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Making a difference

Creative dialogues, protopractice and the
moral shaping of knowledge in a media company

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NTNU
Innovation and Creativity

for my brother, Harald.

Contents

Preface

So, what will I miss from being a PhD student? Of course, the freedom and opportunity to fooling about with the stuff this thesis is eventually made of: with theories read, observations made, pieces of texts produced. Playing with it, pushing it this way and that, turning it sideways, mixing things up, discovering unexpected connections, making pretty synthesis, painting it different colors, and all the time saying "I wonder...What if...It seems like..." And to be doing this in concert with inspiring and thought-provoking advisors, lecturers, peers, colleagues and friends. I will miss the good hours of the many hours I have spent alone with the Mac in some calm space, where I have experienced how the process of writing works in the oddest of ways. Sometimes it has been impossible to make any sense of any of the bits and pieces produced. –Shapeless 'fragments and tagments'. Sometimes it has resulted in firmly grounded thoughts and valuable discoveries. The strange thing is that sense and nonsense have evoked the same happiness. I guess it is because the PhD process –at its best– can be characterized by the word playful. I will miss that.

I would like to express my gratitude to various people who aided and/or tolerated me throughout this project. Sigrun Gudmundsdottir at NTNU, without you this work would never have commenced. Sadly you are not here, but your voice is in 'the tale being told'. Knut H. Sørensen at NTNU, for sharing his broad theoretical expertise and his patience in directing me through the writing of this thesis. Ray McDermott at Stanford University for being the most inspiring lecturer I have ever encountered. My department at SINTEF, which has provided me with my most valuable experiences and insights into research in various companies and organizations. Especially Arne Carlsen for always pursuing the highest of standards, and for engaging me in invaluable discussions on theories and observations. Bjørn Haugstad for his brilliant analytical mind when brushing up the introduction and for the fun we had in the courses we did together. Kjersti Bjørkeng for creative exchanges on observations I did in the early days of this project. Egil Wulff and Mona Skaret for providing me with the most grounded and practical insight into the workings of organizations. Christianne V. Ervik for amusing discussions about TV concepts. David Barnard and Anton Trætteberg for proofreading. The fellow students in the "activity theory group" for critical scrutinizing of different strands of theory. Eva Amdahl and Kristin L. Hope for being genuinely inter-disciplinary minded and interested in my work.

Then there is the site of my study, the company involved. Without the partners in A-Tale, their generosity in having me around and their willingness

to talk about their practice, the research would not have been half as fun as it turned out to be.

My thanks also go to Siv for being my special island friend, always caring about Grete. To Lodve who find time both to ask and to listen. To my family up North, who is happy for what I am and what I do, no matter what.

To my husband Pål, I owe special thanks. Without his presence in my everyday life, I would never have completed this work.

1   Creative knowledge work

This is a field study of creative knowledge work. The setting is a kind of work practice we know little about: The development and production of ideas and concepts for the television and film industry. The study was conducted in a company I have chosen to call A-Tale. How the partners go about their work constitute an interesting example of creative knowledge work. The larger context to this study is the rise of a new mode of knowledge production in which knowledge producers do not work exclusively in universities but also in industry and government laboratories, in think-tanks, research institutions, consultancy enterprises, etc.

The practice within which the partners in A-Tale interact did not settle during the period I conducted my study. Partly this is because A-Tale is a young company, but more importantly it is because the partners are frequently experimenting with ways of working in order to create and realize TV and film ideas. So many times, when returning to A-Tale after being away for a while, the conversation with the partners started out with something like, "Hi, there you are. There have been some small changes since the last time I saw you," or "We are just about doing something with the way we organize the creative processes," or "We need to rearrange relationships to former companies and partners," or "While we have been focusing on cultivating ideas this spring, we have to focus on actually producing them this autumn." Always on their way, from something to something else.

How can we understand and describe organizations on the move? I think that one step on the road would be to understand what motivates and characterizes the interplay between creativity and knowledge in a company like A-Tale. Further, how the partners in A-Tale both change and stabilize their practice in order to maintain a capability to innovate. In the field of organization theory, concentrating on things that might emerge becomes a matter of how to write about movement and change as a defining element of organizational practice. The analysis is grounded in observations on how the partners use and combine insights from their former experience in order to create and cultivate ideas, how they both challenge and align with possibilities and constraints within the industry they are operating in, and, not the least, how they keep alive

the reflection on who they are and want to become as a group at the same time as they are working in a shifting constellation of people and projects.

A-Tale was formally established around 2000. The company is small, about 20 employees. If we take into account the extensive network of people the partners work with and the range of project constellations in which they participate, the number of people involved is considerably larger. All the partners are experienced, high profile figures in the Scandinavian film, television, and media industry. In sum the members of the company make up a broad range of backgrounds and experiences from this line of industry. Their ambition is to become a locus of innovative idea/concept development in Scandinavia by attracting talented idea makers, writers, and directors.

My ambition is to provide insight into some of the concrete activities and discussions going on in such a firm. Through this, make a contribution to the larger discussion about the nature of creative knowledge work. What characterizes the organizing of creative knowledge work? How is knowledge shared and generated in order to invent novel ideas? What are important communicative dimensions in order to maintain a creative space over time? The research questions indicate that my object of analysis is two folded: On the one hand, the processes through which the entire organization moves and transforms. On the other hand, the creative practice of the partners, as visible in their everyday interaction and communication.

Prophesies of the Knowledge Economy

The study is part of the KUNNE research program, http://www.kunne.no/, which started in 1997. It was initiated in the context of the increased focus on *Knowledge Management* in companies, especially amongst engineering consultancies, ICT companies, and management consultancies, and it was started on the background of a national awareness of the growing importance of the service industry, especially those part of the industry coined knowledge intensive business services (KIBS) or knowledge intensive firms (KIFs). I will discuss the common use of KIBS or KIFs later on.[1] In the following, I will

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[1] Within KUNNE we have been five PhD students who have explored the nature of knowledge work using different KIFs as examples. Although we have employed different levels of analysis, methods and theoretical frameworks, the aim has been to contribute to the debate on the inner workings of such firms. KUNNE has later on developed into of a portfolio of research projects with focus on knowledge and learning in all types of organizations, both public and private, service providers and actor within more traditional industry. Today, KUNNE is a network of actors concerned with understanding how knowledge is created, managed, developed and used, and thus interested in participating in research for this end. The

outline some of the main threads in the academic discussions about the importance of knowledge in the economy in general and the growing sector of knowledge intensive business services in particular. I will also point out some of the new questions circulating in the field.

The prelude and larger context to the interest in the role of knowledge in organizations were broad claims about the vital importance of knowledge in society at large. Examples are such as Bell's (1973) forecast of the information age where he predicts that the world will rely upon information, as opposed to the economics of goods; Toffler (1990) arguing that control of knowledge, not violence nor money is the essence of power in the information age; the management guru Drucker's vision (1993) about "post-capitalist" society in which the primary resource is no longer capital, land or labor but knowledge, and in which a new class made up of knowledge workers arises; business strategist Quinn (1992) who argues that the competitive edge of enterprises in the 1990s would not be derived from superior products but from a deeper understanding of a few highly developed knowledge and service based "core competencies" which again implies that less important functions should be outsourced (lean production); Stehr (1994) writing about scientization – the penetration of scientific knowledge into most spheres of social action.

Also in the political scene, the salient role of knowledge has been pinpointed. As drawn to attention by Scarbrough and Swan (2003), UK Prime Minister Tony Blair gave a speech to the Labor Party Conference in 28 September 1999 in which he proclaimed, "We know what a 21st century nation needs. A knowledge-based economy. A strong civic society. A confident place in the world. Do that and a nation master the future. Fail and it is the future's victim." In a speech that mentioned the word "socialism" just once, "knowledge" was mentioned four times (Scarbrough and Swan, 2003).

Although belonging to different fields and writing or speaking to different audiences for different purposes, the authors mentioned are all preoccupied with the knowledge society or knowledge economy. They also have in common that they point to the importance of a specific technological change in advancing the new era, namely the advantages and possibilities due to information and communication technology. Today, the concepts of knowledge society and knowledge economy are widely accepted and used as a

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actors consist of private and public organisations, educational institutions and research institutes, branch organisations and governmental institutions. The contract research institute, SINTEF Technology and society, is the driving force behind the activities and coordinates the work in the network. The group of researchers is multidisciplinary but we share a common interest in knowledge as a phenomenon in the Norwegian work life. The debate on knowledge has had its parallel in the priorities set by the National Research Council, which has organized and funded research programs reflecting and advancing the debate. The KUNNE portfolio is a result of the national awareness on such issues.

basis for research, policy development and in understanding innovation systems.

The early days: Knowledge management & KIFs

Knowledge management as a term may be traced back to Drucker (1993, p. 42). He also introduced the notion of knowledge workers and described the shift from knowledge applied on producing tools to "knowledge being applied on knowledge." From a management perspective, he claimed that the productivity of the new dominant groups in the workforce in developed countries, i.e. knowledge worker and service workers, would be the largest and toughest challenge in the decades to come.

In a later article, Drucker's essential thesis is that the productivity of knowledge work will drive economic success in the 21st century in exactly the same fashion that manual work productivity drove the 20th century economies (Drucker 1999). If old patterns repeat themselves in regard to Drucker's visions, it is likely that business schools and managers of large corporations will pay more and more attention to the relation between knowledge, work and productivity in the years to come, and that it soon will be on the agenda for research communities and policy makers as well.

"Knowledge workers" has been used as a general label to describe the workforce in knowledge intensive firms (KIFs) or professional service firms (PSF), or knowledge intensive business services (KIBS). The terms overlap and are used more or less interchangeably. I will use "knowledge intensive firms", KIFs for short. From the early 1990s, special attention was devoted to managing and organizing KIFs, and the characteristics of such firms compared to more traditional industrial firms.

Early accounts can be found in Sveiby and Lloyd (1987), who emphasizes non-standard creative problem solving, and Starbuck (1992) who has a similar interpretation in his discussion of the economic significance of esoteric knowledge over common knowledge as a characteristic of KIFs. *Journal of Management Studies* (1993) published a special issue in which the editorial appreciates that, "whilst specialized expertise or knowledge is increasingly recognized as being of crucial importance to contemporary societies [..] the phenomenon of 'knowledge workers' and the organization of 'knowledge intensive firms' are concepts that have attracted relatively little attention in the organizational literature" (p. 851). Alvesson (1995) argues that KIFs are characterized by factors such as significant incidents of problem

solving and non-standardized production; creativity on the part of the practitioner and the organizational environment; heavy reliance in individuals, and less dependence on capital, and a high degree of independence in the part of practitioners; high educational levels and a high degree of professionalization on the part of most employees; heavy dependence on the loyalty of key personnel and considerable vulnerability when personnel leave the company; traditional concrete (material) assets are not a central factor, the critical elements are in the minds of employees and in networks, customer relationships, manuals and systems for supplying services.

Typical companies mentioned as KIFs are law and accounting firms, management, engineering and computer consultancy companies, advertising agencies, R&D units and high-tech companies. As to the relations between professional organizations and KIFs, it is argued that KIFs overlap with, and include the notion of, a professional organization. Features ascribed to a typical profession are an explicit code of ethics, standardized education and criteria for certification, a strong professional association, and monopolization of a particular part of the labor market through the regulation of entry. Professional organizations tend to be characterized by the relative homogeneity of the profession. Their self-proclaimed common knowledge base and its significance for the identities of professionals typically reduce variety between organizations, while other knowledge-intensive organizations may have a more organizationally specific knowledge base and be more idiosyncratic (Alvesson 1995).

A recent observation is that a disproportionately large number of KIFs-jobs within the software industry and organizational consultancies are located in the largest cities. For example, in 2001 the Oslo region had 40% of the jobs in this sector in Norway, while Trondheim, Stavanger and Bergen jointly had just over 19% of these jobs. In comparison, the Oslo region has about 22% of all jobs in Norway, while the other three urban regions have 17% (Aslesen and Isaksen 2004). These numbers show that KIFs are largely concentrated in urban areas, and the sector is regarded as an essential component of the innovation system of large cities. The simple reasons are – combining a view on demand and supply – that these areas offer easy access to highly educated specialized labor and that the greatest demand for knowledge intensive services comes from the Oslo region, in which many of the head offices of private and public organizations are located. Many of the projects carried out by these firms require close cooperation with clients, which is easier and less expensive if there is geographically proximity.

A term like proximity triggers the question of what characterizes the interaction between KIFs and other relevant actors. E.g. to what extent do such firms cooperate with universities and research institutions, and to what extent

do they make scientific claims in order to legitimize their knowledge base. To what extent are concepts/solutions sold by the firms imported from abroad and to what extent are they developed nationally? To what extent do they actually serve as innovation agents for other firms and industries, i.e. what characterize the relation between such firms and the users/buyers of their services? More generally, to what extent do modern innovation emerge as an entanglement of specialized information and knowledge offered by KIFs and the domain specific knowledge of other industries and public enterprises?

Even though the core business of KIFs is to carry out projects for clients, the output from these projects varies. Sometimes there is little interaction between providers and their clients, e.g. when standard products and services take place. In such cases, it might be reasonable to expect that little learning takes place in the client firm as a result of their interaction with the KIF. In other projects, products and services are tailored to the client and frequent, face-to-face interaction is required. In such cases, it might be expected that a real sharing of knowledge is taking place. It could also be that in such relationships innovation may be stimulated to a greater degree than in the transfer of more standardized services.

However, such assumptions and questions remain open for speculation because little has been done to make qualitative descriptions of the service providers' contributions from the users'/clients' point-of-view. E.g. to assess to what extent KIF services are considered by the clients to be an important source of innovation for their organizations. Interestingly, Aslesen and Isaksen (2004) briefly mention that some of the large users of KIF services in the Oslo region do not grant knowledge intensive firms an innovative role in their own organization. Why they do not grant them this role and what characterizes the relationship to KIFS from the clients point of view, are interesting questions for future research.

Of course, *knowledge intensive* is a problematic concept, epitomized by the question of whether the work of highly educated professionals is necessarily more knowledgeable than that of the skilled craftsman. The proponents of the category knowledge intensive firm try to avoid this rather value laden and political debate in pointing to the specific organizations in question: Organizations that are primarily concerned with the application of specialized technical knowledge to the creation of customized solutions to clients' problems. Their hope is, that by rooting the study of knowledge and knowledge management in the context of a well-established literature on professionals, professional service firms or knowledge intensive firms, substantive and sustainable insights can be developed that is applicable to other industrial sectors as well (Empson 2001).

Knowledge work transcends sectors

When writing about professional service firms, Løwendahl (1997) stresses that *services* account for a very large part of economic activity and that the service sector constantly increases its share of GDP. National and international statistics confirm this.[2] As indicated in the previous section, several authors have struggled to define what is new and special about a subset of service providers (KIFs) in which knowledge holds the center stage. Also in the larger discussion about services, both practitioners and theorists find it difficult to sharply define services as opposed to goods in value creation. The debate has revolved around three fundamental characteristics of services, namely that they are intangible, instantaneous, and produced in close interaction with the buyer(s).

Recent OECD statistics use the dependence on proximity and co-production in services in explaining why services play a relatively minor role in *international* trade (service imports in OECD countries in 2002 accounted for 20.5% of total goods and services imports) while in contrast services represent a major contribution in the *domestic* economies of member countries (where the proportion of total value-added contributed by services is around 70% and rising).

OECD asks why services are more difficult to trade internationally and claims that for many services a physical proximity between supplier and customer is essential, for example for hotels, hairdressing and industrial cleaning. Consequently, many service producers find it necessary to establish a commercial presence in countries they wish to trade in, in order to be close to their customers. With regard to export, it is interesting to note that it is estimated that one of the fastest growing OECD service exports in the period 1997-2002 was computer and information services. The report does not discuss, however, what it is about such services and their production that might be easier transferred or executed across time and space than other services.

While the immaterial quality and dependency on co-production in time and space seem to be important characteristics of services, Løwendahl (1997) emphasizes that such descriptions at no point can be considered unproblematic. Services such as restaurant meals, hotel accommodation, and air

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[2] Cf. National Bureau of statistics in Norway at http://www.ssb.no/emner/10/14/stefu/ and OECD statistics at http://www.oecd.org. A recent report from ABELIA, Association of Norwegian ICT- and knowledgebased enterprises, shows that since 1980 Norway has increased the number of employees in the "knowledge industry" with 130 000, a growth of 160 %. The number of employees in traditional industries has decreased with 120 000 in the same period of time. In total the knowledge industry employs 210 000 people, while the traditional industries employs 260 000.

transportation have highly tangible components but are clearly perishable. In addition, engineering design services typically result in drawings, calculations and plans, which are tangible, storable and reusable. Auditing services require close cooperation between the auditor and the accounting department of the client firm, whereas the patient cannot assist the surgeon in his/her service delivery process once the diagnosis has been made and the surgery is in progress. Thus, Løwendahl calls for a moderate skepticism on attempts to classify services as one thing and goods as something quite different.

Such skepticism serve as a prelude to more recent calls to develop an understanding of knowledge and service activities as work that cuts across industrial sectors, and, consequently, to dissolve the artificial divide between services and manufacturing. Service and manufacturing activities are increasingly intertwined as manufacturers and suppliers frequently offer packages of goods and services in order to compete on unique value. In a world of fierce competition, services play a crucial role in ensuring quality in traditional manufacturing industries, e.g. rapid product development, efficient transportation, and extensive after-sale services. Thus, actors within the so-called traditional industry may be just as interested in the role of knowledge and learning in organizations as are KIFs and other service providers.

There also seems to be a growing awareness about the public sector as the largest knowledge based service provider in the Norwegian society. It has a large portion of employees with higher education and in this respect it is just as "knowledge intensive" as an engineering consultancy or ICT company. This calls for a cross-sectorial focus on the role of knowledge and services in the economy, that is, to understand knowledge and services as a value adding processes – both within the service sector itself and within sectors of the more traditional industries.

A-Tale: Creative knowledge work

Where is "my" company, A-Tale, situated in the landscape of "knowledge intensive", "services", "urbanism", "innovation", etc.? To some extent A-Tale fits into the description of the KIFs/service industry provided above, but along two important dimensions it also differs from what is typical for this line of business. To take the similarities first: A-Tale has a definite urban orientation. It holds office in one of the major cities in Norway, because there the access to co-operating production companies and freelancers is high and because there the main offices of their customers are located.

Bearing some of Alvesson´s (1995) factors in mind, we might say that A-Tale depends on significant incidents of problem solving and creativity on the part of the partners. Its service may be classified as rather intangible – creative processes that preferably are going to result in original ideas. There is a heavy reliance in individuals, a high degree of independence in the way the partners act, and considerable vulnerability if some of the partners leave the company.

To be more specific about the core characteristics of A-Tale, it is fruitful to situate the company relative to the other companies that participate in the PhD projects within KUNNE. They consist of one contract research institute, one engineering consultancy, one ICT company, one combined ICT and management consultancy, and one PR/communication agency. What these five enterprises have in common is that they all are labeled "knowledge intensive", as discussed in the section above. However, marked by types of output, the engineering consultancy would report a relative larger portion of standard (engineering) deliveries than A-Tale, which is targeted at one-of-a-kind, or unique, deliveries.

There are few opportunities related to the economy of scale in A-Tale, at least as long as its ambition is to create innovative ideas that also score high on serious content. Such concepts may be expected to be acquired by the public service oriented or license based broadcasters, rather than the many small or more commercial channels. The opposite end of the spectrum of what they want to make may be exemplified by some of the concepts created within the reality TV genre. Concepts that have been highly marketable and sold worldwide with great profits to the creators and producers – titles like "Big Brother", "Blind Date", "Temptation Island", "The Bachelor", and "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire". What actually characterizes quality and high-end productions is, of course, an important element in the identity formation of the group.

Compared to the other KUNNE PhD companies, we might say that A-Tale was "born global" (McKinsey and Co. 1993), which means that A-Tale has not developed in incremental stages with respect to their international activities, but has had international activities right from their birth. They do operate in a market dominated by international concepts. In general, there are few TV channels (customers) in Norway and amongst the few channels there are, either they prefer to buy concepts and programs already broadcasted internationally or with documented popularity, or, for the ones most capable of financing the creation of new concepts locally, the dominant policy is to do it themselves.

Hence, A-Tale operates in a national niche market and, moreover, in this niche market they want to create high-end (read: quality) concepts. Obviously, they need to sell their productions internationally in order to survive. In this respect, they are comparable with other Norwegian design companies, or high-tech companies, that try to make it by operating in both a local and an

international market from day one. The local market is small, and the competition in the international design market is fierce. In comparison, the PR- and communication agency and the ICT company, both operated in a national market years before investing in international activities. The engineering consultancy is national. The combined management and ICT consultancy, on the other hand, is an international company (operating in over 20 countries), and it is large, measured by number of employees – the main stock employed in the Nordic countries.

By number of years in business, A-Tale is a young company compared to the other KUNNE companies mentioned. Also, it is small measured by number of people employed. With regard to technology, A-Tale is rather low-tech compared to the ICT companies who are delivering front-end technological solutions. The partners communicate through relatively common means such as e-mail, SMS and telephone, and things get going by and large through face-to-face meetings and written texts of different formats. Along this dimension it bears a certain similarity to the PR- and Communication agency.

With regard to production – which in fact is the technology-intensive part of their projects because of the extensive use of cameras, lightening equipment, sound recording and editing equipment – they hire freelancers or use existing production companies or employ technicians working within the television companies. A-Tale does not have production facilities in-house. A parallel to the ICT companies would be that they did not employ programmers themselves but hired them externally for every project. The only people they would have in-house would be the people selling the projects, doing the initial design part, and being responsible for quality and execution of the projects. None of the ICT companies studied by KUNNE operate like this.

From this brief comparison of the KUNNE companies, we may infer that so called KIFs differ quite a bit from each other, maybe more than what is evident when using the rather general KIFs factors provided by e.g. Alvesson (1995). However, there are two features that make A-Tale stand out from the other KUNNE companies. First, their strong and explicit ambition of providing innovative ideas/concepts to their customers, which hinge on their ability to establish and manage creative work processes. The opportunity to describe and discuss creative knowledge work from an empirical point of view is the main motivation for choosing this particular company for this thesis.

Second, the fact that the partners downplay the significance of a high level of formal education on the part of most of the employees. With regard to formal knowledge/education vs. informal or experienced based knowledge, the partners highlight their long experience from different tasks and positions within the industry. Even though experience is important in all the companies mentioned, compared to the contract research institute, the engineering or ICT

company, making references to an institutionalized or formalized knowledge base is relatively less important in A-Tale. This does not mean that knowledge does not matter. The question is how to understand knowledge as practiced in this specific work setting.

Crossroads: Arts, business & technology

In the national industrial statistics A-Tale is placed within the media- and entertainment industry.[3] Another label used in EU reports is "creative industries". Situated at the crossroads between the arts, business and technology, the creative industries sector comprises a large variety of artistic fields, from those heavily industrialized such as advertising and marketing, broadcasting, film industries, Internet and mobile content industry, etc. to those less industrialized, like the traditional fields of visual and performing arts.[4]

The sector is increasingly important from the economic point of view, representing already a leading area of the economy in the OECD countries, with significant values of annual growth rates: "Creativity is a driver for the economic growth, being increasingly considered a key strategic asset for improving competitiveness in the knowledge based economy. This context favors the creative industries, which are estimated to account to more than 7 percent of the world's gross domestic product and are forecast to grow, on average, by 10 percent each year" (Marcus, 2005, p. 10).[5]

I am not preoccupied with the extent to which creativity as a driver for economic growth favors the creative industries to other industries, as I think this is just another sector of work in which knowledge and learning in light of creative invention are crucial aspects of what is going on. A-tale makes an interesting case, though, since it more than the other KUNNE companies is likely to illuminate how artistic freedom collides and merges with business opportunities and new possibilities due to digital technology. To highlight what might be special about A-Tale, I have also argued against the common image of "knowledge workers": The partners in A-Tale are not "fact producers" as typically found within scientific work and they are not highly educated KIFs

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[3] See "Faktahefte om norsk næringsliv" published 13.07.05 by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Industry: http://www.dep.no/nhd/norsk/dok/andre_dok/veiledninger/bn.html

[4] The cultural industries in Norway contributed to 3,5 % of GDP in 2001. The estimated number of employees is 87 000 person. In comparison, the agriculture sector employs 60 000 persons. See Haraldsen et al. (2004).

[5] Cited from an EU report on the "Future of creative industries – Implications for Research Policy". See Marcus (2005).

workers tailoring a standardized knowledge base into something useful for their customers.

In regard to organization theory, A-tale resembles the innovative organization/adhocracy (Mintzberg 1983). The organization structure is simple, and few of its routines are formalized. The organization makes minimal use of planning, the managers and staff specialists take their place alongside its operating core, and the main mechanism for coordination is informal, mutual adjustment. The innovative organization treats existing knowledge merely as bases on which to build new ones. The building of new knowledge requires the professionals to join forces in multidisciplinary teams. According to Mintzberg (1983), an operating adhocracy innovates and solves problems directly on behalf of its clients. Its multidisciplinary teams of professionals often work under contract, as e.g. think-thank consulting firms, creative advertising agency, or manufacturer of engineering prototypes.

Sharing knowledge, and learning new things, is doubtlessly significant in what the partners in A-Tale are trying to do. Add to the picture their ambition of making programs that simultaneously inform and entertain wider audiences, and that two of their recent TV serials had an average of 800 000 viewers per program, which is a high percentage in the Norwegian national TV context. – As far as numbers are of any importance, they reach out to more people than many research scientists would ever do. This alone is an argument for understanding knowledge and creativity in light of this particular practice.[6]

Protopractice – a durable quality of the "innovative organization"?

What characterizes "the innovative organization" or creative knowledge work from a practice oriented perspective? According to Mintzberg (1983) we may expect that A-Tale explores ways of utilizing the multidisciplinary background of the partners, as the ambition of such organizations is to develop new knowledge on the basis of former experience. We may assume that the partners in A-tale are experimenting with ways of working, ways of presenting themselves to the outside world, and ways of utilizing their extensive network in order to create and realize television/film concepts. We may also say that such experimentation is a typical feature of start-up companies. However, my

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[6] When studying A-Tale I do not evaluate or discuss the content of their programmes or movies as such. This, I leave to the field of media studies and media-/culture journalists.

ambition is not to provide a phase description of A-Tale´s development from an immature to a mature organization. By conducting a grounded study of the partners' work practice I am after the qualities that seem important in order to maintain a creative power over time. I assume that in order to maintain its innovative capability, A-Tale has to be open to new ideas and suggestions on how to do things. This calls for an image of practice as dynamic and susceptive of change.

Theoretically, I find that it is important to develop ways of making the notion of practice more susceptive to the dynamic features of human enterprises than what is visible in the vast amount of writings on practice, which will be discussed later on in the theory chapter. Many practice-oriented studies are preoccupied with the habitual and rule-governed rather than the reflective and rule breaking in human action. It does not mean that the stable features of practice are not important. Nelson and Winter (1982) used the notion of routines in order to conceptualize the efficiency by which organizations apply their existing knowledge bases on familiar tasks. Also innovative organizations may be marked by certain routines, e.g. routines geared at being efficient in their product innovation cycle. However, in order to maintain creativity over time, it is important to break the common ways of doing things. The question is how this takes place within the context of everyday organizational practices?

In this study, it seems important to keep sight of the dual condition of creative knowledge practices – that of stability and change. I therefore suggest that we may think of the "A-Tale project" as a *protopractice*. While "proto" accentuates something new and in the making, "practice" denotes a set of actions with a certain degree of coherence and systematic repetition. Taken together, protopractice refers to change as well as stabilization of what people do. It denotes the emergence of a new practice on the one hand, and on the practice of repeatedly creating something new on the other hand. Innovative organizations have to keep practice open for change, but they also have to establish a set of routines that utilizes the collective knowledge of the people involved. This indicates that protopractice might be a required and durable condition of creative knowledge work, at least as long as novelty or uniqueness in what such organizations make is an essential element of the business strategy.

A-Tale is a young company, we may therefore expect that protopractice in A-Tale is imbued with the thrill of doing things for the first time; giving birth to the first idea as a community; convincing the first customer; accomplishing the first project; experiencing the first excellent collaboration of actors in a network relation. We might say that these are elements that typically belong to the early phase of companies such as A-tale. Even though each and one of the

partners in A-Tale have done many of the things before in their earlier jobs, they are doing it for the first time as members of this particular group and under the vision and business idea of this particular company. I assume, however, that it is important for the partners in A-Tale to find ways of upholding the enthusiasm of "this first time situation". That A-Tale nurtures those elements that provide the partners with motivation and energy. In other words, I am after those elements of the first time situation that seems to be important for creative knowledge work more generally.

If one looks up the etymological meaning of "proto-", we find terms like "forward," "through," and a wide range of extended senses such as "in front of," "before," "early," "first," "toward," "against," "near," "at," "around". These are all senses that indicate something that are unfinished, or about to become. The "unfinished quality" of practice, new business opportunities, and the outlook to develop novel concepts for television and film, may be simple, nevertheless important elements that provide the partners in A-Tale with motivation and direction of their work over time.

New opportunities due to broader structural-economic changes in the media industry increase A-Tale´s likelihood for success. First, the policy of the state owned broadcaster has changed. Now the broadcaster is to produce 10% of programs externally. Second, the National Film Fund[7] now supports independent productions for TV as well as film production, starting with TV serials. Third, the National film fund provides direct support to a select number of production communities.[8]

The support, which covers a period of four years, is meant to contribute to strengthening project development in production companies concerning both the targeted acquisitions of projects, and the creative elaboration of each individual project. For A-Tale, these changes represent an important market opportunity and a possibility to develop steadily over time. A-Tale is one of the few companies receiving direct support from the Film fund. As such, A-Tale is

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[7] http://www.filmfondet.no/english/ Established on July 1st 2001 as a civil executive body under the auspices of the Royal Ministry for Cultural Affairs. The Norwegian Film Fund is charged with administering all national support for film production in Norway.

[8] The national film fund: Support for [film] production companies has as its aim to promote film culture in Norway and to strengthen the [film production] sector through the development of stable film production companies, possessing high competence, that have the capacities and resources to deliberate and act in the longer perspective. The arrangement shall contribute to strengthening project development in production companies, concerning both the targeted acquisitions of projects, and the creative elaboration of each individual project, and concerning the strengthening of administrative, budgetary and project management functions with a view to obtaining increased cost efficiency, strengthened financing and marketing competence that provide for a better exploitation of the revenue-generating potential of the films.

an early example of the role the new actors receiving Film fund support and project development contracts from the national broadcaster might play.

However, the term protopractice is a multidimensional "thinking device". So far I have provided some speculations on what fuels change in the practice at hand. Protopractice also denotes being in the process of stabilizing ways of doing things. An interesting question here, is how A-Tale's success/failure with different projects and relationships define future thinking and doing? I expect that the early productions in A-Tale could play a defining role in the community since they are the result of the partners' concrete engagement in, and direct experience with, their collective ability to create and accomplish something. They become evidences of what they are capable of and become "prototypes" from which other variants are formed, judged against, and maybe replicated from.

Protopractice, then, implies a situation where the people involved develop immediate/first hand knowledge of their collective capabilities as well as a detached or conceptual knowledge defining their effort in more abstract terms. I assume that when the partners in A-Tale start referring to their ideas/concepts as "typical examples" of something, like for instance, "X is an excellent program", or "Y is one of those disastrous ideas," it indicates that the result of their effort has gained a status as "objects out there" (detached knowledge). In other words, prototypes as "the typical example of", also implies a certain degree of stabilization.

A typical example, which we may use to classify other cases, is provided by Tsoukas and Chia (2002) when writing about organizational becoming: "robins are more central to our understanding of the category 'bird', than ostriches are". The authors argue that patterns of action stemming from acting on central cases tend to be stable. However, there will always be atypical cases that do not fit neatly into our previous understandings and which will raise new questions of what to do or how to respond. Discussing kinds of classification in theories about classification, Bowker and Star (1999) refer to observations showing that incipient organizations need some *stabilizing principle* to stop their premature demise. The naturalization of social classifications is one such stabilizing principle. It means that certain categories used by a group are taken for granted and recognized as something that refer to the world "out there."

There are different kinds of classifications systems at work in our society, but Bowker and Star draw a special attention to the classic divide between Aristotelian classifications versus prototype classification. The Aristotelian way is technically oriented in that objects are classified according to a set of predefined characteristics, e.g. a pen is thin, cylindrical and has a ballpoint. If the object does not share these characteristics it is not a pen.

Prototype theory claims that our classifications tend to be much fuzzier than we might at first think. Take for example the category "chair". It is possible to name a population of objects that people would in general agree to call chairs which have no binary features in common: "Prototype theory proposes that we have a broad picture in our minds of what a chair is, and we extend this picture by metaphor and analogy when trying to decide if any given thing that we are sitting on counts. We call up a best example, and then see if there is a reasonable direct or metaphorical thread that takes us from the example to the object under consideration", (Bowker and Star 1999, p. 63). In practice, we find both the Aristotelian and the prototype way in use when people organize their world.

I read from this discussion that when exploring A-Tale as a protopractice, it is reasonable to expect that the sense-making amongst the partners is rich of possible and impossible, direct and metaphorical references to past and present experiences. At the same time, they are in need of a handful self experienced exemplars, defining more clearly their identity and what they are capable of doing and not doing as a group. What I expect is that a stabilizing principle in terms of classification within their practice resembles the prototype way rather than the Aristotelian way, that is, stabilizing by way of association. So, as they finish productions, the examples of what they have made will gain a status as "objects out there". These are shared objects that they may refer to when they create other ideas, and that may inscribe the necessary steps to be taken in order to realize ideas.

There is one last comment I would like to make on the discussion of the dynamics in A-Tale through a construct such as protopractice. I assume that when the collective history of the partners is weak, the engagement in exploring possibilities and the commitment to creating and upholding visions for their work provide the loosely coupled partners with direction, motivation and energy. Engagement in opportunity-seeking and forward-looking activities both fuel learning and have an organizing effect on their activities. Therefore, I assume that vision efforts have some of the same stabilizing and action inscribing function as the exemplars mentioned in prototype theory above. At the same time, visions are important to the development and transformation of the company, above all because they provide the partners with motivation and energy. Hence, visioning is a basic element of both change and stabilization.

The central empirical questions in this thesis revolve around how the partners are dealing with constantly coming up with and producing original ideas. This may be framed as a question of how the practice within which they interact both pattern itself and change as time goes by through their combination of former knowledge and learning about possibilities and constraints in the industry. Theoretically, the challenge is to develop

perspectives that, within the context of creative knowledge work, aid us in conceptualizing an organization constantly on its way to become. That is, as a practice on the move through a joint process of change/stabilization and improvisation/learning. In this section, protopractice has been suggested as a multidimensional "thinking device" in outlining what might be important qualities of creative knowledge work. I have also suggested that protopractice is a durable quality of organizations that manage to stay innovative over time.

Outline of the thesis

The main ambition of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the nature of creative knowledge work. The three research questions are: What characterizes the organizing of creative knowledge work? How is knowledge shared and generated in order to invent novel ideas? What are important communicative dimensions in order to maintain a creative space over time? The theory chapter is written as a journey through complementary fields of research; contemporary theories within organization studies, studies of science and technology, and practice approaches to learning and work. Several of the perspectives are not used directly in the analysis, but are certainly there as a part of my inter-disciplinary background. The chapter ends with a selection of conceptual tool for the analysis later on.

Chapter 3 provides methodological reflections on the study of enterprises such as A-Tale. Then I describe the activities I undertook in order to generate information about the company. At last a brief introduction of A-Tale is provided. When the company was established, how they define their business idea and vision, who the partners are, and how they define their logics of operation.

The analysis is organized into three succeeding chapters dealing with one research question each. Chapter 4 analyzes the way the whole organization moves and transforms. Chapter 5 is devoted to characteristics of the knowledge production in such a company; how the partners use their inter-disciplinary knowledge base in order to create ideas and in order to realize specific projects. Chapter 6 identifies communicative dimensions that seem important in defining the creative space of idea cultivation. At last, chapter 7 summarizes the main findings and discusses theoretical implications of the study.

2   Travels in theory

I started previous chapter with a curiosity about creative knowledge work as expressed in a concrete organizational practice. I tried to situate the company in quest in regard to the larger debate on the knowledge economy and so called knowledge intensive firms. Even though I argued against the use of the problematic term "knowledge intensive firm", I emphasized the importance of understanding the practice within which the partners in A-Tale interact in light of knowledge, creativity, and learning. Via some empirical and some theoretical reasons, I also called upon a need for characterizations of practice that make the notion more dynamic and susceptive of change.

Protopractice is a construct meant to appreciate the experimental and "unfinished" features of the practice at hand, which is necessary in order to maintain innovation over time. At the same time, the partners try to stabilize certain activities in order to be efficient in producing interesting ideas and concepts for television and film. Protopractice denotes the simultaneous processes of changing and stabilizing ways of thinking and doing things.

In this chapter I will situate the study with respect to theory. An appropriate metaphor for this effort might be the journey. As a traveler I go to places out of a diverse set of reasons, or sometimes of no reason but the pure joy of experiencing something new. Sometimes when out traveling I meet interesting people who inspires me to seek out certain places, sometimes I have read or heard about things that I feel as an absolute must to experience, sometimes my budget tells me that I can afford going here but not there. I have encountered the theories to be presented in the succeeding sections in somewhat the same manner, as a mixture of curiosity, chance and conscious pursuit. Some I have encountered by purposively seeking them out, as a part of a research project, a paper to be written, a presentation to be made; some I have read out of a drive for finding "a novel voice", "a different voice"; some – maybe the majority – I have read on the recommendation of people that I have come to admire and respect.

Several of the texts belong to different fields of research, and they are written for different audiences, with different purposes, the common denominator for the references presented below is that they all are, in some way

or the other, concerned with the understanding of the vexed concepts of knowledge, learning and practice. Even though my theoretical universe is interdisciplinary, my field of interest is the study of organizations and different kinds of work.

As the reader will see, "travels in theory" spans a relative broad set of literature. It reflects my interdisciplinary background, but more importantly the aim is to equip the study of creative knowledge work with appropriate conceptual tools. In the introduction, I presented three research questions: What characterizes the organizing of creative knowledge work? How do the partners in A-Tale share and generate knowledge in order come up with inventive ideas? What are important communicative dimensions in order to maintain a creative space for idea/concept development? The research questions indicate that my object of analysis is two folded: On the one hand, the processes through which the entire organization moves and transforms. On the other hand, the creative practice of the partners, as visible in their everyday interaction and communication.

In order to analyze the organizing of creative knowledge work, I will present theories on organizational dynamics and change, and on boundary work and processes of stabilization as presented within Actor-Network Theory. In order to look at idea cultivation in A-Tale as a kind of knowledge work, I dive into theories on "knowledge intensive firms", knowledge management, and discussions on knowledge production within Science and technology studies. In order to capture important communicative aspects of A-Tale's creative practice, I seek inspiration in practice approaches to work.

Learning & knowledge in organization studies

When I read theories on organizational learning at the university the point of departure was Argyris and Schön's (1978) action approach to learning. In practice, organizations may be more or less capable of learning and *what* they learn may be more or less appropriate for their survival. Argyris and Schön argued that the key to learning lies in bridging the gap between individuals' espoused theory and theory-in-use. Keeping this gap in mind they discussed the problem of extending cycles of learning from the individual level to the organization level (Schön 1983a), and the need to overcome defensive routines in organizations hampering learning (Argyris 1990).

After graduation I started working in a contract research institute and my knowledge about theories and practices of organizing work has been expanding

during the ten years I have been with SINTEF. While much of the research on organizational learning and organization development took place in the 1980s and early 1990s, there was a shift in focus from "learning" to "knowledge" around 1995 accentuated by Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) portrait of the knowledge creating company. Here, they argued an increased capacity for innovation in organizations through the conversion of different forms of tacit and codified knowledge.

In the field of organizational learning we had already explored distinctions and combinations of propositions like e.g. individual learning is a prerequisite for organizational learning; even though individuals learn it does not automatically imply that organizations learn; what people articulate about what they are doing does not necessarily correspond with what they are actually doing. Hence, organizations play a critical role in articulating/amplifying individual knowledge through different learning cycles onto the collective level.

Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) built on the approaches offered by organizational learning, but they sought to integrate learning processes into their representation of different types of knowledge conversion, which in sum, constituted, not the learning company, but the innovative company. In short, the innovative power of a company was dependent on the conversion of "tacit" or "implicit" knowledge to explicit knowledge – referring to Michael Polanyi, the Hungarian Chemist-turned-philosopher for an in-depth discussion of tacit knowledge.

Measure & manage vs. understand & nurture

From the mid 1990s a broad range of articles surfaced a diversity of assumptions and vocabularies in understanding knowledge in organizations and in how companies can influence its creation and use. The most notably contrast has been between the aim of understanding and nurturing knowledge creation, and that of measuring and managing knowledge. Knowledge management (KM) became a focal theme for both the external services offered by and the internal organizing of major consultancies like KPMG, Ernst and Young, McKinsey, Coopers and Lybrand, IBM, Cap Gemini, and Anderson consulting.

Discussions about knowledge management in such consultancies/companies were closely related to information systems/information technology. KM was by and large concerned with capturing, storing, sharing, and re-using knowledge to enhance performance in

organizations. A definition of knowledge management provided by Microsoft in 1998 was: "Knowledge management is the use of technology to make information relevant and accessible wherever that information may reside. To do this effectively requires the appropriate applications of the appropriate technology for the appropriate situation", cited in Brown and Duguid (2000, p. 117).

A review of the knowledge management literature made by Scarbrough and Swan (2003) shows that knowledge management has been embraced by both consultancies and professional groups within the IT field. The greatest number of articles on KM was published in 1998, about 270 articles, in which the majority appeared within the IS/IT literature, especially in practitioner-oriented journals. The publisher Butterworth-Heinemann released a series of edited books for practitioners on knowledge management, focusing on how to get from understanding knowledge and the intellectual capital of a firm to actually do something about it (Myers 1996; Prusak 1997; Ruggles 1997). Probably the most comprehensive book in the "knowledge management for practitioners" genre is written by the experienced consultants Davenport and Prusak (1998). They claim to have observed and analyzed over hundred attempts to manage knowledge in organizations and argue that building trust throughout a company is the key to creating a knowledge-oriented corporate culture.

In the same period special issues with a broader and more theoretical scope on knowledge in organizations were released, such as "Knowledge and the firm" by *Strategic Management Journal* (1996), on "Organizational knowledge" by *California Management Review* (1998), and on "Knowledge management" by *Harvard Business Review* (1998). Numerous accounts explored the "new" or "different" or "alternative" conceptions of knowledge from those advocated by management consultancies and/or IT system professionals on the one hand, or the classical accounts of organizations/firms as stable rational entities, on the other. The core question that many of these accounts come back to is the relationship between abstract, objectified knowledge vs. individual and organizational practices.

Blackler (1995) summarizes common images of knowledge in the organizational literature in a typology as embodied, embedded, embrained, and encultured and suggests an alternative approach where knowledge is analyzed as an active process, i.e. as mediated, situated, provisional, pragmatic and contested. The constructivist and activity oriented view on knowledge – or "knowing as a process" – is further explored by Blackler (1993; see also Blackler et al. 1999).

Krogh and Roos (1996) edited what they called a status report on the research on knowledge and suggested a step forward from the cognitivist

perspectives, a heritage from Simon, March and Cyert's breakthrough research,[9] in which knowledge often is substituted by information and organizations are viewed as open systems that process information obtained from the environment. Krogh and Roos argue for an autopoiesis inspired understanding of knowledge as something developed internally in a self-referential manner. Knowledge, in the autopoiesis perspective, is private, and the organization is simultaneously open, with respect to external input in the form of data, *and* a closed system, with respect to the creation of (specific or private) knowledge.

A concrete example of the use of the autopoiesis theory on company cases is provided by Maula (1999). Tsoukas (1996) conceptualizes the firm as a distributed knowledge system, the argument be that no single agent can fully specify in advance what kind of practical knowledge is going to be relevant, when and where. The knowledge organizations need to draw upon is inherently indeterminate and continually emerging. He further defines individual's stock of knowledge in organizations through three dimensions; their role-related normative expectations, their dispositions, which have been formed in the course of past socializations, and their local knowledge of particular circumstances of time and place. Utilizing knowledge is at any point of time a question of dealing with an inevitable tension between normative expectations (which the firms may have some control over), and the other two dimensions (which the firms has no or very little control over).

Spender (1996; 1998) tries to pull a fragmented literature on organization's knowledge and learning capabilities together as a new basis for the theory of the firm. He is offering a pluralist epistemology, which depicts the firm as a system of knowledge types and processes. In structuring the discussion he uses the well-known dichotomies between the implicit and explicit, the individual and social, which constitute the dimensions defining automatic, conscious, objectified and collective knowledge. Even though he argues that firms comprise several distinct types of knowledge, each implying different learning and memory processes, he also argues that the firm's most strategically important feature is its body of collective, automatic knowledge.

Pursuing Spender's ideas about a pluralist epistemology, and at the same time, emphasizing the special importance of the tacit, collective dimension, Baumard (1999) shows that we can learn a lot about different notions of knowledge from organizations in distress or crisis. He presents a case study of four firms of different sizes and operating in different lines of industry. They all have in common that they go through a period of strategic crisis. The change processes are conceptualized as deep-seated transformations of the dominant type of knowledge in the firm – e.g. from relying on individuals and their tacit

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[9] See Simon (1945), March and Simon (1958), and Cyert and March (1992/1963).

knowledge, to relying on more formal system for collective communication – transformations that are both difficult and expensive to achieve.

In sum, much of the debate about knowledge in organizations in the 1990s has revolved around two main topics. First, the definition of the tacit/explicit, individual/collective dimensions. Second, around the question of whether some types of knowledge are more important than others – of strategic/competitive reasons, or in a human resource perspective, or in order to increase organizations' capacity for innovation and change. Recent attempts to provide a state of the art compilation and to push the debate further is provided by the Handbook of organizational learning and knowledge management (Easterby-Smith and Lyles 2003), the special issue on knowledge construction and creation in organizations (Tsoukas and Mylonopoulos 2004), the celebration of the living aspects of knowledge (Carlsen et al. 2004), and the exploration of the interplay between knowledge as possessed and knowledge as practiced (Amin and Cohendet 2004).

Also, a new turn within the debate on IT and knowledge is demonstrated by Morris (2001) who presents an in-depth case study of a knowledge codification project undertaken within a consulting firm. He argues that the codification process represents the firm's assertion of property rights over the knowledge and the individual professional. He asks why it turns out that professionals are willing to co-operate with this process and suggest it is because they do so because they are aware of the limits of codification. Professionals express a firm belief that their true value to their clients (and their source of power within their firm) derives from their unique combination of experiences and intuition. They recognize that this knowledge is not susceptible to codification. Hence, systems of codification are not a threat to their knowledge base, but a means for the firm to establish property rights and branding concepts in order to secure a continuing income stream and, perhaps, find a major success it can market.

Firms seek to codify and establish property rights in order to repeat historical examples from the consulting industry showing that a periodic, massive success of a single good idea is likely to act as a spur for innovations. E.g. like "products" such as Business Process (Re-) engineering or the Boston Consulting Group Matrix of business unit attractiveness, which used the famous terminology of dogs, cash cows and stars. Morris' study suggests that there is a growing awareness amongst knowledge workers, IT-developers and managers about the different aspects of knowledge. How they both relate to

and escape codification. That is, how they both acknowledge the economy of codification and the economy of personal/relational knowledge.[10]

A lack of grounded studies?

The many publications on knowledge in organizations have resulted in a diverse set of problems to be explored and a plethora of possible perspectives and suggestion on how to understand the nature of knowledge and services. Several of these accounts are linked to a rather implicit and vague image of the concrete activities that they based their conceptualizations on. I came to a point where I felt that a vast amount of the writings made assumptions on both the nature of knowledge in specific work settings, and of the way those settings were organized without doing actual studies of the concrete, day-to day activities and perspectives of the so called knowledge workers and the associated managers.

　　Rather, many of the early articles based their descriptions of the new kinds of organizations, the new types of work, and the new knowledge-centered workers, on environmental forces and broad socio-economic trends, that is, on assumptions inferred from the shift from the industrial to the knowledge economy with the emergent possibilities of the new electronic technologies at its core. What I missed was grounded studies less preoccupied with typologies and classifications of knowledge and suggestions of the new organizational forms, and more concerned with portraying what is actually going on. In short, ethnography-inspired studies portraying knowledge work as practiced.

Practice: What are people actually doing?

In the mid 1990s I started reading texts emphasizing practice and the flow of activities in organizations. In a recent anthology addressing the practice turn in contemporary theory, Schatzki et al. (2001) aptly comment that the practice

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[10] Others who much earlier took the "tacit knowledge" issue seriously and, on the one hand, asked what implications it holds for understanding the implications of IT/expert systems and work, and on the other hand, presented critical views on the tacit knowledge concept itself, are found in the edited works of Göranzon and Josefson (1988), and Göranzon and Florin (1990). Even though writing outside the field of organization theory, their discussion of artificial intelligence, knowledge and work is highly relevant to the debate about codification and branding versus the human component and living knowledge.

approach is not a unified one. Nevertheless, they argue that there are variations of issues often addressed by scholars preoccupied by practice: the habitual and customary in our culture; the importance of tacit knowledge and presupposition in defining practice; the conception of practice as embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity; the persistence and transformation of practice that rests on successful inculcation of shared embodied know-how; the "materialist" aspect of practice meaning that the understanding of specific practices always involves apprehending material configurations and that the stability of practices partly reflects the solidifying inertia of material layouts.[11]

I remember talking with a colleague about a couple of articles that inspired me a lot, one being Orr (1990) about sharing knowledge through story telling amongst service technicians at Xerox, the other Jordan´s (1989) analysis of the training of Maya midwifes in Western medicine. Here, she demonstrates how the transmission of knowledge also deals with the imposition, extension and reproduction of lines of power and authority. My colleague then told me about a professor at the Department of education at my university, whom he knew was equally enthusiastic about these kinds of topics. A couple of months later he arranged a workshop where this professor also attended.

This was my first meeting with Sigrun, professor at the Dep. of Education, NTNU, which later resulted in several talks concerning situated learning and apprenticeship (Lave and Wenger 1991; Schön 1983b), the exploration of learning as an integral part of different practices (Chaiklin and Lave 1993), knowledge transfer through storytelling (Orr 1990), distributed cognition arguing for a distinction between the cognitive properties of an individual and the cognitive properties of a system visible in practical situations (Hutchins 1996; Weick and Roberts 1993), and the integrated analysis of people, tools, and the object of work offered by cultural-historical approach to activities; activity theory for short (Engeström 1993; Engeström et al. 1990; Wertsch 1985; Wertsch 1991).

These early discussions, together with the growing unease with the "knowledge management" debate, marked the beginning of a practice approach to organization studies for me. The immediate strength of the practice notion was that it addressed what people do in order to get their jobs done. It advocated an understanding of organizations as they unfold rather than as

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[11] When reading practice oriented theories, I have tried to focus on conceptions of practice that are the easiest to use in understanding work settings and companies. Of course, behind a practice oriented approach there is a rich background: Of philosophical practice thinkers such as Wittgenstein (1958b), Dreyfus (1967), and Taylor (1958). Of social theoretical works such as those of Bourdieu (1977; 1990), and Giddens (1979; 1984). Of ethnomethodologists like Garfinkel (1967), Cicourel (1972), Wieder (1974), and Sacks (1974). However, as emphasized by Schatzki et al. (2001), even though there are a multiplicity of impulses and issues there is yet no unified practice approach.

something defined through more or less complex typologies. Hence, it offered a way of moving beyond regular dichotomies often referred to and used as analytical categories in organization theory in general and knowledge management in particular. E.g. "rational and planned vs. interpretive and emergent", or "formal vs. informal", "content vs. process", or "strategic vs. operational", or, "organic vs. structural", or "stability vs. change", "individual vs. collective", or "tacit vs. explicit."

In a practice-based approach to organizations, change tended to be portrayed as more continuous and continual, than changes resulting from the need for radical re-organizations typically demanded by slowdown in the economy or the promise of productivity increase through the widespread use of information technology. At that time, a practice-based view on change chimed in with the view on organizations as continuously learning and it contrasted the Hammer and Champy (1990; 1993) manifesto of business process reengineering (BPR) in which re-engineering teams were told to take "a clean sheet of paper" and reengineer the organization around the processes that did add value, thus, insisting on sweeping away old practices, or outsourcing them. – Engineering teams that knew little about the actual work practices they were re-designing as they first and foremost consulted the formal descriptions of the organizations.

This stood in contrast to Nelson and Winter (1982) who build their theory of evolutionary economic change on a conception of organizations as a set of collective routines. Routines are to organizations what skills are to individuals. It takes time to develop routines. They emerge on the basis of recurrent responses to situations that over time appear as familiar. It is difficult to articulate them in full and, not the least, routines make organizations poor at improvising coordinated responses to novel situations.

The last point may be taken as an explanation for a lack of radical learning and innovation in organizations, which again may lead to an argument for tough means such as re-engineering to foster change. But Nelson and Winter's conception of routines as rather implicit and taken for granted also indicate the potential problem of re-engineering, insofar as the method used in BPR relies on easily accessible (read formal) descriptions of practices rather than addressing what practices are actually about.

Apprenticeship, participation & storytelling

A group of PhD students organized by Sigrun at the Dep. of Education[12] discussed a line of theorizing and research initiated by the founders of the cultural-historical school of Russian Psychology, L. S. Vygotsky, A.N. Leont'ev, and A. R. Luria in the 1920s and 1930s (Engeström et al. 1999). One strand of the discussion was on practice-based learning and the quality of the mentor-mentee relationship. Sigrun and a colleague had used the notion of the "Zone of Proximal Development" in a project aimed at developing methods for supervising students on teaching practice assignments through the use of modern communication technology (Hoel and Gudmundsdottir 1999).

In terms of Vygosky (1978, p. 86), ZPD is "the distance between the actual problem solving level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers". She talked about how Vygotsky had developed the notion of the zone of proximal development within a theory arguing that higher mental functions (such as abstract thinking, logical memory, and selective attention) is closely related to social, cultural, historical, and institutional factors. In short, by participating in cultural specific activities children develops higher mental processes that are necessary when they are solving cultural specific problems or tasks. Referring to Cole (1988) she maintained that the individual and the socio-cultural dimension in learning come together in the zone proximal development.[13]

Vygotsky founded his theory about ZPD mainly on research on child and grown-up dyads, but arguably it may be that his construct applies to learning at all ages. When e.g. teacher students are on practical assignments, they are in the midst of the activities that will demand the development of certain knowledge and skills. However, the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD) tells that students will learn faster and better if they are supported and guided on concrete problems by a skilled professional in a process of mutual reflection.

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[12] The group was concerned with cultural-historical theory in general and activity theory in particular. It was run by Sigrun and Anlaug with contributions from Ragnheidur and the PhD students Torill, Janne, May Britt, Arne, Ingunn, Nina, Vivi and Anne.

[13] The development of Vygotsky's theories partly has happened through new interpretations such as Wertsch, J. V. (1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. Cole, M. (1988). The zone of proximal development: Where culture and cognition create each other. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication, and cognition.* Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press. Also, by combining his ideas with Bakthin's cultural perspective, see Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, — (1998). *Mind as Action.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

So, while the notion of social learning in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) pinpointed a particular form of participation as a starting point for novices in their journey towards skilled professionalism (legitimate peripheral participation), the zone of proximal development fleshed out a particular mentor-mentee relationship for efficient learning to take place.

A description of an apprenticeship situation that resembles the one outlined by the ZPD is found in Schön's (1983b) thorough description of the reflective practitioner. His diagnosis of higher education is harsh. Professionals, such as doctors, architects, lawyers and engineers are all trained in schools that emphasize technique but neglect the key element of artistry that distinguishes the true professional. Today's professional is mechanically applying privileged knowledge to rote tasks. As a first step to remedy the situation he asks what can be learnt from skillful, professional practitioners; in short, what characterizes the practical epistemology? His core term is *reflection-in-action*.

Schön commences with the assumption that practitioners know more than they are able to articulate, and that the tacit knowledge is visible only when the practitioners act on specific problems in specific situations. What characterizes skillful professionals, however, is their ability to reflect on their own, often intuitive, use of knowledge – while in action. Reflection-in-action enables them to handle the unique, the undetermined, and the contradictory elements always present in practical life. Aligned to the ideas of Vygotsky, the reflective practitioner is one who is able to achieve the level of potential development by becoming his own mentor. A person who inquires into his own practice, using reflection as a tool, such a person is inclined to question his/her own standards of performance at any point of time.

Jordan (1989) describes five characteristics of the apprenticeship mode of learning in the training of midwifes amongst the Maya Indians at Yucatan. First apprenticeship happens as a way of, and in the course of, daily life. It may not be recognized as teaching effort at all. Second, the activities in which masters and students engage are driven by the requirement of the work to be accomplished – pots need to be fired, a baby needs to be birthed, trousers need to be manufactured. Third, there is a temporal ordering of skill acquisition. Apprentices acquire competence stepwise, starting with skills that are relatively easy and peripheral and where potential mistakes have minimal costs (legitimate peripheral participation). They learn a little bit here and a little bit there in a process of working from the periphery of a task complex to the center.

Forth, apprenticeship learning first and foremost involves the ability to do rather than the ability to talk about, which means the acquisition of bodily skills (tacit knowledge) before verbal and abstract knowledge (explicit knowledge). Fifth, the role of stories in the apprentices' learning processes, in which she points to three central observations: the first is that requests for

abstract and hypothetical formulations produce stories; the second is that stories play a major role in decision-making; and the third shows that stories function to legitimate the practitioner.

Referring to Early (1982) and Orr (1986), Jordan is arguing that stories are packages of situated knowledge, knowledge that is not available abstractly but is called up as the characteristics of the situation require it. To acquire a store of appropriate stories and, even more importantly, to know what appropriate occasions for telling them are, is then part of what it means to become a midwife. With regard to standards of performance and evaluation of competence, Jordan tells that little is said about the apprentice's performance. Operating in an environment of competently executed tasks, the apprentice always knows just how she is doing, how she measures up. In such situations, the standards for appropriate performance are ever-present in the expert's actions, and to a large extent, the evaluator is the learner herself rather than the expert.

However, as Jordan points out, in our Western society such apprenticeship mode of learning is reduced to a formal, didactic mode of learning. For her, the appreciation of the kind learning going on through knowledge as practiced is a political question; who's knowledge and what kind of knowledge count as legitimate? Because, as pointed out by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977, p. 42), "[Formal Schooling] succeeds in obtaining from the dominated classes a recognition of legitimate knowledge and know-how (e.g. in law, medicine, technology, entertainment or art), entailing the devaluation of the knowledge and know-how they effectively command (e.g. customary law, home medicine, craft techniques, folk art and language, and all the lore handed on in the hedge-school of the witch and the shepherd) and so providing a market for material and especially symbolic products of which the means for productions are virtually monopolized by the dominant classes (e.g. clinical diagnosis, legal advice, the culture industry, etc)." On the one hand Bourdieu and Passeron (1997) point out how changes in social structures is related to changes in educational patterns, on the other hand they articulate the political stance in this development; that some kind of knowledge is devaluated and dominated by other kinds of knowledge.

Geographically closer to Norway, although preoccupied with the similar problem complex of legitimization, i.e. the understanding and enhancement of knowledge as manifest in skills, or what may be called vocational qualifications, craft work, or practical work, is found in the publications of Göranzon (1990), Molander (1993; 1997) and Perby (1995). In different ways they explore how practical and experience–based knowledge is expressed and how it can be supported, developed and organized. I remember participating in a seminar in Trondheim with Professor Göranzon in 1997 where he talked about the role of

dialogue and reflection for maintaining valuable skills or practice-based knowledge through extending and transforming it. The method for enhancing the status of such knowledge through finding new ways of articulating, transforming and transferring it was published later on by his colleague Hammarén (1999).

Community knowledge in work practices

Having read quite a lot about practice and learning as manifest in our everyday life, I turned to similar approaches used within work organizations. Important characteristics of different work practices were described by anthropologists at Xerox Palo Alto Research Center; knowledge sharing through storytelling; improvised problem solving in local – and for the formal organization – invisible practices; communities of practice as natural units of social configuration and learning. For instance, I read Seely Brown's (1991), enthusiastic story about the findings of PARC anthropologist Suchman who had studied the work practice of the clerks in an accounts-payable office who issue checks to suppliers (Brown 1991, p. 108):[14]

> "Most people assume that formal procedures defining a job or the explicit structure of an organizational chart accurately described what employees do, especially in highly routinized occupations. But when Suchman began studying Xerox accounting clerks in 1979, she uncovered an unexpected and intriguing contradiction. When she asked the clerks how they did their jobs, their descriptions corresponded more or less to the formal procedures of the job manual. But when she observed them at work, she discovered that the clerks were not really following those procedures at all. Instead, they relied on a rich variety of informal practices that were not in any manual but turned out to be crucial to getting the work done. In fact, the clerks were constantly improvising, inventing new methods to deal with unexpected difficulties and to solve immediate problems. Without being aware of it, they were far more innovative and creative than anybody who heard them describe their 'routine' jobs ever would have thought."

In this account, practice is depicted as local collective improvisation situated at the intersection between formal procedures and practical problems. Communities of practice, first introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) when

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[14] John Seely Brown: Corporate vice president at Xerox and the director of the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center.

outlining a social theory of learning as "legitimate peripheral participation" in "communities of practice", seemed especially promising in advancing a new understanding of practiced-based knowledge and learning in organizations.

Lave and Wenger argued that much conventional learning theory, including that implicit in most training courses, attach particular value to abstract knowledge over actual practice and as a result, separate learning from working and consequentially, learners from workers. Communities of practice are comprised of people doing roughly similar work. Becoming a member of the community involves a period of learning through socialization, which entails a form of apprenticeship. Thus, newcomers learn through increasing participation in what is going on. It is legitimate to maintain a peripheral position in which one is assigned tasks here and there, i.e. not being responsible for the critical tasks.

It is important to notice that such communities do not function as centralized repositories of knowledge. Instead, skill and information are unequally distributed within the network of practitioners, and learning occurs when individuals mobilize the network to access the community's collective expertise. The early community of practice inspired conception of knowing and learning, highlights a gap between abstract knowledge and practice-based learning, and, following Suchman (1987), between the formal systems in organizations maintained by managers, and the informal day-to-day performance of jobs.

Communities of practice was developed further by Wenger (1998), arguing that the term should be viewed as a unit with practice being the source of coherence along three dimensions; *Mutual engagement* - that people are engaged in actions whose meaning they negotiate with one another; *Shared repertoire* - the tools, routines, words, concepts, symbols, stories and habits that the community has adopted in the course of its existence; *Joint enterprise* - a negotiated response to boundary conditions, i.e. an understanding of purpose and a regime of mutual accountability.

Conceptual relatives to CoPs include "thought collectives" (Fleck 1979/1935), "interpretive communities" (Fish 1980), "communities of knowing" (Boland and Tenkasi 1995) and "communities of discourse" (Sharp 1997). None of these attempts seem to mirror the theoretical richness of the CoP concept, which in the use of Wenger is only the point of entry into a broad conceptual framework.

Another reason for the popularity of the community of practice concept is probably its idealistic connotations. Consider for example the "New manifesto for Management" as described by Ghoshal et al. (1999, p. 15) the ingredients being "a community of purpose", "shared resources and knowledge", and the "building (of) shared destiny relationships" through "a new moral contract of

creating value". They are fronting the inspired collectives as a conceptual twin of CoPs, without making an explicit link, like for instance, Liedtka (1999) does. A shared sense of meaning and purpose, an emphasis on business processes, and a capacity for dialogue, are all converging themes of competitive advantage that Liedtka derives form the CoP concept.

Also Senge (in Karlenzig 1999) points out that the unit of analysis should be something more than teams or groups: "Communities of practice are the necessary complement to teams [...] knowledge is generated in teams, but it resides in the communities. Teams are task-oriented and fleeting; they don't last. As the teams dissolve, people go off and reform in other teams. But they keep those networks of relationships, and they maintain those community ties." Even though he touches onto the topic, Senge does not discuss the image he outlines of communities as repositories of stable knowledge and teams as generators of new knowledge (read: communities are not innovative).

Practice as maintenance of knowledge & identity – what about innovation or change?

The relationship between practice and social change and between practice and innovation is tricky in regard to the general idea of communities of practice. Brown and Duguid (1991) combined Lave and Wenger's insights into learning through socialization in practice-defined communities with the ethnographic studies of work made by Suchman (1987) and Orr (1990), in an attempt to develop an unified perspective on working, learning, and innovation in organizations. Again the argument is that actual practice, the details of practice – as opposed to conventional descriptions of jobs, manuals, and training programs – are central to understanding work. But they expanded the perspective by arguing that "learning-in-working" engenders and maintains such practices, while innovation, as a change in a community's "way of seeing" or interpreting the world, enhances them. Even though they draw on ethnographic studies arguing that situated action within organizations is inherently of a creative nature, they acknowledge a distinction between maintenance/learning and enhancement/innovation. Instead of substantiate this distinction they conclude that learning-in-working and innovation takes place through a constant adapting to changing membership and changing circumstances.

Communities of practice has moved from being an illuminating description of how learning is tightly interwoven with daily work, to a normative concept, i.e. as a natural and efficient unit of learning which, consequentially,

should be nurtured by managers (Wenger et al. 2002). I have yet to see concrete suggestions about how such nurturing actually can be conducted except from creating slack and opportunities to network, and there are no reports on which effects actual attempts at nurturing community conditions have had on organizations.

With the management perspective, the potential downsides of communities of practice also became a topic of concern. Even though CoPs may be thought of as natural units of knowledge sharing, in a market or business perspective, they may be learning the wrong things. Further, the very quality that make a community an ideal structure for learning – a shared perspective on a domain, trust, a communal identity, long-standing relationships, an established practice – are the same qualities that can hold it hostage to its history and its achievement. Implicit assumptions can go unquestioned with little willingness inside the community to challenge them.

As communities focus on their domain and deepen their expertise, they inevitably create boundaries. Boundaries are not necessarily negative, as knowledge flows easily within a practice, however, while the core of a practice is a locus of expertise, radically new insights and developments often arise at the boundaries between communities. Wenger et al. (2002) argue that boundary work is important, as there is increasing need to cross boundaries because today's complex problems frequently require solutions that are not confined to any one practice alone, let alone to single organizations.[15]

After inquiring into the practice approach to work, I came to a point where I thought that the vast amount of the writings preoccupied with practice first and foremost conceptualized the processes that maintains knowledge and transfer traditional/craft knowledge from the skilled professional to the novice. Despite the few attempts at conceptualizing learning and innovation as continuous, stepwise adjustments within or across the boundaries of communities, I felt that the focus on more radical learning through critical reflection-in-action and on organizations as dynamic and changing faded, leaving me with an understanding of the habitual and rule-governed rather than the transforming and rule-breaking.

Holland et al. (1998) served as a source of inspiration in emphasizing the unusual or new within cultural practices. They are preoccupied with the paradox

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[15] Another facet of the discussion is that from a business organization's perspective there may be economic or political reasons for trying to keep control over boundary crossing – boundaries of practice does not necessarily follow formal institutional boundaries, nor are communities confined within the walls of organizations. The upside is that firms in alliances often find that they can gain knowledge faster from the practitioners they know in other firms than from their co-workers in other business unites in the same firm. The downside of knowledge that travels is that leakage of information may result in a serious loss of competitive advantage.

that humans are products of social discipline yet producers of remarkable improvisation; there is agency in a social world of discipline and order. The paradigmatic incident presented in their book, took place when they conducted a study in a rural community in Nepal. One of the local women was invited to the anthropologists´ balcony for an interview.

To the surprise of the anthropologists the woman crawled up the vertical outside wall to get to the balcony. It turned out that as a lower-caste woman, she could not walk the stairs because she then would have to face the cultural taboo of passing through the kitchen of higher-caste people. Of course, to climb walls was not a common thing to do in that community (Holland et al. 1998). The example tells us there are not only practices into which people are socialized, there are unusual practices from which we can learn things. "The woman who climbed the wall" is used to redefine the theoretical basis for the anthropologists´ field of study, but they do not actually identify or represent the empirical processes whereby the identities of persons in cultural worlds are transformed.

Organizational change

When I read organization theory at the university, the emphasis was on organizations as dynamic and changing, either because they were trying to ride the waves of change in a turbulent world as described by Morgan (1988), or because they were involved in organizational development as planned processes of change. As to the latter, we learnt about theories on organization development as a broad field of different practices and perspectives, nevertheless, with roots back to Kurt Lewin (1943) and his influential three-stage model of change. His major idea is that social change can be identified as sequential and discrete processes moving from a stable social state, through a process of intervention, and then returning to a stable state (unfreezing, changing, freezing).

Although holding on to the basic ideas in Lewin's work, Greenwood and Levin (1997) see his conception of change as limited. Instead, they model change as a continuous learning process in which broad participation is the key to create sustainable learning processes at an institutional level. Noteworthy, the theories on social learning, communities, and apprenticeship, also argued for different forms of participation as a prerequisite for learning to take place. Theories on social learning and communities on practice do not, however, put forward models on how to facilitate social change.

This seamless and mutually constitutive relationship between organizations, learning, and change is argued by Greenwood and Levin and Klev (2002) as well. They discuss how the classical approaches to organization theory were rooted in stable and durable features of organizations, either in the form of bureaucracies – a rational mean for a rational end - (Weber 1994), as efficient decision-making systems due to an appropriate chain of command and span of control (Fayol 1974/1916), or as being efficient due to a high degree of specialization including a clear division of labor between those who plan and improve work and those who execute it (Taylor 1998/1911).

Levin and Klev (2002) argue that first in the 1990s – with the intensified focus on organizations as learning and knowledge producing systems – the perspective on organizations as continuously changing gains momentum. Thus, the contemporary challenge in organization studies is to understand what learning and knowledge in organizations is and what conditions facilitates knowledge creation. They claim that the socio-technical school within organization theory was the first to integrate an understanding of change as a part of the theoretical foundation. This perspective was, however, developed further in the direction of explaining the diffusion of technological innovation rather than developed as a model for the fostering of social change.

Within one strand of activity theory, rooted in the Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research in Finland, an explicit view on organizational change is advanced. An early work of Engeström et al. (1990) analyses the translation of the activity-theoretical perspective into the organizational context. They both advance a more complex understanding of tools than what is found in whatever version of technology or tools presented within the field of knowledge management or in the discussion about communities of practice, and they maintain an explicit perspective on how organizational development can take place.

Tools mediate both thinking and action. In fact, their analytical framework is itself used as a concrete instrument in facilitating organizational change (Engeström 1993; Engeström 1999a). In orchestrating groups of people coming from different parts and levels of the organizations, they discuss and describe work along the pre-defined dimensions in their activity-theoretical framework. Then, participants venture into a process of questioning and reconstructing their own work practices which surfaces inherent contradictions in the institutional arrangements of their work, thus, creating a common ground for developing new solutions to significant problems. While communities of practice is portrayed as informal groups doing their jobs despite or in opposition to formal procedure and management practices, the activity system framework includes such invisible, though hard felt, institutional conditions into the very core of a consciously designed change program.

Engeström (1999b) argues that mediating artifacts play a significant role in producing new solutions, procedures, or systemic transformations in organizational practices. Mediating artifacts include tools and signs, both external implements and internal representations such as mental models. It is not particularly useful to categorize mediating artifacts into external or practical ones, on the one hand, and internal or cognitive ones, on the other. Their function and use are in constant flux and transformation as the activity unfolds. In analyzing the discursive processes, practical actions and mediating artifacts that are employed in the step-by-step production of an innovative solution or idea in Finish and American work teams, he argues that we need to differentiate between different ways of using mediating artifacts.

Four types are suggested; *what* artifacts used to identify and describe objects/purpose; *how* artifacts, used to guide and direct processes and procedures on, within or between objects; *why* artifacts, used to diagnose and explain the properties and behavior of objects; *where to* artifacts, used to envision the future state or potential development of objects. Maintaining an open mind towards different uses of artifacts constitute a creative potential in work groups which is activated through conscious search actions.

I think it is reasonable to expect that such conceptualizations of practice as having a creative potential constituted by members' active and reflective search activities, aligns better with what is going on in A-Tale than the image of practice as efficient maintenance of knowledge. Of course, such search activities cannot be expected to happen in a solitary manner by each and one of the partners or in harmonious unison. It is a collaborative and dialogical process in which different perspectives meet, merge, and collide.

My underlying intention by using the term protopractice is to provide a construct that enables a dynamic appreciation of the life in the organization I study. The partners' willingness and commitment to combine their former experience in order to create original pieces and to experiment with their own practice as they go along constitute an interesting point of departure when contrasted with several of the branches of organization theory preoccupied with change and workplace innovation. In the majority of the writings referred to above, the point of departure is institutional practices that have settled over relatively long time, e.g. Argyris (1990) when writing about defensive routines in organizations; Senge (1990) in emphasizing systems thinking to help corporations to become a learning organization; Lave and Wenger (1991) and later Brown and Duguid (1991) and Wenger (1998; 2002) in describing the learning virtues of communities of practice in organizations. Further, Boland and Tenkashi's (1995) perspective taking and making in communities of knowing; Engeström's (1993; 1999a) developmental studies of medical practices; Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) describing how companies should go

about in order to make bold innovations; Schein (1999) focusing on three co-existing cultures in organizations that may hamper development.

In sum, the managerial challenge is to facilitate processes that bring about systemic transformations, so as the organization increases its capacity for learning and becomes more flexible and innovative. Metaphorically speaking, it is about getting "giants to start dancing" (Kanter 1990) or mastering the impossible mission of keeping "elephants [strongholds] and butterflies [innovators] in the same house of cards" (Starbuck 1993).

The riddle of development is how to deal with deep-seated ways of doing things, inadequate incentive systems, inefficient power-distribution, and conflicting interests between managers and employees. In contrast, this thesis portrays the embryonic experiences of a newly established community of professional story-makers whose ambition is to cultivate and produce stories for different media, such as film, television and theatre. The partners in A-Tale have not had time to institutionalize actions and develop deep—seated organizational routines, which by different reasons has to be revised and brought into a changeable state.

A-Tale is characterized by the dualist state of protopractice. Simultaneously changing and stabilizing what they do and produce – sometimes in opposition to, sometimes accordance with constraints and possibilities in the larger industrial context. Furthermore, I assume that as long as the partners' ambition is to live from recurrent concept/idea development, protopractice is a durable rather than ephemeral condition.

The ing-turn: Organizing, becoming, learning

Other writings concerned with organizational change start out with broader trends visible in contemporary workplaces of the Western society; people are getting used to change rather than stability as the rule of the game, i.e. there is a shift from organizations as a place of life long employment to workplaces with temporary constellations of colleagues and projects. Addressing these tendencies, *The Academy of Management Journal* (1998) was dedicated to the need of developing more adequate approaches to understanding organizational change and transformation, "learning to think temporarily and act processually are important skills for scholars and practitioners" (AMJ, October 1998, p. 834), followed by *Organization Science* (1998) presenting different conceptions of change.

One such line of thinking questions the dominant ontological status of organizations. Wishing to highlight the pervasiveness of change, Tsoukas and

Chia (2002) coin the expression organizational becoming. In line with the authors in *Organization Science* referred to above, their point of departure is that traditional approaches to organizations have been dominated by assumptions privileging stability, routine, and order. It is time to shift the focus from organizations as solid and enduring entities, where change may or may not take place, to organizing – emphasizing the transformational character of human action in which organizations are temporarily stabilized achievements. The perspective in which an organization (as an entity) is supplemented by a concern for organizing as an ongoing process, was first introduced by Weick (1979). An organization is seen as but a temporary reification of a process of organizing that never ceases. In Weick's view, organizing consists of reducing differences among actors; it is the process of generating recurring behaviors through institutionalized cognitive representations.

Tsoukas and Chia (2002) extend the work of Weick by drawing on philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Rorty and James[16] and the insights of ethnomethodology, Chia (1999, p. 210) contents that, "contrary to the commonly held view, order and organizations are not the natural condition of things but their exception [...] Change is the pervasive phenomena, whilst stability, order and organizations represent the productive efforts of human intervention to temporarily stave off the nomadic and immanent forces of change." Chia also argues that change does not take place in a linear manner. Instead, real change is quintessentially "rhizomic" in character, taking place through variations, restless expansions, opportunistic conquest, sudden captures and offshoots.

Although emphasizing the need for obtaining a more complete understanding of the emergent quality and the micro-processes of change at work and presenting an ontological baseline and intriguing metaphor of organizational becoming, there are but a few guidelines on how researchers should go about to conduct such studies in practice. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) merely argue for accounts of organizational change that combine a "synoptic" and "performative" approach. Metaphorically, the distinction is similar to that between a photo and a motion picture. A synoptic analysis looks for patterns of interaction at different points in time that normally escape our perception if oriented towards acting in the flow of events. Such accounts provide us with descriptions of the position an object occupies at a certain point of time and another position of the same object later on. It resembles taking still photos – we are not after capturing the movement itself even though we can imagine it is there. Performative accounts, through their focus on situated human agency unfolding in time, offer insights into the actual emergence and accomplishment

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[16] Works mentioned here are: James (1996/1909), Rorty (1991), and Wittgenstein (1958a).

of change, the motion itself. Tsoukas and Chia contend that synoptic accounts dominate the literature. Therefore, there is a special need for developing the performative models of organizational change.

This prescribes a microanalysis of the moment-to-moment interaction between people. We have to get close to actual practice to be able to discover the improvisional character of human action – actions that may look stable from a distant or if we are only studying formal descriptions of the organization. They draw on the ethnomethodological insights exemplified by Boden (1994, p. 42), "what looks – from outside – like behavior controlled by rules and norms is actually a delicate and dynamic series of interactionally located adjustments to a continual unfolding and working out of 'just what' is going on and being made to go on, which is to say, the organizing of action." By combining these two insights, they conclude that the flow of tinkering, experimenting, and adaptation notably in actual practices is not incoherent, on the contrary, it is patterned as a result of individuals closely interrelating their actions with those of others.

I do agree with the need for relating organizing to micro-processes of interaction focusing on what people are doing. There is, however, a paradox in Tsoukas and Cia's grounding of organizational becoming in the field of ethnomethodology. Two of the courses I did in my PhD program (one on theory and one on methods) were based on the writings of ethnomethodologists. The point of departure of the courses was the move to meaning in the field of anthropology in the late 1950s, i.e. the claim that there is meaning in peoples' behavior, which again called for thick descriptions. Meaning was explored either through the search for the internal orders underlying the organization of behavior, or through the search for behavioral patterns as the natives themselves pay attention to, identify, or in some other way use them. In this, the ethnomethodologists argued for social order as an irremediably emergent accomplishment of members' work; people constantly adjust to and do work on each other, because humans are reflexive and do hold each other accountable at any moment in time – much in line with the quote of Boden. In order to describe how and when people hold each other accountable in a reflexive manner, very detailed studies of both language use and body movements in social interaction were conducted.

When Tsoukas and Chia put forward the premise that change is pervasive, they do so by relating organizational becoming/the ontology of organizational change to ethnomethodologist whose primary concern were the production of social order, rather than social change. Even though the ethnomethodologists did not treat social order as determined from outside social interaction, but a as moment to moment accomplishment – order is not something there is, it is something people do – they did show that people do incredible amount of work in defining each other and maintaining a relatively

stable definition of the situation. That is, acting as if the world is a stable and familiar place imbued with meaning. I will not venture further into the ontological pondering of organizational change put forward by Chia and Tsoukas, as my interest is first and foremost to find a way of conducting a study on the dynamics of organizing in practice.

For organizational becoming to be recognized as a construct that enable a dynamic appreciation of organizational life, a promising path is to relate it to how identities are authored in organizations (Carlsen 2005). Another promising path is to relate it to organizing and learning in the way Clegg et al. (2005) do. They aim at connecting learning and becoming as two mutually implicating ways of exploring and simultaneously constituting the phenomenon of organization. Learning is thought of as a process that allows for creative invention and it is thought of in terms of intensity, which pervades the duration of organizations, rather than being a series of events or concepts that have a discrete location. The becoming in organizations is connected to and constituted by learning. If we are turning this the other way round, we may say that there is no becoming without learning.

Going back to A-Tale, undoubtedly, it is a bit of a challenge for the partners to unlock the innovative potential of their inter-practitionary profile. Each of the partners represents different but also overlapping domains of experiences and expertise. They find themselves, on the one hand, in the paradoxical situation in which customers ask for something new but prefer to pay for the well known, and, on the other hand, in the "luxurious" situation in which each of the partners in principle could live from their individually maintained portfolio of projects. Given the thorough experience, track record and extensive network each and one of them have in the industry, the greatest threat against accomplishing the ambition of collaborative creativity, seems to be themselves. At any moment it is possible for the individuals to pursue their own projects, thus, acting as independent or self-employed tradesmen merely sharing overhead expenses with a group of nice and interesting people. However, the promising new resides in their ability to combine their former knowledge and learn from each other.

Obviously, creative invention is dependent on the individual partner's ability to co-create. Additionally, it is dependent on a couple of other elements that are easily overlooked if we are focusing too much on the inner life of community formation and social learning. To realize their ambition require work across the boundaries of their community. It depends on what they are able to negotiate with their customers, and it depends on how they are handling their broad network which both functions as a wellspring of ideas and as a pool of resources so as to actually produce projects. To repeat the argument of Wenger (2002), while the core of a practice is a locus of expertise, radically new insights

and developments often arise at the boundaries between communities. The partners face the double task of establishing a community within which knowledge flow easily, at the same time as they have to accomplish productive boundary work.

Even though some of the partners have cooperated on projects in the past, no one has worked with all the others, and they do not have the experience of working together on the basis on the business idea and vision of this particular company. Adding to the complexity is their dependence on working with other actors in networks, which are more or less known to the group, hence, more or less stable. Concepts such as organizing, becoming, and learning emphasize the ever-changing quality of practice. The challenge for A-Tale is also to *stabilize* a dynamic practice situated within a turbulent industry just enough to actually realize the innovative potential of this specific community. – But to avoid stabilizing it so much that they do not remain open towards new ideas and new ways of doing things. Given the strong focus A-Tale has on idea and concept development, it is not reasonable to expect a thorough stabilization of their practice, even though there has to be some organizing efforts of more durable character.

Boundary work & stabilization

I found that science and technology studies (STS) offered intriguing descriptions of boundary work and stabilizing processes going on through the translation of interests in heterogeneous actor-network configuration. My curiosity towards the STS literature also arose out of three other reasons. The first reason was an interest in finding a more sophisticated view on tools or technology than those offered by the discussions going on within knowledge management on ITC systems. The second reason, I have already mentioned; the conceptions of practice read thus far, were all too preoccupied by the stable features of practice – the habitual, rule-governed, re-production oriented, and materially inert features. I remember that I with a certain relief read Latour's (1987) story about how scientists fight their way in order to get a scientific finding established as a scientific fact. I felt that the dynamic processes at display in "Science in action" offered something new with regard to the practice approaches presented above.

The third reason was that the practice oriented studies on the one hand, was arguing for the importance of practical knowledge and social/apprenticeship based learning, and on the other hand, was talking about

the devaluation and monopolization of such knowledge by the formal educational system and scientific knowledge. Hence, it was rather obvious asking what the scholars studying scientific practices had to tell from inside the trade.

Actor-networks through translation & association

Latour (1987) treats scientific practice as just another practice in refusing to grant science a special status as the beholder of truth or the most valid knowledge in society. According to Latour, knowledge in the form of scientific facts is not so much the result of neutral, reproducible methods as it is the result of and maintained through specific actor-network configurations in which enrolling and aligning human and non-human resources is essential, "A fact is what is collectively stabilized from the midst of controversies" (Latour 1987, p. 42).

Latour and actor-network theory assert that actors at any given moment pursue different interests; therefore stability is dependent upon a systematic translation of others' interests to ones own. Translation within actor-network theory is calling attention to a richer meaning than what might be evoked in everyday speech. Translation means both movement and transformation, embracing both linguistic and material objects. – A parallel, which is fond in the Oxford English Dictionary's definition: *"I. Transference; removal or conveyance from one person, place or condition to another. Transference of a body, or a form of energy, from one point of space to another. II. The action or process of turning from own language into another; transformation, alteration, change; changing or adopting to another use."*

In outlining a sociology of translation, Callon (1986) argues for a methodological principle in which the researcher/observer should follow the actors in order to identify the different elements by which they build and explain their world. At the outset the researcher/observer should assume free associations between different actors, that is, relationships between them are all topics for actors' discussions and translations; relationships are constructed not something pre-given.

Actors associate with other actors (humans and non-humans) and the more numerous and important their associations are the greater is the power of the actor-network constellation. But, as Callon point out, the network's operation requires a relative stability in order to be conceived of as successful/powerful. If one or several of the significant actors refuse to be enrolled into the network, the construction of a fact or an object falls apart. As

such, power is a result and not a cause, and it does not belong to anybody in particular.

Callon goes on and describe four moments of translation: *Problematisation*, in which one actor tries to become indispensable to other actors in suggesting possible solutions or programs of investigation that the others need; *Interessement*, in which one actor seeks to lock the other actors into the roles that have been proposed to them within a solution or investigation; *Enrolment*, in which one actor seeks to define and interrelate the various roles defined and allocated in the solution/investigation; *Mobilization*, in which one actor seeks to ensures that spokesmen for various collectivities are properly able to represent those collectivities and not be betrayed by the latter. One actor can gain the privilege of being the spokesperson of an actor-network configuration. The centre of translation, then, tends to become a point of power and control.

A key issue in the theory is that in the process of stabilizing a fact, both technical and non-technical, human and non-human elements are brought together. Thus, artifacts are given the same explanatory status as humans. This symmetric position is first and foremost an analytical stance and not an ethical position. Such a position – treating humans and non-humans as equals in analysis – means that we can increase our understanding of fact (or technology) producing processes, by describing which social and technical elements that turn out to be influential.

The "sociology of translation" and "Science in Action" are sources of inspiration in understanding what it takes to actually succeed with an innovation; It is a process of interessement; of dispute, of controversies, of enrollment of allies and changes in alliances; it is a process of translation for aligning different interests; it is a process of consolidating power so as to become obligatory points of passage, and, not the least, it is an assembly which mix things and people.

While the community of practice literature base their descriptions on informal work groups that already have operated over a certain period of time and therefore maintain a high degree of coherence in perspectives, interests and actions, the point of departure for actor-network theory is a "fact" or a "technology" in the making, that is, an unstable assembly of actors that may or may not succeed in constructing an appropriate configuration in order to be conceived as successful. With regard to A-Tale, I find it reasonable to approach them as an unstable association of actors. But nevertheless, as an association that simultaneously strive for the efficient knowledge sharing within the boundaries of a community of practice, and the innovative power that lies in the recurrent construction of new relationships/constellations.

Forms of boundary work

There are four forms of boundary work discernable from different authors within STS. The first concerns boundary work directed at upholding a dominant position. Taking as a point of departure that constructivist studies of scientific knowledge and practice raise doubts about traditional criteria used to demarcating science from non-science, Gieryn (1995, p. 405) poses the question, "If there is nothing inherently, universally, and necessarily distinctive about the methodology, institutions, history or even consequences of science, then why and how is science today routinely assigned a measure of 'cognitive authority' rarely enjoyed by other cultural practices offering different accounts of reality?" Few would doubt, in modern Western society, that science has considerable authority in offering definitions of reality that are perceived as valid and true. Gieryn goes on asking on what grounds this authority is warranted, if not for some epistemological or social quality essential to science and not found outside it?

Drawing on an earlier publication (Gieryn 1983), his suggestion is to focus on episodes of "boundary-work" in which the question "what is science?" move from tacit assumption to explicit articulation; i.e. the instances where selected characteristics are attributed to science (its practitioners, methods, stock of knowledge, values, and work organizations) for purposes of constructing a social boundary that distinguishes some intellectual activity as non-science. Boundary-work occurs as people contend for, legitimate, or challenge the cognitive authority of science – and the credibility, prestige, power, and material resources that attend such a privileged position. Gieryn then goes on discussing different approaches to the study of boundary-work with the purpose of demarcation.

A second meaning of boundary work may be derived from Gibbons et al. (1994) who are less preoccupied with how the boundaries of scientific knowledge is maintained and more concerned with whether it is reasonable to believe that there is a profound shift in the mode of knowledge production in society. A visible trend is what they coin "Mode 2 knowledge production", which re-localizes scientific knowledge use and development from the closed communities in academic institutions to team-based trans-disciplinary efforts centered on complex problems at the intersection between science, society and technology. In such a situation, we may think of boundary work as the negotiations and creative inventions taking place at the crossroad where society, science and technology meet. Knowledge is always produced under an aspect of continuous negotiation and it will not be produced unless and until the interests of the various actors are included.

In Mode 2 knowledge production, complex problems assemble a diverse range of specialists and stakeholders in an application oriented process of knowledge production. Over time, the composition of a problem solving team changes as requirements evolve. Gibbons et al. claim that the changing configuration of a problem solving team is not planned or coordinated by any central body because challenging problems emerge in a way that makes their anticipation very difficult. Hence, skills and knowledge brought to the problem-solving context are heterogeneous and the knowledge produced does not belong to any one discipline or group of experts. We may assume that specialists and stakeholders operating according to a Mode 2 situation have developed competency in constructing productive relationships across the boundaries of their own disciplines and institutions.[17]

The third form of boundary work is described by Nowotny et al. (2001) when they discuss changes in knowledge production in light of broad patterns of change in our contemporary society. Mode 2 Knowledge production fuses with the emergence of a Mode 2 society, and we see the emergence of a democratic and contextualized dialogue that takes place in a new public space, coined the *Agora*. The Agora is an organized space for boundary work to take place. Novotny et al. are preoccupied with the democratization of science through the diffusion of agora-like dialogues. However, the Agora is described in its ideal form and the question remains whether the actual arenas or meeting points for sharing and development of knowledge are as open and democratic as Novotny et al. would like them to be. Amdahl's (2005) study does in fact suggest that there are processes going on constructing a boundary of participation between those who have economic resources to participate and those who have not.

A fourth meaning of boundary work deals with the double task of working across communities, at the same time as the community tries to convince others of its supremacy in its special field. Given the diversity of scientific practices – a diversity which is also to be found between scientific communities operating within the same field of research like e.g. cancer research – Fujimura (1992) asks the question of coherence in scientific work across situations and through time. She introduces the concept of "standardized packages", which consists of a scientific theory and a standardized set of methods or technologies, which are adopted by many actors within a scientific field.

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[17] Even though new patterns of knowledge production emerge, the traditional scientific knowledge production within disciplinary and closed contexts like universities, government research establishments, or corporate laboratories still exists and will continue to do so. We may assume that for Mode 1 knowledge, boundary work in the form of demarcation as described by Gieryn (1983; 1995), will continue to be prominent.

Standardized packages is a concept, which seek to handle two processes in scientific work that goes on simultaneously within a field. First, the need of coordination and management of work across multiple and divergent actors who claim ownership to parts of the problem complex; a kind of coordination and management which maintain common interests but at the same time allow local actors to maintain their individual differences and specific interests. Second, the need to establish the kind of stabilization of allies in a network configuration as portrayed by Latour (1987), in order to be able to produce scientific facts. The purpose of boundary work then is to gain the privilege of acting as the centre of translation in which one also becomes a center of power and control.

Standardized packages comprise Star and Grisemer's (1989) notion of boundary objects which are objects that facilitate the multiple translations needed to engineer agreements among multiple actors though without presupposing consensus. Their example is the building of a new zoological museum in California; "Boundary objects are both plastic enough to adapt to local need and constraints for the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites. They are weekly structured in common use, and become strongly structured in individual site use" (p. 393). Star and Grisemer show how the first director of the museum, Grinnell, managed to formulate objects of interests in a document that addressed and included all the different groups of actors involved in the development of the new museum, i.e. to create a boundary object functioning as a mean which facilitate interaction or communication when the different actors meet, and/or as a mean which is easy to use by the different actors for gaining support locally. This approach addresses collective action from the viewpoint of all the actors and worlds involved, and thereby avoid the preeminence of any single actor.[18]

Then Fujimura (1992) goes on pointing out that Grinnell never fulfilled his scientific ambitions. For example, he never wrote the book articulating his full theory on the connection between natural selection and environmental change. Rather his theories remained implicit in the way information was collected and the specimens were organized in the museum. Thus, Grinnell never became a classical scientific fact builder in that he never entered into what Latour (1987, pp. 208-209) discusses as the quandary of fact builders: "They have to enroll so many others so that they participate in the continuing

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[18] In the course of establishing the museum, the manager also constructed several other boundary objects translating different interests occurring along the way. What happened was that this process of management became embedded in Grinnell's theoretical constructions; "Grinnell's managerial decisions about the best way to translate the interests of all these disparate world shaped not only the character of the institutions he built, but also the content of his scientific claims" (Star and Grisemer 1989, p. 392).

construction of the fact, but they also have to control each of these people so that they pass the claim along without transforming it either into some other claim or into someone else's claim."

Fujimura locates Grinnell's "fact building problem" in the elasticity of boundary objects; they are often ill structured, inconsistent, and ambiguous, so that they serve to accomplish the work to be done as defined by the actors involved. Such objects are able to absorb divergent instances and still maintain internal coherence or robustness. So, Grinnell did what had to be done in order to succeed in establishing the museum, but he did not do what had to be done in order to succeed as a fact producer within the scientific community. He created a large area of autonomy for himself from which he could move into more theoretical arenas – a move he actually never made.

Enterprises within the creative industries are acting at the crossroad where art, business and new digital technology meet (Marcus 2005). Even though A-Tale is a commercial undertaking, I read from their ambitions that they seek to establish financial conditions in order to achieve at least some degree of creative autonomy. Therefore I expect boundary work that seeks to balance the artistic and commercial side of their enterprise and, further, that creative inventions (e.g. in the form of television concepts) reflect and negotiate the different interests of such a crossroad situation.

I guess that the knowledge processes visible under these conditions resembles the ones discussed in Mode 2 knowledge production. A-Tale is dependent on working across many different communities in order to both come up with and actually produce television and film ideas. But as the fourth meaning of boundary work highlights, they are faced with the double task of working across communities, at the same time as they seek to flesh out their own unique identity and to convince others of their artistic/creative supremacy.

Doable problems: Standards vs. local practices

Doing an ethnographic study of the day-to-day practices of laboratory work, Fujimura (1996) also highlights the diversity of tasks within laboratory work. Especially, she draws attention to the invisible unacknowledged work of scientific practices; the amorphous and ambiguous work of planning, organizing, monitoring, evaluating, adjusting, coordinating, and integrating activities usually considered to be administrative rather than scientific. Fujimura coins this "articulation work" and points out that training in basic laboratories emphasize experimental techniques and not articulation work, even though such work is critical to the success of any projects. A main argument in Fujimura's

analysis is that scientists pursue "doable" problems. Articulation work is an important part of constructing doable problems (Fujimura 1996, p. 187):

> "Researchers usually do not know what will be necessary to carry their research to some point of completion before they begin the research. But they do know that they need, in addition to a novel problem, some basic elements including interested audiences who will publish or use their work, sponsors or clients who will provide funding, institutional infrastructure to support their work, skilled staff to assist in getting the work done, and basic research material and equipment and their suppliers. The specific construction of the problem and its temporal solution through the articulation among this cast of characters and their different jobs is where indeterminacy becomes locally determined."

Through articulation work, researchers juggle and balance multiple, simultaneous demands in multiple aspects of the work process and organizations. This juggling results in a framing of problems that are possible to do something about, given that space, financial resources, and time are always limited resources. Scientists make adjustment in work organization as they construct, reconstruct and solve their problems. From Fujimuras analysis I infer that there is a great portion of pragmatism evident in the construction and solving of problems, as probably would be the case in many work practices. The construction of doable problems by and large is a process of improvisation and ad hoc tinkering. Links and translations are constructed between different events, conditions, practices, demands, and interests as they emerge in the work site.

In addition, Fujimura (1996) points out that there is often a tension between local creativity and scientific or industrial standards. We may situate the construction of doable problems at the intersection between industrial standards and local contingencies and frame it as a forth kind of boundary work. Fujimura argues that in their work, scientists often try to reduce uncertainty or alleviate the consequences of uncertainty. One strategy is to standardize materials, instruments, and techniques. There are both economic and scientific reasons for doing standardization.

For example, before 1970 only a few researchers were skilled enough to use ultracentrifuges to separate DNA fragments. They were said to have "golden hands". The situation changed when slow and difficult DNA measurement techniques were simplified, standardized, and packaged into instruments. These technologies then were easily adopted by many laboratories and became the standard procedures for separating DNA. It helped eliminate person-to-person teaching, it replaced many more expensive trial-and-error

strategies, and it allowed many more researchers in different laboratories to participate in certain biological problem solving.

On the one hand such standards represents dynamic opportunities for those communities that put them into use, on the other hand, such packages represent a possibility for stability when in the process of making them; they package up previous complex work, work that would otherwise require more organization and coordination; they affords communication across scientists and scientific groups; they contribute to transform problems into doable entities in specific practices.

The tension between standardization and creativity in local practice is tangible both for the people who create standards and for those who have to decide whether to adopt them or not. Sometimes standards enable the construction of new doable problems, sometimes as Fujimura (1996) points out, the question is framed as whether to join the "bandwagon" or not, i.e. whether one lose important degrees of freedom if adopting certain standards. In the biotech industry, it seems like the local actors do not have much of a choice. To be in business you have to adopt the standards in quest. With regards to A-Tale, I expected that a recurrent topic in their discussions would be whether to conform to or battle the standards set by different television broadcasters and/or the defining characteristics of different film and television genres.

While Fujimura shows the necessity and the efficiency of the widespread use of standardized packages, Collins (2001b) discusses why it is difficult to formalize some kinds of knowledge, and why it is difficult to go about actually doing something when starting with a written manual. One example he uses is the building of the TEA laser. Here, the scientists made a thorough documentation of how to make it. Nevertheless, other scientists were not able to construct it without being present in the lab of the original constructors. The lessons learnt from this is that sometimes we forget to articulate important aspects of the activity, sometimes we do not yet know why something works as it does, and sometimes it is hard to articulate something for a certain audience, but not for another.

Collins (2001a) does not explore the idea about tacit knowledge to deepen our understanding at a philosophical level, but to explicate the idea clearly and to draw out its implications for scientific practices. Broadly he defines tacit knowledge as knowledge or abilities that can be passed between scientists by personal contact but cannot be, or have not been, set out or passed on in formulae, diagrams, or verbal descriptions and instructions for action. Where transfer of tacit knowledge is a problem, it can sometimes be solved by an exchange of visits.

When reading Fujimura's text I can easily see how standardized packages make knowledge travel in a more efficient way between diverse

scientific communities operating within a field. I can also see the vast amount of effort behind the complex task of creating standardized packaged. What is less clear is the effort put into actually getting them spread out and used by other scientists. The museum manager, Grinnell, in Star and Grisemer's (1989) story, also developed a standard for collecting information on specimens and the environment. Unlike the recombinant DNA techniques, Grinnell's standard was directed towards amateurs rather than fellow researchers and it did not come into widespread use. For the museum to become a place with the broadest possible ecological information about the State of California, it was necessary to maintain the support of amateur collectors, trappers and farmers. Both the standardization of information recording forms for trappers, farmers and amateur collectors to fill out when they obtained an animal, and, further, the standards for how to handle the collected animals so as to be able to preserve them for later, were critical for the success of the museum – even though these standards remained a local phenomenon.

With precise information, proper databases on species concepts could be constructed together with a physical layout of specimens in the museum. Star and Grisemer (1989, p. 406) argues, "..that the precise set of standardized methods for labeling and collecting played a critical part in their success. These methods were both stringent and simple – they could be learned by amateurs who might have little understanding of taxonomic, ecological or evolutionary theory." Thus, the methods did not require an education in professional biology to be understood or executed. At the same time, the standardized methods rendered the information collected by amateurs amenable to analysis by professionals. The professional biologists convinced the amateur collector, for the most part, to adhere to these conventions – for example, to clearly specify the habitat and time of capture of a specimen in a standard format notebook. Standardized methods allowed for common communication across dispersed work groups. The result of this type of boundary objects is standardized indexes and what Latour (1987) would call immutable mobiles; objects which can be transported over a long distance and convey unchanging information.

Star and Grisemer (1989) briefly mention that propagating methods in not an easy task. In working with amateur collectors, a major problem is to ensure that the data coming back in from the field is of reliable quality. We do not have access to all the small steps taken to actually teach the amateurs collectors how to use them, to motivate them to actually carry out this work, and at last, to check out and correct the information provide on the forms. The importance of personal contact when in the phase of establishing standards and getting them to work in practice is evident. With regard to A-Tale, as far as the partners hold the ambition of developing original concepts, I found it reasonable to expect

that the partners would be preoccupied with how to twist or circumvent industrial standards. Further, that the partners would try propagate successful concepts and through that have an impact on how things are done in their line of industry.

Collins (2001a) argues the importance of trust for researchers to be willing to try to replicate scientific results and thus spread scientific techniques. Though successful repetition of a result leads to trust, but more importantly for the confirmation and spread of new techniques, trust leads to successful repetition. This means that the scientists before trying to replicate an experiment have to feel some certainty that a result has been achieved, and such a certainty is a matter of trust. Collins argues that sometimes replications are so tedious, difficult and time consuming that it is only because the results emerging from a laboratory are trusted – that other laboratories think it is worthwhile to try to replicate the experiment or to continue to try doing so after experiencing a long period of failure.

Collins points out what may be difficult when trying to transfer knowledge trough written procedures and he emphasizes the importance of trust in the results for others actually being willing to try it themselves. If going back to A-Tale, I would expect that both trust and face-to-face meeting are critical in their creative work.

Vision and possibility driven aspects of work

There is one last comment I would like to make on the analysis of organizational dynamics through constructs such as organizing, becoming, and learning on the one hand, and stabilizing, translation and boundary work, on the other. I assume that when the collective history is weak in organizational such as A-Tale, the engagement in exploring possibilities and the commitment to creating and upholding a vision for their work provide the loosely coupled partners with a momentum to become a distinct community. Engagement in opportunity-seeking and forward-looking activities both fuels learning and has an organizing effect on their activities. Further, I find it difficult to talk about different pace of change and moments of transformation, without touching upon a conception of time. The vision- and possibility-driven aspect of work is missed out in the theory presented so far.

Nowotny et al. (2001) present five integral parameters defining the underlying dynamics through which contemporary science and society co-evolve. One of the elements is how we relate to time. Our uncertain future is

linked to the present though an imaginary potential of what can be accomplished. "Future as extended present" implies that actions, choices and decisions are positioned on a temporal axis in which the future is dramatically foreshortened compared to decades ago. Today, the tendency is to presume that the time-space of our future is open and responsive, i.e. that is can be shaped and that we are active choreographers of our visions, not passive observers. When "visioning" the future we deliberately reach out for potential allies for its construction. The future is not only in the making through imaginative anticipation. We deliberately construct networks so as to realize visions. Caughey cited in Holland et al. (1998) writes about some of the same processes when describing imaginary worlds, "By modeling possibilities, imaginary worlds can inspire new actions" (p. 49).

Studying the establishment of the infrastructure for the Olympic games in Sydney 2000, a large complex project whose uniqueness meant that it was unable to be strategically planned in advance, Pitsis et al. (2003) observed the use of future perfect strategy as a managerial approach in the project. The function of future perfect thinking is to allow for a collaborative quality to occur in projects. Future perfect is different from scenario planning in that the goal is not to achieve more creative strategic thinking in a context where the strategic thinking may be staled. It is not a means for relating tools and technologies in complex projects for managing the uncertainties of the future. "Future perfect" is rooted in the philosophy of Alfred Schütz (1967) who defines the future perfect as the cognitive process by which an "actor projects his actions as if it were already over and done with and lying in the past [...] Strangely enough, therefore, because it is pictured as completed, the planned act bears the temporal character of pastness […] The fact that it is thus pictured as if it were simultaneously past and future can be taken care of by saying that it is thought of in the future perfect tense" (p. 61). According to Pitsis et al. (2003) encouraging future perfect conversations - i.e. forward-looking conversations as if the ends were already achieved - in workshops and meetings, contribute to nurture a collective quality of the project and to action orientation.

Being preoccupied with a completely different topic, i.e. the dynamics of the contemporary Self, Schrag (1997) nevertheless touches upon the time-space dimension in somewhat the same sense as Pitsis et al. and Nowotny et al. "The story of the self is a developing story, story subject to a creative advance, wherein the past is never simply a series of nows that have lapsed into nonbeing, but an inscription of events and experiences, that stands open to new interpretations and new perspectives of meaning" (Schrag 1997, p. 37). Correspondingly, the future is not a series of nows that has not yet come into being. The future of narrative time is the self as possibility, as the power to be able to provide new readings of the script that has already been inscribed and

to mark our new inscriptions of a script in the making. Compared to Nowotny et al. (2001), Schrag adds that history or former experience matters in a developing story. The source of development is rooted in an ability to be open towards new interpretations.

Selecting conceptual tools

"Travels in theory" commenced with the three questions concerning the organizing of creative work, the use of knowledge in order to create novel ideas/concepts, and communicative dimensions that seem important in defining a creative practice over time.

From the discussion on organizational dynamics, I suggest to look at the organizing of creative work as a dual process of change and stabilization. *Protopractice* is the term I have used to conceptualize this duality. Within organization studies, the dynamics of organizations have been portrayed in various ways: As a three phase process of unfreezing-changing-freezing social relationships (Lewin 1943); as continuously change through participative learning processes (Greenwod and Levin 1997); as incremental/evolutionary change in routines (Nelson and Winter 1982); as radical change by the means of re-engineering teams (Hammer and Champy 1993); as a strategic crisis situation igniting a fundamental change in dominant knowledge form (Baumard 1999).

Given the ambition of a company such as A-Tale to live from recurrent idea/concept innovation, I have argued a need for an alternative approach to the dynamics of organizations. Within protopractice, change and stabilization are simultaneous and ongoing accomplishments. Protopractice emphasizes the experimental and changing features of creative knowledge work.

Change is necessary in order to maintain an innovative power over time. Protopractice also highlights a need for stabilizing processes that shape action and construct constellations powerful enough to actually accomplish activities or projects. To define protopractice, I combine recent discussions within the field of organization studies with insights from studies of scientific practices within science and technology studies (STS). Thus, much of the theory in the sections above may be regarded as an elaboration of the dual processes that goes on within protopractice.

I will use concepts such as organizing, becoming and visioning as a way of analyzing community formation in A-Tale and the partners' ongoing experimentation with their own practice. I will also look at the partners' translation and stabilization of interests in order to gather significant allies in a

network configuration that makes them capable of realizing specific projects. The actor-network theory provides a conceptual framework for the study of "facts" or "technologies" in the making. I expect that the partners in A-Tale engage in attempts to configure actor-networks in order to be recognized as a generative force in the industry, and as a way of actually being able to realize specific projects. Following Callon (1986), Latour (1987) and the discussion about different kinds of boundary work, I will use the concepts of translation, association and boundary work in order to analyze the way they realize ideas.

With regard to the understanding of knowledge production in idea/concept development in A-Tale, I draw on theories of social learning. It is reasonable to expect that the partners in A-Tale frequently reflect on their own practice – while in action (Shcön 1983b), and that they try to create arenas of participation in which all the partners can contribute on equal terms (legitimate participation instead of legitimate peripheral participation, as there is no one of the partners that hold a formal novice position towards the others). This does not mean that they will not come into situations where one or the other act as the teacher and the other as the student. I expect that the question of how they can use each other/what they can learn from each other, is one of the core elements that make it attractive to a member of this community and not another. However, according to Jordan's (1989) characteristics of learning-through-practice, this kind of learning happen as a way of, and in the course of everyday activities, so it may not be recognized as a teaching-learning effort at all.

Theory on communities of practice shows that knowledge is efficiently shared and maintained by stable work groups, but that radically new insights often arise at the boundaries between work communities. Since the main ambition of A-Tale is to produce original and high quality ideas/stories, a great challenge is to establish productive processes for idea cultivation and production. Interesting questions are in which ways, and to what degree, knowledge production in A-Tale resembles those processes portrayed by the communities of practice literature.

The literature review shows that the study of knowledge in organizations in the early days where preoccupied with concepts of "knowledge management", "knowledge intensive firms", and with models of different kinds of "knowledge conversions." I have argued that many work practices, including that of A-Tale, do not fit neatly into the images produced by these early discussions. This does not alter the significance of knowledge and learning in practices such as A-Tale. However, the initial talks with the partners in A-Tale concerning my research project left me with an impression of the importance of language as a tool for creating and communicating ideas. –That the creation of ideas for film and television is a highly "communication intensive" practice. This is the reason why my last research question concerns important

communicative dimensions that the partners in A-tale establish in order to uphold their creative space.

I admit that there are few conceptual tools to be found in the theories presented so far. Therefore, the part of the analysis related to the research question on communication, is the most inductive of the three research questions. Mostly, I draw on theories preoccupied with language use for creative action (Shotter and Cunliffe 2003) and the possibilities and constraints of different language games within academic disciplines (Lyotard 1997/1979). Futher I find inspiration in the vision- and possibility seeking aspects of work and community identity.

I assume that each partner in A-Tale brings a wellspring of experience from different fields into the creative work. I also assume that their different voices of experience may be heard when discussing ideas. According to theory (Novotny et al. 2001; Pitsis et al. 3003), modeling possibilities should be seen as a constitutive element in creative practices. It does not mean that the partners in a company like A-Tale model far fetched possibilities, but that they try to create a "near future" or imaginary world spacious enough to encompass the different interests of the different partners.

Concepts such as "future perfect" or "future as extended present" imply that when the collective history of a group or a company is young, many of the activities that motivate and energize the participants have a forward looking and imaginative component. The importance of imagination in human activity may be argued at a general level, but I am more concerned with the actual communication in A-Tale. The theory argues that when actors evoke images of some future state, it is not any future. It is a future with references to certain relevant topics for the actors involved. Also, it is more than just talking about a future. It is an action-oriented process in which the future is created. The obvious question then, is what role does "possibility talk" play in the creative work of A-Tale?

3 Method

The object of study

I have conducted a field study of creative knowledge work. The three research questions are: What characterizes the organizing of creative knowledge work? How is knowledge shared and generated in order to invent novel ideas? What are important communicative dimensions in order to maintain a creative space over time? The research questions indicate that my object of analysis is two folded: On the one hand, the processes through which the entire organization moves and transforms. On the other hand, the creative practice of the partners, as visible in their everyday interaction and communication.

The analysis in this thesis is based on information generated over a period of thirteen months. During this period I have alternated between the company and my office at SINTE on a regular basis over a period of six months, then I worked full time in one of their projects for about two months, and at last I visited the company on selected occasions during a period of seven months.

The choice of A-Tale was based on the following considerations: Since A-Tale was a young company, and the partners represented a broad range of experience from different branches of the media industry, I found it reasonable to assume that there were quite many things the partners did not share and that they therefore could be expected to be strongly engaged in defining how to organize their practice, the company identity, and what kind of productions to be known for. Because of a bold ambition of "becoming an open landscape of innovation", I also expected that A-Tale would be marked by a powerful entrepreneurial spirit and show few signs of the staleness that more mature organizations often experience. In other words, I was looking for an enterprise that differed from the organizations often taken as a point of departure when studying organizational development. In A-Tale there was no lengthy history to analyze or compartmentalized practices to bridge, no asymmetric and unproductive power relations between management and employees to remedy, and no defensive routines to change.

However, I did not want to tell yet another exciting start-up story characterized by a charismatic manager, market optimism, chase for venture capital, and high pace networking. For me, what the actors in A-Tale did and the way they did it represented an interesting learning opportunity with respect to creative knowledge work. The last reason for choosing A-Tale as an object of study is that they did not immediately chime in with the group of companies traditionally labeled as "knowledge intensive firms." This did not imply that knowledge and learning was less relevant in a firm like A-Tale. My general point of departure was knowledge and learning as an important phenomenon within all sectors of our industry. The additional factor that made A-Tale an interesting object of study was their explicit focus on creative processes together with an emphasis of the partners' lengthy experience from the media industry.

Methodological reflections

Both the introduction and the theory chapter show that I am inspired by work place ethnographies such as the ones conducted by Suchman (1987), Orr (1990), Lave and Wenger (1991), Orlikowski (1996), and Barley (1996), but also by science and technology studies such as those conducted by Latour (1987) and Fujimura (1992; 1996). I have spent a substantial time in the field in order to allow for a gradual and quite detailed understanding of the practice within which the partners interact. However, there are some aspects of companies like A-Tale with which I have struggled in order to find the right approach. Mainly because the situation at hand does not fit with the strategies of traditional ethnography, bounded as it is to one place. According to Becker (1996) what researchers do usually reflects some accommodation to the realities of social life, which affect them as much as any other actor social scientists study, by constraining what they can do.

The first challenge is the mobility of the people working. Organizing happens in many places at once and organizers move around quickly and frequently. E.g. when studying IT consultants in an IT company Strannegård and Fridberg (2001), notice that the people they studied were constantly "already elsewhere". Second, there is the simultaneity of events taking place in different settings. E.g. the partners in A-tale spend a substantial amount of time outside office. They participate in different meetings at different places with different people, and the result of such meetings may or may not be significant for the organizing of the company.

The third challenge is the invisibility of a growing part of operations as they increasingly take place in cyberspace. For instance by e-mail, chat programs etc., and by mobile phones on the way to or from meetings. Barley and Kunda (2001) call for a more sophisticated use of technical aids in capturing any kind of computer work arguing for the inadequacy of direct observation. Forth, my experience from doing research in different KIFs is that the researchers are likely to be asked what the company will get in return when participating in the research project. Consultants are used to calculate the value of their time, often by hour, which quickly triggers perspectives such as one-hour interview with the researcher, equals one hour of lost income.

Generating information in a setting characterized by mobility, simultaneity, and invisibility is the backdrop for another set of methodological challenges. Challenges that most likely is relevant for other field studies of this kind:

- First, I am after the dynamics of the practice within which the partners of A-Tale interact, i.e. taking organizing as a starting point and "organization" as

    a product. How do I generate such information?
In doing the fieldwork have tried to keep in mind a methodological principle stated by Latour (1987, p. 59-60), "The people we study often do not give stable or consistent meanings to things, people, and events. They change their minds frequently [...] we ought to respect that confusion and inability to be decisive by not giving things a more stable meaning than the people involved do." The strategy to avoid fixing meanings and events beforehand or too early is to follow the actors in their attempts to stabilize humans and non-humans in an actor-network. The same principle is stated by Callon (1986) in outlining a sociology of translation.

Although I acknowledge its emphasis on the micro-sociology of action and interaction, I have a few comments on the feasibility of "follow the actors" in the case of A-Tale. Taken literally, e.g. by implicating a shadowing of the partners, and holding such a task up against the mobility of people and simultaneity of events, the trouble is obvious. I do not want to rely too heavily on what is bounded to one place, as I want to avoid the difficult task of following each and one of the partners around. To make it even more complicated, I am not only after the actors in their attempts to stabilize humans and non-humans.

The implication of studying organizing is to treat "organizations" as temporary reifications in a context where organizing never ceases. This means that even though some of the activities in A-Tale might be geared towards stabilization, other activities are geared towards change. Because the business

environment in which A-Tales operates demands it, but mainly because of their ambition of creating successive innovations.

Czarniawska (2004) suggests two strategies for handling the mobility problem. One strategy is to study the same object in different places, e.g. by following one and one actor at a time. This is a kind of access I am not able to achieve form the partners in A-Tale. Another strategy – which also solves the problem of simultaneity of organizing events – is to use observant participation (Czarniawska 1998) in which chosen organizational members under researchers' guidance collect systematic observations of events themselves. I have used a variation of the observant participation technique by starting many of my conversations and interviews with the different partners with variations of the question: "What have happened since the last time I saw you?" Over time they got used to me asking this question, and often started giving me small summaries the minute I appeared in their offices and without me asking for it. In this way I have collected small résumés from the actions taking place at various occasions in the world outside the office.

Law (1994) aptly points out that nothing ever happens right where and when the researcher is observing. "All important events happen at some other time, in some other place. In the beginning the researchers tend to panic and try to chase 'the action', but in time they learn that 'important events' becomes such in accounts." He claims that nobody is aware that an important event is happening when it takes place, although in most cases people are aware of the time of day and the day of the month. Events must be made important or unimportant.

My take on "all the events that happens some other time, in some other place", has been to trust the partners ability and interest in providing me with the stories they think are the most important to tell. In addition to the many small talks with different partners when at the office, my version of following the actors, consist of frequent participation in the meetings at the headquarter in which all or most of the partners participate.

- Second, when being preoccupied with the understanding of the concrete activities going on and the corresponding organizing processes of the group – how do I know that I actually touch onto the aspects of practice that matters the most for the partners in A-Tale?

This question stems from the fact that I did not know much about the industry in which A-Tale operates before starting on this project, I have never worked with such a company before, and there are no previous practice oriented accounts of such a company to harvest from. The immediate answer would be to spend enough time there to gradually gain an understanding of what is going

on. However, I think the second principle guiding this research is a crucial supplement to the time factor. It is based on Collins' (2001b) key indicator of success in grasping practice, i.e. my ability to get the partners to listen to me seriously and interestedly when discussing their substance matter.

This second principle stands in opposition to the criteria of adequacy of the analysis stated by Barley (1996) in his article about technicians in the workplace. It is a wonderful ethnographic account of the work of different groups of technicians. The effort behind demonstrating how new ideal-typical occupations can be constructed is thorough: 6-8 ethnographers doing fieldwork 2-4 days a week in six different settings for a period of 6-12 months. That the ethnographers have collaborated as a team across settings, adds to the accuracy and originality of the research design. However, at the closing section Barley writes: "As a final check on the adequacy of our analysis, we distributed working papers detailing our models to our informants and other groups of technicians for evaluation. Most telling was that no technician told us that he or she had learned anything new from our documents. Instead, they said we had presented what they already knew, albeit more systematically than they would have done" (p. 418).

In the case of a company like A-tale it would hardly be taken as the outmost sign of quality that the practitioners learned *nothing new* from months of intense investigation. Of course, what counts as a qualifying evaluation depends on the intentions of the study and the characteristics of the setting in which the study is located. If I were to study the social organization of the care of neonates, the neonate herself could obviously not be expected to learn much from it.

My general experience from five years of research with different professional service businesses or "knowledge firms", is that many practitioners will not consider you a worthy partner of conversation if you are incapable of blending your perspectives and observations with theirs, and from that create new insights; preferably face to face, and on the spot. In other words, "knowledge workers" such as the partners in A-Tale let you into their organization and spend time with you if they believe they may learn something from it.

A small anecdote from the first meeting with the manger of A-Tale may illustrate my point. The initial meeting concerning my study was arranged by one of my colleagues who knew the manager a little bit from the years she used to work in the media industry. The company was recently established as a juridical-economic actor, and the setting for the meeting was to inform about the kind of research our group was interested in, and, in particular, to find out whether it would be possible for me to use them in my doctoral work. Soon after I had presented my research project and indicated what kind of access I would

like to have, he looked me straight into my eyes and asked, "And what will I get in return from you?" I answered something like, "Well, I have been doing research with a fair amount of companies and I know a few things about organizing and work, but, moreover, I think I am quite competent in asking good questions".

The manager looked at me, laughed, and by that approved my request. He just had to discuss it with the other partners first. I felt that what I actually had promised him was interesting conversations about their organization and the way they managed their work. That is, a kind of novel reading from a person who is not fully engaged in the running of the everyday operations, a reading that must answer the demand of interesting conversations and new insights.

It was in the individual interviews with the partners such sharing took place. Before conducting interviews, or inviting small talk, I synthesized observations from group meetings and small conversations taking place in corridors and breaks and presented them in such a manner that they were likely to gain the interest of the individual partners. To again cite Collins (2001b, p. 108), "the nature of conversations with experts is a good indicator – If you can get them to listen to you seriously and interestedly when you discuss their subject that means you are getting somewhere; if, on the other hand, all such conversations begin with their explaining principles to you in a pedantic way, you are getting nowhere." It was when I was able to touch onto the specifics and the significant distinctions in their practice that the interviews really got going. I had to have enough knowledge about their domains of knowledge in order to do it, e.g. it is difficult to ask a system developer about technological choices in a user-oriented ICT project if one does not know anything about system development and the possible technological solutions involved.

I gained such insight about the television and film production over time. In the beginning I spent a lot of time with the freelancers and junior personnel associated with A-Tale in order to learn about the workings of the business. The first interviews with the partners were quite standard in that the intention was to get to know the different persons as individuals; their former experience, their motivation to become a partner of A-Tale, their ideas of what A-Tale should be, the way they are working with the others etc. Later on a more active dialogue in the sense of sharing viewpoints took place.

- Third, although I am inspired by the thorough study of work place ethnographies, I am not an anthropologist. What is my version of a field study?

My ambition at the outset was quite modest with regard to which research activities I would be able to conduct. Even though the initial meeting with the

manager went well, the partners were quite reluctant in offering me access. Hopefully, by demonstrating an ability to touch on to important aspects of their practice, I would gradually gain better access. This point of departure is quite different from the image of a "lifestyle fieldwork" provided by Spradley (1980, p. 3), "Whether in a jungle village in Peru or on the streets of New York, the anthropologist goes to where people live and 'does fieldwork'. This means participating in activities, asking questions, eating strange food, learning a new language, watching ceremonies, taking field notes, washing clothes, writing letters home, tracing out genealogies, observing play, interviewing informants, and hundreds of other things."

My initial version of the fieldwork was to do focused observation in their regular gatherings designed for the making of ideas (Midwifery), to be present over time so as to be able to conduct several small talks during lunch time, breaks, etc., and to conduct a series of unstructured interviews. All activities took place within regular working hours. I am aware that in using the term "fieldwork" and exclaiming that I am inspired by the anthropology of industrial work, the cardinal rule of work place ethnography easily comes to term – the necessity for a prolonged period of participant observation. Of course, it is possible to talk about participate observation as a broad notion encompassing different degrees and forms of participation that the researcher move through during the course of a study. However, my point of departure is the images of participant observation existing within organization studies.

Czarniawska (2004) condensed version is that participant observation means that the researcher assumes the role of an organization member (or the other way around that – an employee becomes a researcher). This, Czarniawska claims, was the method adopted by Dalton, who worked as a manager, Burawoy who was a machine-tool operator, Van Maanen, who was a police trainee, and Leidner who was a McDonald's worker and a combined Insurance trainee. Czarniawska comments that in order to achieve this extraordinary degree of participation you either need exceptional luck in gaining access, and/or the role you take does not need special qualifications, and/or you have some special talent that fits into the situation at hand.

When starting my work in A-Tale, I had no expectation of gaining a position in which I could act as a regular member of the team. That is, to be a participant observer in the sense outlined by e.g. Dalton or Burawoy. A-Tale had no trainee programs that could be possible to follow, I had no experience from the kind of work going on in this industry, and it was difficult to get access to the company at all. However, after seven months, one of the partners asked me to work in one of their pilot projects. My task would be to do research and to assist the director in the casting of a group of people.

The partner said that he thought I could do this job because he saw that I was used to gather and systematize information and because he thought I was god at getting people to talk about themselves and what they are doing. Indirectly he acknowledged my interviews and reflections. I worked for about two months in the pilot project, a period of such intensity – because I had never done such work before and because the working hours lasted from early in the morning to late night – that I had no change to obtain the stance of "detached involvement" that Bruyn (1966) declares to be the ideal state for participant observer. Literally, I was a participant but not an observer. I hardly wrote down any reflections on what happened until the pilot project was over. Nevertheless, the experience gave me first hand insight into the thinking and doing of the director and the executive producer and the workings of world of the television.

Strategies for the production of information

The summarized version of the field study is as follows: My first visit to the company to speak with the CEO was late autumn 2001. It took a while to get access especially they were preoccupied with a high degree of discretion and anonymity, which I will come back to later on. I first took office at A-Tale in early May 2002. From May to September I spent 1-3 days a week there. Especially, I participated as a direct observer in their regular meetings, coined Midwifery. Most of the dialogues to be presented later on are collected in Midwifery.

In mid September I was asked to work on one of their projects, which I did, full time, for about two months. From December 2002 to the end of January 2003, I went to their office a couple of times a month. From February and till the end of May 2003, I spent time writing up my experience and did just visit A-Tale on a few occasions. In June 2003 I conducted a long interview with one of my key informants in which I got feed-back on my main observations. This interview was recorded on a minidisk and transcribed, and is the only time I used any recording equipment during my study.

Several of the practitioners in A-Tale are public persons with well-known faces. This means they are in a situation in which they want to protect themselves from publicity. When doing interviews, I experienced that they had nothing to hide from colleagues, they could be brutally frank towards members of their in-group, but since they were afraid of what could be dug up by journalists, I was not allowed to use video or tape recorders when I conducted interviews or did observations in meetings. The partners were in general against

any form of recording. The main reason was privacy/protection from leakage to the newspapers and magazines. The other reason was to protect the most valuable ideas from being copied by other firms. It was no problem that I took notes from conversations and when I listened to their discussions. I wrote more thorough versions of these notes on my PC afterwards. The activities I conducted in order to generate information were:

Presence, small talk and observation:

I was granted an office space in A-Tale. For a period of four months I spent in average 1-3 days a week in the company. In the beginning my desk was at the first floor where the free-lancers and/or project workers sat. The partners held office at the ground floor and basement. The first floor was a god spot for informal conversations with people who had the dual position of being both insiders (project/contract workers) and outsiders (not regular employees). I also asked them questions about the workings of the media industry in general in Norway. After a couple of months my desk was moved to the end of the corridor in the basement. From there, it was easier to find the right timing for small talk with some of the partners and to join in on the small, informal breaks.

However, as each and one of the partners had single offices and because they spent a lot of time out of office in meetings, the value of observation through a mere presence was limited. The most important source of information was the discussions going on in Midwifery. In addition, I conducted small informal interviews, and joined in at small breaks, lunches etc. Then, I got my own office in the basement. It was during the period I worked as a regular employee in one of their pilot projects and my everyday conversation was first and foremost with those people involved in the project. At this time I also got access to the intranet, with the catalogues over the different projects. This was useful, because I could take a look at the written descriptions on some of the projects that interested me the most. Because of the secrecy on the content of their ideas, I did not get access before working as a regular member of the team.

Focused observation in Midwifery:

I participated in Midwifery on a regular basis. In average, Midwifery took place once a week or at least every fortnight. The initial ambition of the partners were to gather face-to-face once in a week to collectively discuss new ideas coming up, and also other things concerning the running of the company. Midwifery lasted from one to three hours. After some months they decided to meet every fortnight instead. Midwifery functioned as an arena for focused observation on the way they were cultivating/making idea. It was the most important way to generate information since they also discussed personal and collective

ambitions, market opportunities, sales and the like. I held the status as an observer and took notes from the discussions.

Participation in one pilot-project:
I was hired as a regular member of the team in one of A-Tale's pilot projects. I got a salary equal to what is standard for freelancers to get on such assignments. My role was to do research and to cast people for a serial documentary. The engagement lasted for about two months. I worked mainly with the executive producer and the director. At the end of the pilot period we prepared and conducted a presentation of the main project – the idea, the content, the participants, the execution, budget and organization/personnel – for a television broadcaster. In this crucial sales meeting with the customer I held the status as a regular member of the team; the executive producer was the one doing most of the talking. The participation in this project gave me invaluable insights into the details of projects work in this industry. I have a copy of all the documentation in this project. Notes on my own reflections on what was going on, was taken down after the pilot project was over.

Documents and access to their intranet:
I read documentation on the firm, specifically the business plan, and the way they presented themselves on the internet. The content was revised a couple of time in the period I was there. I got access to parts of the intranet in A-Tale. That is, the catalogues keeping track on their ideas, and on the catalogue that belonged to the project I was actually involved with.

Phone call talk:
Since the most of the partners spent a substantial amount of time out of office, I had a deal with one of my key informants to call him while driving from work to his house outside town. I used it a couple of times when I was writing up my notes and felt the need for clarification on certain issues.

Semi-structured interviews:
In the early phase of my stay at the company I did five long interviews with five of the partners about the company, their motivation for becoming a partner, their perspectives on what they should make and the possibilities in the industry. After that I relied on quite short conversations on the basis of things I had heard in Midwifery or in small semi-structured interviews with the individual partners or a few of them together during breaks or from the freelancers. One of the partners, acted as my key informant, and with him I made semi-structured interviews in average every third week.

Strategies for analysis

The information I generated consists of:
– a 60 pages electronic field book of interview recordings, the partners' conversations about ideas, and short reflections on what I have heard and seen;
– a digital recording of a long interview with one of the partners;
– hardcopy of the business plan of the company;
– hardcopies of three different versions presenting the company on the internet;
– articles on the company and/or the partners in the daily press including critics on the television programs broadcasted;
– several written overviews of ideas in progress;
– pitches of six ideas written by the partners or their companions;
– an early version of a manuscript of a drama made by a group of the partners and a writer;
– the whole documentation of the pilot project I worked on;
– a set of hardcopies on the film and television industry as described on relevant internet sites.

When I was in the field, I wrote small reflections on what I had head or seen. After ending my fieldwork I worked more systematically on the information I had gathered, especially on my field book.

As mentioned before, I explore three issues in this thesis: What characterizes the organizing of creative knowledge work? How is knowledge shared and generated in order to invent novel ideas? What are important communicative dimensions in order to maintain a creative space over time? The process of interpretation is inductive and iterative in the sense that I have discussed observations and analytical points during the course of study with some of the partners in A-Tale, with my advisors, my colleagues at SINTEF, and some of my fellow PhD students, and also by reading theory when not being in the field.

My analysis of the material proceeds as follows. I made a rough sorting of what I consider to be background information about the industry and general descriptions about the company, its business idea, and the partners' former experience. Without paying much attention to the research questions, I started looking at what they make and how they make it (idea cultivation) by analyzing conversations collected in Midwifery. The analysis centered around questions such as; how do they introduce ideas to each other; what kind of ideas do they discuss/what characterizes different ideas; what is the scope of the

conversations/what is relevant to talk about when discussing ideas; how do they discuss ideas/is the conversational practice different between the different ideas. I did this initial analysis in order to develop an understanding of what the company produces and how they produce it.

I made several hardcopies of my field book with broad margins so as to take notes when I was looking through the material. I also used colored markers for discerning different kinds of arguments and different kinds of topics brought into the discussion in ideas. After working on the content and format of ideas, and the way they discuss ideas, I moved on to the first research question concerning the organizing A-Tale's creative work.

When the topic of concern was the development of the whole organization, a main challenge was to operationalize contemporary concepts within organization theory such as "organizing", "becoming", "visioning", and "learning as invention". By making yet another hardcopy of my field book, I started looking at the way ideas evoke larger discussions on the company identity and/or the different partners commitment to the company, and/or the way they organize their work, and/or images they created of future possibilities. I marked out such topics as they occurred in different meeting and in single interviews with me over time. Especially I was after those topics that occurred several times although in slightly different form or content during my stay in A-Tale. To this "durable topics of concern", I added some special events that that took place when I was lucky to be present. – Situations that involved the whole group and in which the partners showed an emotional intensity and special commitment in their discussions on the A-Tale project. Taken together, the "durable topics of concern" and the "special events" became the basis for the analysis of the organizing of A-Tale.

The next research question is about how the partners use their diverse knowledge base in order to accomplish their ambition of making original, high quality stories. In the analysis of my notes, I looked after situations in which the partners made explicit references to what they are good at, or wanted to learn. Then I wanted to expand the analysis of their knowledge practice beyond their explicit references to knowledge, expertise, experience, learning, etc. The "knowledge" analysis then became more theory-driven than e.g. the "organizing" category mentioned above which is more inductive. Theory-driven in the sense that I have used the terminology of the actor-network approach to narrate both my experience from participating in the realization of the pilot-project, and to look at how they combine their expertise in order to cultivate ideas.

Communication or language use is such a vital part of the practice of creation in A-Tale. Therefore the last part of the analysis concerns communicative dimensions in their creative language of practice. I have granted

the same status to the direct observation of what people are doing and talking about, and the explicit reflection on their own practice in the interviews and small talk I have had with the individual partners along the way. This differs from the anthropology of work studies mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, as these favor the observation of what people are doing over the way they talk about what they are doing.

E.g. when Suchman (referred to in Brown 1991) studied Xerox accounting clerks, she uncovered that when she asked the clerks how they did their job, their descriptions corresponded more or less to the formal procedures of the job manual. But when she observed them at work, she discovered that the clerks were not really following those procedures at all. Instead they relied on a rich variety of informal practices that were not in any manual but turned out to be crucial for getting the work done. In the case of A-Tale, doing and talking as a part of getting their job done, and *talking about* as a part of reflecting and improving their own practice merge. There is no one who is more responsible for the "official" procedures for the function of the group than the others. Thus, the informal vs. formal dichotomy is not so relevant in the case at hand, neither is the common dichotomy between the ones who plan the jobs and the ones who execute them. In my analysis, "doing", "talking", and "talking about" are pieced together in order to understand how the partners define their creative space. Of the three chapters with analysis, the one on communicative dimension in their creative practice, is the most inductive as it was difficult to find relevant theoretical approaches on this topic.

Representation of information

All the names of the partners are fictitious, so is the name of the company. This is due to the agreement I made with the partners before gaining access to A-Tale. I present several of the ideas that were discussed by the partners. The title and the content of ideas that are business sensitive or recognizable because the programs have already been broadcasted, have been replaced by a title and a content invented by me. There is a danger that important details get lost in such a "reinvention" of the partners' concepts. Details that especially would be crucial in an analysis of the distinctiveness of A-Tale's ideas and productions in comparison to the productions of other companies.

However, when I do analyze A-Tale's chase for a signature style by way of a handful examples on ideas, I combine the analysis with the partners' own reflections on the uniqueness of the ideas. Also, when I have substituted titles

and content of ideas, I have made sure to maintain the main arguments used by the partners. The content of an idea is substituted by an idea that fits within the same genre, and I have kept the references the partners make to different TV shows or movies or persons.

As described earlier, I did not have the opportunity to make audio recordings of the meetings in which ideas were discussed. When the partners discussed ideas, I tried to write down the turns in the dialogues as they unfolded. This was difficult because sometimes they spoke rather fast. Immediately after the meetings I sat down and refined the conversations on the basis on my notes and as I remembered them with the aim of representing the main arguments.

I have looked at the kind of arguments the partners use and how these arguments are coupled to different objects of discourse. I have also represented some of the conversations in a graphical–metaphorical way (see figure 2, 3, and 4 in chapter 6). To illustrate the conversations graphically has been a part of my sense-making of what kind of work the partners do on different ideas, and a way of displaying my thoughts to the partners when discussing it with them.

Brief introduction of the company, A-Tale

A-Tale is a concept development and production company for television and movies, formally established in January 2001. The company pursues new possibilities due to structural and technological changes in the industry. In 2003 the public broadcaster adopted a new policy in which 10% of their programs were to be produced externally.[19] The National film fund also decided to support independent productions for TV as well as film, first of all TV serials.[20] At last, the National film fund provides direct support to a select

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[19] From 1th of September 2003, the National broadcaster (NTV), decided to establish a special department mandated to develop and maintain relationships with the external, independent production community in Norway. The budget is about 9% of the total TV-budget. For 2006 it was increased to 10%, which amounts to 100 million NOK. The department shall assist NTV in reaching its ambitions of contracting a lager portion of the TV-budget to external resources so as to strengthen the independent production society. The function of the department is to assess and develop program ideas and projects together with audiovisual producers outside the NTV system. The department shall also contract National program- and filmprojects.
[20] The Norwegian Film Fund is charged with administering all national support for film production in Norway.

number of production communities.[21] This support, which covers a period of four years, was geared at strengthening project development in independent production companies, concerning both the targeted acquisitions of projects, and the creative elaboration of each individual project. For A-Tale, these changes represented a profound market possibility and a possibility to develop steadily over time. Additionally, the "digital revolution" creates new opportunities, as the cost of equipment for recording, processing and editing film decreases and the quality of digital pictures soon equals that of analog film.

Business idea

A-Tale's business idea is that by focusing on creative talent and the project development process, they will generate unique and innovative media content primarily for the cinema and television audiences locally, regionally and internationally. Emphasizing media content implies that their activities are geared towards development of projects and concepts, rather than on production. When an idea is developed far enough for production to start, the company normally takes the executive role through the control of budget and finance as well as supervision of the project team.

To carry out necessary tasks and roles in production, such as production manager, director, casting personnel, actors etc., they hire a project group of freelancers and/or existing production companies. The two main fields of media towards which project development and executive production is directed, are television and film. In the long run, the ambition is to develop ideas and stories that are media-independent, i.e. base stories that may be developed into TV serials, film, theatre, multi-media performances etc. Fig. 1 provides a sketch of the different phases and processes of operation.

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[21] The National Film Fund support for production companies has as its aim to promote film and television culture in Norway and to strengthen the sector through the development of stable production companies, possessing high competence, that have the capacities and resources to deliberate and act in the longer perspective.

programs externally. For us, it represents a profound market possibility. However, we have to expect that we must sell a production to more than one enterprise, say, another Scandinavian or European broadcaster. Either we have to do it ourselves or we have to negotiate with the main customer whether they should try to sell it through their network."

The turbulent industry, in which A-Tale operates combined with their business idea of making original ideas and stories, requires a practice that is both creative and changing. Equally important is the explicit focus the partners have on their long experience in the industry and the inter-practitionary potential of their knowledge base. Thus, I expected from the outset that the practitioners would emphasize the importance of learning from each other, and the need for continually reinventing their own practices of using/creating knowledge.

The inter-practitionary profile

They are 11 partners and five employees in A-Tale. The founding partners have extensive experience and impressive track records from their special field of work. The areas of competency are film production, film directing, television production, program hosting in television, production of live shows for television, concept development and text writing for advertising, dramatizing and manuscript development for theatre and instruction/direction for theatre. Victor, Live and Sissel have long experience from television production. Ivan has worked for years in advertising and movie commercials. Carl has experience as journalist and TV program hosting. Tobias has worked both with film and theatre, and with both manuscripts and direction. Greenfield has directed movies and commercials. Thor and Peterson and Jimmy are experienced film producers. Jonas has worked a text/manuscript developer and writer. Then, there are two persons who have just graduated from the Film academy and who are working with film production. At last, there are two persons working with production management and one person doing administrative work. Table 1 provides a brief overview of the people in A-Tale.

Table 1: Overview of the A-Tale employees

Name (fictitious)	Main field of expertise
Victor:	Television production
Live:	Television production
Sissel:	Television production
Ivan:	Concept development advertising and commercials. Text writing.
Carl:	Journalist. Host of television programmes
Tobias:	Theater and film manuscripts. Film production. Stage direction theatre.
Greenfield:	Film direction, commercials
Thor:	Film production
Peterson:	Film production, line production
Jimmy:	Film production, line production
Jonas:	Text writing, manuscripts
Sarah:	Graduate, film production
Tale:	Graduate, film production
Cris:	Administration
Erik:	Production management, administration
David:	Production management

The reason why it is exactly these persons, who constitute the new company, is a mix of former familiarity with each other's work, being in a position in which they were able to start something new, and the reputation of each and one of them which make them curious about cooperating with the others. The partners all have long experience from their specific line of business. Doubtlessly, all the partners could get other jobs if they wanted to. Magazines, associations and newspapers in the world of advertising, design, and media portray A-Tale as a dream team of story makers. The expectations run high on the results of their work. With regard to the challenge A-Tale faces in the market, says one of the partners:

> "The need for what we make is not obvious; we have to create a need, get recognized by a wide audience, and be able to get paid for what we do. And while we do it we should get a good laugh at work, not once a month but everyday. After all, that is an important part of what makes it worthwhile being in this group and not in another."

Whatever motivates the individual partners, they have to produce content: The ideas and stories from which film and television programs are to be produced. This content must, on the one hand, be judged so original that it competes with the superfluous number of concepts made internationally and nationally, and on the other hand, it has to be judged commercial enough so that the partners of the company are able to raise financial support for the creation and production.

The three succeeding chapters present the analysis of A-Tale's organizing and practice. The chapters are dealing with one research question each. Chapter 4 analyzes the way the whole organization moves and transforms. Chapter 5 is devoted to characteristics of the knowledge production in such a company; how the partners use their inter-disciplinary knowledge base in order to create ideas and in order to realize specific projects. Chapter 6 identifies communicative dimensions that seem important in defining the creative space over time.

4   Organizing A-Tale: Change & stabilization

This chapter is about processes through which the entire organization moves and transforms. A central empirical question is how the partners in A-Tale are recurrently coming up with and producing original ideas at the same time as they develop their organization. The business idea is to utilize their inter-practitionary profile as a resource in establishing good processes for the cultivation of ideas. In order to become a powerful place for the origin of creative ideas, they are dependent on attracting and co-operating with talented people within the industry. They are also dependent on their capability to realize ideas, i.e. to enroll and configure economic resources, people and technology into successful projects.

So far, the partners have managed this early phase in the company's lifespan by emphasizing processes that creates meaning and motivation for the people involved – more than they focus on creating structure and order. Theoretically, I have portrayed organizational dynamics in A-Tale as a twin process of change and stabilization, i.e. as a protopractice. Within a protopractice, change and stabilization together become the organizational norm. Protopractice as a term is used in order to make the notion of practice more susceptible to the dynamic features of human enterprise than what is visible in the vast amount of writings emphasizing the traditional, habitual and rule-governed rather than the reflective and rule-breaking in human enterprises.

To speak about change and stabilization as simultaneous activities, I have combined insights from two theoretical approaches. That is, recent discussion within the field of organization studies on organizing, becoming and learning as invention, and the analysis of stabilizing elements in scientific practices or technological innovations advanced by the actor-network approach within science and technology studies (STS).

When I say combine two theoretical approaches, I do not mean that I have integrated them into one consistent model. I use them as two analytical outlooks in order to maintain some of the dynamic complexity of the situation at hand. Theoretically, I use them as signposts in developing an account complementary to the two dominant images of organizational change in the

literature: That of planned change, complemented by a picture of unintended consequences and that of determined change, as in all "adaptation to environment" models (Czarniawska and Joerges 1996).[23] The analysis of organizational dynamics in this chapter will be presented through my observations of the process of cultivating and materializing ideas in A-Tale.

The notion of translation is important in the analysis of dynamic phenomena because it evokes associations to both movement and transformation, and it embraces both linguistic and material objects. In order to operationalize translation I will use the four acts described by Callon (1986) that an actor applies in order to construct more stable associations between other actors/stakeholders in a (research) project: *Problematisation*, in which one actor tries to become indispensable to other actors in suggesting possible solutions or programs of investigation that the others need; *Interessement*, in which one actor seeks to lock the other actors into the roles that have been proposed to them within a solution or investigation; *Enrolment*, in which one actor seeks to define and interrelate the various roles defined and allocated in the solution/investigation; *Mobilization*, in which one actor seeks to ensures that spokesmen for various collectivities are properly able to represent those collectivities and not be betrayed by the latter. Equally important as translation is the principle of assuming free associations between actors at the outset of an analysis. Actors associate with other actors (human and non-humans), and it is the range and quality of those associations that provide the network's operations with both stability and power.

The partners are creative professionals. To experiment with way of doing things, is a way of upholding a capacity for repeatedly creating original ideas. Going back to the process orientation within organization theory, Czarniawska (2004) aptly remarks that Weick's (1979) introduction of the term *organizing* was a leap towards avoiding the "organization" trap, but the difficulty in espousing his postulate in practice lies in the fact that, when studying

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[23] Czarniawska and Joerges (1996, p. 14) categorize approaches such as strategic choice, decision-making and organization development under the label "planned organizational change", and contingency theory, population ecology and, in certain variations of neoinstitutionalism, institutional theory under the label "environmental adaption". This holds some resemblance with Czarniawska and Joerges' (1996) definition of change as starting with an idea that catches on and subsequently translates into substance in a given organization. Their point of departure is that a myriad of (management) ideas floate within and between industrial sectors. More often than not, it is the same ideas that materialize in similar organizations around the same time. However, while they are preoccupied with processes of institutionalization and standardization within and between industries, I am preoccupied with a single organization that is trying to increase its competitive edge by the search for original/novel ideas and solutions. That is, by creating one of a kind, rather than adhering to the conventional.

organizing, researchers mostly encounter processes that have already come to a kind of happy end; that is, they have become reified into organizations.

There are but few indications yet how a researcher actually should go about apprehending "organizing" instead of "organization" when in the field. The strategies I have used to face the problem of capturing dynamics instead of "reified processes" are three-folded. First, when being present in the company, I have tried to keep track of different topics of concern introduced by the partners when discussing together or in conversations with me, and to be aware of the consequences of such discussion for what they are doing. Second, when being away from the field for a while and then returning to the company, I have invited the partners to provide small summaries of what have happened since the last time I saw them. Third, after becoming more familiar with the persons and activities in the company, I have tried to *anticipate* what would be the next thing on their agenda. I asked myself, "From the way they talk about this and the way they do that, then the next issue would be?" This was a way to check out for myself whether I was able to touch on to the most important lines of development in their practice.

When in the field, I have tried to be aware of the more slow changes of their practice and also the situations or events of a more "revolutionary" character. That is, both durable topics of concern in their interaction, and transitory moments. Durable topics have come in different shape and with different perspectives at different points in time. My take is that recurrent topics of common concern play an important organizing role in directing the group's attention and effort. Small changes in content and form over time reflects series of translations the partners make in order to adjust to each other's experiences and points of view, and also to the opinions and interests of important allies and co-creators in their network. At any point there are several organizing topics on the agenda. I have made an analytical distinction between two main threads – even though they in reality, as is noticeable in excerpts given from conversations below, are interwoven. One is the organizing of Midwifery combined with the distribution of company roles/responsibilities. The other is the organizing of external relationships.

I have also tried to pay a special attention to moments that stand out in the stream of events because of a special emotional and conversational intensity, that is, situations that involve the group at large and contain reflections on both prior ways of doing things and what should be done next. I think of them as *transitory moments* in which the arguments and emotional energy among the partners builds up to a point where one pivotal action or the other will be made in order to try something new. It may result in experimenting with formal/functional roles and meetings, in attempts at clustering diverse ideas and set of relations, in articulating amongst themselves and to the outside

world more clearly what A-Tale is or is not. Transitory moments involve all or most of the partners and have consequences for the interaction and arrangement between them. The moments are characterized by intensity, convergence and of momentum in which the partners are shifting from "talking about" to "doing something about". That is, when turning the attention from reflecting on what they have been doing to being concrete on what they are going to do next.

Midwifery: Cultivation of ideas

The core activity for A-Tale is to develop ideas into stories and further into "producible packages". Victor has been the head of the company since it were formally established. He is also the one in charge of Midwifery. Midwifery is a regular meeting in which the partners present ideas to each other. Often a written pitch of one-two pages accompanies the presentation. After introducing an idea, the conversation runs open and undirected until someone, often the moderator of the meeting, tries to conclude on whether the idea is good or not, or whether it should be further elaborated, or filed for later, or being presented for actors in their extensive network. In other words, there are several possible conclusions to make about an idea than simply "accepted" or "rejected".

The process is very low tech: The partners are sitting by a long, oval table in a rather small room. A whiteboard is hanging at the wall by the short end of the table. There are no stereotypical signs indicating that this is a place for creative work; no colorful wallpapers or paint on the walls, no special furniture, fancy laptops or other stuff often associated with creative zones. In an interview Victor told me that people hold strong opinions about ideas, and it is his job to orchestrate the meeting so that all the voices are heard, and directed towards cultivating ideas. Says Victor, "Sometimes the temperature runs really high, so it might be wise to get good nights sleep before the meeting takes place." In an interview with Ivan on the way they cultivate ideas, he gave several valuable insights on how to characterize the process. On the origin of ideas, Ivan tells:

> "During the week each and one of us gather ideas. It should be complete anarchy
> in the ways people come up with these ideas - if they get them from their family
> members, from what they read in the newspapers, from people contacting them,
> from manuscripts or pitches received by e-mail or post, from critical reviews of
> television programs or movies, from the dream last night... In Midwifery we

meet to exchange and expand on those ideas we think is mature enough to be presented to the others. The aim is not to give birth to ideas in the very moment we are sitting at Midwifery, but to describe what one has already thought about - and preferably pitched - to the group, so as to level their quality."

Midwifery is portrayed as an arena for the support, creative elaboration and critical assessment of ideas. Ideas originate from everywhere. There should be no limits from where or from whom they get inspiration. Below, Ivan goes more into the details of how the cultivation in Midwifery actually takes place:

"The thoughts of different people are combined with the viewpoints and associations of the others. It is soaked in a mix of factual and fictional comments. Some ideas are immediately ready for production; some must be revised and combined with other ideas before they are good enough. Some are to be rejected after being with us for a while. But we have to bear in mind that many ideas need time before we see their actual potential. They have to reach a higher level of maturity or maybe the holder of the idea needs to reach a certain point in life where he is ready to do something about it. – You know, for instance, the movie 'Gangs of New York' that director Martin Scorsese presented in Cannes. It is fifteen years since he first wrote down the idea. He said the making took such a long time because he had to have the right opportunity, the time and the experience in life before he had the guts to direct it. We should develop a 'databank' of written ideas so as to track them over time and become more aware of which ideas might be combined. If we do not see the opportunity in this Midwifery, we might see it when one or the other is scanning the database later on."

Here, we learn that ideas are improved by ways of free association and combination. Also, we learn that ideas are more or less mature from an artistic and production point of view. To maturity, he relates the question of time and unpredictability. It may be difficult to decide right away that an idea is good or not. Over time it may mature through the combination with other ideas and/or through the life experience of the idea holder. Ivan argues that the function of Midwifery should be (excerpt from interview):

"An idea-holder definitely needs a test-panel and a creative group to accelerate his thoughts. Midwifery is the place for testing and elaboration. It should be fun, engaging, inspiring. Still, we should operate like a *manufacturer* of ideas. On the one hand, this should be a place in which ideas are systematically subjected to processes so as to improve them; on the other hand, the turnover of ideas treated in Midwifery should be higher than we have managed so far.

I mean, it definitely should be higher than what is normal within the world of television. The guys coming from television jump too easily to matters of production and are used to play with quite a low number of ideas. We have to do something to increase the turnover of concepts in Midwifery. I myself have the great advantage of coming from the world of advertising. There, there are no constraints in playing with and combining ideas, we do not take a dime for rejecting or twisting the thoughts of others."

Ivan talks about systematic cultivation and about processing a high number of ideas. Because of the reputation of the founding partners, A-Tale receives a lot of proposals from external idea-holders who would like their assistance in cultivating and realizing concepts. The partner receiving the proposal uses his/her own gut-feeling on whether to take the idea further or not. If (s)he is not sure about it, a sideman check is the way to decide it. A-Tale gets more enquiries than the partners are able to process. They try to be more systematic about the way they receive proposals, but first and foremost the mechanism of selection is their own energy and enthusiasm. The partners also create their own ideas, which in the case of television represent the majority of the initiatives actually produced.

Midwifery is one of the most important stabilizing means of the practice of idea cultivation. It is one of the few regular collective activities in the company. Of course, it is not the only arena in which content generation and opportunity-making take place, but it is a very important arena, because it is one of the few occasions that the group as a whole is gathered face to face. As we shall see, discussing ideas is not far from discussing whom they are and what the company should become, which means that Midwifery holds a crucial position in the construction of company identity. However, as with several of the other activities in A-Tale, Midwifery is also a practice subjected to change.

Transitory moment 1: Grant from the Film Fund

Midwifery has been run for about five months out in the year 2002, when the partners in A-Tale started questioning their own practice in sorting and elevating ideas. This took the form of small comments over coffee cups, doorstep conversations etc. Then something special happened (excerpt from field diary):

15th of Mai 2001, the day before Midwifery: It is a sunny day. Victor, Thor, and I are standing at the doorsteps outside the office for a short break in the sun. They are smoking cigarettes and talking about the upcoming event later that day when they are to present A-Tale for the first time to a wider audience in their line of business. Suddenly Victor' cell phone beeps. Thor and I understand that good news are coming in because Victor laughs and smiles and nods towards us. It turns out that the National Film Fund just announced its first batch of development grants to production companies. A-Tale is one of the very select groups to be awarded for a three-year period – a fair indication of the standing and potential of the partners.

The partners spent a lot of time writing the qualifying application, and now the effort pays off. Victor and Thor comment, that even the application was substantial due to its content, a subsequent clarifying meeting with the Film Council turned out to be more of an interrogation than a dialogue. This brought doubts into the hope of receiving support. Hence, the phone call released a lot of tension. When walking to the assembly room of the presentation, the guys in A-Tale are eager to celebrate the acknowledgement. Everyone is in a good mood. Their presentation at the assembly is well received. Later that evening some of them set out to celebrate at a restaurant down town.

Next morning, just minutes before Midwifery, two of the guys who joined in at the restaurant the evening before announce by phone that they are a little late. Thor and Carl, who also went to the restaurant, laugh and jokingly warn the others that the discussion had run high about the role of "Art" in A-Tale's work. Especially, the tension between art and financial matters heated the discussion. Thor says that they should expect yesterday's discussion to extend into the Midwifery in some form or the other.

It certainly does. When the two latecomers arrive, they immediately seat themselves next to Victor, who presides the meeting. They place themselves so close that they are almost sitting on his lap. Then they loudly and humorously declare that they refuse to take matters of production or finance into considerations in the Midwifery from now on. Ivan claims, "It is time to liberate ourselves from such restraining perspectives and make way for really original ideas!" People laughingly play along and comment on this little rebellion against their own ways of thinking and doing things. Then the meeting proceeds as they turn their attention to new ideas.

Reflections on the practice in Midwifery

The partners are halfway in the meeting, discussing a synopsis written by an external person. In short the idea is referred to as *Laboratory Life*. They are about to close up the discussion or at least Victor tries to conclude, when they start questioning their own practice (excerpt from dialogue in Midwifery):

1) **Victor**: We have to ask Mary [author of the pitch *Laboratory Life*] to take it a bit further. In its present form, the description is not precise enough. But if we are to ask her, we have to put some money on the table so that she has something to work for.

2) **Ivan**: We have been fighting a lot today, about what we are going to make. We should come up with original things, use our imagination, and find challenging ideas that stretch the existing formats. [...] *Laboratory Life* sounds like an exciting idea but the pitch does not communicate well. What do you think Tobias?

3) **Tobias**: I definitely think this is a good idea. [...] But I think it carries a greater potential than demonstrated in the pitch.

4) **Victor**: She will not make a typical soap serial. Neither do we. We should not use against her that she is a former author of pulp fiction. Shall we conclude on raising money so that she can develop the pitch either in the direction of Ch2 or NTV [two major TV channels]?

5) **Ivan**: We should establish it as a method from now on that we work half a day with external persons that has written interesting synopsis – and that we do that before we think about what format the ideas should fit into.

Looking at just a few turns in the conversation, it already reveals several topics the partners are critical about. Victor tries to conclude on the idea at hand by asking the partners whether they want to push the idea a little further by asking the woman who wrote the pitch to work on it. If so, they have to raise some money to finance her work (turn 1). Ivan tries to conclude on the meeting as such, by stating that they have been "fighting" a lot and that this both hamper the number of ideas processed in Midwifery and their ability to be creative. The consequence is that the ideas are not taken as far as they could have, that they do not become as original as they could be. To concretize, Ivan places *Laboratory Life* in the "good but not good enough" category.

However, being uncertain about the *potential of the idea*, Ivan makes an appeal to Tobias (turn 2). Tobias is the one who has worked the most with

developing manuscripts for theater performances and motion pictures. He thinks it has a potential but is not certain about taking it further anyway. Victor enters the conversation again (turn 4), with a new argument related to *the author as such*, not the synopsis of the idea itself. The question of the idea's potential becomes a question of whether they want to invest in the person writing it. Is she someone they want to cooperate with? Ivan answers by suggesting a new *method* (turn 5); given that the pitch or synopsis is interesting, they should work with external persons for half a day on the ideas they carry. This will make it easier both to be creative on the content and to judge whether the person is someone they want a further collaboration with.

We can make one analytic turn by contrasting the turn-taking above with Callon's (1986) four moments of translation: Problematization, interessement, enrolment, and stabilization. As we can see, there is not much in the conversation so far that resembles either of the moments of translation found in Callon's example of a research project on scallops. Several issues are raised, but no one of the different partners are noticeable as the one actor attempting to become indispensable to the others (problematization), or in seeking to lock the other actors into proposed roles (interessement), or in trying to define and interrelate the various roles defined (enrolment), or seeking to ensure that potential spokespersons are proper representatives for their collective (mobilization).

I see a couple of possible reasons why the cultivation of *Laboratory Life,* at least so far, does not follow this pattern. First, because the premise of participation in Midwifery is equality. This means that the partners have to be careful not to draw conclusions too early, or in seeking to manage the others' interpretations, or acting as if there is an argumentative battle going on. Second, because there is a broader range of acceptable conclusions on an idea than simply "accepted or rejected". In the words of Ivan,

"Some ideas are immediately ready for production, some must be revised and combined with other ideas, some are to be rejected after being with us for a while [...] but we have to bear in mind that many ideas have to be with us for a while before we see their full potential."

At this point in time, a set of translations that result in a successful stabilization is not a relevant model in rendering the idea at hand a success or not. Cultivation of ideas is a prelude to processes that at a later stage may be analyzed as sociology of translation.

There are some tensions surfacing in the dialogue that goes beyond the particular idea in quest as it concerns the function of Midwifery as such. The discussion about *Laboratory Life* goes on by Ivan warning that Midwifery

should not touch upon *formats* when discussing ideas at an early stage (end of turn 5, above). Format is a tricky term, first and foremost because it refers to form rather than content. It is possible to spend quite a lot of time discussing whether something should be a drama, documentary, fiction, comedy, single episode, a serial, a prime time show, a late night show, with professional actors or amateurs or laypeople etc. All of a sudden, more energy is spent on "the wrapping" rather than on cultivating the content of the idea. Additionally, focus on format may lead to a discussion about economic estimates; what it will take to realize an idea accompanied with assumptions on what this or that TV network would be willing to finance. That is, a whole range of issues more or less referred to as "matters of production". The conversation goes on:

6) **Victor**: But we have to make contact with people that get the wheel spinning. We can't do everything ourselves.

7) **Ivan**: We are not going to work with production in Midwifery. The main goal is not to earn a lot of money. The point is to find new takes on things, to stretch the existing.

8) **Victor**: We have to accept that there are formats and that we nevertheless can work within those formats. There are many creative takes we can do even though the formats are fixed.

9) **Ivan**: We have to improve our idea-processes. How should we work to be creative with our own ideas? We should not make production a relevant topic at such an early stage.

Ivan strongly warns against becoming too commercial in dealing with ideas (turn 7). Victor replies by reminding the partners about their dependency on working through their network, through people who can actually write the manuscripts, or who can finance projects (turn 6). Ivan (turn 9) contests this view by stating that "matters of production" should not be allowed into Midwifery. Such matters restrain creativity. Obviously, he thinks that the creative potential in Midwifery is far higher than they have been able to so realize so far. It is time to become more brave and daring, "to stretch the existing".

Theoretically speaking, what Victor is reminding the others about, is actually the necessity of doing translation work – of constructing associations between A-Tale, the idea at hand, and the "other actors out there" that are a must for actually realizing an idea. In actor-network terminology we might also say that Ivan, at his side, tries to postpone all perspectives that might move the idea into a process of stabilization. In order to be creative on content they have to avoid stabilizing elements of the financial-production oriented kind.

Victor replies to Ivan's warning against making production a relevant topic at such an early stage:

10) **Victor**: We touch upon matters of principle here. If we put on the table the different formats that exist. For instance, a serial versus a feature film. There are important differences between those two. And we have to recognize that they demand different things. It is not problematic for us that a serial holds the quality of, say, *East Enders*. It is a good quality, and we can come up with a lot of new ways of doing things within such a framework.

11) **Thor**: For *Laboratory Life* I agree that the format is a long serial. Then, automatically, there is a limit with regard to the amount of money per episode.

12) **Ivan**: But how are we to become better in thinking which creative takes we may do? How did David Lynch come up with *Twin Peaks*? We need a whole day meeting, to figure out how to work more productive together. I can assemble some material for such a gathering. But I need someone to discuss with. What about you, Tobias, can you join me? [Ivan and Tobias agree on discussing it over a dinner next week]

13) **Ivan**: We should do some research before working with the author of *Laboratory Life* half a day. Maybe Erik can do it? Erik could make a list of which serials that represent something new the last decades, serials where they have been able to come up with something not seen before.

14) **Victor**: Listen, there are but a few programmes in which they have really come up with something new. Those we already know. But it is not those creative takes that makes the point in the case of *Laboratory Life*. The point is more how to get *Laboratory Life* to develop into a good story. The first step is to decide on whether we want to work with the author or not.

Again the partners touch upon a whole problem complex; their own ability to be creative, which is linked to the way they elaborate on ideas; the difficulty of judging the potential of an idea on the basis of just a synopsis, which is related to a judgment of whether to invest in a collaboration with an external, and for many of the partners, unknown person; the question of whether it will make them more creative on the ideas as such (content) if they are able to pause discussions about formats (matters of production).

To Ivan, matters of production encompass such things as sales, financial matters, return of investment, networking, and formats. Victor, from his

perspective advocates that the question is not about creativity in the group as such, but about being creative about what and with whom. It is necessary and possible to be creative about formats as well as content, and, not the least, be creative within the constraints of existing formats. Further, the creative process is more than just about the group of partners sitting around the table discussing content. Referring to the concrete idea, *Laboratory Life*, he argues that it is about how to work with others so that an idea is developed into a really good story, "the first step is to decide whether we want to work with the author or not" (turn 14). The battle ends by an agreement on putting the idea on hold for a while and rather continue by discussing other ideas.

At the end of the meeting, however, serious claims are again made about the need to re-consider the way creative processes are organized. In particular Ivan argues that they spend too much time on discussing "matters of production" and on processing just a few ideas.

(Re) organizing Midwifery

The following Midwifery, Ivan presides the meeting instead of Victor. Encouraged by the grant from the Film fund, humorous at the outset, and heated by the discussion at the restaurant the night before, the partners ended up quite serious in their ambition to change the way they had organized the creative processes up to this point. The need to try out a new practice had already been formulated in the small talks before celebrating the grant from the Film Fund. Being acknowledged by the council in addition to the financial security produced by the grant, enhance their possibility to pursue artistic freedom. In this particular meeting, however, they make the move from talking about to actually doing something about it.

The conversation is intense, with a high degree of emotional engagement, and it is complex in that it touches upon several related aspects of their practice. First are the ideas themselves – their potential due to content and due to with whom they may establish a relation. Second is the format – the form in which the idea is to be realized. The question is whether they as a rule should stretch the existing formats, or try to come up with something not seen before. In any case, the ideas should be more brave and daring than the ones discussed so far.

Third are the methods for working – whether they always should invite external persons to discuss their idea in half a day workshops. Then, matters of production – that they should not introduce financial issues or economic estimates into to the creative discussion. At last the productivity of Midwifery

is questioned – that Midwifery should treat a larger number of ideas that it has done so far.

Especially Ivan claims that it is time to reflect more explicitly on their experiences so far and try to conceptualize what kind of processes they want to create. He and Tobias agree on preparing some suggestions on what to do till the next Midwifery. Time has come to make some changes. This dense set of events, reflections, and actions constitutes a transition from one way of doing things to another. The intensity of the debate was noticeable, especially between Ivan and Victor. Nevertheless, the whole group supports this initiative to try something new.

Even though Victor and Ivan evidently are the antagonists in this story, the strong link between the person and the kind of arguments they pushed in the conversation at this particular Midwifery is not necessarily so strong in other settings. When I interviewed Ivan afterwards, he used the arguments of Victor as if he himself had never argued differently. Says Ivan, "We shall innovate by twisting formats, not necessarily by inventing a completely new format." Even though a person in a particular conversation represents a certain point of view as the two positions taken by Ivan and Victor when discussing *Laboratory Life*, in another conversation the same person might voice the perspective of a colleague.

At this stage in A-Tale's development it generally seems like the relation between a person and a certain perspective is quite unstable, in a positive sense. The partners are juggling voices as a part of actually trying to co-operate. When pushing change, however, as in the case of this Midwifery, it is necessary to articulate clearly and hold on to a certain position. The partners sometimes take each other's perspectives but when arguing for change they crystallize certain perspectives.

As I argued in the introduction to this chapter, I have tried to pay special attention to moments that stand out in the stream of actions because of a special emotional and conversational intensity, that is, situations that involve the group at large and contain reflections on both prior ways of doing things and what should be done next. The phone call from the National Film Fund and the successive discussions afterwards that ultimately result in the effort to re-organize Midwifery is one such special event. I think of this as a transitory moment in which the arguments and emotional energy among the partners builds up to a point where actions are clearly made in order to try something new. The next section will present another moment of transition. While the transition described above is about the collective creative practice, the next event raises questions about the partners' personal commitment to A-Tale as a vision and a project.

Transitory moment 2: Who are we on the internet?

This moment of transition occurred from what at first seemed like an uncomplicated, straight-forward question about how to present A-Tale on the official web-pages. One of the partners, Carl, volunteered to do a thorough make-over on the existing pages that were set up preliminary at the time when they were formally established. What ignites the debate is not so much the re-formulation of their vision and what they are doing, but a comment Carl makes on how to make visible links to engagements that the partner have from before becoming a member of A-Tale, in particular ownership arrangements in other companies.

At first, the conversation evolves around one of A-Tale's subsidiaries, *Screen*. Screen is an independent company once owned by two of the partners. It has now become a subsidiary of A-Tale. This raises the question concerning another company that, until recently, was partly owned by one of the partners. A company which even bears his family name, *Greenfield Film* (excerpt from Midwifery):

1) **Ivan:** [opens the meeting] This is going to be a slightly different Midwifery. We are not going to talk much about ideas, but rather talk about how we should present ourselves to the world outside, or more specific, what should be put on our website and how should the information be structured [...] Carl, what have you been doing with the web?

2) **Carl**: Well, I thought about making a link to *Screen* under A-Tale.

3) **Victor**: Screen is a part of A-Tale now. It should not have its own homepage anymore. The history of Screen should be copied and placed on a page under A-Tale's structure.

4) **Ivan**: A-Tale is already a label that scares the shit out of the other film production communities. It will create a lot of confusion if we keep on referring to a bunch of other companies. Especially in the media. For instance, if we again and again see references to *Greenfield Film* when journalists are making an interview with Greenfield. We had a meeting with Greenfield, - Thor, Peterson, Victor and I - before the movie guys went off to the set of *Slippery Slope*. In particular, we talked to Greenfield about Greenfield Film. He is tied to the company emotionally and he feels a certain loyalty to the manager. Even though he holds no ownership in the company anymore, he receives an amount of money twice a year to make commercials for the company. Of

course, while working at the set, he receives nothing. With regard to the name, Greenfield Film, there is not much we can do because it is a registered company name. But Greenfield himself works for A-Tale now, and THAT is what should be communicated when media is writing about us. For example, the journalist writing about *Slippery Slope*, he referred to Thor and Peterson as producers, and to Greenfield Film, but not a word about A-Tale!!! People and collaborators have to know the difference between Greenfield Film, Screen, and A-Tale.

Before becoming a part of A-Tale several of the partners were owners of or had other kinds of affiliations to other companies or communities. For several, the status in these engagements is still quite vague, which is surfaced by the question of how to represent them at the web-pages. Ivan argues that this creates confusion when communicating with actors in their network, especially journalists. *Greenfield Films* even carries the name of one of the partners, as he was the one who started it years ago. The name is a valuable brand and journalists are familiar with it. As Ivan says, there is nothing they can do about the name of the company, but for the sake of promoting A-Tale, the time has come to be clear about such relationships. The same story pertains to *Screen*. The conversation goes on:

5) **Carl**: We are going to present the story of A-Tale on the web page. There can be personal pages too, so when Greenfield writes a personal diary from the set of *Slippery Slope,* he can put it under his personal page.

6) **Victor**: The useful information about *Screen* should be put under A-Tale's web. There should not be a reference to an independent site. Screen only exists on paper now.

7) **Ivan**: I am not sure if it is the place for discussing it now, Live, but it is relevant to ask if the heading is A-Tale only, or if it should include *Direct*, something like *A-Tale / Direct*?

8) **Victor**: In fact, I have made a 'grand decision' on that. We need to brand A-Tale. There are no employees in Direct. Direct is a place where things are produced. That is why Direct should not be mentioned in the heading.

9) **Live**: As I see it now, maybe Direct vanishes after a while.

10) **Ivan**: But we should keep Direct as a brand for certain activities.

11) **Live**: Yes, but...

12) **Victor**: Direct should be placed somewhere further down on the web page.

13) **Carl**: *Direct* is a hundred percent subsidiary of A-Tale, so...

14) **Live**: I think Direct is going to fade out, say, in a couple of years.

15) **Ivan**: It is really a psychological momentum in what we are doing now as perceived by the others in our line of business. There are only two companies really worth talking about in film production in this country. A-Tale is one of the two. Soon, I think, we have a firm hold on the television part as well. When we entered the newbiz arena, the other companies paused. They will give in because they know we are the best. Of course our reputation will vary a little when we have actually produced some pieces. The results will not always turn out as good as the idea seemed at the outset. Then A-Tale the brand will loose some of its strength, but we will make outstanding things too and really brand ourselves through such projects. However, the brand is undermined a little if it stands A-Tale/ Direct, and a little bit more if it stands A-Tale/Greenfield Film, or A-Tale/Screen.

The partners are afraid that the branding of A-Tale will be hampered if they are vague about the relationship between A-Tale and the partners involved, and between A-Tale and the other engagements that the partners have or have had to others companies or communities in their network. At the same time, such former engagements have a value as a display of past projects, experience and reputation, so they do want to be associated with this part of the history, but the tricky question is in what way and to what extent can the partners be involved. The issue is delicate because of its personal character. The guys have invested time and effort in relationships and activities and they feel responsibility and commitment to the people working under the company names in question.

In turn 7, Ivan asks about yet another company owned by two of the partners, *Direct*. In the beginning, when they did not know for sure whether A-Tale would actually become something or not, Direct and A-Tale had the same status in the group. Two independent, yet twin, companies in which one kind of activities were to be carried out under the label *Direct* and another kind of activities were to be carried out under A-Tale. As A-Tale has gained momentum, and the question about the profile now is raised, Victor, argues that *Direct* connotes a place in which certain activities takes place, while the people now is hundred percent a part of A-Tale. Therefore *Direct* should not be presented on A-Tale's web pages through a link to independent pages. Instead the content should be integrated under A-Tale's pages. From the outside, it may seem like a technical question on how to structure information, but this small difference in how independence or integration is displayed, is related to

personal and emotional relationships to past and still existing activities, people and companies in their network.

In chapter 2, I argued that creative invention is dependent on the individual partner's ability to co-create. Additionally, it is dependent on a couple of other elements that are easily overlooked if we are focusing too much on the inner life of community formation and social learning. To realize the ambition of the partners requires work across the boundaries of their community. The seemingly simple question about how to display their relationships to other actors and activities in their past, has developed into an articulation of a need for inventive boundary work. To repeat the argument of Wenger (2002), while the core of a practice is a locus of expertise, radically new insights and developments often arise at the boundaries between communities. These boundaries are not unproblematic. The partners face the double task of establishing a community within which knowledge flows easily, at the same time as they have to re-create relationships to former associates so that they become productive for A-Tale. To be productive here means to consolidate A-Tale. The challenge is how to keep the quality of old relationships, as they wish to manage them in a new way.

Re-configuration of the network

How the partners should structure past and present relationships on the internet, ties in with the ongoing discussions on the identity of the incipient actor, A-Tale. It is a manifestation of the process of becoming. They find themselves in a situation in which they try to define and redefine old relationships in order to clear the way for A-Tale. These are creative-emotional re-configurations, not just economic-material cuts in which their time and activities are now to be administered through A-Tale as a legal economic actor.

Here, I describe one stabilizing means in A-Tale in terms of a re-configuration of existing actor-networks, which is necessary for realizing "the A-Tale project" in the sense of being recognized as distinct from others operating in the industry. In this particular case, I use the term "re-configure" instead of "translate", which is the common term within actor-network theory, because I am pointing to a qualitative change of relations in a network that to a large degree already exists.

The partners have all worked in the industry years before becoming members of A-Tale, and they all have extensive networks in the media world. So instead of thinking of them as an actor trying to create a new actor-network, they are, individually, already parts of networks that they have to re-configure

in order to construct the collective actor, A-Tale. This re-configuration is a part of their boundary work in which, on the one hand, the partners' commitment to the A-Tale vision is at stake, and on the other hand, they are in need of consolidating their position as an economic actor.

Some of the companies mentioned in the partners' discussion are synonymous with one partner or the other. One of the companies even holds the name of one of the partners. All ownership relationships in such companies are to be ended or they should become a subsidiary of A-Tale. The partners are negotiating about making a clearer cut of the network by re-configuring old relationships. I use re-configuration instead of the term association, which is common within the sociology of translation (Callon 1986).

The quality of their former relationship is the very topic of concern here, and therefore the principle of assuming free associations between actors at the outset of the analysis is inappropriate. The partners' intention is still to cooperate with the companies/actors mentioned, but that people in the companies involved have to relate to the partners in a new way, that is, as members of A-Tale primarily. Of course the partners can put their effort into activities and people they have a special relation to, but it must be clearer that from now on their main ambition is to realize the A-Tale project.

From a commercial point of view, A-Tale's descriptions of about what kind of company is is – an open landscape for the nurturing of talents and ideas – resembles the open innovation model described by Chesbrough (2003) which he exemplifies through the way Hollywood generates, develops and commercializes its ideas. Firms in the business of entertainment have for decades innovated through a network of partnerships and alliances between production studios, directors, talent agencies, actors, scriptwriters, independent producers and specialized subcontractors such as the suppliers of special effects. As Chesbrough (2003, p. 37) formulates it, "the mobility of this workforce is legendary: Every waitress is a budding actress, every parking attendant has a screenplay he is working on." In an open model, firms commercialize external as well as internal ideas by deploying outside as well as in house pathways to the market; ideas can originate outside the firm and be brought inside for commercialization, and companies can commercialize internal ideas through channels outside of their current business in order to generate value for the organization.

Chesbrough (2003) contrasts this model with the more traditional closed model of innovation, in which firms try to discover, develop and commercialize ideas totally by themselves. Consequentially, they try to get a hold on the most knowledgeable persons at any point of time.

I think that the two models of Chesbrough are useful in making an analytical point. However, my point is not to say that the open model is the

salient one, Open innovation is but one way of acting in a commercial environment. An example on a company pursuing the closed model is Sony that once lost the battle of which standard to use for videotapes; they advocated Betamax,[24] while VHS became the preferred one.

Nevertheless, today Sony has a leading position in the field of digital imaging and digital video cameras. I take from Chesbrough that companies based on open innovation, has to realize that not all high competency people are to be found in house. Instead one must find and tap into the knowledge and expertise of talented individuals outside the company.[25] Then, Chesbrough (2003) argues, the boundary between the company and its environment become porous, enabling innovations to move easily between the two.

Open & exclusive – cutting the network

The partners define A-Tale as an open landscape of innovation, but still, as a part of being more distinct about who they are as a group and what they make, they do work on cutting their network (Strathern 1996). It is a question of being simultaneously open and exclusive. The partners need to change relationships from a very personal level to a group level in order to co-operate but still make pieces that are discernable as A-Tale products, rather than a product of this or that partner. With the discussion about the structure of the web-site, the time has come to be more consistent and distinct about former contacts and relationships.

As the time has passed, A-Tale has become more clear about who constitute the "exclusive core". For instance who can participate in Midwifery and present, evaluate, and cultivate ideas. This cut is less visible for the world

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[24] Sony introduced the Betamax home video system in 1975. The format failed to gain significant market share and was nearly completely replaced by VHS. Once VHS became the base of home video cassette recording, the rest of Betamax's market collapsed. Sony started producing VHS-format video cassette recorders, thus conceding defeat in the " format war ". Their last American model was marketed in 1993, and Betamax VCR production outside Japan ended in 1998. Sony continued manufacturing Betamax VCRs for the Japanese market until 2002, when they officially announced the end of the Betamax consumer line. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Betamax

[25] The open model of innovation (Chesbrough 2003) implies: 1) Not all the smart people work for us so we must find and tap into the knowledge and expertise of bright individuals outside our company. 2) External R&D can create significant value; internal R&D is needed to claim some portion of that value. 3) We do not have to originate the research in order to profit from it. 4) Building a better business model is better than getting to market first. 5) If we make the best use of internal and external ideas, we will win. 6) We should profit from others' use of our intellectual property, and we should buy others' IP whenever it advances our own business model.

outside, partly because of the confusing engagement in other companies. Of course, they do work closely with people in their network in both receiving and realizing ideas. This co-operation takes place by and large on an individual basis or in small teams. After communicating with the idea holder for a while they may check out ideas with one of their colleagues and then decide upon presenting the idea in Midwifery.

While one part of A-Tale's network supplies ideas and cooperate in the creation of content, another part of the network is preoccupied with production personnel and equipment for actually carrying out projects. A few persons follow the process through. Like for instance Young, the director of the documentary, *Christiania – The last word* (the realization of this project is described in chapter 5). Originally, Young, who worked with Victor years ago, sent an e-mail to Victor about Christiania as "a place populated with stories to be told." Live and Victor noticed the same when visiting Copenhagen/Christiania on a trip, and referred to it in Midwifery. They asked Young about co-operating in developing the idea. He participated in the first, explorative phase and when the project was sold to one of the broadcasters and they entered the phase of production, Victor was the executive producer and Young was the director.

People contact the partners, but they also invite people to work with them. It is not one unique and commercially feasible invention they want their name on, but several stories with different origins that nevertheless should be recognized as A-Tale products. In a situation where the ambition is to keep an open mind to new ideas and new people through a sharing attitude, they do seek ways to configure the network of idea-makers, co-inventors, and production staff in order to establish A-Tale as an independent and acknowledged brand.

There is one significant difference between the two moments of transition ignited respectively by the Film Fund Grant and the web-page makeover. While the negotiation and structuring of their relationships and engagements is a test of the personal commitment in realizing A-Tale, the "Film Fund moment" is more about the tension between artistic freedom versus being realistic and commercial minded enough to be able to make a living from what they are doing. Even though having different plots and subject matter, both moments tie into concrete ways of (re) organizing their practice on the one hand and the ambition and identity formation of the group on the other. As such, the moments are about stability as well as change; change due to a critical assessment of their experience with the cultivation of ideas so far; stability because they become more distinct about their personal commitment to the company and more articulated on A-Tale's position in the industry.

Talking about ideas is never far from talking about how A-Tale should be organized or what A-Tale should become to make the very individualistic and strong-minded partners stay there over time. We may coin this way of talking as *multi-directional.* Multi-directional talk is a way of creating their space of work. At least at this point in time, dealing with ideas and dealing with A-Tale are not isolated issues. Maybe later, the partners will reserve the conversations for designated occasions. So far, however, they continuously address who they are or want to become in parallel with actually creating stories and critical reflection on their own practice. I will come back to multi-directional talk in chapter 6, which addresses important communicative dimensions in upholding A-Tale's creative space over time.

Durable topics of concern

When being present in the company, I have also tried to be aware of the more slow changes of the A-tale practice, that is, *durable topics* of concern in the partners' conversations and interaction. Such recurrent topics may come up in different shape and with different perspectives as facets of the same problem complex. Like the more intense moments of transition, the more durable topics of common concern also play the dual role of change and stabilization. They direct the group's attention and effort but they also contain critical assessments of what they do. Small changes in content and form over time reflects series of translations the partners make in order to adjust to each other's experiences and points of view, and to the opinions and interests of important allies and co-creators.

At any point in time there are several organizing topics on the agenda. I have made an analytical distinction between three main threads – organizing for creativity, energizing visions for their work, and learning something new vs. deepen their expertise – even though they in reality, as is noticeable in excerpts given from conversations below, are interwoven.

Move towards the "creative organization"

A while after the Film Fund grant, Ivan and Tobias present the new thoughts about how the organization in general, and Midwifery in particular, should function. Ivan strongly advocates that concepts/ideas should be on a higher

level of cultivation than what has been common so far, before being introduced for the Midwifery and Midwifery itself should be more productive in elevating the content of ideas. In order to do so, the partners want to try to separate discussions about ideas more clearly from matters of production (economic-technical aspects) by organizing them in two different meetings. Ivan emphasizes that Midwifery should be a creative meeting, and the "Production meetings" are to handle all matters of finance, customers, deadlines, coordination etc. At fist, Ivan and Tobias set out to reorganize Midwifery; however, they have enlarged the scope to include what should be their guiding principles for A-Tale as a creative organization. A summarized version on what Ivan defines to be "the creative organization" is given below (excerpt from Midwifery):

"On purpose, A-Tale's organization is not settled yet. This is because we wanted to avoid spending the upcoming autumn running around defending what we decided a year ago. Instead it has been important to do something first and gain some experience through that. Some of us have been thinking freely, Thor, Tobias, and I, and have tried to make an account of our experience this far. In Midwifery a while ago – some of you were not here – there was a 'fight' going on between Victor and me about how we go about discussing ideas. Afterwards, I wrote a humorous minute about it, but the serious aspect is that we realized that we had to do something with Midwifery *and* the organization."

In the excerpt above, Ivan first summarizes what has happened so far, and his version is accepted without any questions or objections. Then he stresses that the time that has passed since A-Tale was established by intention has been a loosely defined period with regard to how Midwifery and the rest of the organizations should function. The way the partner are selecting and processing ideas should be subjected to experimentation. In an interview before this presentation, he also emphasized that the partners have tried not to settle too early on the way they are organizing and executing their work. Says Ivan in the interview:

"There has to be a balance between anarchy and structure in the assembly of ideas, but the way we find this balance should be kept open for testing and re-conceptualization. If we settled on one organizational structure now we would end up spending the rest of the year defending the choice made."

It takes time to entwine each other's ways of thinking and working. This is not a process in which one person beforehand decides on how to do things. The partners start out trying doing something on the basis on someone's

suggestion, then after a while they get a sense of whether it works out or not. If not, one or the other eventually takes action and come up with alternatives.

It is interesting to take a quick look at the lines of speech and action onwards from the moment of the phone call from the Film Fund, to the celebration downtown, to the battle over creativity vs. matters of production, to the re-organizing of Midwifery, and up to this point where the attention now is moved from Midwifery to the organization as a whole. We may think of change as an oscillation spanning the large questions of who they are to the small details of what they are doing, and moving from concerning only one of their activities (Midwifery), to the totality of the collective enterprise. Ivan goes on in his little presentation by coining a new guiding metaphor, *The Personal Imperative!*

Future perfect: The Personal Imperative!

Ivan explains the *Personal Imperative!* (Excerpt from Midwifery):

> "Tobias and I were out dining and discussed us as a creative organization. The core of A-Tale as a creative organization is the *Personal Imperative!* [People laughs and jokes about going home and pull out their old philosophy books from university]. The core of the new organization is personal development. We shall give each and one of us the support he needs in order to do what he dreams of. It does not assume that people want the same for ten years, so we should follow the person on the road. It also means that we should use people to what they are good at. Otherwise the fun is gone, and we turn into a grim community."

The passage above is not only about Midwifery and the way they discuss ideas, but about the organization as such, what kind of place it should be. He advocates the importance of the personal level – the person as a developing person, and the person as a holder of dreams. Further he stresses that each person is good at something. To be used to what you are good at, is what keeps the wheel spinning. Ivan goes on:

> "A-Tale should be an organization for big dreams, and we should do a lot to reach such dreams. The premise is that people are open and honest about their personal ambitions. I myself have the ambition of being responsible for keeping the creative processes spinning. We should help each other reaching such personal goals. Tobias and I have a great ambition of doing something for theatres. I want to write manuscripts, both for theaters and film. That would be

real fun for me. The only problem is that I do not know how to do it. At least not yet."

Ivan thinks he is good at organizing creative processes. Therefore he wants to be in charge of the creative process in Midwifery. Articulating such things, he claims, is to be *open* about what one thinks one is good at. – But he stresses that he also is the holder of a dream of creating manuscripts for theater performances. This is something he is not good at, but wants to learn, and by working with e.g. Tobias, he can learn a lot.

There are several intersecting dimensions called upon when articulating the *Personal Imperative!* and the features of the creative organization: To use people to do what they are good at; the possibility of learning something new through the support of the others; to create a space that allows big dreams; honesty and openness towards personal ambitions. Through such dimensions the creative work is related to knowledge, knowledge is defined both as an individual and present attribute (to be good at) and a relational and future potential (learning something new by the support of others). Ivan claims that doing what one is good at and learning something new is closely connected to dreams, openness and honesty.

Theoretically, in chapter 2, I looked at how visions may provide the loosely coupled partners with a momentum as an organization. Visions are about feelings, beliefs, emotions, and images of the future. Engagement in opportunity-seeking and forward-looking activities both fuels learning and has an organizing effect on their activities. *The Personal imperative!* is an imaginary potential of what can be accomplished. In the words of Nowotny et al. (2001) visions such as *The Personal Imperative!*, implies choices and action that portray the future as something open and responsive.

The future can be shaped and we are active choreographers of our visions not passive observers. Caughey cited in Holland et al. (1998) writes about some of the same active processes when describing imaginary worlds, "By modeling possibilities, imaginary worlds can inspire new actions" (p. 49). Yet another contribution on the importance of visions are provided by Pitsis et al. (2003) who observed that encouraging future perfect conversations in one of a kind projects - i.e. forward-looking conversations as if the ends were already achieved – contribute both to nurturing a collective quality of the project and to action orientation.

Modeling possibilities is a constitutive element in the protopractice of A-Tale. Not far fetched possibilities, but a near future or imaginary world spacious enough to encompass different partners interests. When the collective history is young, many of the activities that engage the partners' energy and interest have a forward looking and imaginative component. The importance of

imagination in human activity may be argued at a general level, but I am more concerned with the actual situation at hand in which possibility-talk is an important collectivizing activity for a young community.

It is not any future, though. It is a future with references to context specific topics. E.g. it relates to the former engagement and existing network of the partners, it relates to the business idea of the company, it relates to what is possible to make and sell to customers, and, as in the case of *The Personal Imperative!,* it refers to what makes it worthwhile being a member of this community and not another; simply put, the possibility of doing what one is good at while maintaining the opportunity of learning something new.

Deepening the expertise vs. learning something new

Even though several of the partners have worked with some of the others on projects earlier in their career, they have never worked with the all the others in order to create a company with this ambition – which is more than carrying out one specific project limited in time. The challenge is to construct and maintain a community that appeals to the partners' ambitions and feelings of doing something meaningful. It is noteworthy that soon after igniting the debate on the creative organization, the partners challenge each other to articulate what they think they are good at and what they are not good at but want to learn.

Theories about social learning within communities of practice highlight that knowledge is distributed in a community. This asymmetry in peoples' expertise, represent an opportunity to learn something new which in turn is one of the attractions of being a member of this particular community. The dialogue below accentuates the role of knowledge and learning in realizing A-Tale, but it also surfaces a possible tension between doing what one is good at versus learning something new (excerpt from Midwifery):

1) **Ivan (**opens the meeting): This is going to be a slightly different Midwifery. We are not going to talk much about ideas, but rather about us an organizing-something.

2) **Ivan:** I think that Victor should not have two jobs. Being the CEO and a Producer at the same time is too much. No one should have two jobs.

3) **Victor:** I think that we could have an economic-administrative oriented manager when we are more mature, but at this point of

our development, we have to have a person that has enough power and standing in this industry.

4) **Ivan:** I agree. My idea is that Thor is responsible for the financial part of the manager job, I myself am responsible for the creative part, and Chris will do the administrative part and act as the right hand of Thor. Bottom line the thought is that A-Tale is a place where we support each other's ambitions. If Victor dreams about being the Producer of the Year in Hollywood, we should make him so. 99% of the people who work here should be working on our projects or products. Thor wishes to be the financial producer, while Peterson is the hands-on producer. Tobias wish to be hundred percent in A-Tale and just a little bit at the School of Arts instead of the opposite around. We are going to help each other in such ambitions.

5) **Live**: A-Tale's success is measured externally. It means that everybody here should work on the basis of his cutting edge competency. Given that Victor and I are the best producers in this country, then we should work with production. Then somebody else should be the CEO. It is nonsense that Carl has to take jobs as a host at whatever live event. Rather he should be the brilliant host of television programs he really is.

Ivan introduces the meeting by claiming that the organizational structure is dysfunctional because several of the partners occupy more than one job, and that is one too much. Again Ivan raises the questions of what kind of place A-Tale should be, immediately relating it to the vision of doing what one is good at, supporting people in their high fly dreams, and having the possibility of learning something new. Ivan is challenged by Live (turn 5) who claims that their success is measured externally and to be successful in their line of business means they have to do what they are really good at.

Extending this argument means that each and one should operate within the area of expertise they are already recognized for, which increases the likelihood of economic profits. However, this limits the space for learning new things, which in fact may be a core motivation for some of the partners to be a member of this community. Live is challenged by Ivan and Carl who again emphasize that the question of *what to become* must be included into the discussion about who they are:

6) **Ivan**: Yes, but my ambition is to write manuscripts [which is something he has not done before]. In fact, I will *demand* being

allowed to write manuscripts for movies. Greenfield's ambition is to be a creative producer, and not a hands-on director.

7) **Ivan**: Take for example the work with *Villa Gimle*; I am the creative power, our companion, Hamilton, is doing the writing, Tobias the master of theater is correcting the manuscript, Victor is our television guy. We are such a great team. Excellent! But we have to be very clear with respect to where the responsibility of each and one of us starts and ends.

8) **Live**: Each and one of us have to ask in what area one is the best in this country.

9) **Ivan**: Yes, but it is also important to ask what each and one of us want to *become*.

10) **Carl**: I know that I am an excellent host in TV, but I do not want spend the rest of my life being The Eternal Host, doing nothing else.

When articulating the creative organization, few words are mentioned about what is practical or economically feasible, therefore I ask Victor in an interview about the realism of *The Personal imperative!* as a vision implicating that they are using their expertise at the same time as some want to move outside their fields of expertise and learn something new. He replies that relying on people doing what they are best at and at the same time encouraging people to do what they dream of the most, make the practice within which the partners interact even more complicated than it already is. He says, "The ambitions of the *Personal Imperative!* should be held up as a guiding light. It is difficult to actually pursue, at least in the short run, one's inner dream if expecting the others to have time enough to support or to teach what one needs to know".

Taking one step back and summing up the diverse set of claims on what kind of place A-Tale should be, the vision becomes even more ambitious; a place in which combined effort will result in significantly better ideas and productions than the case would be if they were operating individually; a place that challenge and bends the existing formats and genres of television and film; a place in which turnover of ideas assessed and cultivated should be high; a place that sustain a mix of "anarchy and structure" in their organizing; a place in which formal roles may circulate over time; a place that utilizes and appreciates the possibilities inherent in a broad network of talented people; a place for personal ambitions and development; a place that is commercial sound even though creating artistically original pieces.

I will not go further into a discussion of the realism of *The Personal imperative!* or A-Tale's vision at large. The sobriety of the comment of Victor

above speaks for itself. The general point I would like to make, is that there is an invaluable generative force in the restless possibility-seeking, the frank tone of communication, the ongoing articulation and testing of who they are, the emphasis on individual contributions and dreams, and the dynamics and opportunities due to the diverse knowledge base of the partners. This generative force is needed for a company situated at the messy intersection between the arts, business and new digital technology. As we have seen from their articulations, the partners construct means to stabilize the organization while maintaining it open for new suggestions of change.

Oscillation between change & stabilization

The analytical focus in this chapter has been on the processes through which the entire organization moves and transforms. The theoretical ambition is to complement the two most widespread models of organizational change in the literature, either as a planned innovation or as an environmental adaptation. As Czarniawska and Joerges (1996) aptly remark, under the "planned change" approach we can see groups more or less carefully designing programs of change that leaves them with a heap of "unintended consequences" and "unexpected results" that are supposed to be disposed of in the next step, but somehow never are. Under the label of "determined change", whether portrayed as a mechanistic or organic type of adaptation, we see similar problems but wrapped in another terminology; an organization is more or less capable of making the necessary "fit" to its environment; the organizational structure has to "reflect" the degree of stability/turbulence in its industry etc.

My way into complementing the familiar models has been to keep a special eye on the activities that move and transform A-Tale as a whole. The signposts leading beyond the dual landscape of organizational change, as either "planned" or "determined", are the notions of "organizing", "becoming", and "visioning" within recent discussions of organization studies. Further, the concepts of "translation" and "association" often used within studies of science and technology. Combined they constitute a basis for analyzing the emergent practice of A-Tale as an oscillation between stabilizing and changing elements.

Throughout the analysis I have shown that the partners in A-Tale are experimenting with ways of cultivating ideas. This is interwoven with the process of establishing A-Tale as an attractive organization for the partners to be engaged in, and with the process of establishing A-Tale as a recognizable

brand in the market place. When on the move, A-Tale both stabilizes and changes practice. Organizing, then, is constituted by a blend of change and stabilization.

Change is ignited through intensified moments of reflections on the partners' own practice. Reflections that occur because of more or less random events, or because of durable discussions about who the partners are as a group and what they should make, or because of possibility driven, energizing visions of what to become.

Midwifery is a regular meeting for creative conversations on ideas; nevertheless it is one of the rare occasions in which all of the partners congregate face-to-face. It is therefore an important means for stabilizing their loosely coupled community. Nevertheless, Midwifery is also subject to change. When they were granted support from the Film Fund, they started to scrutinize their ability to cultivate ideas, concluding that something had to be done about the way they discuss ideas, implicating a (re)organizing of Midwifery in which they switched the role of chair of meeting from Victor to Ivan, and in which they divided Midwifery into two meetings – one concerning ideas/content and one strictly dealing with matters of production. Change did not end here. Since the way they cultivate ideas is closely related to questions of what they are going to make and the company's identity, they started articulating what the foundations of a creative organization should be, which again ignited the search for an appealing and forward-looking metaphor for their enterprise – the new ambitious vision was coined *The Personal Imperative!*

The Personal Imperative! exemplifies the importance of visions in providing the participants with motivation and energy. It defines A-Tale as a place where the partners can both be recognized as experts in their fields, but also as novices wanting to learn new things through the support of the others. The opportunity to realize personal dreams is a part of what makes it worthwhile being a member of this particular community and not another. Hence, the *Personal Imperative!* is not only a forward-looking metaphor, it is a means of stabilization as it seeks to translate the different interests of the partners into a unified whole.

While the Film Fund incident ignited a process starting with the articulation of a core tension between artistic freedom and economic feasibility and spreading outwards encompassing more and more aspects of their practice, the second example on a transitory moment in the analysis starts with a seemingly innocent and peripheral question of how to represent their extensive network and prior engagements on the internet. The makeover of their web-pages is not considered a core activity. Even though the makeover started as an activity the outskirt of their everyday practice it soon evokes a discussion about the identity of A-Tale and its strength as a brand. The upholding of a

vision of the innovative power of A-Tale was combined with the suggestion of concrete measures in order to re-configure the partners' individual relationships to other companies and people. This re-configuration included also a clearer cut of the network. That is, defining some as regular members of the innovative core, others as members for a limited amount of time. E.g. only the partners in A-Tale are to participate in Midwifery.

Even though I emphasized in chapter 1 the thrill and energy stemming from doing things for the first time, my intention using the term protopractice is not to say that historical relations do not matter in such a company. My intention, as stated in the introduction and in the theory chapter, is to expand the notion of practice so as to include more of the dynamic features of the human enterprise. Therefore I have been after describing *organizing* processes rather than "organization", and *becoming* as related to learning about who they are and what they are capable of. The practice within which the partners interact is about trying out ways of doing things and, according to the attitude of the partners, if one experiment does not work out well, one is ready to try something else. Practical solutions are not meant to last forever.

This is one reason why there is so little resistance towards switching position or perspectives. Also, A-Tale is a small organization, and the lines of communication are short, which make the individual preferences quite visible and an ongoing adjustment amongst the partner easier than what is the case in larger organizations. It is a great challenge, however, to come up with ideas and funding models that the broadcasters themselves could not have developed – in fierce competition with other independent producers and international concepts. This puts a pressure on the partners of A-Tale to be both flexible in the way they cooperate in their network, and in the way they organize the work amongst themselves.

One of the partners' greatest challenges is to create a community that realizes their inter-practitionary profile. That is, to find good ways of sharing knowledge and utilizing each other in both cultivating and executing projects. As I see it, the largest threat against realizing the group's potential is the partners themselves. The partners are loosely coupled, both because each of them at any point of time has the possibility to switch jobs, and because there is a possibility to just go on pursuing the practice from which they made a living before becoming a member of this particular enterprise. So, even though I have highlighted change as an ongoing, stepwise process meshed with more radical moments of change, I do also emphasize the simultaneous need of stabilizing their practice.

Some of the same activities that are subjected to change are also means against withering away. The group gathers momentum from constructing and reconstructing a bold ambition combined with a range of possibility-seeking

acts in and though their extensive network. In the words of Novotny et al. (2001), their future is actively constructed, and being active in translating each other's interests and the interests of potential co-operative business partners, is an element in stabilizing their practice.

Further, I have shown that the boundaries of the company are porous in that they are allowing for and seeking out ideas and co-operative relations in a broad network, at the same time they are exclusive in defining some as the true insiders and others as temporary alliances. This maintains a stability that is needed in order to create a feeling of belonging, self-identity and actually gaining experience from different ways of sharing knowledge. In sum, their boundary work is visible both within and across the community. Following Wenger (2001), what the partners strive for is to create a core practice in which knowledge flows easily. This functions as a locus of expertise. At the same time radically new insights and developments often arise at the boundaries between communities; hence the partners need to be on a constant outlook for new co-operative possibilities.

This dual focus on accelerating creative cultivation in-house and engaging in possibility seeking acts externally is visible when discussing ideas. As stated by Ivan in an interview, "An idea-holder [partner] definitely needs a test-panel and a creative group to accelerate his thoughts. Midwifery is the place for testing and elaboration. It should be fun, engaging, inspiring. Still, we [A-Tale] should operate like a manufacturer of ideas." By evoking the metaphor of the manufacture Ivan implies that ideas should be systematically subjected to processes so as to improve them at the same time as the turnover of ideas treated should be high, i.e. there should be a large degree of community efficiency in cultivation. When discussing the idea, *Laboratory Life*, the necessity of good relationships to the outside world, were expressed by Victor as, "we have to make contact with people that get the wheel spinning", or "the point of *Laboratory Life* is how to work with others [outside the group] in order to get *Laboratory Life* to develop into a good story".

Ideas in A-tale are more than conceptual and immaterial exercises. Ideas are affiliative object; objects designed for the creation of memberships in which the ideas have to be plastic and open enough for people to relate to them. Ideas materialize a capability to combine a range of knowledges. They are defined in relation to group values and ambitions transcending singular projects. They are used to distinguish one enterprise from others operating in the market. And they are realized through enrolling a heterogeneous set of actors – humans, technologies and financial resources – in forceful project constellations.

The next chapter will take a closer look at how the partners in A-Tale use their diverse knowledge base in order to invent and commercialize ideas. I will provide a story on what it takes to actually realize an idea, exemplified by a

docudrama, *Christiania the last word*. Then I will provide some insight into the idea cultivation as such, that is, the conversational work done on ideas before it is moved into the project phase. Cultivation is about more than just processing whatever idea. It is about creating the good stories to be told.

5 Idea cultivation: The moral shaping of knowledge

The number of ideas circulating in the film and television industry is superfluous compared to the scarceness of the financial resources and fierce competition for the limited time on air. There are no official statistics, but sayings have it that only but a small percentage actually turns into programs broadcasted by one of the channels. In this world crowded by ideas and stories to be told, why is A-Tale established as a company that first and foremost is preoccupied by the creation and cultivation of concepts, rather as a production company ready to participate in the realization of projects? "We do not do commissioned production", Victor claims, explaining that it means that they do neither have production facilities in-house, nor do they work with any project just to utilize their full capacity. A-Tale is established because the partners believe that their broad range of knowledge and network represent a potential of making good stories, and not just any story.

From a commercial point of view, that is, in order to survive in the market, A-Tale both have to know how to create/invent ideas and to have knowledge about how to produce them (turn them into television programs or films). The previous chapter adds to the complexity by showing that to be good at *cultivating* and *producing*, implies that they also have to experiment with ways of *organizing* their enterprise. Fagerberg (2003) presents a review of the literature on innovation. An important distinction is normally made between invention and innovation.

Invention is the first occurrence of an idea for a new product or a process. Innovation is the first commercialization of the idea. Sometimes invention and innovation are closely linked, to the extent that it is hard to distinguish one from another (biotechnology for instance). In many cases, however, there is a considerable time lag between the two. In fact a lag of several decades or more is not uncommon. Such lags reflect the different requirements for working out ideas and carry them out in practice. First of all, while inventions may be carried out anywhere, such as for instance in universities, innovations occur mostly in firms in the commercial sphere.

However, the invention and innovation may also be a continuous process. For instance the car as we know it today is radically improved through the incorporation of a very large number of different inventions and innovations. To be able to turn an invention into an innovation a firm normally needs to combine several types of knowledge, capabilities, skills and recourses. For instance the firm may require production knowledge, skills and facilities, market knowledge, a well-functioning distribution system, sufficient financial resources and so on.

As we have seen, organizing for creative invention and innovation in A-Tale is a delicate task of upholding personal commitment, configuration of old/individual networks, creation of visions that motivates and direct action, and not the least, to keep ideas open so as to allow for others to contribute and relate to the idea at hand (ideas as objects of affiliation). Sometimes an idea may come up, and the partners in A-Tale decide to try to produce it right away. Sometimes ideas must mature over a longer period of time before they try to commercialize it. Together, invention (idea cultivation), innovation (idea production), and organizing for commitment and identification, constitute the dimensions along which their protopractice translates (moves and transforms).

The first part of this chapter concerns the materialization of a particular idea, *Christiania – the last word*. More precisely, it focuses on the execution of the pilot-project phase, which is an important step on the road towards realization. Within the actor-network approach, the production of facts or technologies is studied in the making. The making of *Christiania* is analyzed through the way a heterogeneous network of human and non-human actors are tied together through processes of enrollment and alignment in order to stabilize a vague idea about something worth telling on television, i.e. the contemporary life in Christiania, Copenhagen. I participated as one of the regular team members in the pilot-project phase*,* doing research and casting. The analysis demonstrates the importance of former successful productions and fruitful co-operation between people as resources in the creation and realization of projects. Historical relationships matters, not the least because the national television and film industry is relatively small.

However, as argued by Victor, ″even though production is a challenge, the real challenge for A-Tale is to come up with original concepts.″ Therefore the second part of this chapter, takes a closer look at the phase before turning a single idea such as *Christiania* into substance, namely, idea cultivation as such. Numerous studies of innovation takes as a point of departure a technological or industrial system that is already made, and then provide a structural account of the stages of development or factors fostering innovation (Fagerberg 2003). Within the actor-network approach, the production of facts or the development of technology is studied in the making. However, whether

doing real time or structural-historical studies, the idea-process in itself has received little attention, that is, the process in which a community cultivates and establishes a reservoir of ideas that may or may not be pushed further towards commercialization. The reason why A-Tale explicitly focuses on this process is, as stated above, because they are after making the good ideas, not just any idea.

There are three arguments that I would like to put forward when treating idea cultivation as a valuable process in its own respect. First, the relevance of the actor-network approach is moved from being an analysis of different kinds of translations going on between actors when a fact/technology/idea is in the making, to become a manifestation of the collective knowledge of a group trough associative thought experiments. "Associating", here, holds the double meaning of free imagination and the act of creating connections between elements that are important in order to materialize an idea. The partners, with their broad and in-dept knowledge about the media industry, *simulate* actor-network configurations as a part of turning ideas into substance. Such simulation is a constitutive element in the prototyping of ideas. Arguably, the ability to do such simulations is a manifestation of the group's expertise.

Second, to understand the process of cultivation, we have to go further than the simple observation of the simulation of actor-networks. The way A-Tale is dealing with ideas is situated in and kept going by a loosely coupled assembly of different experiences and knowledge. Undoubtedly, it is a bit of a challenge for the partners to unlock the inventive potential of their inter-practitionary profile. Each of the partners represents different but also to some degree overlapping domains of experience. The areas of competency are film production, film directing, television production, program hosting in television, production of live events for television, concept development and text writing for advertising, dramatizing and script writing for film and theatre, and instruction/direction for theatre. The promising new resides in their ability to combine former knowledge and learn from each other. How do they do that?

Translated into Sørensen's (2002) reflections on specialization and inter-disciplinarity within an academic setting, we might say that the main ambition of A-Tale is to become a work community (community of practice) in which they co-operate in a non-hierarchical way across the boundaries of the partners' experience. There are some features of A-Tale that might contribute to or hamper their success. The majority of the partners have long experience and track records in the industry, which contribute to the creation of a condition of trust and mutual respect. However, they find themselves in the paradoxical situation in which customers ask for something new but prefer to pay for the well known, and in the "luxurious" situation in which each of the partners in principle could live from their individually maintained portfolio of projects. As

mentioned before, the greatest threat against accomplishing the ambition of collaborative creativity seems to be the partners themselves. At any moment it is possible for the individuals to pursue their own projects, thus, acting as independent or self-employed tradesmen merely sharing overhead expenses with a group of nice and interesting people. If they are not able to unlock their inter-practitionary potential, there is a danger that they will turn into a mere discussion community in which they are available for sharing viewpoints on each other's ideas, but without any further obligations or ambitions of being co-generative.

My third point concerns a reluctance I feel towards venturing too far into the discussions about multi-, inter-, or trans-diciplinarity found within studies of science and technology. The main reason is because the discussions are rooted in a debate on the purpose of academic institutions, on students' curriculum, on incentive system designed for promoting or not promoting inter-disciplinary interaction, on the status and development of scientific disciplines etc. The partners in A-Tale do not belong to specific academic disciplines, and they are operating in a practical and application oriented setting.

The strong emphasize on scientific work as a practice and a craft is why I included Fujimura (1992; 1996) in the discussion about knowledge in the theory chapter. Her study of the everyday activities of researchers, highlight the diversity of tasks and the mix of improvisational acts and adherence to standards that goes into the construction of scientific problems. She argues that what the researchers do is to construct *doable* problems. Researchers juggle and balance multiple, simultaneous demands in multiple aspects of the work process and organizations. This juggling results in a framing of problems that are possible to do something about, given that space, financial resources, and time are always limited resources. In other words, there is a great portion of pragmatism evident in the framing of research.

Not surprisingly, the partners in A-Tale, when discussing ideas, also juggle multiple, simultaneous, and sometimes rather contradictory demands. But there is an additional aspect in their discussions that moderates the pragmatic element in idea cultivation. We also have to understand the use of knowledge as integrated in the community identification project; those things that make it worthwhile being a member of this particular constellation and not one of the others that operate in the industry. In regard to idea cultivation, it becomes a question of what is *worth* doing, and not just what is doable.

This question is related to but not entirely defined by the assessment of what is profitable. As stated before, A-Tale belongs to the commercial part of the creative industries. However, the concepts they develop, are more often than not measured against other criteria than maximizing profit. Economically speaking, "ideas worth doing" can at least be of three kinds; the not-for-profit

kind, profitable enough, and max profitable. When the partners cultivate ideas, the economic upside of a singular idea is discussed, but they also do a portfolio evaluation. Sometimes a concept is defined as an important statement even though it would not contribute to the overall surplus. It seems like most of the ideas are targeted towards the "profitable enough" category and that the group identity is strongly linked to other values like for instance fairness, justice, and artistic originality. As we shall see, the cultivation of ideas invites moral exchanges about both the content and format of television programs.

When Sørensen (2005) discusses the enactment of technology in everyday life, he shows how some technologies invite moral exchanges about their use. E.g. how many hours should children be allowed to watch television, if at all? Under what circumstances should mobile phones be turned off? Drawing on the work of Silverstone et al. (1989; 1992), Sørensen argues that the economic circulation of information and communication technologies in households is paralleled by the transaction of meaning. A household does not just buy, say, a television set or a mobile phone; it establishes some standards, norms, and routines with respect to the use of the devices. Which norms might vary from family to family, but households will often develop a kind of signature set of values in order to manage a new technology. Such moral positions are grounded in a sense of self, and in ideals of appropriate values and behavior that are equivalently sustaining of identity and culture. Norms might also extend to the society at large. E.g. many people have reported that "proper behavior" for the use of mobile phones is to turn them off at weddings, funerals or very nice restaurants (Sørensen 2005).

The general point is the need to move away from a long-term tendency to interpret technologies in mainly instrumental terms, as purposive tools, and to isolate the "monetary" aspect of a technology from the "moral economy" involved in the appropriation of new technologies (Silverstone 2005). The construction of norms for appropriate behavior may be interpreted as an effort to stabilize a rather fluid technology. Social norms and obligations are not given. They should be understood as contested and emergent properties of developing technologies. In the successive sections, we will see that the fluidity of values is highly visible in the idea cultivation of A-Tale as well. There is an interesting intermeshing of morale and economic criteria going on. The moral shaping of knowledge and ideas is one of the main stabilizing forces of the A-Tale community.

Realizing "Christiania - the last word"

The core activity for A-Tale is to select and develop ideas into stories and further into "producible packages". This section portrays how a particular idea originated and was realized. In analyzing this, I use the actor-network approach as outlined by Callon (1986) and Latour (1987). I was hired in the pilot-project phase to do research and casting, and to make documentation to be used in the subsequent meeting with some of the managers in the broadcaster system; those deciding whether to green light a production of the story or not.

September 2002. Late afternoon. I am sitting at my office in Trondheim looking out of the window. The telephone chimes:

1) **Victor**: Hi Grete, this is Victor. What's up? Where are you?

2) **Grete**: Hi, Victor. I am in Trondheim…Probably I am on my way to Oslo tomorrow morning.

3) **Victor**: I feel a bit bad because I have not spent enough time talking with you lately just like we did in the beginning.

4) **Grete**: Well, it is not entirely up to you, I guess. I have not exactly been tracking you down these last couple of weeks.

5) **Victor**: But frankly speaking, that is not why I am calling you.

6) **Grete**: OK?

7) **Victor**: Do you want to go to Copenhagen for a month?

8) **Grete**: Of course, Victor, who does not want to go to Copenhagen for a while? But what is the deal, what do you want me there for?

9) **Victor**: Actually we are interested in the contemporary everyday life in Christiania. I want you to go there to explore stories and find out who would be possible to get involved in a documentary. Ivan and Santa and I are sitting here right now talking about who could do a research on it. We are scanning our network, then, I got to think about you.

10) **Grete**: Well, I am flattered. When is this going to take place?

11) **Victor**: In October. But you have to talk with the director, Santa, first. Fist of all it depends on whether you would like to do it or not, then it depends on whether you and the director want to work with each other. So, I want to set up a meeting between you two. What do you think?

12) **Grete**: Of course I want to do this job. But you know, it does not mean that you are off the hook. I have never worked with TV before, and it must be possible for me to ask you about stuff if I need to.

13) **Victor**: Of course. No problem.

A phone call. This is how I get involved in the pilot-project of the documentary serial on the life in Christiania, Copenhagen. The pilot-project lasts for two and a half months.

The idea came up three moths earlier after a trip Victor and Live did to Copenhagen for a slightly different reason. When returning they are eager to tell what they have observed. They do so in Midwifery, the weekly meeting designed for discussing ideas (*June 2002, notes in my field book*): The meeting is about to come to an end. The partners are through with the agenda and people are small talking. Victor tells that he and Live have just returned from Copenhagen. Amongst other things they visited Christiania. Full of enthusiasm, he goes on: "There are so many characters there. One of the citizens, a guy we knew a little from before, guided us around the place. There are so many myths and stereotypes associated with the place. Pot smokers, yoga fanatics, art freaks, anarchists, syndicalists, half criminals, you name it. But when introduced to the place by one of the locals, we experienced it differently. Contemporary Christiania - as a self-governed alternative in Europe - what kind of place is it today? We should make a serial that busts some old myths, and creates some new." Just before people are leaving the room, Victor claims that A-Tale should make something on this.

"Christiania" is mentioned again in Midwifery three months later, this time it has got a title, *Christiania – the last word*, which connotes the Christianities' ambition of self governance and consensus-based decision-making (*September 2002, notes in my field book*): Victor informs the others at the end of the meeting: "We have had a meeting with the channel managers of NTV [national broadcaster]. We talked about *Christiania - the last word* and sketched a documentary serial of 12 episodes, 15 minutes per episode. They will come back to us in a week and a half but the signal so far is positive. The pilot-project estimate is half a million [Norwegian kroner]." About a week later A-Tale gets to know that the pilot-project is accepted. The budget is four hundred thousand NOK. In a couple of moths the result of the pilot-project is to be presented for the descision makers in the broadcaster system. Then, they will decide whether to move into production or not.

However, to trace the origin of the idea, we have to go even further back in time than the visit Victor and Live did to Copenhagen in June 2002. As a part of the pilot-project, the director, Santa, and I go to Christiania to do casting and

research. In one of our evening conversations I ask Santa, how he became a part of the project. He tells that he used to work with Victor before, when Victor was the CEO of Flux Production. Santa worked on one of the high profile serials produced at that time, directing some of the episodes. Before that he had worked in the news department of the national broadcaster and then in the "Youth TV" department. It was back in those days he got to know Victor who worked as a producer in the same system although in a different department.

Concerning *Christiania*, originally it was Santa's idea. When doing research on another documentary – of which one of the episodes were to be shot in Copenhagen – he went on a bicycle trip to Christiania noticing all the eccentric characters living there. Even though Santa had watched news and single documentaries portraying some of the inhabitants of Christiania, he felt that the dominant images of the place either were too simplistic or based on clichés. This he wrote in an e-mail to Victor who at this point of time had quitted his job in Flux Production in order to work in A-Tale. Santa was still working in Flux Production when writing this e-mail, but he thought that Victor would be the best producer for a piece like this regardless of whether Victor worked in Flux or A-Tale. Santa guesses that Victor had the e-mail pitch at the back of his head when going on this trip to Copenhagen. In any case, Victor called Santa after the visit, and since he was interested in trying to do something about it, the wheel started spinning. They formulated a synopsis on the idea and decided to present it to the broadcaster.

Steps towards stabilization

Making one analytic turn, the realization of *Christiania – the last word*, may be portrayed as a process of stabilization in an actor-network configuration (Latour 1987). The actor-network approach focuses on strategies scientists use for building networks in order to transform findings into facts. Applied to the case above, we may say that more or less clearly formulated ideas are circulating in the network of television actors. One step towards stabilization is to hook up the idea with a producer with a name, i.e. a producer who is reputed for being able to carry out high quality projects. To get the idea through to the producer, it counts that the idea holder knows her/him from before. "To know" in this case means more than being acquainted with; it means to have demonstrated capability through actually having worked together in the past. The idea is strengthened further when Victor and Live see through their own eyes (when visiting Christiania) that there are good stories to be told as well as characters to convey them. They are enthusiastic about what they have

experienced, an enthusiasm that propels a packaging of the idea into something that can be communicated to others, hence, moved closer to realization. This packaging often takes the form of a well formulated, written pitch or synopsis.

To do something about the idea, they need funding which again means they have to evoke the interest of the decision makers in the broadcaster system. These have to believe in the potential of the idea, and to be sure that the idea holders are actually capable of producing it. Also, they have to make sure that there are no other similar ideas under production. They check out with their internal production unit to make sure that they do not have a similar project going on. It is impossible to sell an idea to a broadcaster without a trustworthy producer or production company/community involved. Some of the partners in A-Tale already have a track record of high profile productions behind them, which is a definite advantage when putting up a meeting with the decision makers.

The idea also has to demonstrate relevance for the mission and program policy of the broadcaster. Examples of aims for the program mix are "reflecting the diversity of the society", or "extending peoples horizon about the world we live in". These are general claims. *Christiania – the last word* represents a concretization and provides a vivid content to such statements. In sum, there is a process going on in which interests are translated in order to make a stable connection between A-Tale and the TV broadcaster. This connection depends on the substance of idea itself, but not the least on the political landscape in which the idea is situated. Previous and recent success contributes to strengthening the connection between A-Tale and the broadcaster beyond single ideas. In fact, before presenting *Christiania,* A-Tale, in co-operation with the same broadcaster, had enjoyed a huge success with their previous production. Even though the subject matter and the storyline are quite different, Christiania represents a follow up on a fruitful co-operation. New successful demonstrations are needed, in order to maintain the relation.

Re-instatement of the documentary genre

Another instability for *Christiania* to overcome adheres to the documentary genre as such. In A-Tale, they talk about documentaries as an important genre but a genre that holds a low status when defining the regular time slot of the TV medium. Documentaries are rarely transmitted prime time, which means they seldom reach out to the mass audience. A-Tale's ambition is to make programs that, on the one hand, reach out to a wide audience – which means that they have to be transmitted prime time, and, on the other hand, has a content that

matters – which means that they have to resist strong competition from pure entertainment shows. "To appeal to a mass audience" pushes the idea towards pure amusement; "to change the world a bit", demands a serious content and a format (in this case documentary) that conveys the message.

To position documentaries in the prime time slot and, thus, increase the impact of such programs, the genre has to be more entertaining than what is normal within the format of documentaries and to accept the present demand for *serials* in the contemporary TV industry. Victor claims, "It is possible for documentaries to compete with pure entertainment programs about a regular prime time slot, if they accept what the television medium is asking for – a seasonal program. It cannot be done by producing just a single program as is often the case with documentary projects." So, for *Christiania – the last word* to reach a wide audience, it has to take the form of a documentary serial rather than a single documentary program. Further, to widening the appeal of the program there must be personal processes involved and stories changing over time. It is this personal touch that engage the audience and keep them watching. Simply stated, it is the dramatic component that keeps the audience seated in front of the screen.

This introduces another significant actor to be enrolled in the project, the Christianites. To reach a high average viewer poll, the audience must be permitted to watch the everyday struggle and joys of the Christianites over time – they must be allowed to follow progress and setbacks as captured by the cameras. It is this everyday drama that will keep people watching the serial. However, as required by the A-Tale partners, there must be interesting content too.

There is a risk in formatting Christiania into more than one episode, because the partners then have to focus quite a lot on the personal/private undertakings of people. The danger is that the wider audiences will classify it as just another reality show, lose interest, and downplay the informative part of it. Victor comments on this,

"Maybe there is a danger in formatting it into a serial, but *Christiania* is a *documentary serial*, not a reality show, and we will keep calling it that. We do not ask anybody to do anything, no competition, no set ups, no votes. We just ask some people to allow us to get to know them a little better and through that paint a larger picture about what life is like in such a society. So it is a documentary serial! And now comes my point, I think that if we accept the prerequisites of the TV medium, which is that we want something that lasts one season (…) Then we can make documentaries just as entertaining. We can outperform these brainless game shows or reality TV with an interesting piece of the real world."

Enrolling the Christianites & the broadcaster

Format is one of the indispensable actors in the network, the Christianites another. Formatting the idea into a serial, as argued by Victor, is a solution to what is often perceived as an incommensurable aim of informing versus entertaining. A serial such as this, however, depends on ordinary people's willingness to let the crew follow them over time. When doing research and casting in Christiania we were met by a substantial skepticism. Media in general, including television was looked on with suspicion. We were faced with attitudes ranging from a need to protect the fine tuned balance in the small community, to despise towards "yet another reality/trash TV show", and we listened to stories of betrayals of sensation-driven journalists. So, when doing research we spent a lot of time explaining and justifying: who we were and what we were there for; which TV channel was going to transmit the serial; why this broadcaster and not another; describing how the crew was going to work with the participants; what rights the participants had to edit or sanction the recordings. The arguments that contributed the most to align the project's interest with the Christianites', was the ambition of telling the stories that are rarely heard in the media and to provide an in-depth, differentiated picture of the place.

The pilot-project lasted for two months and a half. We spent two weeks gathering information before going to Copenhagen/Christiania. We stayed for about three weeks in Christiania, a period in which we conducted about 60 meetings with single persons or groups of persons. We tried to cover the most interesting areas of activities going on, and we followed leads and suggestions provided by the Christianites themselves. A digital video recording was made of each potential participant. It was later edited into a one-minute profile and supplied with a written summary of why this person was chosen as one of the participants.

We met the persons we casted 4-8 times in order to make sure that they really understood what they agreed to participate in. We documented each contact we made and made minutes of what we were talking about with different people. It was important to make a comprehensive presentation of what we did and what we talked about in order to make the transition from the pilot-project to the production phase as smooth as possible, but also to be able to make a thorough presentation for the decision makers in the broadcaster system.

Back at the office in A-Tale we constructed a project proposal tailored to inform the decision makers. It consisted of a one-minute video presentation of each potential participant, a slide show presenting the storylines of each person and of the society together with information about the organizational and

financial aspects of the project. At last we created a hardcopy project plan describing the project in detail. The videotape and the project proposal were handed over to the decisions makers in a face-to-face meeting. In the meeting, we did our outmost to visualize and convey the richness of stories to be told and of the people willing to convey them. Most of the talking from our side was done by the executive producer in A-Tale.

Briefly, the arguments of A-Tale's partner took the following form. References were made to the success of the previous project. The partner showed how this project tied in with the program policy of the broadcaster. He argued the unique opportunity to make a contemporary documentary of a special society in our globalized world – with characters both capable of informing and entertaining wider audiences. He then argued that the project wanted to use some of the same production staff from the previous project ensuring the right competence for an efficient and professional execution. At last he pointed out that it could be possible to co-finance the project with Nordic channels because the subject matter is of broader interest than the national level.

The actual making of the serial, was green lighted by the broadcaster medio November 2002. Already in January 2003 the shooting of the serial starts and it lasts for 6 months. The serial follows 12 Christianites in their everyday life. The budget is now expanded to seven million NOK, as the staff and the vast amount of film and audio equipment for doing the actual production is included. So, from being a vague idea at the back of the head of Victor and Live, the idea has now been connected to a heterogeneous set of actors and resources. The network configuration consist of the executive producer, decision makers in the television channel, the director who formulated the first vague sentences of about the idea, me, doing research, the genre (a docudrama), the people in Christiania willing to participate, the well prepared presentation of the project in the form of both images and text, and the many smaller and bigger roles there are in production, including the expensive recording and editing equipment. As the idea moves closer towards realization, the budget increases dramatically. From zero, to about a half a million, to eight millions NOK. There is a high ratio of ideas circulating in the industry versus the few realized. Considering the vast amount of resources needed to finalize an idea, this should come as no surprise.

Inventing ideas

In this section I will turn away from the materialization of ideas into projects towards invention or idea cultivation as such. This is the process by which the community establishes a reservoir of ideas that may or may not be pushed further towards sales and production. Idea cultivation is closely related to those portions of practice that are creative and constructive. The main question to be explored is how the diversity of the knowledge base in A-Tale is played out when faced with different ideas.

The emergence of exemplars

The passage below is an excerpt from an interview with one of the partners, Ivan, about ideas originated from outside A-Tale. He talks about one way of handling such requests.

Ivan: I could tell you about something we just did, this idea that I find to be a good case, which illustrates our way of thinking: I was contacted by the Red Cross about a charity TV program [...] We're not in the business of commissioned productions, I said. But they were interested in...they'll lose 150 million NOK now that they have to give up the slot machines. So they'll have a shortfall of income, and they were wondering if we could help them make their way onto the TV screens [...] Yes, of course, because they've seen from the annual charity fund-raising shows at the two biggest TV channels, that it certainly is a tremendous way of attracting finance...We have a meeting with them. After meeting them, Ivan and I get a sense of...when we get involved, we get a sense of what the Red Cross is all about. True, one has one's perceptions of them from the outside, but when we actually delve into it, we get a sense and a strong feeling of just how important that organisation really is! And then, when we learned that – yes, we'd like to work with them help them try to succeed, because we perceive it as meaningful [...]

And the challenge we were faced with, as I said in the meeting with the RC, was that we can't turn up at Ch2 [one of the largest national broadcasters] to present one of those stage shows with celebrities and pop bands standing about announcing their support for the Red Cross. That's old hat. But if you're interested in taking part in developing something new, something that could easily

revolutionize the sort of charity-TV stuff for the Red Cross, then it is positive. And they agreed to that. So we carried out this pre-production project that cost them a couple of hundred thousand. We're just finishing it now, and it has resulted in a brilliant idea. One that is totally unlike any of the stuff you've ever seen on this kind of topic. That is a sort of variation on studio-reality. Where we'll...well, this stuff is actually *secret* [...]

Grete: It's interesting that you're saying 'variation on studio-reality', because when we cross genres, we haven't got the terms, and what's new has to be articulated as a compound of several other terms...

Ivan: Yes… What we're going to do... What's been shown so far has been things like the NTV [one of the largest national broadcasters] fundraising campaign, which is a studio version with documentaries, and bands that have played in the studio, and artists. Everything has been over and done with in one day. Or Plan (the sponsor-a-child campaign), that lasted for one evening, one long show. We're going to make a 13-hour programme. One that will be part of the ordinary *prime time* offerings, and that will be competing with any other show [...] That is to say, a 13-programme series, to be screened in the best viewing time, and during peak season. That's what we're going to try selling to Ch2. And which means it has to compete with the regular entertainment serials (…)

The format of the Red Cross idea sketched by Ivan holds some similarities to *Christiania – the last word* and also to the serial they produced before Christiania which was rendered a huge success by both critics and wider audiences, *Young Fathers*. These similarities evokes the notion of exemplars, and the role such exemplars play in the practice at hand. Young Fathers was one of the ideas/projects fully accomplished during the period I conducted my study. When the idea came up, it had an immediate appeal to the partners as an A-Tale project. The idea and the production, played a significant role in the community formation process of A-Tale – why?

There are two things about Young Fathers that make it distinct. First it is its political stance in improving the understanding and enhancing the status of fatherhood in this country. What do the public know about contemporary fatherhood except that just a small percentage stay at home with their babies longer than one month of the 12 possible months of paternal/maternal leave? How do young fathers of today raise their children? Second, the format is original because they do not follow the standard of reality shows of competition, intrigues and a well-designed plot the participants operate within. Young Fathers is a docu-drama, which is a documentary based on several programs but with the kind of personal and dramatic touch that many

documentaries lack. The drama lies in following a process of development over time – a process that really means something to someone. The idea came up in one of the first idea-creating sessions arranged by the partners after the start up. Tells Victor,

"After start up, we needed an example right away demonstrating what we were capable of. We brought with us some people to a cottage up in the mountains. A great part of the participants were from the advertising agency that we are cooperating with. The intention was to brainstorm on ideas and content for a high-fly television program. People worked in groups and some girls came up with this wonderful idea from a single question: *Why don't we see more of fathers on television?*

We elaborated on this idea and the concept turned out to be that, during a period of ten weeks, we will get to know six carefully selected young fathers who live in the same city. Except from fatherhood, what they all have in common is that they have committed themselves to raise money for an "elderly home" in Russia. The institution for elders really needs their contribution, so the obligation to make something out of their charity commitment is serious. The fathers meet once a week in order to discuss their charity work. The way the six perform their fatherhood together with the charity work is followed by TV-teams and eventually broadcasted – not continuously but in edited episodes. This is not a reality-show a la Big Brother but real people learning and sharing in a feel good atmosphere.

After corking up the idea, Ivan and I arranged a meeting with one of the broadcasters. We were really enthusiastic about this idea. We knew that if the production turned out successfully, the format could be sold internationally. The result was positive and A-Tale holds the rights to sell the concepts internationally."

When the National Broadcaster a few years ago decided to spend 10% on external program production instead of in-house production, they, too, needed a high profile project demonstrating the potential of this new policy. The project sketched above, was referred to as the first evidence on the soundness of using external resources. This means that A-Tale's first large project held a great prestige not only for themselves, but for their customer as well. An excerpt from the news media indicates the reception of the serial: "*Young Fathers"* is Norway's most popular reality series to date, with average viewing figures of about 800,000, peaking at 1000,000 for the penultimate episode."

What did this project do for the practice and identity of A-Tale? Without going into a discussion about paradigms and revolutions, I find inspiration in Kuhn's (1996/1962) elaboration of exemplars in the postscript of his book. Exemplars refer to the knowledge gained through actually solving problems. It

is a way of learning how theory functions when used in practice. What one learns when relating theory to specific problems, is to view a certain situation in a certain way, i.e. one learns to see which situations can fit to the theory and vice versa. Exemplars as concrete instances of how, say, laws of nature functions in use, also surfaces how one group of scientists differ from another group of scientist although they at a basic level adhere to the same set of theoretical generalizations. Kuhn (1996/1962, p. 187) claims, "Though both solid-state and field-theoretic physicists share the Schrödinger cat equation, only its more elementary applications are common to both groups. At a more advanced level, the symbolic generalizations they share are increasingly illustrated by different exemplars." Using exemplars as an analogy, the function of *Young Fathers* may be interpreted as the first example materializing the more general ambitions and value statements of what A-Tale wants to make.

The statements at the point of time when the idea came up were rough statements. For example, "even though a program is entertaining, is should not compromise on content", or, "there is a wave of trash on television, we should make something that matters to people." Other enterprises in the same line of business may emphasize the same things, so there need not be any distinguishing effect in such statements.

However, Young Fathers as a value statement both resonates with these general ambitions and explicate what they mean in a particular way. It other words, it surfaces how A-Tale differ from another group that may adhere to the same basic values and ambitions The media-political backdrop for Young Fathers is that the selection of people who are actually featured in television programs, tells a story about who hold the power and influence in our society. Being widespread, television has the power to mediate common cultural frames of reference. The question of whose voices are rarely heard on TV is a political question. So is the answer in this particular case – contemporary fatherhood. Young Fathers, as the first exemplar concretizing their position in a political landscape, therefore holds a special status in their practice. It becomes a point of reference, a standard for the cultivation of other ideas.

Young Fathers does have another important impact by defining a learning trajectory. At the point of its realization, it was one of a kind in Norway. The people involved in the production learned how to actually go about doing such a project. This pertain both to the partners who are creative and executive producers and the technical and creative staff hired in the production. The technical staff learned how to go about filming in a "natural" context over a long period of time, following everyday people who is not used to cameras.

E.g. one critical role that they talked much about was the one hold by the three "reporters". Reporter was used in lack of a better term. Their task was to be the ones who got the elders to share things that really mattered for them,

that is, to reveal a little of their inner life. Individual interviews by the elders were made and the best recordings were included in the episodes as reflection on what was going on. Trust had to be built up and good questions had to be asked - not just as a one of a kind happening, but repeatedly over a period of eight months. The executive producer mentioned that not all the reporters were able to instantiate good conversations over time. He also emphasized that the knowledge gained by the team involved in the projects would be an invaluable resource for similar project in the near future, "People has learnt a lot in participating in this production, and I know exactly who to use in similar projects." Thus, Young Fathers is a learning history from which other variants can be created.

The previous section described the materialization of *Christiania – the last word*. Christiania is one of those later ideas that used a lot of the same production personnel. Even though the substance matter is somewhat different from Young Fathers, the format and way of filming and interacting with lay people over a long period of time in order to capture both the factual and dramatic parts of their life, is similar. Notice also that from an economic point of view, the timing of Christiania was important. The broadcaster/customer was looking for ideas that could be as successful as Young fathers at the same time as they acknowledged that the lessons learned by production personnel involved in Young Fathers could be even more efficiently used in a similar project.

At last, Young Fathers, when successfully received by the critics and a wide audience, demonstrated that A-Tale was actually able to come up with something original and successful. What A-Tale is as an organization is always negotiated in the relation to such "significant others", e.g. the audience of their pieces, the shareholders of the firm, the broadcasters, the Film Fund. They watch and define the fate of their projects. Young Fathers represented a high risk of prestige for the executive managers of the broadcaster and it was a high economic risk on behalf of A-Tale. When it worked out so well, it really became an identity defining experience that provided both A-Tale and their customer with a fruitful direction for a creative collaboration.

The Red Cross idea is about to be formatted into a serial, with a real world issue portrayed through lay people, aiming at prime time and high season transmittance, in competition with regular entertainment programs. This format resembles the ones used on Young Fathers and Christiania. With regards to the non-fiction/documentary genre, there seems be an emergent pattern in the formatting of ideas in A-Tale. For instance, in an interview Victor told me that he knew exactly who from the Young Fathers crew he would like to use in the production of Christiania.

The production crew learnt a lot of new things from the making of Young Fathers; how to work with lay people not used to cameras or sound equipment over an extended period of time (two months); how to make live recordings in a real time, little controllable setting; how to ask question so as to derive good reflections from the participants in the serial, how to systematize and edit a vast amount of unplanned live recordings. Therefore, as an executive producer, he sees the advantage of re-using some of the resources in the making of Christiania to ensure the relevant competence, high quality, and efficiency in the project.

However, for the Red Cross idea, the point of departure is slightly different, because its targeted customer is another broadcaster than two previous projects. The freelancers, he might be lucky to engage again, but not the people that belong to the internal technical staff of the competing broadcaster. The execution is easier, though, than the making of Young Fathers simply because he knows more about what to demand from the people working.

Food for speculation is whether this emergent patterning of productions, not in their substance matter, but in the format to convey them, will be recognized by the industry and the audience as "typical A-Tale", just as people are able to recognize a film by, say, Pedro Almodovar or Lars von Trier. Of course, it is way too early to make any judgement on this but what seems reasonable to infer, is that Young Fathers and Christiania constitute exemplars from which other variants is formed. In chapter 1 and 2, I argued that protopractice denotes being in the process of stabilizing ways of doing things. First exemplars, such as Young Fathers and Christiania, play a defining role in the community since they are the result of the partners' concrete engagement in and direct experience with their collective ability to create and accomplish something. They are evidences of what they are capable of and become "prototypes" against which other ideas are measured and replicated from. This point to prototypes as something that signify the typical example of which again implies a certain degree of standardization of what it takes to actually produce ideas of the "Christiania kind". – A "know how" or knowledge of methods that Victor plans to re-use in the Red Cross production.

The story of Christiania, Young Fathers and Red Cross referred to above, shows that the source of ideas is rather arbitrary. Ivan comments on the unpredictable origin of ideas:

"During the week each and one of us gather ideas. It should be complete anarchy in the ways in which people come up with these ideas – if they get them from their family members, from what they read in the newspapers, from people contacting them, from manuscripts or pitches received by e-mail or mail, from critical reviews of television programs or movies, from the dream last night."

Regardless of their origin, I have watched ideas land in Midwifery in A-Tale. Ideas are turned into substance by way of association and translation. They are materialized into actions/projects, and – when judged successful – ideas become exemplars that occasion the generation of similar ideas.

Subjective, emotional & value-oriented knowledge

Ivan's story about the Red Cross also indicates a few things about the kind of knowledge played out when faced with an idea such as the Red Cross. Red Cross is an example on managing a request from someone outside the group who knows little about TV production and broadcasting. Quickly the two partners are able to sort out the client's situation – loss of income due to changes in the rules for gambling machines – and tell whether the idea about creating charity TV a la those shows that already exists, is a feasible and wise approach. The partners need but a few arguments to turn this idea down and explain why it is deemed to fail. They act as experts responding to novices in the field. Such an efficient display of what we may call "cold" knowledge, – self-confident and without hesitation – mirrors the low complexity of the problem or idea at hand. However, after this initial, "negative" response, they invite the customer to enter into a more explorative mode, "If you are interested in partaking in the creation of something new […]"

I see three main reasons why the partners get so enthusiastic about working with this customer. First, the *idealistic* aspect and the trust in Red Cross as an important organization worldwide. Says Ivan, "our greatest productions, they're not first and foremost supposed to focus on money coming in our direction. They're supposed to focus on the fact that some things... Well, what I'm thinking is that when the world of TV looks too bloody awful, you may of course take the huff and quit and start doing something different. Or you may say, how the fuck can you put up some resistance. If we could possibly manage to pull off a series like this, which is about caring, which is about helping a large organisation that is important to the weak of this world...well, then that would act as a counterbalance to this mindless commercial pressure."

Second, the willingness of the customer to think high and wild, hence, the chance to *revolutionize* a genre. A-Tale does not want to create a standard charity show. They want to create something not seen before in charity TV in Norway. Third, the opportunity to reach a *wide audience* and, thereby, deliver a significant impact beyond the screen. Solving the problem intelligently holds a

potential for engaging a large part of the population in charity questions. In sum, these are dimensions the partners can identify with and the project becomes an example on what A-Tale, as a community should be associated with.

Defining ideas is a part of defining the community in which they are members, which again strengthens the membership and commitment of the partners. I do not contest that dealing with ideas in A-Tale by and large is a process of improvisation, creativity and ad hoc tinkering in order to pursue projects that are doable (Fujimura 1996), but what I want to highlight from the observation above, is that the partners to a large degree are searching for what is *worth doing*.

In search of ideas worth doing

A-Tale negotiates with the Red Cross and persuades them to enter the explorative mode of idea cultivation. What we may call a mode of "warm" problem solving. The challenge is to get the customer to trust their ability to facilitate a process that they do not yet know the outcome of, but by means of their creative and problem solving expertise, is likely to turn out well. Success means giving birth to a splendid idea and a format, which is bought by one of the TV channels.

It seems like it is the combination of cold and warm expertise that impresses and then moves the customer (Red Cross) in such a way that they want to put their resources into the uncertain process of idea cultivation. The partners at their side are motivated by the novel opportunity in the problem described by the Red Cross. Reflections on the Red Cross afterwards also demonstrate that the partners are making an emotional investment such projects. E.g. Victor says, "After meeting them, Ivan and I get a sense of...when we get involved, we get a sense of what the Red Cross is all about. True, one has one's perceptions of them from the outside, but when we actually delve into it, we get a sense and a strong feeling of just how important that organisation really is!"

When articulating what Red Cross is or is not and why the partners commit themselves to the uncertain project of giving birth to an original idea, they use relational expressions such as, "the strong feeling of", or "how important that really organization is", or "we perceive it as meaningful." Giving birth to an idea does not pretend to be rooted in some kind of scientific or objective knowledge. Rather, it is expected and accepted that they spell out their personal values and ambitions, and their subjective opinions about what

people (the audience) should be served on television. Their long experience and demonstrated success is what make their arguments both relevant and trustworthy. However, at some point in the near future, the partners know they are expected to deliver an idea. The way they are to give birth to an idea is not straightforward. Being able to navigate through such an uncertain situation is what their expertise is ultimately about.

I talked with one of the young freelancers in one of the projects about learning through education vs. through experience in the TV world. The freelancer claimed that, "my colleague and I belong to the last autodidact generation in broadcasting. We have learnt through practice from the numerous small, invisible tasks there are in television. You start as a production assistant, and then there are infinite numbers of steps before you become production manager or producer. Now, more and more young people graduates from different academies. I think this is good, because it means they have a foundation for what they are doing and can better argue their ideas."

I did not follow up on this reflection in the interview, but one interpretation is that when this industry becomes more and more academically professionalized, then to argue strongly from a personal taste or subjective stance as the basis for knowledge – as the partners do – might be challenged over years to come. At this point of time, the authorative voice stems from years of experience and track records in their specific fields. In other words, that they actually *have* the personal experience validates their points of view.

The Red Cross example shows that our theories about creative knowledge work must allow for the subjective and emotional basis of such work. Engagement in an idea draws upon value statements, for instance as uttered by Victor, "If we could possibly manage to pull off a series like this, which is about caring, which is about helping a large organisation that is important to the weak of this world...well, then that would act as a counterbalance to this mindless commercial pressure." Value statements in A-Tale are of course not ready made; they develop and become a common orientation and a resource in the group over time.

Giving birth to an idea is not a routine-like operation, which Knorr-Cetina (2001) argues subscribe to a performative idiom. She exemplifies the performative idiom by the way a molecular biologist described the practice of cloning (Knorr-Cetina 1999, chap. 6), "Cloning is perhaps one level below what one calls exciting in the lab. You sit down, you think about a particular construct, and then you clone it. That's not very different from deciding to dig a hole in the ground and then to dig it – it's about that exciting." Those portions of practice that are creative and constructive are not adequately described in such terms. Rather people often use relational terms, as the ones used by Victor above (get a strong feeling of; when we actually delve into it; just how

important that organization really is), in articulating or construction problems. Hence, what holds the constructive practice together and gives it continuity is more the relational than the performative idiom between the subject and object.

Related to Victor, the equivalent to cloning as talked about by the research scientist would be to do "commissioned production". That is, "to turn up at Ch2 to present one of those stage shows with celebrities and pop bands standing about announcing their support to the Red Cross. That's old hat." If he were to do this, he would operate under a performative idiom according to Knorr-Cetina (2001). Such routines are not what A-Tale as an "innovative landscape" is about. Victor expresses in an interview:

— **Victor**: We are genuinely preoccupied with the making of stories that reach a wide audience and at the same time may change the world a little bit [...] However, too often Ivan and I experience that we end up in discussions and meetings about projects that are just another bloody TV show.

— **Victor**: We are idea makers, concept developers, and strategic advisors for broadcasters... Such things contribute to increase our level of competence. And this is the unique part of what we do. Commissioned productions or general television production is just about being good at handling a capacity, that is, being good at producing one thing or the other. If that were what I wanted, I would not have quit my former job.

So, what is sharing of knowledge in idea cultivation about after all? The simple argument so far, is that it has a lot to do with an emotional engagement stemming from the thrill of doing something new, or the feeling of contributing to some justice in the world, or the belief in an ideal organization such as the Red Cross. In deciding what to do with an idea, they are thrusting their former experience, their subjective taste, and their opinion on what is worth doing.

The partners know what they are good at, but they also know that it is important to challenge each other's knowledge in the sense Ivan does when working with Victor. – Says Victor, when talking about A-Tale's inter-practitiomary potential:

"Victor: And I notice that the combination of Ivan and me is incredible. Very good! I have never enjoyed myself this much before, when working close with someone, as I do with Ivan. With regard to communication, he is simply extraordinary. He is incredible focused on getting the message through. What story we are actually going to tell. He manages to peal off all the superfluous stuff by asking the right questions...And since Ivan does not hold the same

limitations that I do after working years in television, he...well, he challenges me, brushes off the dust of the traditional ways of doing things in TV. You know, if we have had a session on an idea, and, when we leave, both think, this is cool stuff. Then it is good!"

Ivan comes from the world of advertising and is used to short and focused messages and a high turnover of potential ideas conveying the message. Victor who comes from television production, claims that it is valuable that Ivan does not hold the limitations he himself does after working years in television. If the two partners manage to combine their fields of expertise, they will eventually come up with "cool stuff". In the next section, we will venture further into the "hot zone" in which knowledge is shared and content is generated.

Free association & heavy disagreement

In the passage below, an idea presented by one of the partners is discussed in Midwifery. The idea is nicknamed "Plata" [a well known hang-out for junkies and prostitutes next to the central station in the capital until a much debated crack-down by the police]. Reading it through, it is visible how they at first use their experience to add freely to the idea. Later on, contradictory objects and demands heat the discussion.

I have numbered the different turns in the dialogue, which again is divided into chunks at places where there is a shift in the focus or theme of the dialogue.

1) **Carl**: I have an idea that I got when my wife came home after seeing Plata for the first time. I was just lying on the sofa, relaxing, as a matter of fact. She was totally worked up about it being possible in contemporary Norway to create a place like Plata. People were piled up on top of each other. 60 people, all lined up, one beside the other, shooting up. That is beyond undignified. We can't allow conditions like that in this country. We should make a documentary about this side to the richest country in the world.

2) **Ivan**: That sounds like a *Brennpunkt*[26] programme, or what? And besides, National Geographic have been there and filmed it all.

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[26] A series of programmes that scrutinise the use and abuse of power in the Norwegian society. The aim is to make hard-hitting and thought provoking television. It is the Norwegian equivalent to BBC's Panorama.

They also ask how Norway, the oil nation, can accept that kind of conditions for its drug addicts.

3) **Victor**: Maybe we should turn it into a burlesque sitcom instead. We could reach more people if we don't go for a standard documentary... Or we could do something morbid and make a new, unusual *Christmas Calendar*, something in the same vein as *Nissene på Låven* [the pixies in the barn].[27] We could have one new window close each day up until Christmas. That is, by having a different drug addict die each time.

4) **Ivan**: The upsetting thing is that the politicians know that they're making a mistake in the way we go about drugs and drug addicts, but they're not willing to do anything about it. I don't think a programme that really reaches people can be done by *Brennpunkt* [series of thought provocative programmes a la BBC's Panorama]. We ought to make the most provocative program of this entire year. For instance, the idea of those Westerås students who gave various drug addicts a disposable camera was brilliant. We could go for a kind of art programme, and involve NTV [nationwide broadcaster].

"I have got an idea..," in a few sentences Carl pitches the idea (turn no. 1) and ignites a rapid cycle of utterances (turn 2, 3, 4) that establishes a field consisting of an extensive use of references to concrete examples of programs and movies and more generally to a variety of genres. Such references are used to associate freely. They are used to draw attention to, to define what something is or is not, to classify as interesting or not, to argue for different viewpoints, to elaborate on content, to engage and enroll others, and to test the economic potential and practical feasibility of it. When analyzing *Christiania – the last word*, the genre (docudrama/documentary serial) was one of the crucial (non-human) actors that had to be enrolled in order to stabilize the idea. *Plata*, at this point in the discussion, is about exploration not stabilization, which means that the genre-position is open for a range of candidates.

The following chunk of the dialogue (turn 5-14) is a follow-up and an elaboration, but also a testing of the enthusiasm and interest of the group to actually do something about it. As we can see several members of the group add to the dialogue.

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[27] According to Norwegian lore, every farm has a *nisse* – a kind of pixie who lives in the barn, and likes to play little tricks on people. At Christmas, the farmers would put out a bowl of their own Christmas porridge for the *nisse* so that he would be content and refrain from mischief in the year that lay ahead. Some recent advent programming has featured *nisse* characters, such as the one referred to here.

5) **Victor:** In Flux Production [the former workplace of Victor] we had someone who worked for an entire year following a compulsive gambler around. We could get him to follow a few chosen people around over a period of time.

6) **Sarah**: Olin [Norwegian director of documentaries] did a documentary like that. She filmed this lady drug addict over the course of a year or two. But then the woman got out of her drug nightmare and didn't want the film about her to be screened. She didn't want to see herself like that after it was over.

7) **Ivan**: We ought to make the most nerve-racking programme ever. Not a documentary, not fiction. But a programme where the most nerve-racking defamatory allegations are flung out – without resulting in us getting pinned down for defamation. Like Ole Paus [folk song musician and satirist] being able to get away with slandering the entire royal family.

8) **Tobias**: Maybe we could get Harald Eia [famous comedian on Norwegian television] to participate. He is someone people expect quips and tall tales from. He could show his true potential in the role of nailing down a few politicians. After all, he is a sociologist. Knowledgeable guy.

9) **Carl**: Did anyone watch OJ [another well-know comedian and satirist on television]? He had a brief thing on this stuff about drug addicts and the political scene in Norway...

10) **Victor**: When Espen made *Nissene på Låven* [Christmas entertainment programme], their production slogan was 'When did you last see something for the first time on TV?'

11) **Victor**: Humour and satire are much better than pure documentary. You reach more people. We could get hold of actors who played drug addicts, and who made a terribly good job of it. The characters and the stories could be based on the real stories of a few drug addicts who want to contribute with something or the other.

12) **Carl**: The BBC had that programme with the tramps…who the viewers thought were real tramps, but who turned out to be actors. They had this plot where the tramps took part in competitions, but where one after the other fell away, and people felt sorry for them for that, but they also had lots of sympathy for those who were still in there and looked as if they were eventually going to win something in life.

13) Victor: Yes, people were furious when the last one was tricked on the finishing line and walked away with nothing. – Which is how things often work in real life.

The partners continue to make references to other programs and genres as a part of the expansive cycle, but, interestingly, they also introduce yet "an actor" to be associated with the idea, i.e. specific persons that might employ crucial position in such a project. E.g. Nordskoll, Olin, Eia, OJ, etc. Each person represents different genres and formats, but making references to persons also concretize, that is, simulate what a real production would look like.

The partners use no formalized, explicit tools for the exploration and assessment of ideas. *Plata* as something that might be shown on television is floating somewhere between the variety of references. The field of reference is constructed in no time, which is mainly due to their broad knowledge about earlier productions bearing some similarities or differences that may clarify the idea at hand.

To some extent, we might frame the discussion about *Plata* as a process of classification. Prototype theory as portrayed by Bowker and Star (1999) proposes that we have a broad picture in our minds of what for instance a chair is; and we extend this picture by metaphor and analogy when trying to decide if any given thing that we are sitting on counts. We call up a best example, and then see if there is a reasonable direct or metaphorical thread that takes us from the example to the object under consideration. Translated into the dialogue above, we might say that the partners individually have a broad picture in mind of what a good idea is or is not. Calling up specific programs and genres, define what an idea is through contrasting it with something that is similar, yet different, or something that is different, yet an attractive possibility for the idea at hand. As we can see, the object to be classified, the idea, is created as they are classifying it.

Mobility across the diverse experiences is important in idea cultivation, but not in the sense of maintaining the same meaning or function or inscriptions across sites, which is the topic in Bowker and Star (1999). Therefore terms like classification work should be imposed with care in the case of A-Tale. At this stage of cultivation, an idea is not a problem to be diagnosed or translated into a stable category recognizable across heterogeneous communities but a content to be generated by a group of loosely coupled people. When in the phase of cultivating, it is ideas as "half worked" boundary objects (Star and Griesemer 1989), and not as stable categories, that keep the process going.[28]

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[28] Star and Grisemer coined *boundary objects* to talk about the need of coordination and balancing of different interests and meanings across social worlds. Such objects, which may be abstract or concrete, inhabits several communities, which both have their special

The analysis of the Red Cross story in the previous section, showed the importance of three community values when discussing ideas (ideal or serious content, the prospect of altering a genre, and the likelihood of reaching wide audiences). There is a lot of enthusiasm in the discussion about Plata above. Without question, Plata as a theme scores high on important content, so the conversation so far has been more about what genre and format would be appropriate.

Ivan now tries to conclude by making a general statement. Says Ivan: "I think we have a tendency to laugh ourselves to death, to entertain ourselves to death. Which is why we should do a few documentaries. I watched the documentary on the Twin Towers yesterday. It made me sick. It's based on a unique and horrific historical event, of course. But I don't think we should go for a drama production or go for humour. That idea about Harald Eia is a good one. Some politicians ought to be hanged. We should make one programme that hits like a fist in the stomach. Not a series... I think we should give this idea a chance. Enjoy the fact that we have the opportunity to take it a step further. Is anyone here with me on this one?" He makes this statement and request at the peak of the group's engagement but instead of getting a small group of people to volunteer on elaborating the idea further, Victor suddenly shifts the attention towards the brute fact of the "real world of business."

Victor (turn 14, below) claims that programs aiming at a national and not international audience, and especially if the program consists of only one episode, is not economically viable in light of the way A-Tale is organized. This surfaces the third value visible in the Red Cross example, the possibility of reaching wide audiences. The conversation about Plata goes on:

14) **Victor:** I have two objections. I don't mean to be negative, but... First of all, this type of one-off, national kind of programme is not economic. A story about *Plata* would be that sort of national type of thing. Financially speaking, pursuing it wouldn't pay off.

15) **Ivan:** We could still treat ourselves to a day with, say Harald Eia and a panel of professionals. People who can both inform and entertain…

16) **Victor:** My second point is that there are a handful of decision makers in TV who we run into when we bring along our ideas. They think, whether the idea is good or not, that 'this guy, he's

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interests and see the advantage of co-operating in larger constellations. Boundary objects facilitate the multiple translations needed to engineer agreements among multiple actors though without presupposing consensus - a kind of co-ordination and management, which maintain common interests and at the same time allow the local actors to maintain their individual differences and specific interests. See Star and Griesemer (1989).

been given enough support now'. Or they ask themselves, 'is he capable of materializing all of his ideas'… It means that we need to focus on what we really want. We must be selective.

17) **Tobias:** Yes, there aren't all that many doors to go in. But what we may ask ourselves is what A-Tale's overall profile ought to be. It's possible that we should make something we don't make money from, but that says something about who we are.

18) **Victor**: I totally agree with that. But let's see if we can stretch the idea across several programmes. It is awfully difficult to find a slot for a one-off programme, prime time, during peak season. Unfortunately, many a great one-off documentary sinks like a stone among the wealth of programming on offer.

19) **Live**: I wish things weren't like that. That it rested a stronger responsibility on the channels with respect to rising debate in society. With the existing responsibility we wouldn't even pull in half the money it took us to make a thing like that. Maybe this is an idea for a one-man firm where someone is willing to spend his entire life doing one thing. In our place, it is impossible to financially justify that sort of approach. Maybe we could manage to turn it into a series.

From being expansive, the conversation has now turned towards the restraints of the world of business. The chunk of utterances (14-19) is about the realism of the project in which both the economic premises of the world of broadcasting are criticized and the possibilities to format the idea in a direction economically acceptable for A-Tale are assessed. Victor translates social impact into the ability to reach wider audiences, which again is linked to how format/genre translates into commercial feasibility.

Victor and Live inform the others about what attitudes they will be faced with in a sales situation. Regardless of the quality of the idea per se, there are but a few decision makers in this industry and they keep an eye on the quantity of ideas in progress at A-Tale, assessing both their capability to actually produce these ideas and the cash flow going in A-Tale's direction. The decision makers' ambition is to nurture more than one independent production community in this country. So even though the content of an idea stays the same, the political landscape around it may shift due to the interests of A-Tale's customers.

Live (turn 19) poses a general criticism of the broadcasters for a lack of public responsibility towards weak groups in society, which again limit what they are willing to finance. Tobias then offers an alternative route for the progress of the idea by appealing to A-Tale's identity (turn 17). He claims that

sometimes A-Tale should make something that clearly expresses what the company is all about, regardless of the financial issues. This might be seen as another value defining A-Tale's operation. However, the conversation leaves the question of community identity behind, together with the constraints facing sales and production, when Carl suggests a choice between two equally viable solutions (turn 20, below). Dependent on genre and format, they can either get a low budget gang of people doing it, in which case A-Tale limits their role to being advisors credited by a logo, or, they can do it in-house, but then accept that they have to format it as a serial. Given the choice of a serial, he sketches a possible way of doing it:

20) **Carl**: We could try to get someone at the film school to do it as exam topic. With a bit of assistance we could gain the right to include our logo. But it should be quite possible for us to make a series, I think. There's a series running now where they have focused on individuals in different cities. Hamburg, Cologne...In Hamburg they picked up a guy who was walking about believing he was Jesus. He stands around on different street-corners being Jesus, and then he goes home in the afternoon as if he'd been up to some regular job. He has, of course, lost his girlfriend, who did not envisage going out with someone who was developing into Jesus. We could pick 7-8 social settings in Norway. In Oslo this could be *Plata*. Then we could take one scene in Bergen, and in Trondheim, Tromsø, etc. Lift out a number of issues of interest from each place [the places suggested are the largest cities of Norway].

21) **Ivan**: I think we're talking about three things, at the very least. A hard-hitting fist on *Plata*, a satirical thing, a multi-theme/location serial. If we do the formatting now, we'll kill this. We could set aside a day of allowing ourselves to pursue the different ideas…

Ivan, being the chair of the meeting again tries to sum up and put forward a conclusion. He contends that the idea can be moved in at least three directions; a highly critical single episode program, a satirical-something, and a real world, location based serial. At the beginning of the conversation I showed that a wellspring of possible and impossible genres and formats were put into circulation. The partners were in an explorative mode, and the genre-position was open for a range of candidates. Now the idea has moved closer towards a choice amongst the many possibilities, and as we can see, the discussion has become tougher. Ivan does not want to settle on which of the three candidates are most suitable, on the contrary he thinks that the position should be open for

further elaboration in a smaller group, "If we are formatting it now, we are killing it…" (turn 21). Probably he sees that the location/documentary serial is a strong candidate for the position as it is both supported by an economic upside, and the likelihood of being able to sell it to a broadcaster.

If formatted this way, Plata will follow in the footprints of Young Fathers, Christiania, and the Red Cross. They become exemplars from which other variants may be evaluated or replicated. We may infer that because of the demonstrated success of an exemplar as a solution to simultaneous demands, ideas that may be translated into the form of such exemplars move closer towards realization than ideas just hanging without any visible links to former practice. Somehow Victor is not satisfied with such a solution. He thinks that the creative potential is not emptied yet, but to close the discussion by suggesting moving the idea from the big group to a smaller team is again contested.

The wellspring of associations is not emptied and as we can see, it is Victor who refuses to leave the idea for elaboration in a smaller group:

22) **Victor**: Do you remember that project the Swedish film director did with criminals in prison…where they filmed themselves. We could go down to *Plata*, *caste down* their stories. They'd be taking part in describing their own lives. Then we could find a convincing artist who would do their portraits…

23) **Ivan**: But who will be taking the idea further? Can we appoint a small circle to work on that?

24) **Victor**: I get a bit miffed now, Ivan. I'd like some feedback on my thoughts.

25) **Ivan**: I thought we were getting a bit too deep into the production…

26) **Victor**: This is quite an interesting process. First we have an idea, then I fuck about a bit, then we spin around a few ideas, then I come up with something serious, and then all of a sudden we're supposed to cut it...

27) **Tobias**: We need a smaller circle to take things further. Isn't it natural to include Carl-Ivan-Victor and myself since this is an idea that deserves to go in at least three directions?

This time Victor is turning away from talking about economic matters and problems concerning formatting and sales, and back to the content itself. When Ivan tries to move the idea into further elaboration in a smaller group, Victor immediately switch to a meta-reflection on the way they are discussing ideas – a

quick reminder of the close relationship between idea cultivation (invention),idea production (innovation), and organizing for the establishment of a community of practice (becoming A-Tale). All are constitutive processes through which their protopractice move and transform.

I have noticed that such meta-reflections on A-Tale's ongoing practices are quite frequent and ignited by different persons. Chapter 4 describes a range of such reflection that results in changes of their practice. In the case of Plata, above, the little dispute between Victor and Ivan ends there and then by Tobias (turn 27), who closes the discussion by suggesting who should elaborate on the idea; a group that consist of Victor, Ivan, Carl and himself. – The spokespersons of the three format-candidates.

The discussion on Plata shows us that the partners visit a diverse set of elements in order to construct (and deconstruct) the idea at hand. Sometimes the conversation flows easily and we can see how the partners build on each other's associations. Other times the conversation is marked by heavy disagreement and the partners have a hard time in finding a productive solution.

Ideas as creative knowledge objects

On the basis of the analysis of Christiania, The Red Cross, and Plata, how can we conceive of knowledge and the partners as creative professionals? Can we talk about ideas as creative knowledge objects? How does the account in this chapter relate to the common images of KIFs and knowledge work?

Starting with the understanding of knowledge, basically, there is the importance of "knowledge about". Knowledge about our contemporary society, about television formats, about conveying a message and reaching an audience, about persons in the network that may or may not be a part of the elaboration of an idea, about to whom they may sell the idea, about the economics of productions, about how to carry out an actual production, and, not the least, knowledge about what might appeal to a wide audience. Knowledge about is the substance matter from years of experience and constitutes the creative basis of the group. In order to come up with original ideas, it is crucial that the partners are able to utilize their broad range of individual knowledge and interests. As we can see from the conversations on ideas, they play with and mix a broad range of "knowledge about" elements; genres, examples of specific programs, persons/names in the industry, formats, economic matters, the attitude and policy of the broadcasters.

In chapter 2, I summarized existing perspectives on knowledge within organization studies. Since the late 1970s, the field of organizational learning has focused on the role of organizations in amplifying individual knowledge through different learning cycles onto the collective level. The "knowledge turn" in the mid 1990s added to the picture by introducing yet another distinction, that between tacit and explicit knowledge. Since then, the discussion about knowledge and learning in organizations by and large has revolved around the combination of the two dimensions of knowledge: Tacit vs. explicit, individual vs. collective knowledge.

These distinctions have been used to argue for the power of ICT in the establishment of a knowledge infrastructure (storage and diffusion throughout the organization); the strategically most significant knowledge of an organization (collective and tacit); the importance of creating alternative ways of assessing the value of knowledge (assets that are intangible, relational, subjective, co-generated, contextual etc.); the innovative potential inherent in the conversion of knowledge (from tacit to explicit and from individual to collective, and vice versa). With regard to A-Tale, the main focus in this thesis is on the generative potential of inter-practitionary work. Therefore we should expect the predominant model of knowledge conversions to be highly relevant for analyzing what is going on. There are some shortcomings of this model that I would like to put my finger on.

I agree with Amin's (2004) observation that research on firms and their use of knowledge in the last decades have demonstrated that knowledge is not of a homogenous nature but is fundamentally a heterogeneous resource that must be appreciated in its different manifestations. Whichever manifestation different authors conceptualize, the underlying view is clear: Sparks of innovation or knowledge creation emerge through the interplay of different forms of heterogeneous knowledge, through their confrontation, combination, fusion, transformation, translation and so on. Something has to happen between at least two different forms of knowledge in order to trigger the generation of novelty. This view implies that tendencies to treat knowledge as being essentially of one kind, say, to privilege the tacit over the explicit or the collective over the individual, misses the generative dance between coequal forms of knowledge (Cook and Brown 1999).

The hallmark example of such a generative dance is Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) description of the combination of the bodily oriented practice of a baker with the more symbolic-analytical practice of an engineer in a technological innovation process aimed at producing a bread baking machine. The former relying on tacit knowledge (the baker's embodied skills and gut feeling), the latter being oriented towards explicit knowledge (technical specifications). The two knowledge practices are brought together, first

through a process of socialization, in which the engineer participates in the baker's practice, then, through a process of externalization, in which the engineer defines the main technical functions the machine must fulfill in order to replicate the baker's operations (knowledge conversion).

Undoubtedly, the framework of knowledge conversion has proven to be a powerful tool in demonstrating the importance of tacit knowledge as such, and in creating an awareness of the difficulty in bridging practices that may be stereotyped as belonging to opposite sides of the mind–body dichotomy. With regard to materialization of ideas in A-Tale, however, I have not found the framework to be analytically productive. When looking at idea cultivation – in practice – it is difficult to detect a clear-cut distinction between the mentioned knowledge forms, that is, to tell the one from the other like e.g. "this excerpt of the conversation is an example of individual and tacit knowledge", or "this is an example of collective knowledge". Also, if looking at one idea process in total, e.g. the discussion of Plata from turn 1 to turn 27, I am unable to demonstrate that there is a conversion going on from, say, individual, tacit knowledge to explicit, collective knowledge, like e.g. Baumard (1999) does in his analysis of companies' "knowledge profile" before and after a strategic crisis.

Therefore, I agree with Engeström (1999b) criticizing Nonaka and Takeuchi for having constructed a process oriented framework depicting a seemingly continuous innovation process on the basis of a series of customized empirical examples that occurred independently both in time and space. The framework functions well in providing conceptual insights about the diversity of knowledge, but it is rather useless when analyzing the micro-processes of innovation in practice.

So, while perspectives on knowledge as a heterogeneous resource within organizational studies highlight the generative potential of diversity, they are less clear about what actually get the interplay between such knowledges going. In order to understand idea cultivation in A-Tale, my alternative to the "knowledge conversion" model, has been to combine recent discussion within organization theory (focus on ongoing change and change as continuous learning) with dynamic perspectives on scientific practices within studies of science and technology. In the introduction of this chapter I also made a distinction between cultivating ideas (invention) and production (the materialization of ideas into projects paid for by the broadcasters).

Objects crafted by way of simulation

When analyzing how a particular idea is materialized, exemplified by *Christiania – the last word*, I used the actor-network approach as described by Callon (1986) and Latour (1987). I described a process in which there is a need for stabilizing a widespread set of actors and interests. The partners have to make sure that they actually have the necessary actors with them, both humans and non-humans, because otherwise the whole project would collapse in the moment they start the recordings. Because of the long experience, track record, and the network of people and technology they know or are familiar with, the partners are quite powerful in stabilizing the needed configuration of actors.

Of course, in the actor-network theory, power is not something attributed to an actor. Power is the result of the creation of strategic associations. In the case of A-Tale, however, I have shown that historical relationships are valuable and re-usable resources together with their long experience within the industry. The Latourian image of a strong center of control fits quite well for A-Tale with regard to ideas in the pilot and production phase of realization.

When turning to the cultivation of ideas, the actor-network approach is relevant in a different way, that is, as a basis from which one may develop a description of the simulation the partners do when refining ideas. Probably, a community consisting of more inexperienced people would not be able to cultivate ideas with the same level of precision and efficiency. Thus, actor-network moves from being an ontology of science in the making, to an epistemic capability of a community in the making. In idea cultivation, the partners are able to *simulate significant elements* (genre, format, persons, economics, technology, broadcaster policies etc.) contributing to turning the idea into substance. Plata exemplifies that the simulation can be both expansive – in which a loose net of associations are created – and convergent – in which priorities have to be set and the efforts of stabilization are more visible.

However, in the case of idea cultivation, the actor-network's emphasize on stabilization has to be used with some care. The analysis is pushed further by situating idea cultivation within a community of loosely coupled partners. This is a follow up on chapter 4, where I looked at the processes through which the whole organization moves and transforms. A-Tale's ambition is to unlock the partners' inter-practitionary potential and become a work community within which they co-operate in a creative and non-hierarchical way. If they are not able to share and combine, there is a danger that they will turn into a mere discussion community exchanging viewpoints but without any obligations for co-generation and common deliverables (Sørensen 2002).

The image of the partners as an idea cultivating community both resembles and differs from the image of communities of practice depicted by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). Communities of practice are groups of coworkers exhibiting interactive learning characteristics based on participation and identification; the more people (want to and are allowed to) participate, the more they learn, and the more they identify with and become prominent within a group, the more motivated they are to participate even further within a group.

However, as pointed to by the increasing literature on communities of practice, CoPs have been used more to understand how knowledge is transferred and maintained across generations of coworkers – the reproduction of habitual and routine like aspects of practice – and less to understand novelty and transformation (Wenger et al. 2002). Also, it has been argued that there is a danger of groupthink or gradual loss of meaning if communities get too tight knit and there is too much inwards communicative focus. During the time I conducted my study, the partners did not resemble a stabilized work community. I have argued that they neither seek to fully stabilize their practice given the ambition of upholding a capacity for recurrent innovation.

To emphasize the simultaneity of stabilization and change does not imply that they are not on their way to become a distinct actor in the market. The becoming of A-Tale is visible through several simultaneous processes. First is the emergence of certain values as a basis for the choice and development of idea. Then comes the development of exemplars functioning as an imaginative and practical standard for the prototyping of other ideas. Third are the efforts put into visions/forward looking metaphors that both motivate the partners and guide action. At last are the re-configuration and cutting of the network as a part of branding and demarcating exclusive membership. These are all processes that go into the creation of conditions supporting serial invention/innovations, contrary to a situation where the ambition is to commercialize (and mass produce) just a single product or technology. Protopractice is the term I have offered to pinpoint this condition of movement in the form of change and stabilization.

Mutable mobiles: Objects designed for affiliation

In this chapter and in chapter 4, I have shown that the boundary between the inside and outside of A-Tale is blurred which, arguably, prevent both groupthink and lack of novelty. The partners work trough an extensive network of people. One part of the network supplies ideas and cooperate in the creation

of content, another part of the network supplies production personnel and equipment for actually carrying out projects.

In addition, the discussions about ideas have shown us that ideas are turned into substance through associating them with existing TV genres, previous well-known programs, specific persons in key roles, the policy and interests of its potential customers, their own exemplars representing success etc. This implies that an idea is not an internal object, it is an object situated at and designed for the creation of affiliation across the boundaries of the partners' community. Generally speaking, boundary work aimed at creating multiple affiliations is one of the prevailing features of A-Tale.

As we have seen, A-Tale uses several optional ways of commercializing ideas. This resembles a model of open innovation (Chesbrough 2003). In this model the company has realized that not all the high competency people are to be found in house. Instead one must find and tap into the knowledge and expertise of talented individuals outside the company. This means that the partners do not have to originate all the ideas themselves in order to profit from them. Neither do they have to realize all ideas as in-house productions. E.g. for Plata, Carl suggests a choice between two solutions (p. 166, turn 20).

Dependent on genre and format, they could either get a low budget gang of people doing a thought-provoking single program, in which case A-Tale would limit their role to being advisors credited by a logo, or, they could do it in-house, but then accept that they would have to format it as a multi-location serial in order to create a commercially sound project. It is important in a situation of open innovation to build good business models so as to ensure reasonable parts of the revenue. The open model of Chesbrough (2003) complements the actor-network and practice approach to A-Tale, by emphasizing the business sides of a community of innovation.

Going back to the question of what it takes to turn ideas into substance, the chapter shows that the minimum requirement for upholding cultivation is the partners' willingness and effort to share their thought. As a way of understanding ideas under cultivation, I have used the notion of conceptual boundary objects, a derivate from Star and Grisemer' (1989) ecological approach to cooperation across institutional and professional boundaries. Cultivating ideas is about creative co-operation between equals which means that the pattern of communication diverge from some of the typical processes outlined in the sociology of translation (Callon 1986). No one of the different partners are noticeable as the one actor attempting to become indispensable to the others, or in seeking to lock the other actors into proposed roles, or trying to define and interrelated the various roles defined, or seeking to ensure that potential spokespersons are proper representatives for their collective. That is, being the one actor pursuing interessement, problematization, enrolment, and mobilization

(Callon 1986). Because the premise of idea cultivation in Midwifery is equality and mutual trust, the partners have to be careful in making conclusions too early, or in seeking to manage the others' interpretations, or acting as if there is an argumentative battle to win.

Latour (1987) writes about immutable mobiles as artifacts that are stable and mobile across place and time, like for instance a map. Even though the map is combinable with the need of different users, its content and form of representation is often maintained in time and space by a strong center of control. In idea cultivation in A-Tale, the ideas are combinable with the viewpoints and associations of the partners. Moreover, the partners do work on articulating ideas in such a way that others can join in, co-create and identify with both the idea and the group working on the idea. Engagement and creativity is evoked by the ideas' openness and instability. Which is to say that, for the ideas to be mobile in the associative landscapes of the different partners, they have to be mutable.

This collaborative aspect in which the partners acts a equals and as mutually responsible for keeping the cultivation going, is highly visible in e.g. the discussion about Plata. Plata is a conceptual boundary object under construction and a central feature is that it is a "mutable mobile". When I use mobile here, it does not refer to the ability to move across physical distance but what we may think of as a conceptual distance, which is bridged through processes of association having mutable ideas as a focal points. The communicative acts that to turn ideas into substance, should be conceived of as suggestions in an ongoing process of construction rather as definite entities inscribing certain thinking and actions. To get the creative process going, to get the idea to move from partner to partner, the idea must both be expressed and perceived as unfinished.

Ideas as objects to be known

Can we talk about ideas as knowledge objects? According to Knorr-Cetina (2001) we can. Precisely because of their lack of definition and the partners' active engagement in search activities, ideas become knowledge objects, which differ in important ways from the habitual and customary in our culture or the embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity often discussed in literature on practice. To paraphrase Knorr-Cetina, ideas as knowledge objects are defined by their lack of completeness – only incomplete objects pose further questions, and only in considering objects as incomplete do practitioners move forwards with their work. The partners combine their broad and in-dept

knowledge about the media industry in shaping vague ideas. I have shown that often they simulate the elements most significant for turning ideas into substance. Arguably, the ability to do such simulations is a manifestation of the group's collective expertise.

Generally speaking, ideas appear as rather unknown objects in the hands of the partners who add to them, modify them, and appropriate them. Through acts of communication ideas become known objects that nevertheless may change their appearance from the phase of cultivation, to the sales phase, to the pilot-project phase, to the production phase. Ideas that are realized become prototypes in which formats and methods of work is re-usable. Practice undergoes both stabilization and change as the idea community (A-Tale) and the people involved in production learn about failure and success with regard to the materialization of specific ideas.

The moral shaping of knowledge

There is one last point I would like to make with regard to knowledge production in creative knowledge work. It concerns the visibility of morale exchanges in idea cultivation in A-Tale. The partners' conversations on ideas have shown us that giving birth to ideas does not pretend to be rooted in some kind of "scientific" or "objective" knowledge. Rather, it is expected and accepted that the partners spell out their personal values and ambitions, and their subjective opinions about what people (the audience) should be served on television. Their long experience and demonstrated success is what make their arguments both relevant and trustworthy.

The analysis of the way the partners talk about documentaries, has demonstrated at least three values that ignite the partners' enthusiasm about working with a specific idea or customer (idealistic aspect, the outlook to revolutionize a genre, the opportunity to reach a wide audience). These are moral considerations that are important in the community's self-identification project. Dealing with ideas in A-Tale is a process of improvisation, creativity and ad hoc tinkering, in order to pursue projects that – in the words of Fujimura (1996) – are doable. However, I want to add that the partners also search for what is *worth doing*.

The short version is that they are trying to get away from "commissioned productions" with all its connotations to routine projects and purely commercial considerations. But the tinge of normativity – the expectation and strong articulation of how things should be, ideally, must not be overlooked. In fact,

the significance and meaning of moral exchanges in knowledge work is little discussed within organization or management theory, both on theoretical or empirical grounds. The common image of KIFs and knowledge work is shaped by "knowledge being applied to knowledge" (Drucker 1993), and "companies as a set of knowledge conversions" Nonaka and Takeuchi (1994), "reliance on highly educated individuals doing problem solving" (Alvesson 1995), as "deliverers of specialized, private/esoteric knowledge", as "a pluralist system of knowledge types" (Spender 1998), and as "a efficient knowledge management system by extensive use of ICT" (Scarbrough and Swan 2003).

Within science and technology studies Sørensen (2005) and Silverstone (1989; 1992; 2005) emphasize that the development of new technologies is paralleled by transactional systems of meaning in which people also develop and manage standards for use of the devices they acquire. – With mobile phones comes "mobile phone morality". Idea cultivation in A-Tale frequently invites moral exchanges about content and format, and the logic of the media industry. The interesting question with respect to knowledge production in commercial enterprises like A-Tale is not whether they have a morale or not, but how visible morale exchanges are, what such exchanges do, and what role they play in the situation at hand. For A-Tale, it seems like such exchanges is the single most important element for sustaining a distinct identity and practice that extends beyond the immediate demands and pragmatic considerations of just being in business.

6 The emergence of a creative language of practice

In this chapter I will draw attention to important communicative dimensions in the creative practice of A-Tale. If the company is to succeed with their bold ambition they have to develop a productive language of practice. Conversations, discussions, dialogues, argumentations – talk in different form and content – are the most important means for idea cultivation. Talk is their creative tool. The two previous chapters have already presented a diverse set of conversations; about ideas, the partners' ambitions, the company vision, the distribution of roles, the way they manage network relations etc. Much of idea creation in A-Tale is driven by such conversations and short and focused written descriptions. It is a rather low-tech activity if compared to the use of technology (cameras, lightening, editing equipment etc.) involved in actually producing stories. By and large, idea cultivation takes place in small ad-hoc clustering of two-three people and in their weekly gathering, Midwifery. I have also shown that they frequently reflect on their own ambitions and expertise. The social bond between them is to a great extent constituted by ongoing streams of talk. Some of the partners even claimed that the layout of the office building restrained them in keeping a "broad band" communication going, and that the need for easy access to each other, was bigger than the need for quiet office space.

The first communicative dimension to be discussed concerns the opposing aims or purposes that ideas often have to be related to. "Objects of talk" represents different values. Their juxtaposition creates tensions the partners need to negotiate in order to carry on constructive discussions that fulfill both the need to create individual commitment and audience-appealing artwork with legitimacy in the field. The second dimension is about the need to keep the community open for a broad range of conversational forms. As will be shown, there are several different ways of discussing ideas. The conversations oscillate between subjective-emotional utterances and impersonal, bureaucratic-like judgments. Also between rather anarchistic turn-taking dialogues and structured testing of the robustness of a pitch. I argue that the community must afford a variety of conversational forms in order to maintain creativity.

I also relate the diversity of conversational forms to the difficulty the partners have in deciding right away whether an idea has a potential or not. E.g. everybody that has worked with concepts for TV or film knows that a seemingly vague or bad idea at a certain point in time may be combined with another idea sometimes later and then turn into an excellent concept. So, instead of deciding right away whether to accept or reject, they try to establish a reservoir of ideas that allow for coincidences, maturation, and combination over time.

The third dimension concerns the ceaseless chase for the community's signature style. This style has to communicate well with external decision makers in order to attract resources. But the style also needs to be unique and exclusive in order to attain recognition for their talent and, thus, professional legitimacy in their field. How are the partners' thoughts about a signature style visible in the definition of ideas as a typical A-Tale product? What strategies do they use in order to maintain a position where they can be true to their artistic ambition at the same time as they communicate enough with established conventions so as to attract resources and wider recognition?

Objects of talk

To identify objects of talk, I will use a framework sketched by Lyotard (1997/1979). Drawing on Wittgenstein, Lyotard relates knowledge and social bonds to different kinds of language games. According to Lyotard, all kinds of social practices and cultural phenomena may be regarded as a range of different language games. Science, politics, fine arts, economics etc., operate within distinct spheres of activity. They have their own rules that define and regulate the game. Therefore, Lyotard argues, knowledge is a question of expertise that goes beyond the simple determination and application of the criteria of truth – the typical quest of science – extending to the determination and application of other criteria such as function (common criteria amongst engineers), justice (law/legislation), aesthetics (fine arts), and efficiency (economics).

We may interpret this as a framework that outline the complex problem of inter-disciplinarity. Why it is difficult to operate across the boundaries of distinct practices. Lyotard argues that we have to acknowledge the differences, not the least because multivoicity is indispensable for creativity. I will not go further into theoretical debate on who is to decide what knowledge is and by what criteria knowledge is to be judged. Rather, I will use Lyotard's discussion to look at the criteria prevalent in idea cultivation, and how the partners try to reconcile their differences.

In chapter 5, I argued that knowledge in A-Tale differs from scientific knowledge in the sense of pursuing "facts" or "truths" about the world analyzable in the form of statements free of positive or negative modalities (Latour 1987). Clearly, the partners use "propositional knowledge" in their discussions, but knowledge in relation to their practice is a broader notion. It includes "knowing how", e.g. knowing how things works in the media industry and knowing how to formulate "good" utterances about the idea at hand or the kind of community A-Tale should be, or the possibilities that exists. In addition, it includes judgments of whether an idea is thought-provoking, if the story to be told raises the question of injustice in our contemporary society, whether the dramatical content and universal theme of a television program will appeal to wide audiences, if the idea represents an opportunity to "revolutionize" a genre, if the formatting of the idea have a economic upside, whether an idea will contribute to A-Tale's signature style or not.

In a knowledge perspective, search for "truth", "justice", "aesthetics", and "efficiency" represent different language games and thereby different ways of creating knowledge. Even though Lyotard is preoccupied with the discourses that define major areas of activity in or society, he claims that the dominant objects of discourse are not static entities within secluded spheres of our social life. They are objects to be known, objects to be decided on, evaluated, and transformed. Translated into the discussion on ideas in A-Tale, I see that in the creative process, knowledge both includes and extends the application of uncontested propositions. I see that different objects of talk can be mixed in a constructive manner and thereby contribute to the stabilization of an idea, but they may also collide and push the idea towards the breaking point.

Look for instance at the way the partners move through different objects of talk in the discussion about making something on "contemporary farming":

1) **Ivan** [presents the idea]: There's a lot of insecurity in the world we live in today. It is busy, stressful – and it's the same whether one lives in Oslo or in Chile. However, some people have a different relationship to time. I think farmers do. The idea is to pick four farmers from different parts of the world and do parallel follow-ups. The little farm in Kenya is bound to differ from the big farm in Arizona, who is different from the potato farmer in Jæren [farming district on the south-west coast of Norway]. But they are likely to have something in common, no matter how they run their farm. We give four farmers a camera each, and then they can make their own video diaries where they talk about what they do, and show us what they're doing.

2) **Greenfield**: I think the topic is very interesting, but the angle is a bit too naïve. Farmers are losing their farmer status. They're not independent producers. You can't produce the food for your own consumption because you don't own it. You are only one link in a production chain where one feeds into a larger system of foodstuffs. What they have in common is that they are industrial workers.

3) **Thor**: I think this could give us an interesting portrait of today's world... I think they have something in common, something in their way of thinking: If we make a cosmology based on the four – what they have in common may be that they are experiencing industrialisation.

Ivan's point of departure is the universal feeling of a constant lack of time in our modern world. Stress and disquiet is the result. What have we lost? The idea is to make people aware of what we are longing for by telling a story about an alternative life form through four farmers located in different countries. Greenfield (turn 2) agrees on the observation of our hectic life style, but he thinks that to look to farmers for an alternative is illusionary. This demonstrates a lack of "factual knowledge" on what contemporary farming is all about. Thor suggests that industrializing instead of an alternative life form could be the underlying theme for the four farmers. However, Ivan does not want to give up on the idea of portraying the blessing harmony of living close to nature.

4) **Ivan**: I went to Northern Norway the other summer. Up until five years ago all the little patches of field were farmed. You hardly get that any more. There's something about the proximity to life and to whatever grows in the soil that's been lost.

5) **Greenfield**: But one needs to take a well-informed angle. With genetic engineering and the patenting of genes a farmer who uses genetically modified food may be sued. For instance, within rice growing in Vietnam they are not allowed to use rice that gives greater yields just like that, because someone owns the genes of this specially engineered rice.

6) **Ivan**: Then we're onto a documentary about global food production. That is not what's in this idea. I have greater confidence in the personal and familiar than in system studies and more research-like angles.

7) **Thor**: Right, but one touches upon it via these four farmers. We get a reflection of macro conditions in these four. They are not

workers, they make a living from what they do, but they experience pressure from various directions.

8) **Live**: I think we're on to something here.

9) **Greenfield**: If we are going to say something about the larger context embedded within the small, we need proper knowledge about the world. We need to be informed.

10) **Ivan**: What most of the documentaries we have talked about so far in Midwifery have in common is that they enter into people's heads and people's lives. We're not supposed to capture research findings or high-level political discussions.

Again Greenfield advocates that if the topic is farmers, then there should be a more "knowledgeable and factual angle" (turn 5), for instance the power concentration and inequality resulting from patent rights and genetic manipulation. Ivan disagrees. He does not want to make a documentary about the "food production" in the world. That is not the core of his idea. He is after personal and eye opening stories contrasting the pulsating, cool but stressful urban lives. He does not want a "system or scientific" angle – no research results and no geo-political viewpoints.

The object of talk moves from "a sense of" our modern lifestyle, to "facts about" contemporary farming, to a display of "alternative lifestyles", to a "systemic critique", to "personal and intimate" stories. Is the beauty and power of the story to be found in the intimate and low-voiced alternative or in the grandiose and systemic critique? Should they keep to "facts" or portray a few personal stories? Are they after making justice for a weak sociological group (farmers in developing countries), or focusing on aspects of our lives we can hardly do without? The discussion about contemporary farming together with the conversations presented in chapter 4 and 5, demonstrate noticeable tensions in their language games.

There is a tension in the organizing of their enterprise, stemming from the need to manage both cultivation and realization of ideas – pinpointed by one of the partners, (p.80), "the challenge is to find the right mix between structure and anarchy [...] an idea holder definitely needs a test-panel and a creative group to accelerate his thoughts. It should be fun, engaging, inspiring. Still, we should operate like a manufacturer of ideas." Manufacture evokes images of efficiency and a capacity for processing a high number of ideas, which has to be aligned with the enthusiasm and unpredictability of artistic creativity. There is also a tension stemming from the partners' different fields of expertise and the challenge of becoming something more than a mere discussion community. E.g. consider the discussion on selling expertise vs. learning something new: Says

Live (p.101), "A-Tales's success is measured externally. It means that everybody here should work on the basis of their cutting edge competency." This is a claim to which Carl and Ivan respond, "But it is also important to ask what each and one of us want to become […]", "my [Ivan's] ambition is to write manuscripts, [which is something he has never done before]." Obviously it is easier to sell proven expertise in the market, than the ambition of learning something new. However, it is the opportunities to learn new things that make several of the partners prefer this community before another.

At last, there is a tension due to the formatting of ideas in which they may choose amongst a variety of genres at the same time as some of the formats/genres hold a larger economic upside than others. Says Ivan (p. 98), "We shall innovate by twisting formats, not necessarily by inventing a completely new format." He continues this line of thought in the discussion about Plata (p.134), "I have two objections. I don't mean to be negative, but... First of all, this type of one-off, national kind of programme is not economic. A story about Plata would be that sort of national type of thing. Financially speaking, pursuing it wouldn't pay off." I think that for A-Tale to exist as a small actor in the creative industries – as a commercial and artistic actor – they have to bee good at morphing contradictory demands throughout the course of their talk. Creative knowledge work, then, is the business of forming sustainable conglomerates out of different relevant objects of talk in their idea cultivation.

A-Tale claims authorship in idea cultivation – a metaphor inspired by the "practical author" (Holman and Thorpe 2003) – meaning they do not consider themselves as reproducers of the rules and standards set by others or the culture of broadcasting and movie making. The creative language of practice – constituted by the way they interact, a range of possibility seeking acts, and the actual creation and evaluation of their ideas and stories – stretches and handles the tension between the given and the innovating. Coock and Brown's (1999) illustrates how we may conceive of language use in such a setting (p. 393):

> "The activity that conversation affords is not limited to a merely additive back and forth exchange of information. When Emma says to Andrew 'I've been doing it this way', Andrew not only adds that knowledge to his own, but he also takes it into the context of his own experiences, skills, sensitivities, and the like (and vice versa when Andrew makes his reply). By placing Emma's knowledge into Andrew's contexts, the conversation can evoke novel associations, connection, and hunches – it can generate new insights and new meaning. As everyone has experienced, a conversation's back-and-forth not only dynamically affords the exchange of knowledge, it can also afford the generation of new knowledge, since

each remark can yield new meaning as it is resituated in the evolving context of the conversation."

To this example, they add the conclusion that engaging in such a conversation is a practice that does epistemic work; it is a form of knowing. This form of knowing represent a shift in focus from performing operations on existing knowledge to making something new. The excerpts from the partners' conversations presented above show how they make use of different kinds of knowledge in their generative dialogues. To put it bluntly, both "facts" and "feelings" and "knowledge about" ways of conveying stories.

To understand idea cultivation as creative knowledge work requires that we analyze discussions or conversations above the sentence or the clause, i.e. to be concerned with communication in social contexts, in interaction between speakers. I have argued that ideas may be seen as conceptual boundary objects towards which the partners direct their attention, co-operate, and develop a group identity. Ideas are generated by way of different objects of talk, that is, objects to be transformed, evaluated, and decided on. Ideas then become competence-building measures, although they do not belong to the language game of describing or declaring something as true or false.

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, "The A-Tale project" is situated in the creative industries, which is lying at the crossroads between the arts, business and technology (technology here refers to new and more low cost opportunities due to a shift from analogous to digital film and television production and transmittance). The sector comprises a large variety of creative fields, from those heavily industrialized such as advertising and marketing, broadcasting, film industries, internet and mobile content industry etc., to those less industrialized, like the traditional fields of visual and performing arts. It should come as no surprise that there are collisions between the ideal/artistic ambitions of the partners and the commercial demands in their discussions.

Such collisions are a result of the partners' attempt to draw different spheres of activity into one another. In order to integrate the many issues involved in living from ideas at a more general level, we may use the metaphor of a "morph" between two value systems: the Protestant work ethic (considered by Max Weber the very spirit of capitalism) and the bohemian – the 1960s – ethic. This kind of combination of seemingly incommensurable spheres of life, is briefly discussed in the EU foresight report on the future of creative industries (Marcus 2005).

The Protestant work ethic is essentially mainstream and conformist, based on logic and structure, traditionally pursued within the structure of social institutions, like large corporations. In its logic, the institutions will be productive and efficient as long as the individuals conform to be productive

and efficient. The bohemian ethic is more hedonistic and its form of discipline is mainly aesthetic. However, it has spiritual and socio-political dimensions, and it tends to be more intuitive than logical, and more individualistic than conformist.

From such a perspective we may expect that the most prominent tension present in A-Tale will be that between commercial demands (to make mainstream productions) and artistic or aesthetic freedom (to preserve their peculiarity). Interestingly, my observations in A-Tale show that many of the conversations also revolve around bringing "justice" to weak voices in our contemporary society.

"The Morph" between justice, economics & aesthetics

To generate the content of ideas is a work of imagination and the conversations are characterized by free association. The dialogue is characterized by a wellspring of references and associations, high energy and laughter, especially when the pitch bears an immediate appeal to their ambitions and company identity. It is a mode in which, ideally, the demands of actually producing an idea should not be taken into consideration. After a while the discussion moves on to how the idea can be translated into the TV medium and the language of motion pictures (the partners use "formats" for short). The choice of format soon evokes the question of what is possible to sell to the broadcasters. Then the discussion concerns the goals, the structural premises, the ways of doing things, and the level of competency in the world of broadcasting.

To be creative on the content of an idea, often evokes their aesthetic ambition and drive for making justice to weak voices in or society. To be creative on the genre/format of an idea often turn into a discussion about economic feasibility. Content versus form creates a special tension that has to be accounted for. When analyzing idea cultivation, I observe that they often try to morph the object of "justice", "aesthetics" and "revenue". Which means they try to combine the object of bringing justice to weak voices in our society, with the object of maintaining an aesthetically high quality on the way the story is told, with the object of generating an economic upside.

The choice of formats is based on long experience and judgment of how the industry operates. Being creative on content and format means finding ways to achieve what they want without being rejected by the decision makers in the TV industry. Says Victor, "It is no more than a handful decision makers we encounter when we come to present ideas. These are not the creative people, but the ones one who run budgets and are preoccupied with how many are going to watch this program." To come up with exciting formats that are

acceptable for the external decision makers and fulfill the partners' ambitions, is a real challenge.

Take for example A-Tale's ambition of enhancing the status of TV documentaries. I heard independently from several of the partners that they prefer factual programs and documentaries as shown on Discovery, National Geographic or BBC to the easy going, brain dead entertainment shows. E.g. when asking Carl where he gets his ideas from, he answers: "I like documentaries and watch them a lot. The Swedes are really good at making them. From them we could learn a lot. After this terrible, trash, reality wave, people want quality content again. I am sure about that."

Victor comments in an interview about their focus on documentaries, "It is important to plunge into the range of experiences, people and places of our time and of our changing world. Especially those stories often ignored by the wider media." Also Ivan comments on the tendencies in broadcasting: "I think we have a tendency to laugh ourselves to death, to entertain ourselves to death. Which is why we should do a few documentaries." Or as Victors claims when talking about doing something in cooperation with the Red Cross, "when the world of TV looks too bloody awful, you may of course take the huff and quit and start doing something different. Or you may say, how the fuck can you put up some resistance. If we could possibly manage to pull off a series like this, which is about caring, which is about helping a large organisation that is important to the weak of this world...well, then that would act as a counterbalance to this mindless commercial pressure." What is at stake here is the determination and application of the criteria of justice; to make content that matters, that might change the world a bit.

Therefore, they talk about documentaries as an important genre but includes into their judgments that the genre unfortunately holds a low status in the TV prime time slot. Documentaries are rarely transmitted prime time, which means they seldom reach out to the mainstream audience. To really make an impact, to exploit the power of the television medium, documentaries have to reach out to wider audiences – which mean that they have to be transmitted prime time, and in consequence, have to compete with pure feel-good entertainment. This soon evokes the criteria of efficiency/economic feasibility; concerning the cost of producing single program documentaries; concerning the policy of the broadcasters; and concerning what is economically sustainable for their own organization.

For instance, when discussing "Plata" Live claims (p.135), "I wish things weren't like that. That it rested a stronger responsibility on the channels with respect to rising debate in society. With the existing responsibility we wouldn't even pull in half the money it took us to make a thing like that [Plata]. Maybe this is an idea for a one-man firm where someone is willing to spend his entire

life doing one thing. In our place, it is impossible to financially justify that sort of approach. But maybe we could manage to turn it into a series." Live argues that a serial is better off than a single episode program.

The process of morphing "justice" and "revenue" becomes even more clear when Victor argues that it is possible to achieve both by being inventive, "it is possible for documentaries to compete with pure entertainment programs about a place in the regular prime time slot, if they accept what the television medium is asking for – a seasonal program […] I think that if we accept the prerequisites of the TV medium […] Then we can make documentaries just as entertaining. We can outperform these brainless game shows or reality TV with an interesting piece of the real world." In the wake of this argument, follows the determination and application of the third object, namely "aesthetics."

Victor suggests altering the documentary genre a little bit by introducing and emphasizing the "dramatic element" of both the stories to be told and the way they stories are told. "Drama" means a personal process that develops over time. It has to be a story that has a visible line of development over time so that it can be formatted into a serial rather than a single program. And the story must be of the kind that the audience can identify which means it must have an emotional appeal that ties the audience to the screen. Further, the personal stories will be accompanied with rich contextual pictures of e.g. landscapes or a city in motions, the use of music to put people in the mood. When discussing documentary ideas, "justice" and "economics" soon collide but combined with "aesthetics" possibilities they slide towards a possible solution, which, of course, does not solve every problem.

The idea of making a documentary serial faces a new challenge along another frontier. This time the problem stems from the controversies concerning reality TV. When emphasizing the everyday drama of everyday people, and formatting the idea into a serial, the documentary faces the danger of being classified as just another reality show. The audience and critics may lose interest and downplay the informative part of it. Victor comments on this in the case of *Christiania – the last word* (see p.117), "maybe there is a danger in formatting it into a serial, but Christiania is a *documentary serial*, not a reality show, and we will keep calling it that. We do not ask anybody to do anything, no competition, no set ups, no votes. We just ask some people to allow us to get to know them a little better and through that paint a larger picture about what life is like in such a society. So it is a documentary serial!" This insistence on keeping the three objects – justice, efficiency and aesthetics – in alignment will pay off if the audience and the critics agree. Then A-Tale has been able to achieve something that contributes to their standing as a creative community.

What would happen if they did not strive for the morph of opposing objects in idea cultivation? When discussing *Plata* (p.134) another format than

a docudrama was in fact suggested. Says Ivan, "I watched the documentary on the Twin Towers yesterday. It made me sick. It's based on a unique and horrific historical event, of course. But I don't think we should go for a drama production or go for humour. That idea about Harald Eia is a good one. Some politicians ought to be hanged. We should make one programme that hits like a fist in the stomach. Not a series." Ivan points to the risk of the message to get lost in the format. A single program is a possible solution, given that they are willing to overlook the economic side of it, or, as Carl is onto, if they can forget about doing it in-house, and instead try to inspire a low budget gang of people to do it, in which case A-Tale can take the role as advisors credited by a logo. In both cases, "justice" prevail whichever of the other object of talk. The question has then turned from how the tension between objects can be resolved, to what can be done in order to achieve this single object. Obviously, they would not earn money if this format was the regular solution to ideas, but as one production within a broad portfolio, it could be a wise thing to do. In the words of Tobias, "what we may ask ourselves is what A-Tale's overall profile ought to be. It's possible that we should make something we don't make money from, but that clearly says something about who we are."

From the discussion so far in this chapter, what does it mean to be creative in A-Tale? When I talked with a couple of the partners about the relation between ideas, TV-formats and creativity, it became clear that their ambition is first and foremost to twist and bend and experiment with formats already known, not necessarily to invent something completely new. However, choosing and creating content and format is rarely done without evoking their ambitions of being noticed by a wide audience, and being noticed means getting their things transmitted prime time.

Such a display of tensions between the profitable and popular, and the ideal and independent, or, between serious content and brainless entertainment, is visible in many of the ideas discussed in Midwifery. Creative work in A-Tale is therefore much about managing opposing criteria that matter a lot to them. "Documentaries" is a genre in which the partners' contradictory ambitions – such as "wide audience", "prime time", and "revenue" – are difficult but possible to achieve. *E Young Fathers* and *Christiania – the last word* is the concrete results of their creative invention.

I have also touched upon the danger of doing such combination – a blurring and dissolution of the message/content. Something might get lost if they, too early and too efficiently, combine different objects of talk. Introducing the economics and constraints of the TV world too early into the discussion obviously threaten the other objects of talk in idea cultivation. Ivan more than once has warned that formatting ideas too early means killing them. Such utterances partly reveal his background from advertising, in which the turnover

of ideas treated and rejected are much higher than in television, and in which the economics associated with every advertising project is relatively speaking more modest. Ivan is used to think about the message to be conveyed first, then the medium to convey it. The guys from television are used to start with the constraints and possibilities of the TV medium and then search for ideas and formats to fit in.

Midwifery is the most important collective arena for idea cultivation. It is one of the few occasions that the group as a whole is gathered face to face. In this arena the imaginative dialogue is supposed to function at its outmost. However, after a while, they decided to reorganize Midwifery into two meetings (see chapter 4, p.87). The new Midwifery is thought to be a place for purely imaginative conversations. The new production meeting is thought to be a place for discussing hard-core matters concerning sales, project execution etc. The aim of this reorganization is not to downplay the importance of "efficiency/economics" but to put the application of the criteria on hold in idea cultivation.

As it has turned out, it has been difficult in practice to solve the ongoing contest between thinking and associating freely versus doing reality checks by asking questions about the feasibility of a format or to what decision makers they are to sell the idea. One reason may be that the TV medium inhibits profound technical and economic constraints which one just has to be aware of in order to avoid wasting time on far fetched ideas. Talking about such constraints function as a reminder; the group should be informed about the consequences of their decisions. If they e.g. go for a single "eye opening" episode on a specific topic, it may very well be a statement with an attitude from the hands of A-Tale, but it will be an expensive statement.

To decide which format a story should have may be conceived as restraining creativity, but not necessarily in a negative sense. Contingencies can be bypassed, i.e. they can be viewed as opportunities for inventing new rules of the game. For instance, given the logics of the broadcasters, we saw from the discussion on *Plata* that the idea was about to be solved in a way that both fulfilled the ambitions of A-Tale and the requirements of the broadcasters. So far, it seem like such tensions is a part of actually leveling the quality of ideas. It is the difference between the objects of talk that make the partners aware of constraints and possibilities – in other words, such difference is a basis for inventiveness.

A range of conversational forms affords creativity

In this section I would like to draw attention to another communicative dimension: The broad range of conversational forms observable in idea cultivation. It seems like the partners intentionally try to keep the community open for several ways of discussing ideas. One reason seems to be that openness towards diversity in conversational forms affords creativity. Conversations in idea cultivation oscillate between subjective-emotional utterances and impersonal, bureaucratic-like judgments, and also between rather anarchistic turn-taking dialogues and structured testing of the robustness of a pitch.

Perspectives on conversations as a kind of practice that does generative knowledge work is interesting, especially because they emphasize the shift from performing routine operation on existing knowledge to making something new (Coock and Brown 1999). While Lyotard (1997/1979) argues that the very difference between language games and objects of discourse, is a requirement for inventiveness, Coock and Brown (1999) emphasize that the quality of the dialogue itself is crucial with regard to the generation of new knowledge, i.e. that people actually know how to tell, and know how to listen. In Midwifery, it seems like the intention is to create a creative space in which the conversations resembles the kind of free speech to be found amongst friends. Friends are quite free to use any available resource when talking, to change games from one utterance to the next: questions, requests, assertions, and narratives are launched and replied. This is not to say that such a conversation is without rules, but that the rules allow and encourage a large degree of flexibility and diversity of utterances.

Another reason for the diversity in conversational forms is the fluid character of ideas: Some ideas are mature other need several rounds of refinement before they reach a producible level. Some ideas are rejected right away; some is met with great enthusiasm, other with heavy disagreement, which the partners nevertheless agree on pushing a step further. A seemingly vague or bad idea at a certain point in time may be combined with another idea some time later and then turn into an excellent concept. The range of conclusions on ideas in Midwifery is broader than simply acceptation or rejection. So, instead of deciding right away whether to accept or reject, they try to establish a reservoir of ideas that allow for coincidences, maturation, and combination over time.

When discussing knowledge and the partners as creative professionals in chapter 5, I emphasized that it is difficult to pin down decisions on ideas to a single person with enough power to act on behalf of the others, or one critical

argument that counts more than others, or one piece of information that stabilize the idea. I showed that the partners make use of few formal criteria for assessing an idea; whether it is good or not, whether it is worth further elaboration, or whether it should be filed for later occasions. The three rather informal criteria that seemed to crystallize as time passed by were the ideal aspect of a project, the possibility of twisting a format/genre, and the outlook of reaching a wide audience. Looking through several discussions about different ideas, it also seems like the forms the conversations take as they progress constitute a basis on which they can "classify" an idea.

The conversations take form through the partners' spontaneous responsiveness to the others, sometimes with the voice of pure enthusiasm, sometimes with less commitment. The forms are not prescribed. They emerge as they speak. They are not mental representations or objects of thought requiring explicit interpretation, but a sense of the direction and quality of the conversations as it develops dynamically. In this section I analyze several conversations about ideas on this background, and in order to make the notion of conversational forms more tangible, I have represented the dialogues graphically and through suitable metaphors like for instance "Whirl-like" conversation or "Patchwork-conversation." I use these representations in order to understand the generative role of language use. When I showed the interpretation to a couple of the partners, I received positive feedback on the accuracy of the representations in regard to explicating what is going on. In the following, three different dialogues on different ideas are presented. They are all taken from Midwifery.

The Patchwork

The first is a dialogue about a documentary idea, *Waiters waiting*, introduced to the others by Ivan. It is Ivan and his colleague, Jim who is the origin of the idea:

1) **Ivan**: This is based on something I read in the newspaper, which said that 80 per cent of people are unhappy about their work. Jim and I were talking about farmers the other day, but this thing about the 80 per cent made me end up with waiters... No other occupation consists of so many people who actually want to do something different. This is the case all over the world. We can establish a contrast to the guy who actively applied to do a formal education in order to be a waiter. He's an

exception. The vast majority go around dreaming about something else they'd rather do.

2) **Greenfield**: [Counting how many are seated around the table] Few people here are happy with what they're doing, then…

3) **Thor**: During certain periods in life, of course, one is waiting to do something different.

4) **Tale**: Is this not just a mere reflection of a general kind…?

5) **Peter**: I think this is one of those 'are you what you are doing or are you what you want to become' type of issue.

6) **Greenfield**: New York and Los Angeles are the most obvious places where all waiters are actors. That's what they're saying. Maybe we should do something on people who wish for something different instead...Their dream, and the road to making it come true.

This conversation commences from a pitch that at first seems quite concrete and clear. Waiters, more than other occupational groups, are in reality just waiting for the opportunity to do something else. Why is this kind of work such a transitory activity? And what about the few who actually want to become waiters? Shortly after being introduced, another facet is added to the theme which in fact turn the attention away from the idea about waiters as a group, to the few people who make an income now on whatever, e.g. being waiters, but who really want to become something else (turn 6). It is possible to make a documentary about some people longing for something, people that try to realize a dream. The dialogue goes on:

7) **Ivan**: Yes, rather than doing something on waiters as a group…

8) **Peter**: Life is certainly more meaningful when there's a goal to strive for.

9) **Greenfield**: Yes, but what goal? Many people want things to be different, in different areas of life. I, for a start, am not very happy about my car.

10) **Live**: Life consists of large or small things one wishes were different.

11) **Thor**: The interesting question is what might have been different if one weren't doing exactly this thing. The fact that we don't know what would have been different may make life slightly unbearable in the search for alternatives. You know that *Sliding Doors* [an American movie] phenomenon: One might, for

example, have entered in this place, might have gone somewhere different, taken a right turn, or maybe not. The 'What if' situation.

12) **Ivan**: Maybe there's a connection between this and the Swankas.[29] They dream of something different…?

13) **Thor**: 200 years ago we didn't know of or think about different choices. What our ancestors were doing, determined what you would become, and that was that. If the father were a tailor then the son would be a tailor. Now we're much more informed about possibilities, and we are faced with choices all the time. My great grand father knew early on what he was to become.

14) **Greenfield**: That sort of thing still exists. Just take Vietnam as an example. We go there when... There's a small village there, where nobody has even been to Hanoi.

15) **Ivan**: Yes, waiters often know what they want to do, which is not to be a waiter.

Thor (turn 11) introduces another take on the idea; to look at our contemporary society as one in which people are overloaded with choices. It is not a question of pursuing the one dream, rather the challenge is to handle an eternal "what if" situation. Then, Greenfield suggests yet another approach which is a bit more critical about today's society (turn 16, below). We are too preoccupied with external, high status goods and the travel in our inner world is lost:

16) **Greenfield**: What if we distance ourselves from the present by a hundred years. Today there is little focus on the inner journey. External reward has never been more intensely focused than right now. Instant gratification is the thing of our times. One is supposed to acquire lots of material goods as evidence on what one is worth.

17) **Live**: Some waiters really are the best actors. That is, they use the best parts of themselves to play just that, a waiter. People in the military and those who are waiters learn to deliver, it is expected that one does a good job and the good waiters put up a splendid performance night after night.

18) **Ivan**: Is there a theme here, or what?

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[29] Swankas denotes a group of poor South African men. On Saturday nights they dress up in their most expensive shoes and suits to go and compete for the prize of best dressed man. Some of these events were documented by photographer T. J. Lemon and won the Arts Stories category in the World Press Award about Africa.

creation – to acknowledge that not every idea has to be realized right away, means that they are putting the criterion of "efficiency/economics" on hold.

To explore further how conversations take on different forms and afford different conclusions, let us take a look at a conversation that contrasts *Waiters waiting*. The idea presented below was much more mature when introduced in Midwifery than *Waiters waiting*. It may be characterized as a "hot air balloon" ready for lift off.

The Balloon

Victor presents a proposal from an amateur production community that so far has been producing commercials and short films. They want to cooperate with A-Tale in the making of an animation movie based on a novel, *Traveler*, of a popular novelist. Victor presents the idea. He says that the production community wants to make a long play film instead of a short film because they know that there is no revenue on short films. But since they do not have the experience in the making of long play movies, they want to co-operate with A-Tale.

1) **Ivan**: I have read the book. The story appeals to both children and grown ups. Finally, someone comes up with an animation project, which is something else than the good old fairy tales.

2) **Victor**: My daughter heard the story in school, read by her teacher. She liked it a lot.

3) **Tobias**: I think this project is terrific. The drawings are there already [in the book], they just need to be animated, and the base story is very good. But the challenge is to find the right voices for the characters and turn the story into a manuscript that works well.

4) **Carl**: It is about time we a get something else than Pokémon, which has no story at all.

5) **Victor**: *Prod. Lab* says they can produce it for ten millions.

6) **Thor**: If they are able to carry out the technical part for ten millions, there is no reason at all to hesitate. Let us go for it.

The making of an animation based on the *Traveler* is an idea with a high level of maturity, judged by the immediate approval from the group. They do not have to process the content of the idea because the base-story is well written and

well known to both children and grown-ups. The artwork of the illustrator is easily turned into animation. The cost of production is low. The amateur production community that came up with the idea is characterized as a competent and interesting partner.

The only concerns are related to elements of executing: Who is to be the director, who is going to turn the text into a manuscript, etc. A crucial point is whether this is a project they could do completely on their own, or it is an opportunity to establish a long-term relationship to the amateur production community. They agree on the moral responsibility and advantage of joining forces. Altogether, little time is spent on this idea. It is thumb up on every aspect considered. The discussion may be thought of as a process of lifting off a Balloon; every positive reaction adds hot air to the balloon and the conclusion is clear; there is nothing more to do, but to loosen the mooring (see fig. 3):

of the Promised Land; one sees the golden opportunities, but there is a long way and many obstacles to overcome in order to actually get there.

While "the whirl" is directed towards minimum requirement for an idea to constitute a good idea, "the balloon" exemplifies a mature idea and the focus is more on the method than the subject matter – how to go about in order to realize the project. In contrast, "the patchwork" envisions such broad landscape of possibilities that the story to be told is lost. There are of course other relevant forms than the ones mentioned above. My ambition has not been to define the widest range of possible forms, and other graphical pictures may be used to envision the forms. My intention is to substantiate a way of thinking about language use when doing work in such a setting. Therefore, I have tried to find some illustrations that are accurate enough to discuss the generative power of language.

It seems like it is neither the one argument, a serial of logically organized arguments, nor a process of just muddling-through that culminate in a conclusion of whether a pitch is up to something. Rather, it is a sense of the energy in the conversations together with the overall form the conversations takes after letting it flow for a while. The ideas, presented by one or the other of the partners, orally and/or written, are like pieces of clay to be molded. We may borrow a metaphor from Mintzberg (1987) in which he compares the art of strategy making in organization to pottery, and managers to potters sitting at a wheel molding the clay and letting the shape of the object evolve in their hands.

The features of the clay at the outset as well as the idea of what to make is a part of the process of interaction, which finally results in some kind of object that emerge as a mix of the artist's plan and the constraints and possibilities in the matter at hand. I want to emphasize that a view on conversational forms as interactional accomplishments between the partners also have to include a view on the substance matter – the maturity/immaturity of the idea – as one of the defining elements in the interaction.

As noticed, ideas are on different levels of maturity when presented in Midwifery. In industrial terms, the function of the conversations is to manufacture (cultivation) raw material (ideas) into high quality projects. The partners frequently reflect on the way they do things. It seems like the reflection they did on what kind of conversational forms had been dominant in Midwifery was a resource for refining their practice. As formulated by Ivan, "An idea-holder definitely needs a test-panel and a creative group to accelerate his thoughts." By this he argues that every initial idea is to be critically scrutinized by others. However, as they articulated in the same Midwifery as *The Computer* evolved into a "Whirl-like" conversation, too much of the invaluable time they are gathered face to face has been spent on deconstruction. They subscribe this to the low level of maturity of many ideas when introduced in Midwifery.

To spend less time on deconstruction and more time on construction, they conclude that ideas should be on a higher level of maturity when pitched for the group as a whole. Enhancing the ability to recognize conversational patterns that emerge when they discuss pitches, is a means for increasing the efficiency of cultivation in terms of the number of ideas processed in Midwifery and in terms of reducing the time spent on being critical.

Of course, it is not easy to assess whether an idea holds a good enough quality to be introduced to the others. I have shown earlier in this chapter that efficiency is but one of the relevant objects of talk in creative work. I also want to stress, that the setting in Midwifery is such that nobody is given the power to decide single-handedly that a certain idea is good or not. If this was the case, then the partners would be a gathering of independent economic units localized together in order to share overhead costs.

Midwifery is established on the conviction that they are able to be more creative and more original when acting as a group than as single persons. Another aspect of the conversational setting is that there is a range of possible conclusions on ideas – to decide whether a idea is good or bad is only one possible outcome, other conclusions are that the idea should be filed for a later occasion, that two or three persons should do more work on it, that the idea might show its potential by combining it with other ideas, that it should mature for a while before discussing it again, that someone shall take the idea and talk with someone in their network about it etc.

Midwifery is designed so as to create a pool of ideas over time, in which a few are rapidly moved towards production while others can be actualized later or never. Therefore it is important that Midwifery afford a range of conversational forms. If they only had "balloon"-kind of ideas – clear-cut and appealing – they would become like a mini version of the National Film Fund whose role is to assess ready-made ideas (project proposals). "Balloon"-kind of ideas is excellent, however, in that they represent moments of sharp vision for what they stand for as a group. Or, if there were a tendency for the conversations to become "deconstructive whirls" only, or "patchworks" adding yet another possible angle to an idea, then the partners would never enter the stage of actually producing something. If the partners were not able to deconstruct some ideas and to enter into flights of open imagination on others, the chance of really creating something original would diminish. To analyze creative work of this kind as constituted by diverse forms of conversations, might be a key indicator distinguishing a sound community of innovation from another. Mastering a variety of forms is thus a part of the collective knowing and rhythm developed by and through conversational interaction in the group. This indicates that the partners are about to develop a certain language of practice that probably will function as a means of stabilization over time.

The emergence of a signature style

The last communicative dimension in this chapter concerns the question of the distinctiveness of the output from A-Tale. Needless to say, the company belongs to the commercial part of the creative industries. The national market for their concepts is small and the competition is harsh. To develop and sell concepts/ideas is a niche-activity. Live claimed, "A-Tale's success is measured externally", and even though A-Tale received a four-year project development grant from the Film Fund, four additional companies also received funding. Internationally, there are numerous competitors in the concept-development market.

Becoming A-Tale includes a search for the unique or the distinguishing features of their productions. Variations of the phrase "we are going to make things others cannot," are frequently heard in the dialogue between the partners. Or statements like, "even though the pieces we make shall entertain, we shall not compromise on the seriousness of the subtext", or, "we do not do commissioned production". What do they think is A-Tale's contribution compared to their competitors? What make them different in their line of business? To answer such questions, I think we have to look at what they consider to be a good story and a good production. Even though some general statements have been made during the few years in business, the partners are more in a search mode than being definite about elements of a signature style.

Ideas, ideas – which one is "the one"?

I discussed with Victor and Carl which of the following five concepts they considered a real A-Tale product, and which they judged otherwise. *Släger* and *The Computer* are not unique ideas or concepts, they said. *Young Fathers, Villa Gimle*, and *Norge for Nordmenn,* definitely deserves the A-Tale label. – Why is this? I used this question together with the mentioned examples in order to condense the bits and pieces I had heard and observed about this topic over time.
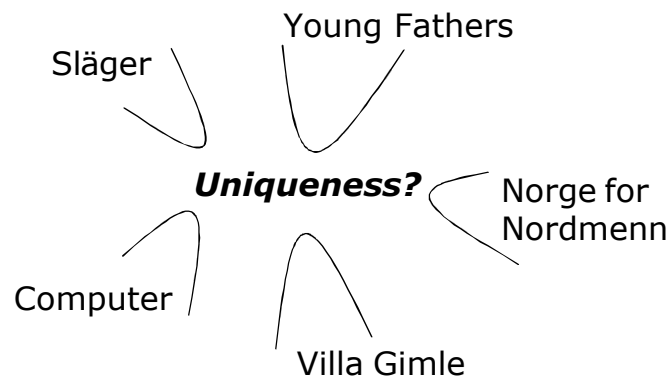
Släger   Young Fathers

Uniqueness?   Norge for Nordmenn

Computer

Villa Gimle

Figure 7 In search of an A-Tale signature

The Computer: The aim is to tell a revealing, multi-perspective story about the variety of ways of using computers by ordinary people and the status the computer has gained in many homes and work settings. In many homes the computer is given the central position in the living room. Some people carry their laptop with them where ever they go and are uncomfortable without it. For some it has got to be a Machintosh, if not they can do without. Some got to have the fastest and best machine available. Some worry themselves sick about damage from viruses etc., so they hardly dare to turn on their machine, while other are proud of having a computer but are not into using it.

Släger – the story behind the hits: A serial, which – in an entertaining but realistic way - try to answer the question of how come the simplest of the simple pop tunes can influence a whole nation; not only in its year of release but through decades and over several generations? E.g. "Take on me" or "Livet er for kjipt" or "Love med do". Statistics show that in 90% of the top ten Billboard hits, the refrain starts within 29 seconds.

Young Fathers: What is young fatherhood like? How do they raise their children? What role do they play in their family? Except from a few popularized images of modern fatherhood the public knows little about the role of young men with regard to the upbringing of children. We will get to know six carefully selected fathers who live in the same city. They do not know each other from before but they have committed themselves to fundraising for an "elderly home" in Russia. If they do not manage to raise the fund, there will be no home in for elders. We will follow them through a period of six months. See how they take care of their children, how they organize their family life, and how they

collaborate in charity work. The serial will bust some of the common myths of contemporary fatherhood, and hopefully create some new ones.

Norge for Nordmenn: A serial about being Norwegian. "The fish does not know it is in water". What is typical Norwegian except from the things that seem natural for us but are peculiar in the eyes of strangers? The programs are based on a combination of home videos, short films, and active intelligent studio personnel that comments on the topics raised in each episode. By themselves, the videos and short films do not have to be funny or hilarious. The studio personnel will make them interesting and entertaining. The audience will laugh and cry as they discover the "truth" about the way we are. They will recognize themselves in the behaviors and attitudes revealed to them in the serial. One topic could for instance be "The Norwegian Man." We would show videos of the crazy daddy on his son's soccer match, or the guy that every weekend drags his children out hiking in the mountains – talk is less, walk is more. We could also show short films about being a man in a society where women pursue their career or who fancy the seventeen year old year girls in the parade of Mai 17.

Villa Gimle: Is about Vidkun Quisling's last days at Villa Gimle. He and his companions face the end of World War II. It is a burlesque comedy about what took place; the relation to Terboven and the Germans at Skaugum, Der Fürer in Berlin, Quisling's biographer, Haldis, his wife, Maria, the NS-Government etc. The manuscript is on its way but the medium and format are yet to be decided.

In search of a typical A-Tale production

Norge for Nordmenn consists of a unique mix of media and formats: home videos, short films, and a live studio setting with insightful commentators. Originally, the idea started out with Ivan who wanted to enhance the status of short films in the TV world. He says, "Short film is a difficult format nurtured by sub-cultures, and it conveys stories at best reached by a narrow audience." Given the high number of quality short films that exist, something should be done to enhance its status in front of a wider audience. At the time when Ivan launched his idea, the unresolved question was how to incorporate short films in which television format. To ignite the renaissance of short movies is an idealistic thought but it was judged by the other partners to be too much of an ambition. By coincidence, a guy in their network came up with a suggestion of a serial in which Norwegians' culture and habits should be revealed through a

careful collection of home videos and some well know entertainers commenting on them. The partners made an assessment of the pitch and found it incapable of moving beyond the pure comic behavioral/external actions of peoples. Some funny studio guys playing jokes on what is shown on the videos would definitely not compensate the generally low quality of the "stories" told in such videos.

Then Ivan and Victor came up with a third suggestion – based on a combination of the two former ideas: They will as a group of film-directors to make short films on different aspects of being Norwegian. These will represent the professional-artistic take on the topic. Then they gather a bundle of home videos that will represent the everyday-reality kind of perspective. At last, the studio will consist of an "expert panel" of intelligent and communicative persons, e.g. Shabana Rheman [standup comedian], Knut Nærum [author, essayist, entertainer/comedian], Thomas Hylland Eriksen [professor in anthropology], that frame and talk about the short movies and home videos, and add their own knowledge on the topics in both an entertaining and an insightful way.

Ivan and Victor presented the idea in a meeting with one of the broadcasters. They thought that the concept was original in its solution on how short films finally may reach a wide audience (a mix of media home-video, short films, and TV studio), and in the way they want to use a live studio setting (active panel with "experts" and entertainers). In addition, they liked the ambition of telling something substantial about our culture, though in an entertaining way. While *Norge for Nordmenn* exemplifies what could be a typical "A-Tale product", the next idea, *Släger*, did not gain the same status.

Says Carl, "From the pitch of Släger it is easy to see that the television guys have not been involved in the writing of it." Släger is an ordinary pop/rock serial, which could be made by the television companies themselves. It asks some interesting and entertaining questions about music and it would doubtlessly reach a wide audience since it is about the making of mainstream hits, but it is noting more to it that that; no new ways of using the media, nothing special about the format suggested, not a unique topic. Both Ivan and Jonas are very interested in music and play instruments themselves, but they have never worked with television before and really do not know what would be original enough for the broadcasters to buy it externally instead of making it in-house. *Släger* was, in fact turned down after receiving negative feedback in a meeting with one of the TV channels. One of the broadcasters has stated that they reject about 90% of all project proposals that they receive from independent producers. *The Computer* was also turned down, eventually. This time because the topic was not interesting enough for the partners themselves. They could not agree on the basic idea, storyline, or genre. Nobody was really

committed to take it a step further. If there is no spontaneous energy of any of the partners, an idea soon dies or is ruled out of the lists of potential projects.

Villa Gimle is hilarious and it takes a lot of courage to make something like this. Quisling is a dark spot in the Norwegian history. Just think about the connotation the world Quisling has gotten worldwide. How can anyone dare to make fun of the situation and what happened at that time? Villa Gimle surely has to be more than well made in order to fly. What is unique about Villa Gimle, is first and foremost the idea itself. Secondly, the idea and manuscript, which are in the making, inhabit flexibility in the way it might be presented before an audience. The manuscript bears the potential of being produced for television as well as theater, or even a movie in a kind of "Life O'Brian" style.

The format can be a mix of a costume drama and a musical, or more a "Black Addar" kind of show. The form is yet to be decided. Doubtlessly, it takes the expertise and talent of a lot of people to actually make it. *Villa Gimle* is an ultimate A-Tale concept. Obviously, there is a wellspring of ideas that A-Tale could have put their energy into. The five ideas above indicate some elements required in order to define a concept as a typical A-Tale product: A serious content conveyed in an entertaining way; an original mix of genres and/or formats; a high quality in the production of the concept.

Four dimensions defining a signature style

Taken together, the communicative dimensions discussed in this chapter may be seen as constitutive of the creative space in A-Tale. They provide a fertile ground for the development of a company identity and a signature style for their productions.
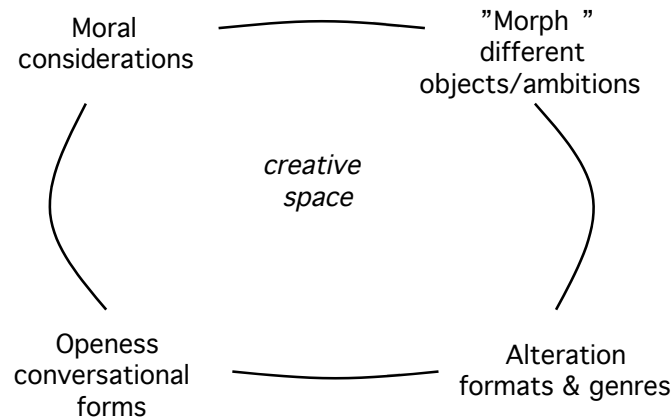
Moral
considersations — "Morph"
different
objects/ambitions

*creative
space*

Openess
conversational
forms

Alteration
formats & genres

Figure 8 Four dimensions upholding a creative space

First, we have seen that the partners are preoccupied with a search for what is worth doing. Moral exchanges are highly visible in this search. Through such considerations they develop and manage standards for ideas under cultivation. As I have mentioned before, moral exchanges is a way of stabilizing their identity and practice beyond the immediate demands and pragmatics of just being in business. Second, in idea cultivation they strive to combine/morph different and sometimes opposing ambitions or objects of talk. In particular we have seen that they try to make productions that fulfill the ambition of bringing justice to weak voices in our society, of generating economic surplus, and that holds an aesthetically high quality. Third, when it comes to the more technical part of what make their concepts distinct from other productions; they emphasize the importance of creating an original mix of genres and formats. This is visible in ideas like Young Fathers, Villa Gimle, and Norge for nordmenn described in the previous section.

At last, I have drawn attention to a special quality of their communication when they discuss ideas. It seems like they try to keep the cultivation of ideas open for a range of conversational forms. E.g. some conversation takes the form of a "whirl-like" exchange of utterances in which ideas are critically scrutinized and driven towards rejection. Other ideas are met with great enthusiasm and the conversation makes the idea fly like a "hot air balloon". The point is that there are several different ways of discussing ideas and I have argued that the community must afford a variety of conversational forms in order to maintain creativity over time.

Even though A-Tale is situated in an industry in which they are expected to come up with new ideas, the well know tension between what may be defined as original and what appeals to a wider audience is a difficult one. A-Tale claims what In the words of Holman and Thorpe (2003) A-Tale authorship in idea cultivation – meaning they do not consider themselves as reproducers of the rules and standards set by others or the culture of broadcasting and movie making. According to Deetz (2003), authoring may be defined as a collaborative process through communication in which people recognize the possibility of producing rather than just reproducing social life. Language use is considered the pivotal mean of authoring. Through responsive relational expressions (Shotter and Cunliffe 2003), the partners try to create a shared landscape of possibilities for action when discussing ideas. They are coauthors of a situation in which the conversations bring a shaped and vectored sense of where they are now and where they might go next. This opportunity and action seeking way of relating to ideas, is especially noticeable in Midwifery.

I have shown that the dialogues in Midwifery take on different productive forms, as the subject matter worked on – the ideas presented – is qualitatively different. To emphasize the difference the three exemplifying conversations presented earlier in this chapter, are not just displayed as a plain sequence of utterances, but represented graphically/metaphorically as "the patchwork", "the whirl" and "the hot air balloon". This does not alter the basic perspective of coauthoring and responsiveness, but highlights the performative role of the language of protopractice. After all, the partners are not just *talking about* ideas, they cultivate, expand, evaluate, and reject them; ideas in Midwifery are more than food for playful minds, they are the matter or raw material to be processed. Language does things (Garfinkel 1967), and in this respect, *converdoings* might be a better term than conversations.

Unlike the contributions in Holman and Thorpe (2003), I do not emphasize the ideal manager as the main figure in creating a shared landscape of possibilities for action by producing appropriate responsive utterances. The movement from a vague understanding of the circumstances of an idea and the organization towards a much more explicit, linguistically expressible account is ascribed to group dynamics rather than a single, designated manager. Each and one participating in Midwifery is relationally responsible in a conversation for possibilities.

Converdoings surely open avenues for action, but in a layered sense as every utterance may ignite multi-directional reflections moving beyond the specific idea in quest, i.e. what A-Tale should become as an organization, which external actors they want to be associated with, how the portfolio of projects should be, how they should be organized, in what way customers can be challenged but still keep their interest in what A-Tale wants to make. Practical

language use, its productive role and its centrality in the process of organizing, is evident in the case of A-Tale. Not because the partners are extraordinary sensitive to the way they communicate but because the whole reason for establishing the company in the first place, is based on the drive for creating something new.

The analysis in this chapter is not a traditional linguistic analysis of how speech in divided into sentences, which in turn can be broken down into phrases and words; words that can be divided into small sound units, syllables, which again can be categorized into speech sounds or phonemes. Rather, I am following the Bakthinian (1986) line in which speech is cast in concrete utterances belonging to particular speaking subjects, "The speaker ends his utterance in order to relinquish the floor to the other or to make room for the other's active responsive understanding" (p. 71).

In Midwifery, utterances alternate between the partners and I have emphasized that they speak from a position as equals, a position of trust, and a position in which the way they are doing things are open for suggestions of change. However, they do have different past experience – some from movie production, some from television production, some from theatre production, some from the world of advertising – and the different voices of experience go into the determination and application of different objects of talk belonging to different language games (Lyotard, 1997/1979). As shown in the discussion about documentaries it is possible for an idea to achieve the contradictory objects of "justice", "efficiency/economics" and "aesthetics" by being inventive on the format of an idea.

7 Creative knowledge work revisited

This thesis has explored creative knowledge work, with an emphasis on three issues: What characterizes the organizing of creative knowledge work? How is knowledge shared and generated in order to invent novel ideas? What are important communicative dimensions in order to maintain a creative space over time? I have tried to keep the complexity of creative knowledge work in focus by maintaining a two-folded object of analysis: On the one hand, the organizing of A-Tale. That is, the way the whole group moves and develops. On the other hand, the partners' creative practice, seen in the running conversations and activities.

The analysis has combined different, though complementary theoretical approaches. In order to look at A-Tale as a site of knowledge work, I have drawn on theories on "knowledge intensive firms" and different conceptualizations of knowledge within organization studies and science and technology studies (STS). In order to explore the practice within which the partners interact, I have used several practice approaches to learning and work, in particular those concerning communities of practice. To develop an understanding of the organizational dynamics in A-Tale, I have combined theories on organizational change with actor-network theory.

In particular, it has proved fruitful to combine insights from organization studies and STS when the topic of concern is the way the whole organization unfolds and moves. More specifically, in the empirical analysis, I have framed instances of organizational dynamics in A-tale through concepts such as organizing, becoming and visioning, as presented in recent contributions to organization theory. To further the understanding of A-tale's complex movements with respect to stability and change, common concepts within actor-network theory like boundary work, association, and translation have proved fruitful. The analysis of A-Tale has shown us that companies whose ambition is to live from recurrent innovation or even recurrent invention, face an organizationally double task. They have to keep their practice open for change in order to stay inventive over time. At the same time, they have to develop sufficient means of stabilization in order to prevent a premature demise of their creative output.

The study of A-tale has shown that to understand creative knowledge work we need to conceptualize organizing as a simultaneous process of change-making and stabilization. A perspective on organizational development as a dual process of change and stabilization is complementary to the two dominant models of organizational dynamics; that of a planned (more or less) participative process of development versus that of "determined change" in which organizations are portrayed as more or less capable of making the necessary "fit" to their environment.

Thus, some of the recent literature on organizational dynamics, like Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and their way of defining organizational becoming favor too strongly the transformational character of organizations. Both change and stabilizing are ongoing accomplishments. To put it bluntly, organizations like A-Tale does not only try to become, they try to become *something* (see e.g. Carlsen (2005) for a thorough discussion of acts of becoming). The actor-network approach (see e.g. Callon 1986; Latour 1987) demonstrates that an actor has to enroll relevant and significant human and non-human actors into a stable configuration in order to succeed with a "fact producing process" or a technological innovation. The analysis of A-Tale has demonstrated that the partners employed a range of stabilizing means. Let me repeat three of the examples of this. First Midwifery, which stabilized practice through the collective orientation and regularity of the meetings. Second, the emergence of exemplars in the form of proven stories of success. Third, A-Tale's explicit search for ideas *worth* doing. This resulted in an orientation towards certain values for the assessment of ideas (idealistic content, the outlook of altering a genre/format, the likelihood of reaching wide audiences).

My other observation to A-Tale's emphasis on good stories and not just any story is the prominent place given to moral exchanges in the partners' creative practice. I think this point deserves a special attention because it is a significant characteristic of A-Tale as a professional community. Creative knowledge work in A-tale is marked by moral exchanges, expectations, and articulations of how things should be. In the theory part, I discussed the moral economy through the writings of Silverstone (1989; 2005), Silverstone et al. (1992), and Sørensen (2005) within science and technology studies. The significance and use of moral exchanges in knowledge work has largely been overlooked by organization and management theory, theoretically as well as empirically. Numerous writings have focused mainly on the development of "purely" knowledge oriented images, exemplified by formulations such as "knowledge being applied to knowledge" (Drucker 1993), and "companies as a set of knowledge conversions" (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1994). Further research should pay more attention to what degree and in what way (creative) knowledge work invites and is developed through moral exchanges about for

instance the content of the work to be done, or about the relationship to customers.

Of course, "company moral and ethics" is a main topic in the debate on corporate social responsibility (CSR), where companies prohibit forms of illegal or immoral behavior through statements and monitoring of certain Code of Ethics[30]. However, the interesting question with respect to knowledge production in commercial enterprises like A-Tale is not whether they have official statements of the company's ethical behavior, or more generally, whether they have a morale or not. The issue is the degree of visibility of moral exchanges in the course of daily work, and what such exchanges do in the performance of knowledge and the construction of a group identity.

An important observation from the case of A-Tale is the way moral exchanges unfold at an operational level. In fact, in A-Tale, they were deeply integrated in the execution of daily work. The normative understanding of relevant issues reflected in these exchanges constituted a signature set that reminded the partners of why it was worthwhile being a member of this particular community of work and not another. Equally important to the theoretical understanding of creative knowledge work was the observation that the construction and application of such norms seemed to represent an effective effort to stabilize a rather fluid professional community beyond the cultivation and realization of stand-alone ideas.

The flip side of stabilization is change. The analysis has shown that the very same elements that stabilized practice might be subjected to change. For instance, during my fieldwork, Midwifery was re-organized into two meetings. The status of the TV concepts *Young Fathers* and *Christiania – the last word* as valuable exemplars was contested in the discussion on Plata (p.139-136). The stable, long-term networks of the partners underwent a radical re-configuration to better serve the A-Tale project (see p.92). Change as an ongoing accomplishment that parallels efforts of stabilization may be taken as a prelude to a theoretical point concerning the relevance of actor-network theory.

Creative knowledge work requires a deliberate focus on change as a means to stay innovative over time. This challenges the link the actor-network approach makes between a successful establishment of a fact/technology and a full stabilization of an appropriate actor-network configuration. An instable configuration means failure of fact production, which for instance is demonstrated in Callon's (1986) analysis of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay. The analysis of A-Tale showed that recurrent invention and

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[30] Ideally, CSR covers the responsibilities corporations of other for-profit organizations have to the societies within which they are based and operate. See e.g. Handy (2002) for a discussion on the CSR concept.

innovation required a constant engagement in the construction of new, vigorous actor-networks, in order to attract novel ideas as well as to realize projects. As I have mentioned before, this indicates that people engaged in creative knowledge work need to avoid a thorough stabilization of their practice as it may stall creativity. Actor-network theory certainly is productive for the analysis of single innovations and inventions, but the analysis of A-Tale indicates that the approach needs further elaboration in order to account for actors that aim at serial innovation and invention. Then we could better understand the strategies companies like A-Tale use in order to exist beyond a single successful (or failed) production.

In order to study the relationship between knowledge use and concept/idea production, I looked at models of knowledge conversions (e.g. Nonaka and Takeuchi 1994; Spender 1998) and the lengthy discussion on tacit and embodied knowledge within knowledge management (e.g. Davenport and Prusak 1998; Baumard 1999) and within practice approaches to learning and work (e.g. Dreyfus 1967; Jordan 1989; Göranzon 1990; Hammarén 1999; Collins 2001a; Schatzki et al. 2001). However, I did not find the knowledge conversion models or the notion of tacit and/or embodied knowledge to be particularly fruitful in surfacing the unique features of the creative practice of A-Tale. I have argued that we need to develop our language to talk about ideas as objects under construction in an inter-disciplinary practice. The analysis has shown that one possibility is to conceptualize ideas as *creative knowledge object* in three different ways. First, they are objects to be known. Second, they are objects crafted by way of skillful simulation. Third, they are objects designed for the creation of affiliation.

Ideas as objects to be known ignite processes of inquiry, questioning, association, agreement, disagreement, etc. The partners of A-Tale made emotional investments in ideas. They made use of their subjective opinions and personal experience in order to assess, shape or reject them. They made extensive references to TV concepts and films, but few references to any formal knowledge bases. In short, ideas were to large extent assessed by way of personal–emotional arguments.

Further, the partners had comprehensive experience from the media industry. As members of the A-Tale community the partners used this experience to simulate the elements they think is necessary in order to develop an unfinished idea into a story worth to be told. Theoretically, I believe this is an important observation. In A-Tale, we saw how the partners negotiated the potential of ideas through thought experiments or ways of making associations. This meant that they *simulated* specific actor-networks for specific ideas. Sometimes, the partners were able to stabilize what they considered to be powerful configurations. Then, the idea could move on to the phase of

production. On other occasions, ideas would remain in an unstable configuration and thereby become rejected or filed for later discussion. In other words, ideas appeared as objects crafted by skillful simulation.

An additional claim is that the ability to do such simulations was dependent on the partners' long and in-depth knowledge of the media industry. It is likely that a community consisting of more inexperienced people would not be able to simulate ideas with the same level of precision and efficiency. Thus, productive simulation is a manifestation of the group's expertise. Theoretically, the relevance of the actor-network approach is moved from being an analysis of different kinds of translations going on between heterogeneous actors when a fact/technology/idea is in the making, to become a manifestation of the collective knowledge of a group through associative thought experiments.

The open quality of ideas – e.g. ideas as food for whirl-like, balloon-like and patchwork-kind of conversations – indicated that they were objects designed for the making of affiliations. The partners worked to articulate ideas in such a way that others could join in, to co-create and identify with the idea and the group representing the idea. Consequently, I have argued that we should look at ideas in creative knowledge work as mutable rather than immutable mobiles (Latour 1987). Only as mutable mobiles – objects designed for affiliation – would they be able to traverse the varied experiences of the partners and their associates.

My analysis of the communicative dimensions of creative knowledge work in chapter 6 drew on theories of language use for creative action (Shotter and Cunliffe 2003) and the nature of language games within academic disciplines (Lyotard 1997/1979, heavily influenced by the work of Wittgenstein). Also I found inspiration in the function of "possibility talk" in teams pursuing one-of-a-kind project, or time-limited constellations directed at inter-disciplinary problem solving. Concepts such as "future perfect" (Pitsis et al. 2003) or "future as extended present" (Nowotny et al. 2001) imply that when the collective experience of a team is limited, many of the activities that motivate and energize the participants have a forward-looking component. It is important to notice that language use in the form of possibility talk is an action-oriented process in which the future is created.

My claim is that A-Tale's creative knowledge work had to develop into a productive, inter-practitioner language game – a creative language of practice – if the company was to succeed with its bold ambitions. The display of a variety of conversations, discussions, dialogues, argumentations, agreements, disagreements, etc., in this thesis show that "talk in different forms" was the partners' most important tool to achieve change as well as stabilization. For instance, we may look at the partners' frequent reflections on their own actions as a kind of routine directed at changing unproductive practices. One such

reflection was ignited when A-Tale received the grant from the Film Fund. It culminated in the re-organizing of Midwifery and the crafting of a new vision, *The personal imperative!* Therefore, an understanding of creative practice should include an understanding of "language use for new practice".

A main theoretical point stems from the issues often addressed by scholars preoccupied by practice (see e.g. the overview of the field provided by Schatzki et al. 2001). Practice-oriented studies often address the habitual and customary in our culture. They address the importance of tacit knowledge and underlying presuppositions in defining practice. They conceptualize practice as embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity. They demonstrate the persistence of practice that rests on successful inculcation of shared embodied know-how. They argue the "materialist" aspect of practice in the sense that stability of practices to a large degree reflects the solidifying inertia of material layout. My claim is that several of the practice approaches downplay a constitutive element in creative knowledge work, namely that of language use and communication.

The analysis in chapter 6 might to some degree be read as a communication/language oriented reinterpretation of some of the observations presented in earlier chapters. Generally speaking, there is a need to re-focus our research on contemporary work practices in the direction of language use. Of course, practice-oriented studies of e.g. Orr (1986) and Jordan (1989) emphasize the role of storytelling in processes of social learning. Stories are packages of situated knowledge, knowledge that is not available abstractly but is called up as the characteristics of the situation require it. Stories often play a major role in problem solving and decision-making in practical work. From such studies we may infer that there is certain language use associated with a certain kind of knowledge. My ambition has been to provide some insights into the emergence of a creative language of practice in A-Tale. Stories are important in A-Tale too, not the least because stories are the output of their creative process. However, I was more after other aspects of communication that could be equally important.

I do not disagree that the issues summarized by Schatzki et al. (2001) are important in defining the constituents of practice, also with respect to companies like A-Tale. But for instance Argyris and Schön (1978), Schön (1983), and Argyris (1990) have since long emphasized the role of language use in the form of "reflection in and on action" to bring about processes of organizational learning/change. Practice-oriented studies often emphasize the habitual/customary in our culture and argue that the persistence of practice often rests on the successful transfer of tacit or embodied know-how (Schatzki et al. 2001). Following Collins (2001a, 2001b) tacit knowledge can be defined as knowledge or abilities that can be passed between people by personal contact but cannot be, or have not been, set out or passed on in formulae, diagrams, or

verbal descriptions and instructions for action. Where transfer of tacit knowledge is a problem, it can sometimes be solved by an exchange of visits. I have argued that we can look at idea cultivation in A-Tale as an interdisciplinary effort (see e.g. Sørensen 2002). The analysis of idea cultivation in A-tale has demonstrated that a minimum requirement for idea cultivation [read: interdisciplinary work] is in participants' willingness to share and generate knowledge. In other words, they cannot rely too much on the typical mechanism for the transfer of tacit knowledge like for instance observing others when doing their job.

The description of ideas as "creative knowledge objects", the development of community identity through "multi-directional talk", and the perspective on A-Tale's signature style as defined by four communicative dimensions (see fig. 8 in ch. 6), rest on an analysis of the "language aspect" of practice. Following Shotter and Cunliffe (2003), we may interpret the partners' work as an effort to try to create a shared landscape of possibilities for action when discussing ideas. They did so through responsive relational expressions. Thus, the partners were coauthors of a situation in which the conversations brought forward a shaped and vectored sense of where they were and where they might go next. Deetz (2003) adds that it is through communication as a collaborative process that people recognize the possibility of producing rather than just reproducing social life. Both Deetz and Shotter and Cunliffe emphasize the constructive or creative potential of language use.

In fact, insights such as these were an important source of inspiration when I started looking for a place to do my fieldwork. They also inspired me to invent a term that connotes the stable, yet instable feature of creative practices, namely *protopractice*. I have offered protopractice as multi-dimensional concept. It emphasizes the organizing of creative knowledge work as an ongoing accomplishment of change and stabilization. It highlights the development of ideas/concepts into exemplars. Exemplars are an expression of group identity and function as standards for the construction of other ideas. Finally, protopractice does not simply describe the early phase in a typical start-up company. It seems to be a durable condition in companies whose ambition is series invention and innovation. While "proto" accentuates something new and in the making, "practice" denotes a set of actions with a certain degree of coherence and systematic repetition. Taken together, protopractice refers to the emergence of a new practice on the one hand, and on the practice of repeatedly creating something new, on the other hand.

There are certain things about A-tale that probably make some of the observations presented in this thesis more distinct than they might be in other companies. The size of the company is relatively small and the ambition of creating something novel is high. New financial opportunities in its business

environment provide a fertile ground for project development. The partners all have long work experience from their respective fields and have good job opportunities elsewhere. At last, the number of possible ideas to be developed is high and the time from invention to realization (innovation) is relatively short. Still I think that many of the observations are relevant for other companies preoccupied with creative knowledge work as well. For instance, I think that we may observe the parallel process of change and stabilization, even though the pace of the processes or the content of them may be different. For interdisciplinary work of this kind it is important to establish some unique yardsticks of communication and a flexible language of practice that uphold a creative space over time. To the latter I have presented several observations: First was the ability to rapidly simulate ideas. Second was the importance of openness towards multi-directional talk in which group identity is constructed alongside the content of ideas. Third was responsiveness towards the flow of a conversation – that ideas can be developed through a range of conversational forms.

The last theoretical argument departs from the role granted to the "materialist" aspect of practice. An example is the observation made by Schatzki et al. (2001): The solidifying inertia of material [read: physical] layouts is a major contribution to the stability of practices. Again, I do not contest that the use of physical tools or the structure of say, a workshop or an office, have a stabilizing effect on peoples' thinking and doing. The description of A-Tale has shown that the partners made use of technological tools in their practice, even though they might be regarded as relative simple or low tech (e.g. the room in which their regular meetings are held, the physical layout of their offices, the laptops, software, cell phones, etc., used to get their work done). The point I want to add is that there are other stabilizing mechanisms that may supersede the material stabilization. Value talk, the search for ideas *worth* doing, the moral shaping of knowledge, the negotiation of opposing "objects of talk", visioning in the form of "future perfect" or "possibility talk" – all were distinctions that amounted to the same issue: The becoming of A-Tale. Thus, the moral economy in A-Tale became a source of stabilization that was an alternative to the material layouts and tools commonly described in practice approaches to work, or to technology as commonly focused within actor-network theory. With regard to the study of contemporary work, this certainly is an area for further research.

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