values are taken up
The American pragmatist George Herbert Mead developed a theory of 'cult values', in response to his reflections upon the fact that opposing nations could both deem themselves to represent the good and the right in the build up to the First World War. In two essays written in 1914 and 1923, Mead argued that when countries or institutions think of themselves as if they were wholes they then can start to ascribe to all the members of that idealised group values that become universal and overriding norms. These values are an important part of who we are and where we come from, but ethical issues arise when the values of an idealised group become norms to which individuals must subscribe if they are not to be deemed sinful or selfish, i.e. they become a cult which can exclude or include according to the level of adherence to the norms. They then start to confuse the distinction between values and norms that Joas set out above. A cult

provides a feeling of an enlarged personality in which individuals participate and from which they derive their meaning as persons. Mead also argued that this idealisation works to distract our attention from the daily exercise of ethical choices in the here and now and sometimes seeks to justify immoral behaviour undertaken for the idealised collective good.

As a consultant I sometimes take part in meetings in organisations, as a facilitator or as a supporting co-contributor, where discussions on the subject of values can quickly take on a religious tone. In a recent strategy meeting there was a pivotal moment for me when the Director told her staff that she wanted to be able to 'sell' the strategy they had worked on with messages about how exciting and ambitious it was. The more idealised and transformational it promised to be, the more she felt she could sweep other members of staff up in the project. It began to seem as if the strategy would only be viable if it could deliver the Promised Land. Members of the group began to compete with each other to counter their earlier negativity, when they had cited instances of how staff and managers in the organisation simply were not ready to take on ambitious plans because they had not sufficiently understood the practice that was demanded. As the meeting progressed, it became les and less possible to ground the strategy in the day to day practice of the organisation. Only the impossible was deemed ambitious enough. I was moved to point out to the Director that the obverse of extreme ambition and idealisation is demoralisation and disappointment but she seemed unable to hear the point that I was making.

This idealisation seems to me to become dangerous when it distracts us from the work that we have in the here and now, and the necessary discussions that we need to have together to achieve it. Rather than advocating strict adherence to these cult values, as important as they are, Mead argued that they need to be functionalised in our day-to-day interactions with each other. By functionalisation, Mead meant the ability to explore with others what a general value might mean in a specific context. Let us take, for example, ActionAid's assertion that we should be 'honest and transparent' in our communications with others – how possible is it to be honest and transparent all the time? How transparent is transparent? Do my standards of honesty conform to yours? Who ultimately decides whether a particular action has lived up to the standard or not? Mead would argue that only through discussion, reflection and, ultimately, conflict are we able to discover what these cult values will mean in practice. Taking a standpoint of values being non-negotiable would preclude this negotiation.

Hannah Arendt, too, was interested in the power of collective purpose-making, or expressions of collective solidarity, and was conscious, like Mead, of their limitations. In *The Human Condition* (1958) Arendt sees action as a way of expressing individuality and self in concert with other beings; action allows us to begin something new. Because everyone is acting with their own intentions, together and alone, we cannot be certain of the outcome since we are acting into a web of pre-existing relationships. And because of the vagaries of the human heart, we also cannot be certain that we will be tomorrow who we are today. As a hedge against uncertainty, then, Arendt describes the importance of making and

keeping promises in the face of the unpredictability that afflicts human life. Collective promises have added power:

> The sovereignty of a body of people bound and kept together, not by an identical will which somehow magically inspires them all, but by an agreed purpose for which alone the promises are valid and binding, shows itself quite clearly in its unquestioned superiority over those who are completely free, unbound by any promises and unkept by any purpose. This superiority derives from the capacity to dispose of the future as though it were the present, that is, the enormous and truly miraculous enlargement of the very dimension in which power can be effective. (1958: 245)

By referring to and distancing herself from the idea of a 'magical' 'identical will', Arendt tacitly differentiates her theory of a contingent and contextual promise made by a body of people from the idea of a 'collective will'; i.e. a phenomenon that arises when individuals voluntarily give up their desires in favour of the collective whole.

An organisational process which brings people together to make collective promises to treat everyone equally, or to act with integrity, is a force to be reckoned with, since it creates an enlarged sense of self and purpose that unites people in a common course of action. It creates the conditions for feelings of solidarity with each other, and for those on behalf of whom the organisation is working. The enlarged sense of self and group purpose arise at the same time – the individual and the collective are different expressions of the same thing. It can feel like an island of certainty in a sea of unpredictability and assumes a realisable future. And I have taken part in many workshops, both as an employee and as a facilitator, where this sense of group purpose has been tremendously powerful. However, it is also important to consider the other characteristics of this collective purpose-making that Arendt draws attention to:

> We mentioned before the power generated when people gather together and "act in concert", which disappears the moment they depart. The force that keeps them together, as distinguished from the space of appearances in which they gather and the power which keeps this public space in existence is the force of mutual promise. Sovereignty, which is always spurious if claimed by an isolated single entity, be it the individual entity of the person or the collective entity of a nation, assumes, in the case of many men mutually bound by promises, a certain limited reality. The sovereignty resides in the resulting, limited independence from the incalculability of the future, and its limits are the same as those inherent in the faculty itself of making and keeping promises. (Arendt, 1958: 244/5)

The 'sovereignty' that Arendt refers to is limited, partial and temporary, and lasts only as long as people come together to renew their purpose. She also warns of the spuriousness of individual entities such as nations, or perhaps in the reified statement from ActionAid ("ActionAid lives by…") claiming sovereignty of action.

For Mead and Arendt, collective values statements are points of departure rather than final destinations. They have meaning as long as we are together discussing them, but we will need to go on discussing them in order for them to be vital. Both would argue that negotiation is at the core of what is required to undertake work with others, and for Arendt in particular that negotiation would be mediated through relationships of power. In essence, then, Mead and Arendt argue for a radically social understanding of values which arise in definition between people, rather than residing 'in' an individual, who is then assumed to be able to modify their own behaviour in favour of the collective good or in an idealised collective whole. There is no way of resolving the paradox of the free individual who works together in an undertaking with others; there is no required submission to an idealised whole, or an appeal to a transcendental otherness, spiritual or otherwise.

Understanding values as an emergent phenomenon
John Dewey, a friend and collaborator of GH Mead's, was also concerned to develop a philosophy of the everyday and to portray the exercise of values as an emergent social activity. In an essay entitled '*Logic and judgement of practice*' (1915/2002) Dewey builds the argument that 'a judgement of value is simply a case of practical judgement, a judgement about the doing of something' (1915/2002: 243). Values, then, do not reside in objects, or statements; rather, these objects and statements provide the data for evaluation. Nor are values subjective mind states that equate to individual choosing or the fulfilment of desire; they are merely practical reflection upon action, 'a present act determining an act to be done, a present act taking place because the future act is uncertain and incomplete.' (Ibid: 246). Because there is latent uncertainty about the course of action to be taken, values imply both judgement and criticism arising out of reflection, and an understanding of values as an emergent phenomenon.

Developing the theme of values as an emergent phenomenon, Dewey idealises intelligent reflection on lived experience as a means of continuing to engage with values. If we do not do this, he argues, we are in danger of losing our moral vitality trying to apply rules that are irrelevant to the circumstances and thus deprive ourselves of the faculty of judgement:

> The more completely the notion of the model is formed outside and irrespective of the specific conditions which the situation of action presents, the less intelligent is the act. …. The man who is not accessible to such change in the case of moral situation has ceased to be a moral agent and has become a reacting machine. In short, the standard of valuation is formed in the process of practical judgement or valuation. It is not something taken from outside and applied within it – such application means there is no judgement. (1915/2002: 248)

This is not to argue that we should not learn from experience, merely that we also have to weigh whether that particular experience applies in the situations which we encounter. For Dewey, exercising judgement is a vital act.

As for the second thread of Dewey's argument about the application of judgement in the decision about goods, in an essay entitled '*Moral judgement and knowledge*' (1932/2002) Dewey starts from a position that affection, or rather mutual affection, is at the bottom of values that influence behaviour. The following is from a section entitled '*Sensitivity and thoughtfulness*':

> Sympathy is the animating mold of moral judgement not because its dictates take precedence in action over those of other impulses (which they do not do), but because it furnishes the most efficacious *intellectual* standpoint. It is the tool, *par excellence*, for resolving complex situations. Then when it passes over into active and overt conduct, it does so *fused* with other impulses and not in isolation and is thus protected from sentimentality. In the fusion there is broad and objective survey of all desires and projects because there is an expanded personality. (1932/2002: 333).

Dewey offers mutuality as an alternative of immersing oneself in the greater good of the 'whole'; sympathy is the basis upon which we can start to explore the value statements, a belief in honesty and transparency for example, and what they mean in everyday work with others.

Values and mutual recognition

For Dewey the starting point for mutuality was sympathy for and sensitivity to the position of the other. In thinking the idea of mutuality through Mead (1934) suggests a form of self-sacrifice:

> We are definitely identified with our own interests… I think all of us feel that one must be ready to recognize the interests of others even when they run counter to our own, but that the person who does that does not really sacrifice himself, but becomes a larger self. (1934: 386)

There is an echo here of the enlarged sense of self that Dewey refers to in reflecting on the idealizing and self-unifying role of values. What is central here, though, is the mutuality of the exercise, and the recognition that other people might have a different understanding of the same value ideal.

What concerns me as a consultant to development INGOs is the exclusionary dynamic of the discussions of values that I witness and am expected to collude with. So great is the idealisation that to offer dissent is to risk opprobrium. In fact, I have witnessed situations where the dynamic has been so strong that it would have been impossible to introduce a different point of view. This seems to me a dangerous situation for INGOs to be in if they seriously believe in justice and inclusion and is a long way from the mutual exploration, recognition and negotiation that Mead, Dewey and Arendt recommend.

Conclusions – if not systems and 'shared values', then what?

There are other ways of thinking about organisations not as systems, as bounded wholes, but as complex patterns of human relating (Stacey, 2000; Stacey Griffin and Shaw, 2002) which draw on the complexity sciences. Unfortunately there is

not the space to go into this here since it will provide the material for subsequent articles.

Writers who use alternatives to parts/whole thinking build on the work of GH Mead (1932, 1934) and John Dewey (1934), Norbert Elias (1939/1991) and Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990) whose writings have involved overcoming the dualism of inside and outside, objective and subjective, self and society. Elias, for example, like Arendt, Mead and Dewey, was dissatisfied with contemporary ways of idealising the individual at the same time as reifying the social. He rejected the idea of mind as being 'inside' an individual, of there being an 'inner essence' just as strongly as he argued against the idea of conceiving of societies as 'wholes'. Elias rejected systemic ways of understanding the social because they came:

> …primarily from the natural sciences, particularly biology. But here, as so often, the scientific modes of thought easily and imperceptibly merge with religious and metaphysical ones to form a perfect unity. A society is conceived, for example, as a supra-individual organic entity which advances ineluctably towards death through the stages of youth, maturity and age . . .. Sometimes the members of this latter camp . . . ascribe to whole social formations or to a mass of people a soul of their own beyond the individual souls, an anima collectiva or a 'group mind'. (1939/1991, pp. 4–6)

Like Elias I have tried to make the case above that ways of thinking about values in development literature are bound up with systemic ways of understanding individuals and the organisations they work in. By idealising 'wholes' we are immediately cast by most writers on development as constituent parts and are offered either submissive obedience or rational self-examination as a way forward to 'bridge the gap' between our practice and our ideals. This places the responsibility on us as individuals to discover right action by ourselves – given that values arise through experiences that enlarge the sense of self with others, this is an injunction that we are doomed to fail to obey. It also tries to cover over the inevitable power relations and conflict that arise when human beings come together to try and achieve something, and I have given some examples of situations where I have been made to feel uncomfortable with the powerful quasi-religious dynamic that I experience groups getting caught up in. There are also psychological and therapeutic ways of understanding these dynamics which I have not chosen to explore in this article; instead I have concentrated on philosophical and sociological approaches which privilege the social nature of the emergence of values.

I argue that when managers turn values into instruments of management by which they intend to measure success or failure they have forgotten that organisational value statements are primarily idealisations. They are motivating idealisations which create the conditions for feelings of mutual solidarity. However, they need rediscovering in the day to day process of encounter between people who are trying to explore how to work together. By abandoning the idealised notion of wholes, by recognising the transcendent but temporary

nature of coming together with others to construct the future, we allow ourselves the possibility of discovering our values afresh.

The Nobel prize-winning economist Amartya Sen (1999) also encourages us to continue to engage with each other as an act of freedom:

> …since freedom is concerned with *processes of decision-making* as well as *opportunities to achieve valued outcomes*, the domain of our interest cannot be confined only to the outcomes in the form of the promotion of high output or income, or the generation of high consumption…Such processes as participation in political decisions and social choice cannot be seen as being – at best - among the *means* to development…but have to be understood as constitutive parts of the *ends* of development in themselves. (1999:291)

Sen's view is that we have a collective responsibility to each other to ensure the exercise of individual capabilities, such as the ability to participate, articulate and agree and disagree over valued outcomes. We will find ourselves, through mutual recognition, discovering ourselves and others anew and negotiating non-negotiables.

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Appendix III

Mowles, C. (forthcoming, 2008) 'Just think of the change you want to bring about and work backwards from there": strategy, idealisation, complexity', Development *in Practice*.

'Just think of the change you want to bring about and work backwards from there': strategy, idealisation, complexity.

Abstract
This article argues that in continuing to make strategy as they do, borrowing from systems theories, managers and leaders in INGOs idealise the future at the expense of the present. As an alternative, the author explores some aspects of complexity theory and how it puts forward a different idea about how change occurs rather than assuming that it can be wholesale, predictable and controllable. Finally, the author sets out some of the implications for practice if we let go of our naïve ideas about change and our role in it, opening ourselves rather to paradox, improvisation, knowing and not-knowing.

Key words: systems theory, complexity, practice, paradox, continuity and change.

'Just think of the change you want to bring about and work backwards from there' – strategy, idealisation, complexity.

In the following article I will be exploring the assumptions behind the way many INGOs make strategy. Although this may seem like quite an obscure thing to write for a journal concerned with the practice of development, I will do so because I believe that the way many development managers think about strategy-making and change is very underdeveloped and has huge implications for the way the practice of development is framed and implemented. As a consultancy practitioner of more than ten year's standing, I am often engaged by INGOs to help them work out strategies and have become greatly concerned about how current strategy practice may result in cutting across what the staff and managers in INGOs would say they wanted to achieve in their relationships with others. I will be exploring some theoretical assumptions behind the making of strategy in the belief that there is nothing so practical as a good theory, whether it is acknowledged or not.

I will set out the argument that a common way for staff in INGOs to conceive of strategy is based on idealising the future, sometimes ascribing to themselves heroic capabilities of creating radical and qualitative discontinuities with the past. The most important thing about a strategy is sometimes believed to be its ambition and the scale of change it promises. Staff are then encouraged to try to implement these promises systematically and rigorously, assuming some kind of direct causality between their efforts and the outcome that they anticipate. I will argue, however that these aspirations are sometimes based on a naïve view of what is possible and how change comes about. Instead they offer an escape to an

idealized future at the expense of developing the capacity for reflexive engagement in the day to day experience of doing the work. When managers, staff and partners in the South are encouraged to concentrate on the original abstractions, the vision, goals and targets rather than the difficulty they have in bringing change about, there is potential for conflict, alienation and even oppression. I believe that the taken for granted assumptions behind the strategy process have become a way of covering over the complexity of the work and the reflexivity that is required to make sense of the strategy in context. Instead of engaging with the difficulty of knowing and not knowing, managers can get drawn into efforts to sustain the idealisation, since to do otherwise would be considered a failure to 'deliver'.

I will make the case that strategy-making in INGOs has become increasingly informed by systems theory, perhaps blindly influenced by the private sector. Systems theory puts forward the idea that organisations, or societies are wholes with boundaries, and that wholesale change is possible by making changes to the way the parts interact with the whole, based on assumptions of predictability and control. This is not surprising since systems theories have proved immensely useful in the fields of medicine and engineering in particular, where they have been helpful in modelling of known cause and effect. Where they prove less useful, I will argue, is in giving accounts of novelty and change, particularly in the much less predictable domain of human interaction. They are mechanistic theories which require something more nuanced to cope with complexity and unpredictability.

In setting out an alternative, the idea that organisations and societies are not systems, but are rather complex patterns of human interrelating which are constantly iterated and changed over time, I will be arguing that staff and managers should abandon the fantasy of a predictable and controllable future. Instead they have the option of taking seriously their daily experience of undertaking the work they do together, and making sense of the constant flux in which they are engaged. This is not to argue that staff in organisations should not make plans, nor am I in any way suggesting that they should not get inspired and motivated about what they are doing. But in considering their interactions to be complex and unpredictable, particularly as plans are taken up further and further away from the site of the original planning, they will learn to engage reflexively and reflectively upon the phenomena arising in the present, and then these reflections become the basis of further iterations of planning and strategising. I will put forward the view that organising is a process of forming and being formed at the same time.

An evolution in INGO approaches to thinking about strategy and change will pose a serious problem for senior managers and leaders. In the competitive market for contributions to aid it is hard to make the argument that progress may be largely incremental, contested and difficult, with sudden but unpredictable breakthroughs in unexpected ways. It is more common to make exaggerated, inspiring promises for what can be achieved, and to claim direct responsibility for the parts of it which are achieved.

I am aware that in offering a theory of change based on analogies from the complexity sciences I am also contributing to a domain of ideas which sustains other theories offering different explanations of the same process, such as Giddens' structuration theory (1991) and Latour's actor-network theory (2005) for example. I will not be exploring these other theories within the scope of this article. I will, however, be making a small contribution to a growing body of literature on development which values reflexivity and/or is critical of the dominant discourse of managerialism (Eyben, 2006 and 2005; Mosse, 2005; Mosse and Lewis, 2005; Quarles van Ufford and Giri, 2003; Wallace et al, 2006 and Wallace et al, 1997). Moreover, this contribution of mine is a gesture towards other contributors in this volume to bring forth further theories of strategising and change which are current in the South, about which I am inexpert. This article will draw on literature from organisational theory, sociology and philosophy predominantly from a Western tradition, and in particular, those thinkers who have sought to overcome the inherent dualisms of individual and society, self and other, continuity and change.

Targets for transformation[5]

I am working with the indigenous staff of a British-based INGO in Kenya trying to develop a new strategy. This is their second attempt in a year, the last one having been deemed inadequate by the regional manager based in London. Moreover, a cloud still hangs over the team because they were also judged not to have 'delivered' on the last strategy. In the ensuing fuss that resulted from the Trustees worrying about 'performance', both in consideration of not 'delivering' on the last strategy and for having come up with a new strategy that did not meet the requisite standards, the country representative was sacked and a new one has been appointed. The new country representative, who is British, is very experienced, but has never lived in Kenya before.

He wants my support in developing a five year strategy that is serious and substantive, but he is also canny enough to know that at least 50% of the exercise will involve writing and presenting in a way that the UK finds acceptable. He has an additional challenge in that headquarters has also been developing a five year strategy which has set out a new vision for the whole organisation with accompanying plans and targets. The Kenya country office is expected to respond to the targets set for them from London, as well as coming up with some new targets of their own.

I find the local team difficult to work with since they are so reluctant to speak about their work. They seem humiliated by the targets they have not met and intimidated by the future targets that they are required to respond to. They also talk about the fear that they feel in anticipation of the same thing happening to them that happened to the country representative; by not 'delivering' on their targets, they will be judged to have failed and will be sacked. The organisation's performance management process, such as it is, is also predicated on target-setting. Meeting your targets is highly valued in this organisation.

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[5] 'Transformation' in this instance is understood within the terms of the orthodox paradigm of change which I am critiquing.

What emerges as we begin the process of talking about the work, what's possible, what makes it difficult, is the fact that the members of the team do not actually function as a team. They seem to spend little time talking together about the difficulties they are experiencing in the every day hurly-burly of the work. It's true they have weekly and monthly co-ordination meetings, and they are always plotting achievements against targets. But the focus is always on the plan – are we, or are we not on target? Reasons for not achieving targets are tolerated as long as we can talk about them as 'problems' to be 'solved'. As the discussion develops it appears that this is a phenomenon that affects the work in villages, too. This British INGO selects a village to work in and 'mobilises' the community around the project they are offering; they carry out a participative base-line survey, community members are involved in the design, implementation and running of the project, then after a year the INGO packs up and leaves in order to do the same somewhere else, and work to the scale that has been previously promised. At the same time, and in the same village, other INGOs are doing exactly the same thing, using their own participatory methods, 'capacity building' in their own ways, and working to try and meet their own targets.

Reflections on the narrative
In Kenya the staff had been encouraged to spend a lot of time engaging with an idealised end state, wholesale change to the degree that they had predicted in the their earlier strategic plan, and to account for the extent to which they had realised it or not. Their previous Director may or may not have been a good manager, but they were unable reflect on what they were doing in trying to implement the plan because they were unused to doing so and were unsure how much their observations and experience were valued. Though they had done their best, there was an overwhelming feeling of failure since what they had encountered locally, and the way they had been managed, had prevented them from doing what was promised.

What informs this kind of strategic planning?
The theoretical underpinning of strategic planning in the form that was taken up by this British INGO is informed by systems dynamics, which is a development of first order cybernetic systems theory (Wiener, 1948). A cybernetic system is a target-seeking, self-regulating system that can maintain its equilibrium within its own environment. A common example of a cybernetic system would be something like a heating system with a thermostat; an agent outside the system sets the control, a temperature in the case of a heating system, and the system then continuously corrects itself through negative feedback to the target temperature which has already been determined. Wiener originally had his insight into negative feedback when he was working on anti-aircraft guns; there is a target to aim at and you keep correcting your aim until you hit it. Anyone who has worked with the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) will recognise it as a cybernetic planning tool.

The development of systems dynamics from first order systems thinking is that, rather than just depending upon machine analogies, it gives pride of place to

people and their perceptions, values and beliefs and creates a process known as 'idealised design':

> The aim of idealised design is to enthuse the participants with a vision of what their organisations might be like and to endow them with a mission to create the future on this basis. The process is meant to generate consensus, mobilize the stakeholders with a crusading zeal, and reveal that only the participants' limited imaginations prevent them getting the future they most desire, right here, right now. (Jackson: 2000)

Systems dynamics is based on the claim of both positive and negative feedback and thereby appeals to notions of control when used to understand of the role of human beings in the organisations in which they work. In strategic planning exercises involving systems dynamics approaches, then, groups of employees are encouraged to idealise an end state, and then apply logic and rationality to achieve it. The process of enthusing staff and managers, and getting them excited and motivated is in acknowledgement of the differing world views that exist in any organisations but it can impose harmony as a way of avoiding the engagement of difference.

Systems dynamics ideas have been taken up and popularised in particular by Peter Senge (1990) in *The Fifth Discipline*, and Argyris (1990) and Argyris and Schön (1978, 1996) in their ideas on organisational learning. What they have in common with many manifestations of systems thinking is the following: they conceive of the organisation as an idealised whole with a boundary, and imagine that 'whole' organisational change is possible. Any information, especially mistakes (Senge, op.cit.) and the unexpected (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001)) are opportunities to improve the systemic model. Usually spatial metaphors are used to determine different 'levels' of organisational activity, so senior managers are deemed to be at a higher 'level' than more junior staff, and can design principles and rules which will act upon those people at a lower level. Despite an acknowledgement of different perspectives and world views, an acceptance of a socially constructed reality, more sophisticated systems theories aim at resolving conflict, harmonising differences and controlling the organisation towards agreed idealised ends (alignment). This kind of thinking also manifests itself beyond the imagined boundary of the organisation when strategy is conceived of as gap-analysis, or niche-finding; in other words, there is another idealised whole 'outside' the organisation, and with enough analysis of data and social and economic trends the organisation is constantly 'plugging the gap' in the field, or finding its niche.

The limitations of systems dynamics for understanding change
Organisations are of course, not wholes, and nor are societies, even though it is sometimes helpful for us to think of them as such. And nor are human beings parts of wholes, since they are creative, imaginative and often contradictory. We do not automatically align ourselves with the needs of a system to which we are deemed to belong. This is the contradiction in systems theory that Senge (op.cit.) and others who write in the systems dynamics tradition have spotted, which they attempt to overcome by enjoining us to acknowledge our individuality but to give up our 'bad selves' in favour of the needs of the idealised whole (Griffin, 2002).

This tendency has also been taken up by commentators on management in INGOs when organisational values are thought to be 'non-negotiables' (Chambers, 2005) for example, or when employees are enjoined to discipline themselves and align themselves with the organisational mission and values (Pasteur and Scott-Villiers, 2004).

I made the point earlier that systems theory is a very powerful tool for modelling factors which are known. The way it accounts for change, however, is to put forward the idea that leaders and managers in organisations can stand outside of what they are doing, understand how the parts relate to the whole, and design an alterative, with one level of an organisation acting on other levels. Change cascades down the levels and a new realignment is possible which will be in a new balance with the environment. What happens here is the idea that the systems designer temporarily steps outside the imagined boundary where they have a vantage point for redesigning the whole system. The unasked questions here, though, are how the designer can be part of the whole, and yet separate from it, and what it is that triggers the insight into the change that is needed. Even if we thought it was possible to do this, to have quasi-divine insight, what happens if the environment one wants to be in balance with is constantly changing and never 'in balance'? What happens if the 'parts' we are trying to realign, and sometimes these are our colleagues, partners and beneficiaries, refuse to go quietly and have other ideas about what is needed, or even understand what we are proposing differently from how we intended it?

There is a considerable body of literature (Tsoukas, 2006, Griffin, 2002, Stacey et al, 2000), which makes the case that it is no longer adequate to think about organisations as being a conglomeration of parts to be disassembled and reassembled, nor to believe that the future can be predicted, controlled and planned for in logical steps. Perhaps in order to think about a complex world we need to develop more complex ways of thinking about how we organise with others. It may be time to leave behind analogies that have been useful in the past but which we may now find limiting, such as the idealisation that organisations and societies are organisms or 'living breathing wholes'. Rather, it might be more productive to explore paradox, contradiction, knowing and not knowing.

It is my contention, then, that systems theories only take us so far in understanding the processes of change and our relationship to them. They are more sophisticated than a simple mechanistic paradigm, but they cannot account for the emergence of change as genuine novelty. They assume a predictable future, and their yet account of how these predictions will be realised cannot be explained within the chosen model itself. And yet, great store is set by this modelling process and it has very direct consequences for the day-to-day lives of staff, partners and beneficiaries. Staff are praised or criticised on the basis of realising targets derived from such modelling, partners are obliged to work to the same assumptions, and beneficiaries will receive support or not on the basis of strategy-making activity.

Visionary transformation
I am facilitating a strategy workshop for a large British INGO in the UK, organisation X. Around 26 people have come from all over the globe to come up

with a strategy that is supposed to be an improvement on the last one, which has been judged 'too modest' by senior managers.

My contractor is convinced that we need to spend at least three quarters of the time together focusing on the strategy document together, which sets out a completely new and ambitious vision. The headings of the section of the document which most interest me are set out is as follows:

> Vision – What change X organisation wants to see in the world
> How we think this change will happen
> Organisation X's contribution to the change 2007-2010

We spend a useful and intriguing first morning listening to stories from all over the world about what trying to implement the last strategy has been like. Inevitably we focus on the specificities of undertaking the work in different contexts; how good our own practice is, how strong the partners are, what else is going on for the communities with whom we are working. Some things that have been attempted have worked, fully or partially. Other things have not, and some other ideas had exactly the opposite effect from the one we intended. One factor amongst many others is the observation by some participants that in some parts of the world senior managers and other colleagues have not taken the strategy seriously and have worked to other priorities instead. As I look around I can see exactly the same phenomenon played out in the workshop; some senior managers have promised to come and have not; other senior managers have not allowed their staff to attend in the first place, or staff have opted not to come, even though they have an organisational responsibility for this area of work.

The managers present behave in different ways; some enjoin participants not to 'carp' about the difficulties of undertaking the work, since it sounds negative. Another manager, at the point of our reviewing the vision statement keeps repeating "just think of the change you want to bring about and work backwards from there" like a mantra. In the final session, we are to present the work we have accomplished together to the Director. She is enthused by what she has heard and tells the group that the only way of promoting this strategy in the organisation is to get them excited about it. The image she uses is of a train journey. "There is a train leaving the station and it's going to a very exciting place. We're going to transform the lives of millions of poor people and I want you on board!"

Many of the participants, even the ones who had previously complained about some managers and staff in the organisation not taking the previous strategy seriously, begin to compete with each other to say they are excited about the new vision. No-one wants to appear to be 'negative'. Somehow, at this moment, it is not possible to draw attention to the most important thing that is happening in the room.

An alternative understanding of how change happens
I have made the case above that a common way of understanding and planning change, is grounded in the theory of systems dynamics. Groups of staff are encouraged to imagine idealised goals, often of a heroic nature, and to then itemise logical, causal steps that lead to it; in the words of the senior manager in

organisation X, "just think of the change you want to bring about, and work backwards from there." Often this idealisation is privileged over and above the day to day experience of functionalising the vision that matters to practitioners. So in Kenya in the first narrative, and in the UK in the second, when staff felt confident enough to talk about the difficulties they were having, they were often discouraged from doing so, either because they felt fearful that these insights were not valued, or because their experiences are considered irrelevant to or distracting from idealised ends. Failure to deliver, or to engage sufficiently with the idealisation, is simply a phenomenon to be managed, or motivated away.

Earlier I stated that there is a greater interest in understanding complexity as it affects human interaction and organisational life, and these ideas have been taken up by writers thinking about the management of development (Eyben, 2006; Hamdi, 2004; Mosse, 1998, Roche, 1994). It has led to a greater focus on narrative as a way of knowing, on reflexivity and paradox. I too want to turn to theories of complexity and emergence as a way of further exploring processes of change in organisations

Complex adaptive systems theory
So what can we understand from theories of complexity? Complex adaptive systems theory (Goodwin, 1994, Kauffman, 1995) grew out of agent-based modelling in the mathematical and computer sciences. It has been applied as an analogy to ant colonies, or birds flocking, or even to explain how the billions of neurones function together in our brains, and have become popular with social scientists. Simplistically put, what we learn from complex adaptive systems theory is that coherent patterns can emerge from the interaction of local agents with other local agents in a self-organising way without an overall blue print or plan. Patterns evolve and change from the amplification of small differences between the agents either because of diversity being introduced into the environment and/or because the agents are heterogeneous. The coherence of these interactions can never be traced back to the sum of interactions of the parts, and the patterning is constantly evolving in unpredictable ways over time. There is paradox at the heart of the system, since the global pattern is not accounted for by simply summing the parts, and individual agents are both forming and being formed at the same time. However, it is not possible for just any pattern to emerge since the whole is *constrained by its history* and the characteristics of the agents.

To sum up, in contrast to prior systemic theories of change, then, complex adaptive systems theory puts forward the idea that in situations of great complexity, with large numbers of interacting agents, change comes about without an overall plan or an external designer by means of these agents interacting locally with each other in autonomous ways. No one agent is in overall control. What actually happens is constrained by the history and qualities of the agents and their interactions, which will tend in particular directions, but will be ultimately unpredictable. The process is never in a state of equilibrium but is changing all the time.

The relevance of complexity to thinking about strategy

It is not feasible to pick up these analogies from the complexity sciences and simply apply them wholesale to human interaction. After all, I have already made the case that human beings are not simple rule-following agents, but are conscious and self-conscious and interact with others in a way that is both rational and irrational. Where the analogy is helpful, though is that it enables us to think of evolution and change as being possible from the self-organising patterning of agents themselves, liberating us from the idea that we have control over what is playing out. But is also deeply paradoxical change, being predictable and unpredictable, known and unknown, certain and uncertain at the same time.

We are moving towards an understanding of complexity not as something to be applied to human interaction as a 'tool', or as simple rules (Wheatley, 1994), which is the way it often gets taken up, but as a description of the way that humans interact. Interaction is locally contingent, producing both continuity and change over time. Thinking about human relating in this way produces a number of consequences for our reflections on strategy-making.

In the process of strategy-making and in trying to implement our plans, variations of interpretation and outcome will emerge because of different factors; because human beings are all different, because power relations are unequal, because others are also acting with intentions. Over time the global patterning of these interactions will look like nothing we could have predicted. We are acting with our intentions into a web of other people's intentions. We will be forming the web of relations and being formed by it at the same time.

I referred earlier to the fact that more and more writers on development are increasingly taking relationships seriously, and how we bring ourselves into this thinking, what is termed reflexivity. Eyben (2006), Mosse (2005) and Cleaver (2002) for example, write within a social anthropological discipline which emphasises the importance of the contingent and the local, encouraging reflexivity as a counterweight to the grand thinking in much development writing. There are a number of sociologists and philosophers who are also helpful in understanding the interdependence of local and global, individual and society, and who have contributed to the development of the idea that change comes about in processes of interrelating that none of us can control. I do not have room within the scope of this article to do any more on touch on their importance for this kind of thinking. However, Norbert Elias (1991), described a similar phenomenon of local/global interaction, in setting out his view of the course of social change:

> As the moves of interdependent players intertwine, no single player nor any group of players acting alone can determine the course of the game no matter how powerful they may be. ... It involves a partly self-regulating change in a partly self-organizing and self-reproducing figuration of interdependent people, whole processes tending in a certain direction. (Elias, 1991: 146/7)

The image of the game is central to Elias' understanding of interdependence and power relating. It is not that any outcome is possible, since we are born in to an

age and culture where certain principles about social relating have evolved, the 'rules' of the game. So processes tend in a particular direction, constrained and enabled by the game we are playing. However, knowing exactly how things will turn out is uncertain, since not all the players have equal power and ability to play the game. For Elias we must expect that the interweaving of people acting out of different intentions results in an outcome that no-one can foresee.

G.H. Mead (1934), writing in the Pragmatic tradition and Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1991), who read and admired Mead also take up the idea of the game in their different ways to describe how we interact with each other, enabled and constrained by each other and the rules of the game. In his own reflections on the global and the local, Bourdieu points to broader social processes that are manifest in day-to-day interactions: 'the body is in the social world, but the social world is in the body' (1982: 38).All three, Elias, Mead and Bourdieu were interested in explaining how continuity and change occur in society, which appears both ordered and disordered at the same time, beyond assuming that it is down to the narrow intentionality and will of individuals or some kind of collective and ordered goal setting.

What are the implications for practice?
At the beginning of this article I put forward the idea that there is nothing so practical as a good theory, and in doing so I believe it behoves me to be more specific about the practical consequences of thinking differently about strategy. What actual difference would it make to take up some of the insights from complexity theory and those philosophers and sociologists who have set out ideas on the interaction between the local and the global, self and society? In the following I will contrast how I think staff in INGOs currently take up strategy and how they might take it up, with consequences for leaders and managers.

Staff in many INGOs think of strategy-making as a separate activity from doing the work. The work we do is to 'deliver' the strategy. Strategy-making is an episode of idealization, focused very much on the documentation and its coherence or otherwise, which is supposed to renew our ambition and excitement to undertake the next chapter of our heroic journey of bringing about change. On a straight line between a past which we fully understand and a future which we can model we can trace with milestones the direct causality between our efforts and whatever turns out. Partners and beneficiaries also have a role in helping us realize our strategy which they will share with us because they have participated in its formation. Change to whole societies or communities is possible since we can stand outside the society/community in which we work and understand the processes which make it as it is. More than this we can interfere with these processes and redesign them for the better. The role of leaders and managers in this process is to inspire and motivate and set out an ambitious vision which has the weight of a promise. We reward staff for their performance against targets which we have derived from our modeling.

What I am proposing as an alternative is that when we come together in a group to discuss our work, what we have done, what we are doing, what we might do, we are making strategy. Time does not flow in a straight line between the past and an idealised future, but is cyclical; the difficulties that we encountered in

trying to realise our previous intentions is not a distraction from our idealisation, but will help inform our intentions about the future in the present. If we become more skilful about making sense of this cyclical patterning of time and the relations between ourselves, now, in the room, and in our interactions with others in our places of work, we may better understand those global patterns of interactions which we are forming and being formed by at the same time. In trying to understand this patterning we will try to appreciate the small differences that are emerging, which might become radical differences over time, rather than expecting that wholesale change can be brought about by our actions alone. We will appreciate paradox and contradiction, knowing and not knowing, sameness and difference. The role of leaders and managers is still to inspire and motivate, but they will understand this motivation to be a gesture to their staff who can only take it up locally and contingently in their places of work and in their daily interactions with others. We will reward staff not on their ability to deliver against targets, but in their ability to undertake what Bourdieu (1990) calls 'the necessary improvisation' of our ideas in their contexts. When we act with intention into the world we act into a web of intentions of our partners and beneficiaries, and others, as well, and we owe it to them not to impose our targets on them, but to negotiate with them what is possible. Strategy-making is continuous and skilful improvisation with others and the exploration of what that improvisation means to us and our intentions.

Conclusion
In writing about some common assumptions that get brought to bear on the making of strategy in INGOs I have drawn attention to the fact that many much strategy-making in INGOs are grounded in systems theory. Systems theories are predicated on ideas of predictability and control and originate from the engineering and biological sciences. As applied to organisations they imagine a whole with a boundary, which is often reified or anthropomorphised (organisations can be 'living, breathing wholes', believe in certain things or act in certain ways). Systems theories have assumptions that changes to the whole, the organisation or the society, are possible, but presuppose and all-seeing designer who is somehow both part of and outside the system at the same time who can identify and describe the change needed and the steps to get there. Idealised design theory places a big emphasis on uniting staff through 'visioning'. By idealising the future at the expense of the present and the past, I have argued that staff in INGOs risk promising an unachievable future, which is privileged over the day to day experience of undertaking the work together.

As an alternative I have borrowed analogies from the complexity sciences, particularly complex adaptive systems thinking, to describe a different theory of change. Global patterns come about through emergence based on the self-organising activities of agents acting locally. By taking up writers who think in the tradition of overcoming the dualism of conceiving of individuals as being parts of wholes, I have set out a way of understanding change to be locally contingent, paradoxical and unpredictable. There are no mysterious forces, social, political or economic that act upon human beings that are separate from human interaction. We form society and are formed by it at the same time. When we act with intention into a web of other people's intentions we can expect struggle, messiness and change, but not always in the ways we would anticipate

or even want. The idea that we can predict the future and set ourselves targets to bring it about is largely fantasy.

For me the corollary of this way of understanding the world is the urgent necessity for staff in INGOs to reconsider the assumptions by which they undertake strategy planning, which do not seem to have changed much over many years. INGOs have become bigger and more complex, aspirations have increased, but the way of undertaking the work has stayed the same. Staff and managers should expect some of their planning intentions not to be realised; this is not an aberration to be corrected but a phenomenon to be expected, appreciated and worked through. Staff in INGOs could spend less time being anxious about abstract, future-oriented strategy documents, which can only ever be taken up locally and contingently. Instead they could spend more time paying attention to what happens as a result of how their plans get taken up locally, and the difficulties of doing the work. This would value the day to day experiences of their staff and partners in the South, and would encourage very different kinds of conversations. The patterning of what we are doing, now, today, is not a diversion from our vision because if we become skilful at reflecting on it, it will tell us more about what is possible than fantasising that we can predict the future and form it from pre-reflected targets.

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