EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE MANAGEMENT – A COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEM & SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Managing change could be one of the most, if not the most, common daily activities performed by managers/practitioners of modern organizations. From the advent of Taylor's (1911) scientific management and Lewin's force-field approach (1947), most change management models and typologies (such as discussed by Kanter et al (1992); Ford and Ford, 1994; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Kotter, 1996; Morgan and Sturdy, 2000; Luecke 2003 etc.) were developed upon the basic assumption that change could indeed be managed and controlled (Sturdy and Grey, 2003). Such deterministic, mechanistic and planned perspectives could be significantly challenged if our organizational realities were to be observed through the lenses of Complex Adaptive System (CAS) and Social Constructionism (SC). Within the purview of CAS and SC, organizations' actions, which were delivered through its free-willed actors, were essentially unpredictable and hence difficult to control and manage. This thesis research was conducted to investigate how, by adopting the CAS and SC perspectives, could the author's change management practice be impacted through a first-person inquiry action research (AR) approach in the context of a real-life workplace change management project. Due to a dearth of similar work, particularly within the areas of CAS and SC, the expectation for any significant findings was not high. Nevertheless, the data collected managed to demonstrate the usefulness of incorporating the CAS and SC perspectives into one's change management practice (in addition of traditional and foundational change approaches). In particular, continual iterations of sense-making and sense-giving, which the author has termed as "sense-exchanging", had been observed to be a key action trait throughout the inquiry. The author has achieved significant sustained learning from this AR experience and further believes that through sense-exchanging, managers/practitioners could yield greater impact, in terms of enhanced agility in managing challenging situations, sensitivity toward alternate/weakened/silenced voices/mindsets and leadership in building trust and alliance, when managing change in their workplace.

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Chapter 1: Research Motivation and Purpose

1.1 Introduction – An Uncharted Research Journey

Over a substantial portion of my education and learning journey, I had been considerably persuaded that for a research to be considered empirical, scientific and rigorous, we need to approach it in the positivistic manner, i.e. extensive application of measurable empirical data (preferably quantitative), statistical analysis, hypothesis testing and so on. As I embarked on the thesis phase for the DBA program, I was actually getting ready to perform a similar research regime that would see myself designing a set of questionnaire using the Likert scale, which could be statistically measured and validated, collecting significant amount of quantitative data, and subsequently chewing these data using SPSS or the likes before presenting a thesis that could be academically acceptable (i.e. generalizable and replicable). I immediately felt significantly concerned when I was informed by my thesis supervisor that the DBA requirement was for my thesis research to be conducted in the form of action research (AR). This is because not only was I more confident and comfortable in the aforementioned positivistic type of research approaches, I was indeed even quite proficient in them, especially in applying statistical methods to analyze quantitative data. Furthermore, though by then I was already familiar with AR approaches, since it was one of the key focuses in most of the DBA coursework modules, this did not supplement me any confidence for my thesis research project at all as I have had limited, if any, experience in conducting a fully fledge AR. Instead I was feeling very cautiously unsettled as I began planning for my thesis research and preparing for my ethical approval.

In addition to ascertaining an actionable research focus for my thesis, the other immediate challenge during this initial phase of my research planning had been to identify a suitable research context at my workplace for my action research. Enacting on recommendation provided by my thesis supervisor, I began to explore the most proximate organizational events or projects that were ongoing or in the pipeline. Another critical consideration for the research context would be that I should be leading and/or managing it, i.e. having significant control and/or responsibilities over the event or project. At that juncture, I was assigned to take the role of change management lead for the restructuring of my directorate, consisting of one division and two other departments, which I quickly identified

to be a very suitable and current workplace context for my AR. This project was a major and key organizational wide endeavor at that time, and my involvement as the change management lead would mean that I would be possessing significant steer and responsibility over the change project, hence making this an extremely viable and fitting candidate of choice.

There were two phases in this organizational wide restructuring exercise. My initial involvement in the first design phase of the exercise was mainly to facilitate the external change consultants' work, as well as to render any informational and administrative support to them. This was done in confidence with only strict involvement of myself, my executive vice president (EVP), who is at the top of my directorate's organizational hierarchy, and the external consultants. Thus, the design phase had not been conducted in a consultative manner and there was no or minimal involvement or participation from any of my colleagues in the entire directorate. However, once our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) had signed off and approved the new organization design, my subsequent role was to take the lead to align all the business processes and procedures of the directorate and departments based on the newly approved organizational structure in the second implementation phase of the entire project. In this implementation phase of the restructuring project, I was given quite a significant amount of liberty on how I could execute the project as the change management lead for my directorate, and therefore, I figured that this would provide me with a suitable context to explore the intriguing research theme and focus that I had identified to explore and investigate upon for my thesis AR. I would elaborate further later in this chapter on the motivation behind the chosen research theme and focus, but before doing so, it would be critical to discuss some other further challenges that I had encountered as I proceeded with my research ethical approval.

Once I had made the decision to establish the change management project as my DBA AR context, I approached my EVP to seek his official permission to allow me to use this change management project as my DBA AR context. I had also sought for his official permission to allow me to solicit data and information from my project participants (i.e. my colleagues in my directorate) for my AR project. It was imperative that I had to acquire both organizational and participant consent for my proposed AR as mandated by the ethical

approval process, before proceeding with the AR. His immediate response had been quite positive, and he had no issue with my request as long as it would not affect the timeline and deliverables of the actual change management project. Nevertheless, due to my request to solicit data from my colleagues, he would prefer to cross check against the organization's official policy on this aspect and the CEO's perspective on this. Although the organization policy was silent concerning such requests from employees to conduct academic research and collect data from the workplace, my EVP deferred this to the CEO to seek his advice. My EVP had subsequently conveyed to me the CEO's perspective that allowing staffs to conduct personal academic research in the workplace would not be a good idea. In fact, I was further informed by my EVP that I was not the first staff who had approached the organization on such request and there had been no precedence of any approval for such request. However, he clarified that there was no objection for me to leverage off the actual workplace change management project and to use it as a context for my own thesis AR. The caveat was that I would neither be allowed to officially solicit data from my colleagues and use them in my analyses, nor inform them that I was conducting an action research. Furthermore, I would not be able to make any reference to my organization, colleagues and project in my submitted thesis.

My EVP had not granted me any formal approval to conduct the change management project as my thesis AR, but he specifically agreed that the organization would have no rights over how I use my own thoughts and information engendered from my experiences and interactions from within the context of my change management project. Of course, my EVP had particularly reminded me that regardless of my decision to use the workplace project for my thesis AR or not, I should not allow any situation to affect the progress of the change management project, which was his primary concern. Judging by the convention on how a usual empirical research would be conducted as highlighted in the beginning of this chapter, I realized that this could impair on the rigor and comprehensiveness of my AR data and analyses. Thus, I turned to seek advice from both literatures and my thesis supervisor on how I could address the situation that I was in before proceeding further. It was also due to this "challenge" that I began to focus on the merits of first-person inquiry methods in AR, which had proven to be another highlights of my thesis AR journey.

1.2 First-Person Inquiry

Consequently, I proceeded with the decision to conduct my thesis AR using the first-person inquiry approach due to the restrictions imposed on me by my organizations as discussed in the previous section. It also followed that my data and the subsequent discussions on its analysis and findings might find difficulties in aligning to the normal, usual dissertation writing structure that most students or examiners would be more familiar with. Personally, instead of seeing this as a drawback, I had taken upon it more as a challenge. It is a challenge because I would have to rely largely on my own reflection and research field notes as my data source to develop my analysis and findings in such a first-person inquiry since I would not have the luxury to solicit any third-party input or data. It is normal to presume that with the availability of empirical data from third parties, such as the project participants, this could provide a much more comprehensive and rigorous analysis for the AR. Nevertheless, as I would illustrate in greater detail on how I had conducted my first-person inquiry in Chapter 3 "Research Methods and Coding", such first-person inquiry and reflexive data should not necessarily mean lesser rigor or even unscientific.

Although the essence of most first-person inquiries was focused on the data engendered from the researchers themselves, it was almost inevitable that these data could contain, to quite an extent, the researcher's interpretation of the context and contextual actors' actions, engagement, behavior, and their underlying motivations. Coupled with the depiction of the research context and some of these organizational actors, especially in the form of the various narratives that were discussed as part of the findings of the AR, it is plausible that some of them could be identified with certain level of deduction and inference, even though all the names of organization and actors had been anonymized in the thesis. Hence, in order to manage and mitigate such ethical challenge, I had also agreed to accede to the embargo of this thesis, should there be a need to do so.

Furthermore, and quite surprisingly, I still managed to receive valuable unsolicited feedback from my colleagues, who had participated in the change management project, sometime after the project had been completed. I was informed via these unsolicited feedbacks that they realized that my management approach, or more accurately the one that I had adopted in this project, had been quite unique. It would be futile to have a unique approach

if it is an ineffective one. Thankfully, these feedbacks were primarily positive and had encouraged me significantly that my approach had been effective, at least in the eyes of these colleagues who had provided them. Although I could not formally solicit feedback from the project participant, these limited numbers of unsolicited feedbacks could in a small way serve to provide some form of validation for my first-person data, analyses and findings. Since these unsolicited feedbacks were predominantly positive ones, using them formally as third-party data to validate my findings would introduce a positive bias and thus inappropriate. However, it would equally unfitting if I were to discard them as irrelevant outcome to my thesis AR, since the context of these feedbacks were significantly due to the "unique approach" that I had incorporated into my practice in this change project. Therefore, instead of discussing them as part of my formal data in the analyses and findings of my first-person inquiry, I would be deliberating on how these unsolicited feedbacks had offered a certain kind of sustained learning to me both as an action researcher and as a practitioner in the final chapter of this thesis.

1.3 Research Theme and Focus: The Complex Adaptive System (CAS) and Social Constructionism (SC) Perspectives

As I embarked on the DBA program, I was introduced to quite a number of original (to me) and intriguing schools of thoughts throughout the studies of the prescribed course works. I was particularly fascinated by both the concepts of Complex Adaptive System (CAS) and Social Constructionism (SC) when I was first introduced to them. I must confess that although I have had come across these 2 concepts prior to the DBA program, I had, nevertheless, the faintest comprehension regarding them. Moreover, I had never taken a keen interest to find out what exactly do they entail or more critically, what kind of impact they could have on me as a professional or even as an individual, until when I had to really dig into CAS and SC for my coursework modules. As I began to understand and embrace these two concepts more, primarily to fulfil the requirement of my coursework, I also started to notice and realize that to both concepts proved to be of much relevance to my lived experiences, both in my personal life and professional practices. I was seemingly able to better explain several elusive experiences (both personal and professional) and more importantly make sense of them as I attempted to perceive them via the CAS and SC lenses. Of course, this is in a manner of speaking based more on observations and intuitions, rather

than one that had been scientifically tested. These experiences were elusive in the sense that they were often difficult to grasp or establish a sensible causality, even if at all, when I tried to comprehend, make sense of and explain them through my predominantly deterministic mindset. I believed that the focus on models based on causality and logical deductions in our education approaches had led many of us to espouse such largely deterministic worldview. I would not dispute its usefulness and contribution in our practice, but it is certainly not sufficiently comprehensive in terms of helping fully understand our experiences and observations. Intriguingly, I felt as though that through the CAS and SC perspectives, I could espouse a sort of closure to many of these seeming mysteries of my lived personal and professional experiences, i.e. CAS and SC could somehow supplement whatever that was then lacking in still largely deterministic worldview.

In all my living and practice, I had subscribed largely to the belief that a high level of determinism dominates the systems we live and work with (including social systems). The reason for espousing only a "high-level" of determinism instead of discussing determinism as a holistic attribute that I uphold, was that from my experiences somewhat determinism does not seem to always make sense at most deeper levels, especially when it comes to systems involving humans and their accompanying free will (i.e. autonomy). I remembered at various times in the past getting confused and unconvinced during lectures or discussions, where the presenters often discussed the brilliant organizational and social theories as if human free-wills could be effectively controlled (which is already an oxymoron), or implying that such autonomy was unimportant to consider that as part of the theoretical models, yet stipulating the effectiveness of such models and theories within our social systems (including organizations, which are essentially social systems). Not knowing better then, a naive me just accepted this as a matter of fact, and as a matter of how things work in real-life, i.e. there would always be situations or so-called black-boxes that you could not explain away with. Nevertheless, having now armed with the CAS and SC perspectives, I could see how wrong I was to presume and accept then the inexplicability of many of these intricacies and complexities of our social and organizational systems.

Being a predominantly positivist-trained professional, I often upheld determinism to be "the" way I could get things to work out to yield desirable and predictable outcome. After

all, if cause and effect were the driving forces of our realities (as determinism dictates), we would just need to find the correct “cause” and activate it to get the “effect” we had been searching for. In fact, my past training and beliefs informed me that whenever we could not establish a relevant cause-effect relationship in our lived experiences, then it was either an outlier situation or we had not ascertained the necessary variables involved. In both cases, they would often remain as mysteries that would be left unresolved while I continue living and embracing determinism in life. Inexplicably, I seldom found the motivation to delve further into these unresolved feelings to address them, because in doing so it felt as elusive as attempting to find the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. However, CAS and SC perspectives seem to have inspired a regenerated motivation to reflect further on these mysteries and even to provide closure to some.

Interestingly, when I brought these newly acquired knowledge and revelations to my usual casual discussion with some of my more intellectually geared colleagues and friends, most of them, if not all, found it to be similarly intriguing. Nevertheless, through some of these discussions, it also dawned on me that quite a few of them felt, and quite cynically so, that both CAS and SC could be just some convenient ways conjured up by some academics to explained out the “random errors” of the system and the outliers. Much as I found this skeptical view an interesting perspective, I was also convinced that this could largely due to their lack of a deeper understanding of both CAS and SC, since everyone whom I had spoken to appreciate both concepts only vaguely. Some of them even confessed that it was the first time they had heard of such fascinating ideas, and though some felt it sounded outrageous from the onset, they had come to agree that it did make good sense too upon making further expositions. I also believed that because most of us were uninformed or have limited information on these two concepts, it was often easy to overlook how significant they could be in terms of applying them to perceive our lived experience. Or even more importantly, to live our realities with these perspectives as an active lens to guide our actions and interactions. It had been with this intrigue that I began to question how my real-life work practice would be impacted if I were to apply both CAS and SC actively.

My experiences with organizational and societal systems we lived and worked in were frequently laden with some of those observations that I would often account as “outliers”

within my deterministic belief system, largely because somehow determinism alone could not explain many of them. However, as I reflected more and more through the lenses of CAS and SC, I began to see more that these concepts could actually make more sense to account for the free will and unpredictability brought about by human actors, their autonomies and interactions within these social systems. It would certainly be native to claim that CAS and SC would provide the answers to the complex problems and challenges of managing situations and people in organizations, but my preliminary understanding of CAS and SC did shed some encouraging light, at least theoretically, to such tricky problems in organizational lives.

I have been involved in various capacities in my professional practice as a change agent, change leader, and change manager as far as I could remember since I started my career as an enterprise resource management system implementation consultant 20 years ago. Even as I moved on to various other roles as I progressed in my professional life, I realized that as long as we are involved with people (organization actors), managing change would be part and parcel of workplace life. Furthermore, my experiences informed me that managing, steering and controlling organizational change had often been some of the most arduous tasks any manager or professional could undertake, especially if it had to be done within time and resource constraints, not to mention the often less than satisfactory success rate that we experienced. I often wonder why this had been so. Then more importantly, I was beginning to speculate that perhaps by incorporating CAS and SC perspectives to our change management practice, we might just be able to alleviate the challenges faced in the process to certain degree. This had thus become the main motivation behind the decision to approach my DBA thesis action research. Having identified the upcoming process alignment phase of my organization restructure exercise as my research context, I decided to investigate how my role as the change management lead would pan out in this project if I were to engage the CAS and SC lenses in a deliberate and active manner into my practice. It would be interesting to observe how I might lead such a project or address the accompanying challenges differently (and hopefully effectively) with a fresh approach, one which was significantly different from my “usual” practice. Furthermore, leading change would also mean that the issue of power and influence would need to be considered,

particularly in the manner that power could be perceived as a socially constructed concept. This would also be explored further in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

As I had earlier elucidated that before encountering CAS and SC in the DBA coursework, the management and leadership approaches and styles that I adopted in my professional and personal practices had been predominantly influenced by largely deterministic-driven, positivistic thinking and frameworks. It must be noted that I was not about to discredit such thinking, which have been helping me navigate the complex and dynamic corporate environments I operate in, but I do strongly feel that if we can incorporate more of CAS and SC perspectives into our practice, it could perhaps serve as very valuable and effective supplements to our management practices. Perhaps my discussion so far seemed to contrast determinism against CAS and SC perspectives, but my intuition and learned perspective informed me that it is much more likely that they could be both symbiotic and synergistic. It would also be possible that we might become better and more effective practitioners if we put on more of the CAS and SC lenses as we conduct our practice in conjunction with the common management thinking we were already equipped with. Therefore, I would like to reiterate that my interest had not been to study how CAS and SC perspectives could be more superior than the more common management knowledge that most practitioners operated with, but rather my intention had been to study how they could be applied to improve my practice and to supplement the management knowledge and experienced that I had accumulated, if at all.

1.4 Thesis Structure

I suspected that it might have been uncommon for a dissertation paper to be introduced in such reflexive manner as above. This had been largely due to the limits imposed on my AR by my organization and hence restricting me to a first-person inquiry approach only. Nevertheless, on hind sight I would not say that this had been purely a limitation, but more of a chanced opportunity to explore the kind of research method and research theme that I would otherwise have not entertained under normal circumstances. The rest of the thesis would present and explain why this had been so, and henceforth, the structure of the thesis should resume a more familiar one.

The literature review on the readings that had honed my thinking and mindset, challenged my assumptions and biases, and shaped my practice would be the highlights for the next chapter. Subsequently, Chapter 3 would first feature on the research methods and data collection that I had approached my thesis AR with, while the coding approaches and methods would also be discussed in the later sections. Following this, I would proceed to explain in detail how the coding process and the analyses involved were conducted in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 would continue to discuss the findings that emerged from these coding and analytical processes before I finally concluded my thesis with Chapter 6, which would present my final reflection and some sustained learnings for my practice and personal life.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Unlike a typical empirical study or academic research work, my thesis AR had not been conceived to develop or test any theory, nor was it designed to replicate any established research in a different context to explore the generalizability of that work. As already clarified in my introduction chapter, my AR had been conceived to explore and investigate the possible impact of adopting an active CAS and SC lens to my own practice in a first-person inquiry approach. This had been primarily due to my organization's restriction to sanction any data collection from staffs for personal research purpose. Thus, instead of espousing a primary objective of synthesizing the literatures on CAS and SC, especially within the context of change management, in the following review of literatures like in most typical thesis or research writings, the key goal here had been to allow me to develop a coherent perspective of both CAS and SC. Such a coherent perspective would be critical as I attempted to incorporate such a perspective into my practice during the course of my change management project in my work place for this thesis AR. In addition to enriching and enlightening myself with the relevant knowledge that had already been discussed in the CAS, SC and change management literatures, I had hoped that this literature review process would be able to provide a sufficiently sound foundation on how I could adopt a CAS and SC perspective for my change management practice, i.e. shaping my practice.

In order to investigate how my change management practice might pan out to be if I were to incorporate CAS and SC lenses actively, I would first need to explore the predominant perspectives, mindsets and even biases that change management literatures had informed and influenced practitioners (myself included) in the conduct of our change management practice. Although this should not imply that every practitioner or I adhered to each and every of these perspectives, mindsets and biases, it should be noted that these were the predominant ones that had surfaced in my readings of the relevant literatures in this area. Subsequent to this, I would explore the relevant CAS and SC literatures within the context of change management and discussed how they had influenced my thinking and consequentially shaped my practice, i.e. how I could actually "put on the CAS and SC lenses" as I conduct my change management practice.

2.2 Predominant Perspectives of Change Management

Before I deliberate on what the literatures had discussed about viewing change and how to manage it via the CAS and SC lenses, it necessarily important to iterate what were the predominantly accepted views of how could change management be approached in practice. Change management literatures had often generalized change into two broad categories: planned and emergent change. In fact, since Kurt Lewin (1947) introduced his 3-steps force-field model toward managing change, the theories and practice of change management had been predominantly developed as some forms of derivative of it in the form of planned change (Bamford and Forrester, 2003). It was often accepted by most practitioners that change could be managed in a programmatic, reductionist, linear and sequential "N-step" manner. Wetzel and Gorp (2014) argued that most of the present day popularly adopted change models following such "N-steps" direction were often certain derivatives of the infamous Lewin's (1947) force-field approach and based largely on Taylor's (1911) scientific management principle, i.e. organizational change could be planned and implemented. For example, Kotter (1996) proposed that "organization transformation" could effectively be managed and implemented following a 8-steps approach taken to manage and control organizational change, Kanter et al (1992) also offered a "ten commandments for executing change", while Luecke (2003) also suggested a 7-steps methodology toward managing and implementing organizational change.

Although some authors had argued that certain current change models consisted of some additional "steps" that catered to support emergent change vis-a-vis Lewin's 3-steps force-field model (with the underlying assumption that all stakeholders involved were highly engaged in the change implementation), they were still effectively advocating that change could still be managed, controlled and planned (By, 2005; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1993). Even as change managers realized that it was more important to approach organizational change via a "more fluid" contingency/situational model (Stacey and Dunphy, 2001; Huy, 2001), the underlying assumption of controllability and predictability of change actions in such contingency models often still meant that change managers should follow a prescribed number of steps and sequences to implement, manage and effect organizational change. As such, it had been evident that most of these step-based approaches, which were often based on traditional management concepts (Fayol, 1949) and Taylor's (1911) scientific

management, did not address the possibility that organization change could be unpredictable, non-linear, and oftentimes complex, often permeated by the “free will” of the organizational actors involved (Stacey, 2011). This was largely due to subscribing to the assumption that organizations were mechanistic systems that could be effectively controlled by managers employing highly structured control mechanisms in the various systems and sub-systems of planning, organizing, resource-allocation, role-demarcation, coordination and communication, often from a very hierarchical, top-down approach, i.e. every organizational actor would mechanistically work towards an agreed directions without any objection (Bramford and Forrester, 2003). However, as Bramford and Forrester (2003) argued, this was not always the scenario, and the observed reality was that different organizational actors could have different beliefs and ideas on the same issue.

Such mechanistic and planned change discourses were not without critics. Schein (1985) argued against the effectiveness of planned change from the perspective that organizations were assumed to be isolated systems that could be effectively and fully controlled, and such isolated change effort would likely fail to react to any radical change that could happen suddenly both within and/or outside the systems. Several authors also advocated that such planned change focused mainly on a single dimension, and thus could be too simplistic to address the interconnected-ness of organizational environments, boundaries and relationships. This could no doubt achieve some short-term results but the likelihood of sustaining a long-term positive impact on the organizations implementing such planned change could be limited (Dawson, 1994; Genus, 1998; Hartley, Bennington & Binns, 1997; Senior, 1997). Additionally, the planned change methods oftentimes called for formulation of objectives, project scope, schedules/milestones, strategies and methods, which could all become too dependent on one or a few individuals to be fully responsible for effecting the change (Wilson, 1992). Not only would this bring great pressure on these individuals (to deliver the results of the planned change), it could create an authoritative change environment, which could in turn post significant challenges for each and every actor involved in the change to truly appreciate all the planning done for the change initiative. Wilson (1992) posited that these change leaders/managers might be able to have a full appreciation of the full plan of change that had been purposely engineered to achieve the change objective, but they would likely be the only ones who believed in the plans one

hundred percent and thus fully committed to it. However, as Pettigrew and Whipp (1993) had argued, change should be comprising of “linking action” by all the organizational actors throughout the entire business. Their views on change processes and events were that they were dynamic and frequently difficult to be perceived or observed accurately. This also mean unpredictability would be inherent to any change initiative, and thus its results were also often inconsistent with what was originally planned (Schein, 1985).

Furthermore, the key problem with these step-based, mechanistic approaches was that the complexity-prone, dynamic and organic perspectives of organizations were often given little, if at all any, emphasis (Wetzel and Regber, 2013). Organizations are social entities consisting of both its social members/actors (humans) and their interactions (activities). Wetzel and Regber (2013) discussed that oftentimes attempts to apply mechanistic methods on social and organic subjects could often yield less than desirable success (if success at all), or worse off, this might create more problems than it attempts to solve. Rosenzweig (2007) in his 2007 book “The Halo Effect” criticized similar dependence on rigorous researches/models, causality, correlation, and “organizational physics” (i.e. organizations operate within a set of deterministic rules and parameters that can be managed, altered and controlled) by business owners, managers and practitioners, and referred to such as “delusions” of management and control. Indeed, the popularity and unquestioned acceptance of such mechanistic and programmatic approaches to change (which I had also been a keen advocate of prior to my awareness of the CAS and SC perspectives) could be associated with two key change management themes, which were often being exploited and favored by management practitioners and researchers alike. They were namely “pro-change biases” and “managerialism” (Sturdy and Grey, 2003). Before going into exploring these two themes, it would be worthy to note that organizational change implementation and management applying the above planed approaches had yielded limited success with a reported more than 70% failure rate (Balogun and Hailey, 2004), which clearly raised the need for both researchers and practitioner to rethink and reflect on these approaches, or perhaps more specifically the two change management themes highlighted.

2.2.1 The Two Themes of Change Management

In this section, I would explore two rather uncommon themes in change management research and theories as discussed by Sturdy and Grey (2003). I believe that by exploring these two rather "unorthodox" themes, it would allow greater insights on the predominant mindset, assumptions and biases of typical change management practices, and hence potentially offering the possibilities to contrast with the significance of what CAS and SC lenses could bring to a change manager's practice and perspectives. They were "unorthodox" because they were seldom being explored and discussed among change practitioners and often given little, if at all, attention in most organizational change research (Wetzel and Gorp, 2014). The two themes are namely:

1. Management's bias to favor change over stability/continuity (or Pro-Change Bias); and
2. Management's obsession to control and manage change, and their insistence that change could actually be controlled and managed.

Perhaps a more technically correct approach to describe them should be biases and assumptions instead of themes. However, they were almost always admitted as a given in organizations and were entrenched so deep in the management of the organizations among practitioner that they were seldom, if at all, questioned or challenged upon in most change management research (Sturdy and Grey, 2003; Wetzel and Gorp, 2014).

2.2.1.1 Pro-Change Bias

I had been a keen believer in the concept of "resistance to change" until my current thesis supervisor challenged me into rethinking and reflecting more on this concept. I was convinced from the years of management training and practice that change is necessary and it is the responsibility of management to plan, lead and manage organizational change. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Wilson (1992) had clearly outlined the weakness of such "management's responsibility" to plan and implement change mentality without taking into the consideration of the other organization actors involved in or affected by the change, and consequently cultivating an extremely authoritative, top-down only change context. Instead of facilitating the planned change, such restrictive change context could actually encourage greater resistance from the change recipients (Bamford and Forrester, 2003:560).

In fact, from these literatures, it made sense to postulate that organization actors' (particularly those of the lower rung of the organization and often change recipients whose voices were often being silenced) tendency to resist change could be one key opposing force in the change force-field model as pioneered by Lewin (1947). However, Sturdy and Grey (2003) referenced Boudon (1986) that resistance to change was an "appallingly prejudice-ridden and authoritarian expression" and discussed the prevalence usage of "resistance to change" lingo, which was a ubiquitous organizational change management phrase and concept. To them, this actually reflected the deep-seated assumption and bias of managers and scholars that change was indeed more than necessary and desirable in organizations, i.e. a kind of "pro-change" bias. They further highlighted that such "pro-change bias" were so prevalent in both practice and researches that there had been little room, if at all, for the alternative, i.e. "no change" to be considered.

Of course, we should be all familiar with the ethos of "change is the only constant" and speaking from experience, I believed this idea/ethos had not only permeated just the management level, but even to majority of organizational actors across all levels. In fact, this idea of "change is the only constant" had been not a recent invention, but one that stretched all the way back 2,500 years to Heraclitus, who advocated "All is flux, nothing stays still." (Beer and Nohria, 2000). However, this should not imply that everyone who espouses such ethos truly believed in or was committed to it. It would not be too far-fetched to postulate that some organizational actors (particularly the lower rung employees who were actually executing the work processes of the organization) did not espouse such ethos with genuine belief and commitment to it but rather, they could be subjugated to accept it because management deemed it to be so. It might be generally true that for human (and thus organization) to progress, change, especially one that bring positive and productive outcome, should be necessary. Nevertheless, perhaps it should also be necessary to pause for a moment and consider the possibility of "no change"? Even Sturdy and Grey (2003) had argued that if what Heraclitus had espoused has been valid, then it would be paradoxical for it to remain valid after more than 2,500 years!

Reflecting back on my lived experiences as a change management practitioner, it had been

almost impossible to recall any past instance where a change initiative would conclude that no change was actually required. On the other hand, I did recall several experiences of change recipients seeking and asking questions on the necessity of the planned change, and some with genuinely good reasons to back up their perspectives, but only to be talked out (or perhaps more aptly silenced out) to believe otherwise. Somehow, I wondered how many other organization actors had chosen to keep silent even when they genuinely questioned the validity and necessity of planned organizational change. The point that I would like to make here was not so much of should we change, or not, but rather should we change for the sake of changing? Is it possible to have too excessive change or changing beyond the necessity? After all, even though in general the intention to bring about change had been to achieve a more desirable organizational outcome, but perhaps the essential question should be "more desirable for who?".

It is plausible to think that all the years of management education could have conditioned most practitioners to believe that it would not be necessary to listen to the "alternative voice" of no-change since change would never be bad or negative. Then when we, as change leaders and managers, kept focusing primarily on the necessity for successful and effective change, and consequently attempting to drown out the change recipient voices because we believed that they were just resisting the change (i.e. resisting the future good that management were offering you), weren't we trapping ourselves with some sort of bias or blind spot? In fact, with similar reasoning I began to question the uncountable times in my practice when I had cognitively drowned out all these "alternative" voices by (either selectively or not; intentionally or not) filtering them out as "resistance to change". Perhaps there were also valid alternative voices that could be of value to the change efforts that were being implemented. That was not to imply that it had been erroneous to go ahead with whatever change programs that management had initiated and planned, but rather such "pro-change" bias had certainly allowed management to grant change leader/agent significant power over the change recipients to drown out both invalid and valid alternative voices to the planned change.

In fact, the argument "change is necessary" even went beyond the state of necessity to that of "everything is change" (Ford and Ford, 1994) and stabilities were even interpreted as

changes that had gone unidentified (Kanter et al, 1992). Such discourses only inspired greater reasoning for management and change practitioners to acquire greater power over their change recipients and even further ascertaining that resistance to change was indeed genuine and consequently legitimizing the suppression of alternative voices that do not harmonize with the proposed change plan. Hence, such pro-change bias, which I believed to be rampantly prevalent in organizations and among managers and practitioners, could serve to be the very prescription that fuel the self-fulfilling prophesy of "resistance to change" in many planned organizational change programs. On the other hand, the above discussion offered the plausibility to posit that perhaps oftentimes the change recipients just wanted their voices to be heard and also to be able to make sense of the rationale behind the planned change, such as through authentic dialogue (two-way communication and conservations; exchanges of ideas and perspectives), rather than to just systematically go against the change.

2.2.1.2 Managerialism & Obsession to Manage and Control Change

From the preceding discussions, it might be worthwhile to further consider the possibility that organizational change management practice and research tended to be biased of being both managerialistic and universal (Sturdy and Grey, 2003). Sturdy and Grey (2003:656) argued that "the ethos in much of the literature is of organizational change management being a science of universal laws for the benefit of all". Similarly, Stacey (2011) had been also highly critical of the tendencies of organizational change management practices and researches to pursue similar managerialistic and universalistic veins at the expense of ignoring the intertwining effects of complexity amongst organizations and organizational actors. Klikauer (2013) extended Locke's (2011) definition of managerialism:

"Managerialism combines management knowledge and ideology to establish itself systemically in organizations and society while depriving owners, employees (organizational-economical) and civil society (social-political) of all decision-making powers. Managerialism justifies the application of managerial techniques to all areas of society on the grounds of superior ideology, expert training, and the exclusive possession of managerial knowledge necessary to efficiently run corporations and societies."

This definition further exemplifies a certain hegemonic characteristic of organization change management (or actually more aptly that of the general management of organizations and businesses) if the idea that organizational change management (i.e. planned change) had been indeed managerial in nature. I could not help but agree that there could be certain truth in this upon reflecting on the way we had been managing change or even in general management of organizations. Sturdy and Grey (2003) also tried to warn of another problem with managerialism in organization change management: that the focus of the change effort would be hinged primarily, if not wholly, on the organization and its objectives rather than that of its actors or other social consequences. Although they did acknowledge that such social impacts might be explored out of change management research and frameworks such as works by Bourdieu (1999) and Senette (2000), they cautioned that the scarcity of researches that studied the impact of organization change model/framework on our broader society should be alarming at least. After all, organizations' action clearly impact on its organizational actors (also social actors) and the society as a whole. They argued that there could be a risk in an inward-focused culture of favoring certain competitive and economic gains at organizational level over potential wider social harms. This might also increase the risk of exposing the core components of organization and its actors to greater exploitation. Lastly, Sturdy and Grey (2003) also voiced the concern of the significant possibility of entrenched universalism within the context of organizational change management literatures and practices contributed by the pro-change and managerialism biases, whereby more weight might have been granted to studies and practices that reinforce such biases.

Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron (2001) found that the quest for generalizable frameworks of change management still remained as a primary focus of organization change research even though there had been good attempts to actively expand the field to give the complex, dynamic and social aspects of organization change management more awareness and recognition in both literature and practice. Nevertheless, in order to gain more traction in this aspect, Sturdy and Grey (2003) argued that we needed to address the universalism that permeated organizational change management research, as universalism had contributed a significant amount of inertia to move into the relatively less charted dimensions of organization change management. If change management theories and practices were indeed universal toward pro-change and managerialistic, this could further

underpin the subsequent theme to be explored – the manageability and controllability of change.

Much of the prevalent organizational change management models and typologies (such as discussed by Lewin, 1951; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Ford and Ford, 1994; Morgan and Sturdy, 2000, etc.) were built upon the basic assumption that change could indeed be managed and controlled (Sturdy and Grey, 2003). The paradox would be that if change was really manageable and controllable, it followed that most of the change initiatives should not have achieved less than satisfactory success (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2004). As a change management practitioner, I had my fair share of experience in applying these change models and typologies. Though my experiences were definitely not generalizable or could be proven to be conclusive, there were countless times when, as a change agent or leader, I felt the significant loss of control over a change project. In fact, when I thought hard about it, I could not remember if there was any single one time when the change effort that I formulated, facilitated, led, planned, organized or managed went according or even close to the original plan. We might still achieve the desired outcome in the end but often at the expense of significant deviations, in terms of budget, time, and/or effectiveness. Some could have even implicated our relationships with colleagues and superiors alike.

Furthermore, by attempting to understand, manage and control organizational change, an underlying assumption that organizations and its actors could actually be directly investigated, analyzed and understood (Van Tonder, 2004) would need to be applied. Stacey (2011) argued that this would be inherently myopic as organizational actors and stakeholders were autonomous individuals (i.e. with free will), and the unpredictability and complexity of their actions and interactions clearly limited such notion. Nevertheless, perhaps a more appropriate postulation against this obsession of change practitioners to manage and control change should be not so much of if it could be controlled and managed or not, but rather the predictability and degree that it could (or could not) be done so. My experiences informed me that most of us did not believe that any change initiative/project could be fully and entirely controlled or managed realistically, but we just had to believe that it could be done so. Any deviations from it would then be accounted to our incompetence,

lack of experience or simply resistance to change. With an understanding of the pro-change and managerialism biases as previously discussed, it would not be difficult to appreciate the underlying rationale of my experiences.

Since we (were made to) believe that change could and should be controlled and managed, it then drove our practice toward a certain obsession to control and manage all our change initiatives. Some could argue that such control would drive performance and hence would be beneficial to our practice. On the other hand, could such obsession lead to more silencing of the alternative voices just like the pro-change bias and managerialism might have as discussed earlier on? Indeed, one key reason for conducting organizational change research had been probably just further attempts to improve and increase such predictability and degree of control and manageability of change. However, if we should continue to subscribe to the same universalism as before, these attempts would likely be a futile one, otherwise we should be looking at more successes in our practices and experiences. Furthermore, it is likely that the autonomy and free will of organizational actors and the complexity of self-organization (of actors) would make this predictability and degree of control and manageability much lesser than desired (Stacey, 2011), but this should not mean that control and manageability were impossible. Conversely, carrying such unpredictability and complexity to one extreme could result in significant demotivation to even try managing change at all, since it would be futile to even try. Perhaps we ought to be more pragmatic about this and strike a balance instead of embracing the biases of pro-change and managerialism unbendingly or giving up hope in the face of complexity and unpredictability. I would opine that it is plausible that we, as practitioner, should adapt from being too obsessed about being controllers and managers of change to being more of influencers and facilitators to effect change.

2.3 Toward a Less Mechanistic and Deterministic Change Management Approach

While I was not advocating to discount the usefulness and validity of these classic views and "N-steps" models in their application toward aiding manager and change practitioner to conduct their change program, I also began to be more inclined toward adopting a less mechanistic, deterministic perspective toward planned change to complement these theories and models, and optimistically and ultimately achieving a more holistic and

comprehensive change approach. Driven by the uncertainty and complexity experienced by organizations in their business environment, more authors had also questioned the validity of planned change approach, in particular the lack of consideration for emergence in the change process (Dawson, 1994; Pettigrew and Whipp, 1993; Strickland, 1998; Van de Ven and Poole, 1995; Wilson, 1992). Although I had raised concerns on pro-change and managerialism biases, I could not ignore an obvious observation that change could often be inevitable in our current social and business context, especially so when our ever more dynamic relationships between each other, and between the environments and us are evidently evolving on a constant basis. Nonetheless, as discussed in the earlier segment, adopting only a pro-change attitude could be dangerously leaning toward managerialism and universalism of change management. Similarly, I had come to understand that it would be incorrect to believe that we could control and manage change totally, and it would also be equally erroneous to believe that there is absolutely no control over it. In essence, having expounded the seldom explored themes of organizational change management practices and researches had led me to be cautious of being not too managerialistic and universalistic toward change management, as well as of being not too obsessive toward controlling and managing change.

I believed both themes, if and when espoused upon staunchly, could have a detrimental impact on the process and outcome of the change effort, such as losing alternative, non-managerial voices that could be beneficial to the organization and change effort, and facing greater and unnecessary "resistance to change". Sturdy and Grey (2003) argued that in order to address the silencing of non-managerial voices, we might have to turn to social constructionism (SC) and leverage on discourse analysis to study change practice. To them, change could not be meaningfully materialized just by focusing only on the process, content and context, but rather a "construction of meaning" would be essential. Stacey (2011) also argued that since there would be no way to predict (hence control and manage) change fully in our complex world and realities, change practitioners could (and should) approach change from the perspective of CAS, which he convincingly argued to be of more relevance to our organizational realities. Hence, a key focus of my AR had been to explore the possibility of addressing these biases (of pro-change narrative, reductionistic thinking, managerialism and universalism), which were often inherently embedded in many change management models,

theories and discourses (Wetzel and Gorp, 2014). It was thus suggested that perhaps by adopting CAS and SC perspectives in managing organizational change, we could inculcate a more effective approach in managing and effecting it, by engaging more in social change among the organizational actors, who were inherently social creations to start off with. Essentially, the relevance of adopting CAS and SC perspectives in managing change should not be discounted or even ignored even as we continue implementing our change programs leveraging on the various well-established "N-step" change methodologies or models.

In the following sections, I would proceed to review the literatures on both CAS and SC within the context of change management in organizations and also to establish the background on how both concepts had influenced and shaped my change management practice as I proceeded with my action research project and engaged with the stakeholders/actors within my change context. The subsequent reviews were organized into 4 areas, namely, "Organization, its actors and Organizational Change", "Concept of CAS and its relevance to managing change", "Concept of Social Constructionism and its relevance to managing change", and finally "Putting on the CAS and SC Lens". The intent had been that these 4 areas, including what had been discussed in the preceding sections above in this chapter, should be able to provide and establish a sound theoretical foundation for my first-person AR and allow for a more meaningful appreciation of subsequent presentation of my research methodology, coding approaches, data analysis and findings.

2.3.1 Organizations, Actors and Organizational Change (Actions)

Organizations were made up of individuals/members who worked together toward a common goal. These individuals' actions, choices, decisions, learning and behaviors would all become parts and buildings blocks of the organization's activities. Hence, organizations were essentially entities defined by the activities or action its members (individual actors) were performing. According to Geser (1992), the actions of these individual members of the organization would be the "primary actions", which collectively constituted to the organization's actions. These constituted organizational actions then in turn produce further actions and/or interactions. In fact, Geser argued that the organization itself was "an object of action", which both produced and was constituted by actions. Because organizations were defined by actions, it then made sense to conclude that the individual members and

participants operating within the organizational contexts should be defined as organizational actors.

Although organizational parameters such as policies, manual of authorities, procedures, etc. could theoretically bound organizational actors' actions, they could indeed be free to perform any action (or inaction) in whatever way they deemed fit, i.e. organizational actors were autonomous, free-willed individual capable of acting beyond clearly defined organizational boundaries (Stacey, 2011). In short, organizational parameters were organizational mechanisms (both tacit and explicit), which were acquired, developed and implemented to aid in the planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling the organizational activities and actions. Geser (1992:447) even suggested that such organizational parameters aided in giving a more empirical and predictable characteristics of organizations in comparison to the individual organizational actors who formed them. By "free to perform", I referred to the fact that organization actors were not like robots and computers, which could be programmed to follow specific instruction without question or deviation (assuming no system glitches or programming bugs). Rather, organizational actors could potentially go beyond these defined organizational parameters by choice and act (or refrain to act) in contradiction to what these parameters had determined them to be, even if there could be significant ramification as a consequence. Conversely, also implied by Geser (1992:433), organizations were in general not as autonomous in their actions as organizational actors. In Geser's word, organizations become "prisoners" of their specific goals, systems, policies, etc. (i.e. organizational parameters). This could also infer that organizations tend to be more stable actors as compared to its individual members (Geser, 1992:433). In terms of handling changes, this hinted that organizations would not be particularly apt to adapt to disruptive changes that were characterized as discontinuous, episodic and intermittent in nature (Geser, 1992).

Weick and Quinn (1999) discussed in great depth on the distinction between such episodic change against continuous change (which were often gradual, incremental and emergent). They argued that episodic change tended to follow the Lewin (1951) 3-step change model of "unfreeze, change and refreeze", while continuous change would be those that followed a "freeze-rebalance-unfreeze" framework of analysis. They were of the opinion that Lewin's

change model was based on the assumption of linearity, and external interventions such as change programs, which apparently did not work out for many organizations (Beer et al, 1990). In essence, Weick and Quinn argued that to manage change more effectively, it would be needful to go beyond the traditional Lewin model of episodic change to intervene at a more micro-level of continuous change. Since continuous change signifies that there would be no distinctive start or end point (Orlikowski, 1996), Weick and Quinn suggested that there would then be a need to "freeze" the existing organizational situation to gather a snapshot on what was happening (e.g. reflection), then to "rebalance" or reframe the contextual parameters for opportunities (Dutton, 1993) so as to co-engender a shared discourse. Finally, they identified a need to "unfreeze" the rebalanced state so that the organization could continue to undergo its continual transformation. Moreover, they also recognized that to intervene and manage continuous change, the perspective to be adopted would need to go deeper into an even more microscopic level, i.e. the focus should be on the self-organizing groups of organizational actors and their interaction (i.e. rebalance) (Weick and Quinn, 1999; Stacey, 2011). This was echoed by Ford and Ford (1995:560) who argued that "changes emerge through the interconnectedness of many micro-conversations, each of which follows relatively simple rules". As would be expounded more in later section, such was a depiction of a typical CAS.

However, it would be equally erroneous to posit that episodic type of change could be irrelevant or that the organizations were only constantly undergoing continual change at an institutional level. In fact, Tsoukas and Chia (2002) espoused that organizations experienced both such episodic change (in the form of institutionalized change initiatives, such as restructuring) and continuous change (in the form of localized human self-organization) simultaneously most of the times. Furthermore, they seemed to imply and support the notion that while organizations underwent episodic change, change management practitioner should not just focus on the institutionalized plan and actions, but should also pay sufficient attention to the underlying continuous, microscopic change that would be happening to even each individual organizational actor (pg. 580). As episodic change set in, organization actors would tend to engage in self-organization actions and attempt to realign their values, perceptions, expectations and mindset, in response to the institutionalized plan being unfolded (Stacey, 2011). Thus, it could be valuable for change management

practitioners to go beyond the planned actions of episodic change and tap into how they might engage and/or influence such localized continuous change that would be happening simultaneously so as to have a better chance of achieving success in such institutionalized episodic change initiatives. In essence, such a perspective of continuous changes being embedded within episodic change could be of much relevance within the context of CAS. Therefore, it followed that if managing the localized, continuous change at the organizational actor level could be critical to the success of implementing institutionalized change, the subsequent question for change management practitioner would then be "how we can actually manage such localized self-organizations and responsive adaptation of organizational actors undergoing an institutionalized, planned change". Perhaps, with some optimism, we could look toward CAS and SC to offer further insights to address this most-pressing issue if we were to subscribe to the view that organizations are indeed CAS and organizational actors lived and worked within such a CAS. Hopefully, my AR inquiry and findings could provide further insights to shed some light in this aspect.

2.3.2 Concept of Complex Adaptive System (CAS) and Its Relevance to Managing Change

The interest in applying complexity theories and system-approaches to investigate organizational and management phenomena, including change management, took flight mainly only since the 1990s (e.g. Anderson, 1999; Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998; Levy, 1994). It had a relatively short history when compared to the classical management approaches adopted to investigate change management since the 1940s. Even as more researchers were embarking on using CAS to explain organizational behavior and investigate change management, much of the works were based on case studies (e.g. Burgelman and Grove, 2007; Chiles, Meyer and Hench, 2004; Plowman et al, 2007). Empirical approaches were uncommon in the CAS research arena (Girod and Whittington, 2015), which might contribute to the lack of empirical and systematic evidence about how CAS might impact or influence organization functioning (including managing organizational change). This could be one reason why CAS had not been adopted as a mainstream conceptual framework to study organizational change. Another possibility could also be that CAS were often denoted as non-linear but yet also not chaotic. Indeed, CAS were often understood as systems that were maintaining at a delicate balance at the edge of chaos between linear stability and ultimate disorder (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998; McCarthy et al, 2006; Carroll and Burton, 2000).

This “edge of chaos” had been characterized by the presence of various positive and negative feedback, which could have significant impact on changing the delicate balance between stability and disorder. Typically, positive feedback tended to augment change (i.e. pushing the balance toward instability) while negative feedback tended to dampen change (i.e. pushing the balance toward the stability). Nepstad et al (2008), using the case study of Amazon forest, demonstrated that many small distantly-related, innocuous events could actually escalate into a single catastrophic large-scale event (e.g. deforestation of the Amazon forest on an extremely grand scale), and some of these numerous distantly-related and inconsequential events could even be happening in locations that are extremely far away from the Amazon forest. They argued that such small-scale events could sufficiently aggregate over time to reach a “tipping point” whereby an immediate (and often unstoppable) escalation into a major catastrophe (e.g. avalanche). Similarly, Lorenz (1993) discussed about how the very minor perturbation caused by the flapping of a butterfly in Brazil could have a consequent effect on the formation of a huge tornado as far away as in Texas. Hence, in the similar manner, if there had been sufficient feedback engendered in the system, it could tip the balance of the CAS toward the edge of chaos and ultimately to cross over the edge. Once this happen, it would be like a sudden trigger toward a major “shift of balance” analogous to a major change on a scale several times greater than the sum of all the small changes that came before it (Miller and Page, 2007). Such non-linearity, complexity, unpredictability and emergence would again be characteristics of a typical CAS.

In the empirical study conducted by Girod and Whittington (2015) using a relatively large sample size, they had come the conclusion that such phenomena of many small, continuous, incremental changes could aggregate, escalate and tip organizations over their edge of chaos into experiencing a major, discontinuous, disruptive change, typical of a CAS. In essence, they concluded that in a CAS, it could be highly likely that “change produce greater change” (i.e. disruptive, discontinuous change was often the consequence of many continuous, incremental change) and CAS theory would be one of the more appropriate means to study non-linear change and causality. Both Van de Ven and Poole (1995) and Weick and Quinn (1999) also discussed how the feedback processes of a CAS could amplify minor changes into a larger, episodic change. Hence, both continuous and episodic types of

change were characteristics of CAS, and the intricate relationships between the two types of change cannot be over-emphasized. It would not be rigorous to study one without the other within the CAS context. The common trait of episodic and continuous change when Weick and Quinn (1999:366) did a comparison of the two was that for both of them, the ideal organization would be one that was proficient in continuous adaption, i.e. the ability to leverage and adapt continuous change in order to steer toward a desirable episodic change.

Similarly, Brown and Eisenhardt (1997) also argued that for both cases, successful firms were often those "self-organizing" ones, which were able to take advantage of the complexity and emergence, both of which were again characteristics of CAS. Marion (1999) also favored adopting complexity and chaos approaches toward understanding and managing the processes within the modern organizations. In particular the notion of non-linearity (due to complexity and chaos, which were the norms that organizations experienced both internally and externally as argued by Marion) greatly accentuated the need for us to rethink the usual manner to manage organizations and change based on the common assumption of linear causality under classical management theories. Oftentimes, complexity and chaos were treated as external environmental constructs that organizations had to negotiate with, but Morel and Ramanujam (1999) suggested that organizations could also be associated with dissipative structures, from which the interaction of the components/agents it constituted (i.e. organizational actors) could produce adaptations and emergent actions rather than purely from the interactions with the environment. This could imply that an external trigger that engendered an episodic change might have unpredictable effects and responses from the internal interactions of the organizational elements, such as its organizational actors. This might, to certain extent, explain why organizations had been experiencing less than predictable success in their change program (Beer et al, 1990; Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2004), especially if they had not considered that organizations were composed of sub-systems and/or units that were highly inter-connected and inter-dependent on each other (Anderson, 1999).

Additionally, the "base unit" of the organization elements, i.e. organizational actors, were rational autonomous human, who according to Stacey (2011) was the primary reason why we should treat organizations as CAS. Stacey explained that individuals were able to make

decisions and act relying on his/her capacity to reason and rationalize, and he called this rationalist causality. Furthermore, as the individual was not living in isolation and as a social creature, s/he often participated in close and extensive interactions with other organizational actors, and such interactions could result in a self-organized emergence, which Stacey (borrowing from Kant) called formative causality. However, the challenge posted by formative causality was that, as espoused by Bohm (1983), any particular effect was formed on the basis that specific conditions/inputs had already been programmed within the system such that the cause (that would bring about that effect) would enforce these conditions/inputs to unfold as programmed in order to achieve that particular effect, i.e. predictability would thus be plausible and there would be effectively no authentic emergence. It might also be irrelevant to ascertain the conditions in which a particular cause-effect relationship had been programmed in since it was imminent that a cause-effect relationship would unfold due to the formative causality established. Hence, if we employed the philosophy from Immanuel Kant, organizational actors would be acting, reacting and adapting based on both rational and formative causalities, then as Stacey (2011) had argued, there would be no genuine novelty or emergence involved, i.e. it would still be deterministic.

The keyword here should be “autonomous”, which implies that there would be no way to predict or even command the outcome of organization actors’ actions and behaviors. Not only would unpredictability be a challenge for such autonomous actions and behaviors, oftentimes it would even be impossible to try to align the intentions, actions, behaviors and spoken words of organization actors. In short, one could say one thing yet do another, and often without a clear motive on why this happened. As co-workers, managers and subordinates, organization actors often had to resort to guesswork to interpret and engender meanings as they acted and interacted. Although in such cases, it could be due to communication challenges or weaknesses, it nevertheless also highlighted how difficult, if it would be at all possible, to try to negotiate, navigate and enact on the autonomies of these organizational actors, while being engulfed within the dense network of organizational parameters. Therefore, within the CAS space, it was believed that causality should be transformative (Stacey, 2011) or even mystical (Senge et al, 2005). All these just added more complexity and chaos to organizational lives, and more so during the implementation of a

change initiative.

Coupled with the inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of all parts of the organization, the self-organizing feature of organization actors could and should become a primary concern of change management practitioner, and as a matter of fact of all managers. In fact, Stacey (2011) also pointed out that since the change practitioner and managers themselves are also rational autonomous organizational actors, they would also be subjected to the change context, participating in the self-organizations and hence contributing to more dynamics, complexity and chaos of the change. This could just contribute to greater unpredictability, emergence and self-organization of the change scenario. If change initiatives/programs did not take such complexity of the organization into account, change efforts could often be hampered significantly (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). When we viewed organizations as CAS as discussed, change management practitioners and managers/leaders could no longer rely solely on the classic management and system theory (Ford, 2008).

System theory posited that organizations would maintain an equilibrium state with its environment through control mechanisms as signaled by both positive and negative feedback loops (Stacey, 2011; Ford, 2008). In essence, negative feedback referred to the organizations tending to engage in actions to move in an "opposite" direction when a certain parameter had been detected to deviate from the defined or desired value. The purpose was to return the "system" into a pre-defined equilibrium (usually as defined by the desired organizational parameters or objectives/goals) through actions that would push it back into equilibrium. For example, in a normal market condition, if the demand was reduced, in order to maintain price (say of crude oil), the negative feedback would dictate a cut in production (i.e. supply) so that a certain level of price can be maintained. On the other hand, a positive feedback moved the system in the "forward" direction whereby, instead of cutting back to bring back the system into equilibrium, it encourages a usual "expansion or increment" of the parameters (e.g. The beer game as Senge (1990) adapted from Forrester (1958; 1961)). Forrester (1958; 1961) suggested that social systems and organizations were inherently complex and non-linear, largely due to the presence of both positive and negative feedback loops. Through the example of the beer game, he argued that such complex and non-linearity often result in counterintuitive and unexpected outcomes. Made more complicated

by “distant in time and space”, these positive and negative feedback loops could often confuse rather than aid in decision making process of organization actors due to the complexity nature of such feedback. Furthermore, Forrester argued that due to such complexity and distance in time and space, it would be extremely difficult for organization actors to locate the specific point or area that required tweaking to tackle the problem. Hence, implying that, notwithstanding the effect of the autonomy of organization actors as discussed earlier, there still existed a limitation of how system theory could provide managers and practitioners the basic framework to steer their organizations and manage change.

As organization faces turbulence and discontinuity in the environment, classic management and system theory would tend to advise to minimize the resultant impact via a more simplified approach such as through codification and abstraction of information (Ashmos et al, 2000). Such approach was essentially reductionist and in addition to system theory, it had drawn largely from classic “scientific management” that originated from Taylor (1911) and Fayol (1949), whereby the management of organization would be broken down into simpler and divisible tasks so that with clearly defined rules and parameters, management would be essentially manageable and controllable. Linear causality was hence once again assumed inherently in such simplified approach toward management (and change management). This reductionist approach could no longer be effective in answering the call to adequately navigate organizations through turbulence and discontinuity (Ford, 2008). This was because such depiction of organizations generally bracketed out the notion of complexity, often as a result of local self-organization among the autonomous organization actors. Stacey (2011) argued that in such reductionist thinking, the “autonomy”, if any, would lie mainly with the manager while the main bulk of the organization actors were assumed away as rule-following parts of the organization. In essence, such perspective assumed that organization actors could be just like robots and the organization as a highly intricate yet manageable and fixable cog work. The danger of such assumptions clearly ignored the significance of the emergence that would always be embedded within the organization and engendered from the self-organizations of the organization actors or groups, which could also be often a source of sabotage or innovation alike in times of disruptions and discontinuities (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1998; Stacey, 2011). Thus, managing organizational change with a CAS

perspective should greatly supplement the inadequacies of both classic scientific management and system approach, and possibly harvest greater potentials embedded within the rich and complex networks of organizational actors. This could be particularly relevant in our increasingly dynamic world, and without the adaptability, which the CAS could supplement, organizations could find it hard to progress and prosper (Englehardt and Simmons, 2002a).

CAS researchers' and authors' assumptions of unpredictability and emergence might seem to give much less scope for control than management practices that relied on the assumed predictability of human and organizational activities. This could seem to contradict the proposition that change management could potentially be enhanced by CAS. After all, much of our deep-seated biases (of pro-change and managerialism) had conditioned us to believe that if we could not predict, foresee and control, how could we, as change management practitioners, be able to do anything productive to bring about authentic and innovative change? Before we could attempt to address this issue, it would be important to take another look at CAS in terms of its emergent and evolutionary qualities.

Stacey (2011) discussed a key phenomenon of CAS consisting of self-organized organizational actors following simple set of rules, which could either be explicit or implicit or both, yet still able to exhibit emergence and innovation. Reynolds (1987) designed a simulation to study the flocking behavior of birds using a network of computer programmed homogenous agents he called as "Boids". With only 3 simple rules, he also managed to demonstrate the emergence of such CAS. Ray (1992) then further this by creating a simulation with heterogenous agents and similarly with simple rule sets. Not only the outcome had been unpredictable and emergent, it even showed that evolution could indeed be possible in the form of new species formed. In Ray's simulation, he only introduced agent with 1 method of replication (in terms of the replicating instruction) but ended up with different categories of replications (again in terms of replicating instruction) in the end. Is such attributes of emergence and evolution, which were key characteristics of CAS, then of destructive or constructive in nature? I posited that it is neither, but rather it would be up to how we, as practitioners, took advantage of these characteristics and steered them. In the face of increasing dynamism and change, we could no longer rely on what worked in the

past for what would work in future. Market conditions and environment continue to evolve (primarily because they themselves were also CAS in essence), and I believed then it should be important for us as practitioner to embrace emergence and evolution instead of shunning them, and to learn how to address them, perhaps even using them as tools to help us in our practice, which resulted in the CAS perspective becoming ever increasingly important in many aspects of organizational realities.

Stacey (2011:264) recommended that approaching management or change via CAS might sacrifice reliable forecast and predictability (as if we were indeed able to forecast and predict with reliability), but could be highly effective if one learned to identify the right sets of rules and to influence it and steer the local self-organizations and interactions. In this end, it would be indeed possible to embrace and leverage on the emergence and evolution that followed. However, it must be noted that these simple rules or sets of rules should not be set in stone, i.e. unchanging. According to Morgan (1997), managers should seize any opportunities or leverage points, which s/he defined as small changes in the context that could be affected and managed, so as to allow the self-organization of other organization actors to develop and take charge. In this manner, such leverage points in the context could actually be used to steer the self-organization toward a certain direction of emergence and evolution. In fact, he further suggested that one could learn to identify the existing "attractor" that had been shaping the organization/context into stability and evaluate if this existing "attractor" should be changed. If change had been required, one could then begin to consider what the "new" ground rules should be, i.e. by identifying the new attractor and its rules. With these new ground rules, the change practitioner/manager could thus attempt to "push" the self-organization toward the "edge of chaos", whereby the dynamism would be the most optimum for innovation and novelty to happen (Marion, 1999). In fact, Marion suggested that the unpredictability exhibited in complex systems did not necessary allow one to conclude that everything happened by chance and there existed no control at all. He posited that attractors at the edge of chaos were usually constrained and tended to relate quite closely to each other, hence implying that such attractors could actually function as a form of control to steer the self-organization.

Stacey (2011) also argued that the notion of setting up basic ground rules to move the

organizational actors toward a desired attractor could, to an extent, also bring back the element of control for the manager. Nevertheless, the inherent assumption here would be that organization actors, who were essentially heterogeneous autonomous individuals, would choose to surrender certain level of their autonomies to follow the rules. Although the prescription of using simple ground rules to guide the local interaction of self-organization seemed novel and aligned to complexity theory, Stacey argued that this approach could similarly award the leader/manager with the illusion of control. This could result in missing the greater and more authentic bigger picture of actual self-organizations that could take place both at the localized context as well as another inter-connected context. Hence, Stacey proposed to adapt complexity through what he termed as complex responsive processes. Instead of trying to manipulate the basic ground rules to influence local interactions, leaders/managers could and should embrace complex responsive processes whereby the focus should be on "communicative interaction, power relating and ideologically based choices" (Stacey ,2011).

Human interactions were essentially always communicative, and we employed linguistic tools and mediums (e.g. symbols), and gestures in our conversations. These communicative tools, symbols and gestures were "social acts", which were socially constructed in real-time as interactions were engaged. Such social acts were very contextual, and meanings (explicit or implicit, individual or shared) often arose from such communicative interactions. Additionally, such communicative interactions were often power relations laden, whereby constrains and enablement of actions and/or further interactions could be affected. In the processes of conversations and power relating, organizational actors were also making choices based on certain ideologies they subscribed to all the time, i.e. these choices could be rational, altruistic or even selfish. Such ongoing conservation, power relating, and deliberate choosing would consequently and simultaneously develop or being enacted by certain themes (usually in a narrative form), which often contained the potential to in turn create meaning (even shared meaning) and undertook some kind of actions (or joint actions).

In Stacey's view, these joint actions that resulted were not the work of just the basic ground rules, nor were it due to the leader/manager's steer, but rather the emergence of the

complex responsive processes that had occurred through self-organization of the local interaction simultaneously. Resulting joint actions might further in turn cause further iterations of complex responsive processes that could bring about further unfolding and construction of "known-yet-unknown" future. Known because these complex responsive processes had been driven by purpose and ideologies in actors' choices, conversations and power relating. Unknown because no one could predict how the joint action would be socially constructed in the next iteration of self-organization within the CAS. Because such causality had the potential of transformation, Stacey (2011) and Senge et al (2005) called this a mystical kind of "transformative causality", which was somehow unconventional. It was therefore possible that through an in-depth and thorough understanding of such complex responsive processes, one could hope and attempt to shape the outcome of the intricate networks or webs of interactions via self-organizations within a specific context. Hence, I believed exploring such complex responsive processes, perhaps via identifying and locating the traits of such, and learning the ways to engage in these processes should be key action points/inputs to the inquiry process within a CAS context.

Bold claims of adopting the CAS perspective into the organization's structures, processes and systems in fostering organizational learning and adaptability through leveraging on the self-organization of organizational actors and groups to bring about innovation and improved performance were getting more popular and accepted (Girod and Whittington, 2015). However, its lack of empirical data to ascertain such effectiveness were extremely prevalent and cited by several authors who contested against these claims, such as Tetenbaum (1998) and Englehardt and Simmons (2002a, 2002b), and Lafferty (2002). Englehardt and Simmons (2002b) argued that CAS should be more of a framework for analytical purpose rather than a competent theory that could be tested. Lafferty (2002) even criticized CAS for being a mere substitute for "pragmatism and judgment". Such shortfall of CAS could potentially render the feasibility of generalizing and operationalizing CAS for useful application, but it should not negate its usefulness and applicability in informing and enhancing the practice of change management practitioners. I would like to reiterate once again what I had set out to achieve in my AR inquiry as explained in my introduction chapter, i.e. my research motive and purpose had not been to make any bold claim on how CAS perspective could innovate change management but rather how would a change management practice work out to be if

we seriously, purposefully and choicefully engaged our practice with such CAS perspective.

2.3.3 Social Constructionism (SC) and Its Relevance in Managing Change

Following the concept of complex responsive processes as discussed by Stacey (2011), it would be also useful and needful for change management practitioners to realize that the organization reality that s/he was operating in had been a socially-constructed one. Beinhocker (2006) discussed that organizations were in fact objectives-oriented, boundary-maintaining, socially constructed systems of actors' interactions, and hence implying that a CAS would be capable of evolving. Like all evolving CAS, Beinhocker argued that organizations and its actors were absorbing, processing and constructing their realities in an interactive way with each other and with the environment. To him, evolution was essentially a type of information-processing algorithm in search of a fit among all the stakeholders and environmental landscape that the organization and its actors were operating in. There was no fixed path and in fact he argued that this algorithm would tend to take a much more uneven and fragmented path than a usual more logical, fixed and smooth path. This would certainly fit the notion of social constructionist view of organizational reality. The idea of viewing organization as a social network and arrangement had not been new. Institutionalist theorists (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Scott, 2001; Zucker, 1977) had long advocated that organizations developed and regulated processes that incentivized and constrained social interactions among organizational actors to shape shared meaning and collective behavior (usually for the purpose of stability).

Weick (1995) also proposed the similar idea that organization and its actors enacted on their environment and social setting. Enactment is basically the process of trying to make sense of what had been going on within the given context and social setting, and thereby making choices based on certain ideologies and taking action. Weick's idea of enactment had the sense of iterations, i.e. choices and actions (and its consequent outcome if any) feed-back into subsequent enactment process. All these actions and interactions should be observable throughout the entire organizations and down to its most basic element, i.e. a single organization actor. Weick's enactment approach also implied that the autonomy of the organizational actor involved played a significant role, hence the notion of a socially constructed organizational reality was also inferred upon. Such enactment could also be

perceived as similar to Stacey's (2011) complex responsive processes.

Cunliffe (2008) had discussed social constructionism to be constituted of various different type. She presented social constructionism types as if on a spectrum, which she argued that on one end, the realities were subjective and negotiated by individual actors within a social setting and the process to construct the meanings of the realities experienced would largely by cognitive, such as Weick's (1995) enactment approach toward social constructionism. On the other end of the spectrum, Cunliffe termed the social realities as "intersubjective", in which actors participated in the meaning or reality construction process interactively and spontaneously, and the process would be mainly relational and dialogic based. Furthermore, Cunliffe also posited that the former type of social constructionism could be embedded with power dynamics while no dominant control could be identified or located usually for the later form. Although I felt more aligned to Cunliffe's preferred subscription of the later form of what she had termed as "relational responsive social constructionism", i.e. the emphasis was on an intersubjective reality co-created via dialogic exchanges, and always in relations with and responsive toward each other, I could not imagine that power relations and dynamics would not play any part in our organizational (or even personal) realities. This would be highly relevant especially considering we lived and worked in a highly structured and hierarchical society.

Shotter's (1996) work on propagating the essentials of social constructionist thinking perspective in both professional practices and academia using what he termed "social poetics" had been another of my major influence. Shotter's social poetics approach was also aligned to the relational and dialogic approach that Cunliffe had subscribed. Shotter argued that in order to enable a sufficiently fruitful meaning making process among individual actors, it would be indispensable for the interactive process to be relational, dialogic and responsive between themselves, their surroundings, and contextual circumstances. Indeed, this responsive process of ongoing meaning construction (using social poetics) tended to be unique, and the resulting emergence of the process would be highly dependent on how the relational and dialogic responsive actions played out. According to Shotter, this would also be consequential to what were already partially shaped within the minds and perspectives of the actors involved in regard to the particular context. As such, these meaning making

processes among the actors could be highly creative as they co-created new meanings and realities that would be shared among them. Furthermore, the notion that such processes of social constructionism would be less deterministic also meant that there would be a strong essence of unpredictability.

Shotter even claimed that the only meaningful way to investigate, understand and make sense of other actors in our circumstantial context was first to gain an appreciation of their "inner life", and subsequently approach our interactive engagement with them relationally and dialogically. It would be through such responsive engagement in social poetics that one could catch a good glimpse of the authentic meaning or meanings of the spoken and acted. In fact, such social poetics within the context of social constructionism could even be claimed to enable the momentous co-creation of their circumstantial context in a transformative and reflexive manner (Shotter, 2011; Cunliffe and Shotter, 2003). Such a perspective on how transformative and reflexive social constructionism could offer to me had been a significant influence to my change management practice, in that in addition to the opportunities that could potentially engendered to gain a deeper and more meaningful understanding of my fellow organizational actors, I would also be more prepared to engage (with social poetics) the very indeterministic and unpredictable context that we, as change manager, faced more often than not.

In addition to making sense of our situations, circumstances and our colleagues' "inner life", a social constructionist perspective could also have the potential to allow enablement of better communication, knowledge creation and resolution improvisation (of organizational challenges) (Shotter and Cunliffe, 2006). Social constructionists posited that social life, social interactions and relationships were articulated primarily through the use of language and other supporting communicative medium, particularly in dialogues (Gergen, 1999; 2010; Hosking, 2011). It was through these dialogic, relational interactions that shared meanings and narratives were co-created and enacted upon. In fact, Gergen (2010) claimed that it was through such ongoing conversation (even small talks) or in his term "confluence" that meanings were made, and actions were envisioned and subsequently taken. It was also through the local self-organized construction of meanings, through the use of language and other communicative medium, that could shape the perspectives and mindset of the actors

involved and hence their subsequent actions (or even inactions) (Gergen, 2009; McNamee and Hosking, 2012). This implied that language, and hence meanings, could be indeterministic, metaphorical or even mystical (Cunliffe, 2002), which could only be known or made known as we use it to communicate and co-construct our reality (McNamee, 2015). This had also been in line with Stacey's (2011) complex responsive processes whereby conversations and dialogues were the primary communicative tools for interaction within the self-organizations of actors. In this case, adopting a social constructionist perspective when managing change in organizations would thus be compatible with the CAS perspectives, and in fact it should be an essential aspect for practitioners who intend to influence and shape the organization's discourse and narrative.

When considering a social constructionist perspective, it should further be noted that it would be vital to evaluate the social dynamics involved. Searls (2008) suggested that as organizational actors interact and engage with each other, there were three primary factors that would contribute to the social engagement dynamics, namely, transactions (tangible and intangible), conversations (formal and informal) and relationships (intrinsic and evolving). Organizational actors would engage with each other through these three dynamics, and both transactions (e.g. favor, knowledge transfer) and conversations would tend to be highly explicit under most circumstances (formal or informal), and thus inclined to attract similarly explicit values such as economic, intellectual, emotional, etc. However, relationships were likely to be predominantly implicit due to its nature, and it could be something that would develop or deteriorate over time and interactions. Though relationships might or might not be the source of power relations, it was clearly affecting and being affected by power relation dynamics. Its evolving nature was also what contributed to the social constructionist view of the organization and organizational life.

Ehin (2013) highlighted that due to the unique nature of relationships, they were at best capable of being influenced but certainly not controlled, particularly if third parties were involved. Ehin further posited that relationships were often intertwined with individual identities and group identities alike. It had been this need to establish a certain identity (by individual or group) that steered the engagement dynamics of transactions, conversations and relationships. Hence, this would further contribute to more unpredictable and

indeterminate outcomes in every iteration of such engagement and interaction. Since transactions and conversations tended to be more explicit, it would be more obvious to most practitioners (i.e. potentially more predictable than relationships). Relationships, being more of an implicit construct, would then be less obvious, especially to group outsiders. Thus, Ehin (2013) argued that it was necessary for organization to be more open to support such intricate network of relationships (especially informal ones) to allow for greater steer toward creative emergence and evolution instead of suppressing them.

Further to the notes on social dynamics and the complexity of interpersonal and hierarchical relationships presented, as practicing social constructionist, we would need to be fully aware at the back of our minds that all these co-constructions of meanings also encompassed a significant amount of background history, culturally motivated norms and practices, and value system of individuals (Cunliffe, 2011; Shotter, 1996). All these could increase the complexity of the context and thus potentially contributing to greater unpredictability and indetermination, which could in turn caution a greater need for good sense-making and sense-giving (see below) practices for practitioners. Nevertheless, this should align fittingly to the CAS perspective of organizational life. Therefore, I believed that having an appreciation of such intricate engagement dynamics would likely to be very practical and productive for any change management practitioner when engaging groups/individuals in any change effort. Similarly, I was hoping that the use of complex responsive processes and social constructionist perspective could be advantageous for this purpose.

2.3.3.1 Social Constructionism & Power (& influence) in Change Leadership

In Weber's (1978) words, power is essentially the capability of an actor to exercise his/her own will in a social relationship notwithstanding the challenges s/he would encounter in doing so. This implied that power exists across as a universal concept and phenomena in all social and organizational relationships. Dreher (2016) further developed the premises, based on the works of Berger and Luckmann (1967), that it is specifically through social construction of knowledge that allowed power to be explored as a socially constructed concept. Dreher argued that power structures, embedded in our social context, were essentially a product of social actors' construction and enactment of their experienced

realities and the underlying, taken-for-granted knowledge base. Power and influence were products as a result of our ongoing subjective constructions of the objective realities we experienced and knowledge we accumulated. In essence, power is a social construct, although it could be often be perceived as an objective reality. In another word, the objective reality is oftentimes "empowered" through the social constructions of all involved actors. Therefore, power could be both an input and output of our social construction and is inherently and intricately intertwined with all our actions and interactions.

In fact, Gergen (1995) argued that power only becomes relevant through our relatedness (with each other), as we continually construct our realities (with each other) through our relationships, exchanges (especially linguistically) and responses toward the power that emerged. Gergen (1995) and Hosking (1995) had also helped to differentiate power into what Hosking termed as "power to" (while Gergen termed as centripetal power) and "power over" (which Gergen termed as centrifugal power). "Power to" or "centripetal power" allowed actors within the group to consolidate toward a shared ideology, meaning and value (i.e. reality) such that it would sort of create a stabilization effect of the group, while "power over" or "centrifugal power", on the other hand, allowed the group to explore the possibilities of counter against those individuals or groups who were not aligned to their shared realities. Both Gergen and Hosking had argued that we might have been too focused on this "power over" in our attempt to decipher and understand the concept of power in social relationships than the equally important "power to". Therefore, it is important to note that within the SC perspective, and particularly for the purpose of my AR project, the concept of power and influence should not be limited to "power over" but also to include "power to". Indeed, as the later chapter on my research findings would explicate further, it is the "power to" that were more commonly observed in my AR, and enhanced the co-creation of shared meaning among the group.

In their studies on relational social constructionist leaderships (RSCL), Endres and Weilber (2017) argued that an "emerging flow of influence" (i.e. power) should be a key element of such RSCL, without which, the processes could at most be recognized as some general forms of relationship, instead of being sufficiently qualified to be called as leadership. They had argued for a viable approach to study leaderships within SC perspectives (vis-à-vis a

constructivist perspective) they termed as RSCL. Therefore, I believed that such a perspective of looking at power as a socially constructed "emerging flow of influence" should also be taken into consideration for my AR into my practice because as a change leader for my AR project, it is plausible that I would be engaging in some form of RSCL at times.

2.4 Putting on The CAS and SC Lenses

The preceding sections had provided a basic foundation on how we could perceive our organizational realities through the CAS and SC lenses, and also offered a theoretical foundation to support my AR objective, i.e. how would my practice as a change management professional be affected, if at all, once I put on the CAS and SC lenses in my practice. I had hoped that the above discussions on the various CAS and SC concepts within the change management context had been sufficiently effective in putting forth a more convincing position for CAS and SC perspectives to be considered as serious contenders among the grand space of change management theories, perspectives and practice. Nevertheless, all these would not be of value if we, as practitioners, were not able to apply them to our practices, which brought us to the key question (and challenge): "How could we actually put on the lens of CAS and SC in our change management practice?". Before I could draw any conclusion in regard to how, if any, different would my change management practice be like if I adopt a CAS and SC perspective, it would be essential to first establish how such a perspective or lens could be "put" on.

Earlier sections in this chapter had been organized to first ascertained how CAS could be a valuable alternative to supplement the widely adopted "N-step" organization change management approaches, after establishing some of the weaknesses and biases of such approaches that provided some basis to warrant for more efficient and effective alternatives. Once we became more aware that CAS could be a viable concept to study, observe, analyze and understand organizations, its actors and changes, the first milestone would have been achieved. Secondly, through Weick's (1995) enactment, Stacey's (2011) complex responsive processes, Shotter's social poetics, Cunliffe's relational responsive social constructionism, and Searls' (2008) and Gergen's (1999) social engagement dynamics (particularly the use of language, communication and relationships), it was hoped that there

had been sufficient ground to demonstrate the viability of SC approaches to allow practitioners and managers to enact, engage, influence and subsequently steer the change processes within the context of a CAS. Hence, it had been in the opinion of the author that while the theoretical concepts and frameworks of CAS provided an adequate understanding and appreciation on how change management would be like if we were to look at organizations as CAS, it would be through embracing SC lens that could present us with the opportunity on how to enact upon these change management through a CAS and SC perspective.

As my AR would require me to take action, i.e. enacting on the change management project within my research context and purpose, it would be imperative that I had to develop an actionable approach toward such enactment. To be effective in enacting within the CAS, it would be essential to work on the self-organization in the local context (Stacey, 2011; Reynolds, 1987; Ray, 1992). Both Searls (2008) and Gergen (1999) advocated strongly that by applying social engagement tactics adequately, through the appropriate enactment using language, communication and relationships dynamics, it would be highly possible to enact within the local context of the self-organization of the CAS and this would have the potential to influence the direction of the shared-meaning co-creation processes, and even the complex responsive processes that Stacey (2011) had spoken about. Nevertheless, as prescribed by CAS, the individual agents/actors within the organization would be independent autonomous beings, and this would thus imply that in order for such co-creation of shared meaning to be genuine, it would take dialogues and communications to be beyond (or perhaps even beneath) the normal organizational communication channels, approaches and definitely hierarchical structures. As such, to have a genuine enactment within the self-organized context with the actors to co-create a desired shared meaning, which would be essential toward influencing the actual change directions taken in the organization, it would require an actionable form of mechanism to realize this. Among the many concepts of enactment on the self-organized context, the concept of sense-making and sense-giving provided some intriguing traction toward this end. In the following section, I would be discussion how these concepts of sense-making and sense-giving could be leveraged as the enactment mechanism and important complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2011), and providing an actionable manner to put on the “CAS and SC lenses” for

my action research.

2.4.1 Sense-Making and Sense-Giving

The concept of sense-making was not something new in organizational and management theory. In its simplest essence, sense-making was just a cognitive process that people enacted upon when what they perceived and experienced had been different from what they had expected it to be (Weick, et al, 2005). In a study done by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) on the initiation of strategic change effort, they opined that the inception of strategic change of organizations could be dissected into vital processes involving what they called sense-making and sense-giving. Accordingly, sense-making were processes that allow organizational actors to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct meanings to relevant discourses and narratives with the objective of ultimately developing a meaningful structure to understand and make sense of the organizational realities (and the subject matter that they were dealing with). Sense-giving on the other hand were attempts undertaken by organizational actors to shape the sense-making process of others (and I would additionally argue to include our very own selves too!) to arrive at a "preferred" state of understanding and sense of the relevant, contextual organization realities (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991). In their perspectives, sense-making had to deal with "understanding" the situation while sense-giving endeavored to "influence" how others made sense of the situation. Hence, implying too that sense-making had been generally interpreted to be for self, while sense-giving for others.

Gioia and Chittipeddi advocated that sense-making and sense-giving were important and critical processes in managing change especially when there were significant levels of ambiguity, confusion and uncertainty. More specifically, they argued that sense-making process could be the vital cognitive process for individual or group to understand and interpret the contextual narratives and discourses, and how these could be shaped to fit to a desired, workable and sensible organization reality via sense-giving to others. However, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) seemed to advocate a top-down approach in terms of their sense-making (for self) and self-giving (for others) model. In their studies, the CEO/President would initiate actions to sense-give "downwards" with the objective of trying to gather buy-in. Although they acknowledged that those from the lower rung of the organization would

attempt to sense-make and reciprocate the sense-giving by sending their interpretation back to the top, they found that the "reverse" sense-giving tended to be more of depicting "an inclination to agree with the essence of the proposed changes" (pp 443). In this sense, the fact that they deliberately conceptualized sense-making and sense-giving into two separate cognitive processes also supported the notion of a uni-directional top-down sense-giving approach by the change leadership to the organizational actors with the purpose to "assist" their followers to sense-make the change context and decisions. The reciprocal sense-giving from the bottom back to the top did not make significant impact (or may not even be relevant) to the subsequent sense-making process of the change leadership. This meant that the exchanges that took place were essentially not bi-directional or dialogic, or at least there seemed to be lack of authentic exchange of ideas in both directions – top-down and bottom-up. Gioia and Chittipeddi's study was focused on initiating strategic change and initiated from a high-level, which also meant that this model would probably make sense, especially if and when the organization was facing a crisis or an impending one.

There was also an assumed process of sense-giving had been done top-down and the sense-giving back upward would be more of sending confirmation to the top that the intended messages and meanings were correctly "given". There was almost no mention of the voices and viewpoints of those below the executive level being taken up in the subsequent sense-making processes (after the sense-giving by the executive to the lower hierarchy). The notions of control and predictability were also in some ways being implied here too and this could probably largely due to the lack of consideration that organization is a CAS whereby self-organization and complex responsive processes were often at work. Although with sense-making and sense-giving at work, there would have already been a significant move away from a bureaucratic, top-down, command and control approach toward organization and change management, the lack of consideration that the organization was indeed a living CAS could also mean that outcomes such as true-buy-in, emergence of creativities and novelties, and ownership of enacted change could have been potentially limited substantially. Such desirable outcomes might seem only wishful to most executives and managers, but according to Stacey (2011), it would be highly possible if we could incorporate self-organization and complex responsive processes into our practice, and these sense-making and sense-giving processes could just be the practical mechanisms we need to

realize those ideals.

2.4.2 Sense-Exchanging – An Iterative Cycle of Sense-making and Sense-Giving

I believed the concept of sense-making and sense-giving in effecting organizational change as discussed by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) could gain greater leverage and traction if we had allowed more dialogic or multi-logic exchanges to take place within the iterations of sense-making and sense-giving processes. In such a manner, the sense-making and sense-giving processes would incorporate the perspectives and narratives from the various layers of the organization and allow such perspectives and narratives to be exchanged for a more genuine co-creation of a shared meaning through the iterations of such processes. This also aligned neatly to the context of a CAS whereby the key characteristics of self-organization and complex responsive processes often impact on the underlying co-construction of meanings among the organizational actors. Regardless of the fact that some managers/leaders/executives might not subscribe to the notion of CAS, self-organization and the social constructionist perspectives of organization, it remained that organizational actors interacted with autonomy and exchanged meanings within and among themselves both individually and collectively (Searls, 2008; Gergen, 1999). This implied that without an effective mechanism to try to understand and influence such on-going self-organizations, which was by definition uncontrollable and unpredictable (or it could even be detrimental if there had been no such awareness), any attempt for meaning making and sense-making to organizational actors to bring about effective change could prove to be just an elusive attempt.

As meaning making and construction were essentially continual and iterative, this also meant that we needed to allow sense-making and sense-giving to undergo iterations of exchanges before organizational actors could truly come to an agreed, co-created consensus of the context and content they were involved in. Therefore, within the premises of CAS and SC, a more useful approach to apply sense-making and sense-giving should be more of expanding these cognitive processes to be more of an exchange, i.e. sense-exchanging. Essentially, sense-exchanging could be defined simply as an extension of sense-making and sense-giving to allow for iterations of sense-make and sense-give, with the goal of aligning the meaning making processes between the “giver” and “receivers”. In fact, the original

giver of meaning or ideas should not just be sense-making and sense-giving to the "receivers" but should also subsequent be receiving from the original receivers on how they had made sense of the messages/meanings. From here, the original giver should then begin to sense-make from the "new" or "modified" messages/meanings and to incorporate the alternate messages or meanings, if any, into his/her subsequent sense-making processes. Consequently, the original giver would then espouse a modified message/meaning (which most probably could be slightly or even significant different from the original) and again to sense-give to the original receivers to either confirm the meaning or to further refine it. The process should be iterated until the group finally settles in on a shared meaning (which again could be slightly or significantly deviated from the first original one when the sense-exchange processes started).

The sense-exchanges taking place would allow the change leaders/managers to, in certain manner, make sense of and probably influence the self-organization of the CAS via actively engaging in the social construction of the group's narratives and meanings. Not only would this allow a more meaningful exchange of narratives and discourses, it also would have the potential to allow for more diverse voices, in particular suppressed or weakened one, to be incorporated or at least considered for a more authentic multi-logic co-construction of shared meanings to take place. Such a sense-exchange approach toward managing organizational change within a CAS context and allowing co-social-construction of meaning would likely to be more impactful and probably improve the chance of achieving holistic and authentic organizational change over the already useful approach of top-down sense-making and sense-giving as proposed by Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991).

Sense-making and sense-giving were well understood concepts and effective tools that had often been discussed and even applied to change management, and particularly so within the premises of CAS and SC (Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Weick, 1993, 1995; Weick et al, 2005). In fact, Berger & Luckmann (1967) even suggested plainly that sense-making could be a social constructionist process itself. From such perspectives, it made sense to conclude that sense-making and sense-giving could be valuable tools to deploy as enactment mechanism if one were to attempt to investigate how change management could be affected through the lenses of CAS and SC. Therefore, I would expect to explore my inquiry with significant

actions involving sense-making and sense-giving. Nevertheless, as highlighted earlier, in order to fully capitalize on sense-making and sense-giving, it would be essential to explore them as iterative cycles, which would in turn give rise to what I had termed as sense-exchanging.

As I reflected more on the sense-exchange concept, I felt that it could indeed be a very useful tool for managing change, especially when one was to put on a CAS and SC lens. It could potentially align as a type of, what Stacey (2011) had termed as, "complex responsive process", which was also iterative in nature. Though from my extensive review of related literatures, there had yet been any discussing explicitly on this concept of sense-exchange, I did not believe it was entirely novel. As presented above, it could just be a terminology to describe a more in-depth and iterated cycles of sense-making and sense-giving to achieve a truly dialogic (or even mulit-logic) exchanges to co-engender a true shared meaning of the circumstance and context. Hence, there should be good reason to believe that sense-exchanging could be a very plausible type of complex responsive process that I could apply when I approach my action research change project with the CAS and SC perspectives. In conclusion, in order for me to engage my colleagues (i.e. change participants or recipients) through the CAS and SC lenses, I should and could strive for some manner of sense-exchanging at the local self-organized level with them. In this manner, and upholding the various principles and ethos of CAS and SC ideologies (such as those discussed in the preceding sections), I opined that it would be possible to avoid the pro-change biases of managerialism and overcome the hegemonic obsession over change management processes, which would in turn allow the possibility to practice with the CAS and SC lenses.

With the above thorough discussion of the various concepts of CAS, SC, change management and its related assumptions and biases, it was obvious that my practice had been significantly impacted and hence shaped by these literatures. As I embarked unto my first-person inquiry, armed with all the intriguing knowledge and ideas on how I could enact on my change management project and its actors through the CAS and SC lenses, I was actually even more unsettled, but not in the sense of lacking confidence. Rather, I was unsettled because these literatures had substantially shaped my thinking, mindset and practice such that they were deviated significantly from my usual approach, rendering it

impossible for me to anticipate what to expect as I engaged with the change management project. I knew in my heart that it would be different this time as I embarked on my very first first-person inquiry AR, but what I could not know was if it would be making a radical impact to my practice positively or negatively, or even if at all. I was both excited and uncertain as I entered my AR with these new lenses, and just like how we needed time to get used to a new pair of shoe, I believed I would get more comfortable and settled in as I practiced with these new lenses in my change management project. Regardless of the outcome and findings of my inquiry, which would be discussed in later chapters, the next most critical task should be to give the reader a further appreciation on the methods that I had adopted in the conduct my inquiry, including data collection and coding methods.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology & Coding Process

3.1 The Merits of Action Research (AR)

The immediate concern of conducting an AR and writing up a thesis based on it has been the oft-discussed challenge on how to effectively demonstrate the quality of an AR. Perhaps this had to do with a commonly misunderstood notion that AR is qualitative research. Although AR employs a significant amount of qualitative methods, and usually collects and utilizes more of qualitative data than quantitative ones, the truth is that AR actually deployed mixed methods and relied on both qualitative and quantitative data (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). Greenwood and Levin (2007) had argued that it would be erroneous to assume that just because AR is action-oriented research, it is therefore not scientific and rigorous. Moreover, they also contended strongly that the assumption of quantitative research being more objective and hence must be more scientific than qualitative ones to be equally biased and flawed. According to them, action research (AR) consists of 3 key elements: action, research and participation. In essence, AR is a research strategy that focus on delivering actionable change/outcome as a result of stakeholders being actively engaged (participation) during the entire process.

Unlike positivist research, which could often allow for generalization, or more specifically what Kaplan (1964) discussed as 'nomological generalization' (i.e. universal generalization and it would hold true across all circumstances as long as certain pre-conditions were in place and satisfied), qualitative researches were often not aiming to achieve such nomological generalization (Freeman, et al, 2007). This kind of nomological generalizations as espoused by positivist type of researches were often for the purpose to predicting causality and further to attempt to manipulate the "variables" or causes involved to derive a certain effect (i.e. determinism). In qualitative work such as AR, generalization would still possible but, in a sense, that it was to portray and discuss the actions and voices of research subjects within specific local context. Lewis and Ritchie (2003) called this representational generalization, and while similarly Kaplan (1964) used the term generic propositions to depict such particularistic generalization, Stake and Trumbull (1982) termed it as naturalistic generalization. The objective of qualitative type of generalization of research would thus be contextual and there is no claim to generalize beyond the appropriate context. In effect, the

purpose of qualitative studies (including AR) should be more about us uncovering the most effective manner to work within the context so as to improve the work we were doing to achieve better outcomes and also to better serve the people that we were supposed to serve within that particular context (Freeman, et al, 2007). Similarly, instead of preoccupying ourselves, as action researchers, to eradicate subjectivities from our research work so as to establish objective theories and knowledge, we should be focusing on finding and enacting on an optimum position to bring about better successes and outcomes to the contexts and projects we were involved in (Peshkin, 1988). I believed that such noble goals should not be exclusive to AR but all researches should aspire them. After all the ultimate goal of all researches should be to seek out and create knowledge, but not just any knowledge. Knowledge created should be useful and applicable to solve problem and bring about more successes in real-life situation and contexts.

Greenwood and Levin (2007) also specifically argued that theory and action should not be delineated, which is how social research had been commonly structured (i.e. in a pure versus applied manner). Instead they believed that the best way to actually develop and test any good theory would be through engaging the actors and context in action. This ethos indicating that the utility of any theory/knowledge/learnings could more effectively be demonstrated through the actions taken and the outcomes observed had indeed served as a significant motivator for me, even as I recalled one of Kurt Lewin's famous slogan, "Nothing is as practical as a good theory". Hence, although there were doubts and uncertainty initially in regard to adopting AR method for my thesis project, greater understanding on what AR actually entailed and its potentials in contributing to authentic change and knowledge creation through action motivated my endeavor to conduct my thesis project in similar manner, i.e. involving active participation of real actors and yielding actionable outcomes in real-life context.

3.2 First-Person Inquiry

Upon having the concerns that I had with AR addressed and the merits of AR established, I was then more confident and motivated to undertake my thesis project through an AR within my work place, and more specifically on the second implementation phase of a major change management project that I had been assigned to undertake as change management

lead. The next hurdle would be to proceed with getting my research proposal and ethics approval completed before starting the AR project. Although I had given the narrative on the challenge that I was facing in regard to getting official approach to conduct my AR in my workplace using the change project I was leading, I would like to give a brief reiteration here to allow a greater appreciation on why I had chosen to conduct my AR as a first-person inquiry.

I approached my executive vice president (EVP), who was the top manager for my directorate, to discuss on my plan to use the data from the change management project that I was leading for my DBA thesis research, and I was met with little resistance initially. In fact, my EVP had initially given me the blessings to proceed, as long as what I was going to do would not negatively impact on the actual change project timeline or output in any manner. I promised him that there would be nothing more than just for me to collect the data in the form of my exchanges with the project participants and perhaps having some interviews with some of the participants if and only if they would give the consent. It was at the mention of having interviews with my colleagues (who would be the change project participants) that my EVP began to signal to me that it might not be appropriate. He informed me that if my thesis research work was purely dependent on just my own data in terms of my observations on the project and workplace exchanges, he would not be too concerned since this would be fully on my own burden. However, he had become quite hesitant after knowing that my plan included interviewing my colleagues in relation to the context of my AR concepts. He told me that he would prefer to seek proper permission from my CEO on this since he knew that there had been one or two cases whereby staffs had similarly requested to conduct their thesis research works in the work place and the top management was not agreeable to it largely due to the collection of data from the staffs in the organization.

After having discussed my request with the CEO, my EVP explained to me later that the stance of the organization, or rather that of the top management, had been that employees were not discouraged or prevented from conducting thesis research within the work context as long as the data to be used for the research work were not solicited from the organization or its employees, i.e. the data should be purely the employee researchers' own

observations and interpretations of what had transpired, and no endorsement of any kind of these observations and interpretations would be sanctioned by the organization. Furthermore, no real names (companies and/or individuals) should be mentioned, and neither would the organization officially endorsed or authorized any of such employees' personal research work. In essence, the message that my EVP had conveyed to me on how I could conduct my AR using my change project as the context was that the organization would not officially sanction it but yet he would also not stop me as long as I did not breach any of the "rules" explained to me. Neither would I be able to solicit data from my colleagues nor to utilize any technical data belonging to my organization. Moreover, anonymity shall be strictly imposed on my writing although the organization would not be obliged to verify such anonymity.

With such "restrictions" enforced by my EVP and organization on my thesis research, it also became clear that my initial plan to conduct interviews or feedback session to solicit for data/information related to my research agenda would not be viable at all. This also meant that my AR data would then have to come from only my own observations and interpretations of what would have happened through the entire research process and the exchanges involved. Therefore, I was driven to the situation whereby I would have to rely on my own first-person data and inherently to be investigating my own practice, i.e. me conducting research on myself, which in turn effectively means that my AR is fundamentally a first-person inquiry (Reason and Torbert, 2001).

In addition to researching on oneself, Reason and Bradbury (2008) furthered that first-person inquiry researcher should "choicefully" engage with keen awareness, continually examining impacts of the "outside world" (context) whilst acting on it and employing inquiry extensively into the "moments of action" (pg.6). According to Marshall and Mead (2005), a key behavioral trait for a good first-person inquiry would be to always remain "critically humble", i.e. one had to be "simultaneously committed and confident" about one's knowledge and action in the contextual reality while being aware that this knowledge one was possessing would be incomplete and emerging. Therefore, maintaining a critical humility throughout my inquiry process remained a key ethos of my first-person AR inquiry.

In fact, the traits of incompleteness and emergence of first-person AR were also in alignment with concepts explored within CAS and SC as iterated in the literature chapter. Indeed, such unpredictability and emergence were not just traits experienced in AR, Greenwood's narrative on his class when he invited Roald Hoffman (a Noble prize winner chemist) for a lecture on scientific method for his students clearly depicted that the actual conduct of scientific research was not what most of us would have imagined (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). Professor Hoffman painted an almost socially constructed, collective, action-reflection iterative process that was performed by a group of individuals who co-create emerging knowledge in a mostly unpredictable, dynamic and even to some certain politically-influenced manner. This was akin to the manner AR were conducted and Greenwood highlighted that after the lecture, most of his students were surprised to hear from a Noble Prizewinner chemist that science performed in the real world was not as deterministic as they would have thought it to be. I believed what Greenwood and Levin (2007) were trying to convey was that AR is as scientific as what most would consider real science to be.

One could continue to argue that such first-person AR inquiry is unorthodox or even problematic as a scientific approach due to the lack of objectivity in the research process. Nonetheless, as the above brief depiction on how even a renowned scientist could actually discuss what most would consider real science to be equally inundated with subjectivities intertwined with a significant amount of interventions within the entire scientific process by the community involved seemed to debunk the notion that laboratory science had almost no hint of subjectivities involved. Still, the issue of how to ascertain quality in my first-person AR inquiry remained a key concern, especially in terms of how my AR data should be gathered and analyzed, which would be deliberated in the next section.

3.3 First-Person Inquiry Data Collection Approach – Quality of AR & AR Data

As I explored recommendations from experts such as Marshall (2001) and Coghlan (2008) on how to achieve quality and rigor in such first-person inquiry, I had come to appreciate particularly Marshall's (2001) advice on the need to adopt a certain kind of "attentional discipline", which focuses simultaneously on both what she calls "inner and outer arcs of attentions" working in tandem. Marshall emphasized that instead of being obsessed with

acting with such attentional disciplines in an unbending patterns of inquiry behaviors and actions, they should be adopted in a more flexible and receptive frames of mind, yet fully focused and resolute as and when required, so as to enable the inquirer to achieve when she termed as “soft rigor”. Marshall’s “attentional discipline” advice had thus provided me with a primary guiding principle and rigor inquiry discipline as I went about conducting my thesis AR in leading the change management project and collecting my AR data.

The inner arc of attention involved how I was always on the look-out for key themes, patterns and even my own assumptions related to my research arc (i.e. CAS and SC perspective for Change Management) through observations, perceptions, sense-making and shaping issues. It was more of an inward reflection of self (with respect to the subject matter) to make sense of what was happening around. The basis in which I gathered my first-person inquiry AR data was primarily through such an inward self-reflection on what had transpired during and throughout the change project as I interacted and exchanged (dialogues) with the change project participants, i.e. my colleagues. As my study was purely a first-person inquiry into my own practice, I did not inform my colleagues that the change project was also going to be used as the context for my thesis AR. Of course, I was also prohibited from disclosing this to my colleagues as instructed by my directorate EVP. Nevertheless, if a first-person inquiry would just focus on this inner arc and without an avenue to test out a particular theme/pattern/assumption observed (as an outcome of such critical self-reflection), it could result in a futile inquiry devoid of learning and improvement (Marshall, 2001). Hence, as I actively engaged in this inner arc of attention, I also pursued the outer arc of attention as advised by Marshall.

Essentially, this demanded me to also engage with other participants of my change project to test ideas, challenge assumptions and shape critical issues collaboratively, even as I continually and critically self-reflected across the many change project workshop sessions, one after another. As I did my internal critical reflection after one workshop session, I also planned out some potential actions to be taken in subsequent ones as part of my endeavors in executing my outer arc of attention. It must be hence emphasized that as I conducted my AR, I consciously applied both arcs of attention simultaneously (within my scope of research interest – i.e. CAS and SC perspectives) as I explored and co-engendered the contextual

reality collaboratively with the project participants with the attentional discipline of "focused openness".

This continual shaping of my interpretations of what had been going on allowed me to capture the nuances of my inquiry in the form of subsequent more critical self-reflection (after the meetings/workshops) and recorded in my fieldnotes. Furthermore, Marshall (2001) recommended the importance of any quality inquiry to be in the form of iterated cycle of reflections and actions. In a manner, this made much common sense in a normal AR setting as one would have to take action to actually test out the collaborated outcome of the reflections (from both the inner and outer arcs of attention). In fact, I believed that as I attended to the outer arc of attention, I was also already engaging in taking actions in many ways. Hence, my first-person inquiry approach had been one that involved a perpetual cycle of actions-reflections paying attention to both the inner and outer arcs of the research context. In addition, throughout the inquiry, the ethos of critical humility, informing me that what I had observed, reflected, interpreted and acted upon were actually incomplete and still emerging, contained me from being too presumptuous (such as jumping to conclusion) yet also encouraged me to push the boundaries through these perpetual cycles of action-reflections. All these self-reflections, actions and engagements were recorded as meticulously as possible into my fieldnotes, which constitute my first-person AR data. Additionally, I continued to uphold and engage with the same inner and outer arcs of attentions during the coding of my data, which would be discussed in greater depth in subsequent section in this chapter.

I was also further inspired by Coghlan (2008), who had built upon the work of Bernard Lonergan (1957; 1992), discussing on how we could enhance the quality and authenticity in a first-person AR. According to Coghlan (2008:352), first-person inquiry is more about we "experiencing ourselves as subjects with direct awareness of how we act and learn to grasp our own interiority" than how we might observe our own-selves as an object externally. One key issue that I was struggling with in conducting a first-person inquiry was how could one claim to be objective when we tried to see ourselves by standing outside of ourselves. This idea of being able to stand outside of oneself to observe oneself with objectivity would be quite an incredulous claim. No one would be able to claim that one would always be

attentive and capture all required data. Neither would anyone be able to claim that one would never skip any critical or important questions, feelings, biases or assumptions. In fact, it would be more convincing to believe that we would tend to settle for what is acceptable and more comfortable for us than to questioning beyond our comfort zone. Coghlan (2008) argued that such "process-skipping" (Gendlin, 1964) could render the first-person inquirer to be inattentive, incomprehensive, unreasonable, and ignorant or even unethical, hence lacking the authenticity required for such first-person inquiry to be considered empirical (Pg.357-360). Lonergan (1972) conceptualized such authenticity to consist of 4 "transcendental precepts", namely "Be attentive (to the data and context)", "Be intelligent (while inquiring)", "Be reasonable (in making judgement)" and lastly "Be responsible (in decision-making and taking action) (Coghlan, 2008:359-260). Coghlan argued that when action researchers can adopt these 4 transcendental precepts into their inquiry practice diligently and with discipline, they would imperatively be able to achieve greater authenticity and their skill as practitioner-researcher would be honed significantly.

Even as I engaged with my change management project in the form of first-person AR inquiry, I endeavored to always engage with Coghlan's proposal to be as attentive as I can be to the context and details, to be always intelligent to seek and ask good and useful questions (both to my project participants and myself), to be as reasonable as I can in assessing the context, interactions and engagements, and lastly to be as responsible as I can be in making the appropriate decisions and/or taking appropriate actions. Coupled with Marshall's inner and outer arcs of attentional discipline (2001), Coghlan (2008:364) posited that action researchers could effectively enhance the quality and authenticity of self-reflexive studies, which in turn could further converge such inquiries toward empiricism. In order to ensure I worked within these frames of Lonergan's 4 transcendental precepts and Marshall's attentional discipline, I had also purposefully and critically reflected before the workshop sessions on various key engagement points and actions of previous ones and journaled them in my fieldnotes, before I proceeded with the workshop. I had realized that this had ameliorated the authenticity of my AR in terms of my heightened attentiveness, intelligibility, reasonableness and responsibility of my subsequent engagements in the inner and outer arc of attention.

Once again, although one might suggest that such feeling of heightened authenticity could be an illusion and thus subjective at best, I would argue that Lonergan's (1972) 4 transcendental precepts of authenticity could be applied in the form of iterated cycle of being attentive to the context would give rise to greater intelligence toward the inquiring process, which would in turn reinforce the reasonableness in passing a judgement, and finally allowing a more responsible decision making and action process. This could usually result in more authentic and actionable outcome/decision/action (Coghlan, 2008), which could in turn trigger better attentiveness in the next iteration of engagement in authenticity. Intriguingly, I realized too that the more I journaled my reflections, and self-reflected on my thoughts and feelings, the more aware I became in operating with the 4 transcendental precepts of authenticity. Thus, as I engaged with greater authenticity (i.e. the iterated transcendental precepts) through both the inner and outer arc of attention, I believed the quality of my AR had also been equally reinforced (Coghlan, 2008; Marshall, 2001).

Although there were no formal interviews or other data solicited formally from the project participants, it must further be noted that my fieldnotes did include some of the information/inputs/reflections from the daily routine/work-related interactions, conversations and engagements with them as my colleagues. These data were relevant to the reflections of my practice, especially if they represented moments in which I had purposefully and choicefully engaged with the CAS and SC lenses. Such "third-party" data, though could not be considered as a direct objective data, had nevertheless still enriched my first-person critical reflection and enhanced the quality of my first-person inquiry in general, because "they" supplemented my personal reflection and augmented its criticality. Furthermore, my fieldnotes were intended to capture the exchanges (including the moods, emotions, feelings, linguistic and non-linguistic cues, etc.) as directly and momentarily as possible with the intent to document the "as-is" essence there and then, which was also the reason why they were written within a very short-span post-event (usually at the end of the workday when the workshops were conducted).

Moreover, I had also purposefully and critically reflected upon the experiences both before and after the workshops/meetings with the objective of trying to ascertain and make sense

of what was going on throughout these sessions and how my action/inaction had or could have impacted the situation. I had also documented subsequent intentions or plans as my critical reflections led me along, which would also enable me to be more attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible in subsequent workshops and iterations of action-reflection cycles. Lastly, I would also like to reiterate that throughout the change project, in order to examine how the CAS and SC perspectives could influence and make a difference to my practice, if any at all, I had continually, actively and attentively applied the CAS and SC lenses when I conduct and facilitate the workshops, when I perform my critical self-reflection and when I was journaling my fieldnotes. Hence, my data is the outcome of following the meticulous processes that Marshall (2001), Coghlan (2008) and Lonergan (1972) had advocated for those of practitioner-researcher who engaged in conducting first-person inquiry AR.

Such first-person inquiry approach had been extremely intriguing in two aspects: I was able to keep my focus on critically assessing the impact of my CAS and SC perspectives adopted for the project (hence assessing my practice), and to acquire new wisdom and knowledge from the experience and incorporate it into my practice (i.e. continual learning), both of which was not what I had expected from the onset. In fact, this type of first-person inquiry allowed me to really experience what Marshall (1999) had termed as “living my life as inquiry” or more aptly “conducting my practice as inquiry”. Indeed, through this first-person inquiry experience, I began to realize that as we really lived life as inquiry, we became bolder to challenge the norm, break the tradition and learn new wisdom. In fact, such learnings were often sustained ones because they were an integral aspect of my inquiry, akin to what Ramsey (2014) proposed as the “scholarship of practice” that focused on “attention” instead of knowledge, hence resulting in context and actions being centers and resources for learning (in particular to practicing managers). In a significant sense, this might be my first AR experience, in particular a first-person inquiry even, but it had permanently altered my perceptions in regard to what should we consider and adopt when we really wanted to achieve sustained learning (vis-à-vis knowledge) and actionable outcome (vis-à-vis generalization) that are both authentic and of quality, especially for practitioner-researchers (vis-à-vis academia).

3.4 Change Project and Inquiry Background

Since my thesis AR is a first-person AR inquiry on my own practice, I could only rely on data that was generated from my own observations, perceptions, reflections and sense-making during my interactions and exchanges with my colleagues (i.e. project participants) as I led the change management project in my workplace. My change management project was to lead and implement the process alignment based on the new organization structure due to the outcome of a major corporate restructuring exercise. My directorate was organized to contain 2 separate departments and 2 divisions. Department A, which was organized into 4 divisions, had been identified the key subject in the change management project due to a significant change in both headcount and revised mandate. Department B, which was organized into 3 divisions, required almost no tweaks to its processes as the restructuring mainly streamlined its headcount minimally.

My change management project was for the entire directorate but more than 70% of the work had to deal with the process alignment of Department A. Hence, the focus of my AR was on the interactions and exchanges experienced between me and my colleagues in Department A. In order to gather the information and data, and to collaborate with Department A's staffs for my process alignment purpose, I had organized workshop sessions at divisional level. As the mandate of each division in Department A had been clearly demarcated, it made sense to organize the project execution at divisional level. Although there were some inter-divisional interactions in terms of the processes, it had been agreed with Department A manager and the 4 Division heads that these could be captured and addressed through ad-hoc sessions involving the relevant parties as necessary.

During the workshop sessions, I led and facilitated in the discussions and collaborations among the staffs as well as gather all the relevant information and data in regard to the processes, which were largely organizational and procedural specific ones. I had also noted points and actions that we had decided to act on and/or those that we should deliberate further in subsequent sessions, sometime due to lack of required information and sometime due to the need to allow some time for my colleagues (and myself) to contemplate more before making a decision or taking a particular stance. This depiction was mainly for the purpose of illuminating the background of my research context at my work place.

It must be reiterated again that my thesis AR was not about the change project *per se* but on how I had led and executed the project as a change leader, i.e. the AR had been on my own practice as a practitioner, and in this particular project, a change management practitioner. Therefore, the mostly technical organizational and procedural data and information would not constitute to my data, but rather, all the critical reflections on my own practice that I had purposefully recorded throughout my change project did. I journaled all these critical reflections in private (and not during the session) in the form of "fieldnotes" following a sort of ethnographic tradition. The fieldnotes were written after each of the workshop session with the participants to primarily reflect on what had happened during the session from my first-person perspective. I had meticulously recorded my own personal self-reflection on what actually transpired during the workshop sessions, particularly on the interactions and exchanges that I had had with the change project participants.

3.5 Fieldnotes and Data Examples

Before I proceed to the next section on how I had approached the coding of my fieldnotes for further analysis, I would like to share some examples of my data, showing how I had explored both the inner and outer arcs of attentions through reflection and action (Marshall, 2001). In each example below depicted in Table 3-1, I would first quote from my fieldnotes and then explain how, in the particular contextual example, I had reflected and taken actions (or even tested my reflection-action cycle). From the tabled brief examples, it should be evident that my fieldnotes were not journaled in any specific and structured format, but just a reflexive manner on what had transpired to capture both arcs of attention and the action-reflections engagement as much as I could. If there was really any necessity to try to fit my method into a more traditional "box", I would think I had adopted a very similar approach that most traditional ethnographers did as they studied and researched on their specifically chosen context, i.e. we went into our context without a specific knowing that what we could, would or might capture and uncover.

Fundamentally, I entered my research context with an open mind and recorded what I saw, heard, experienced and felt with minimal premises or *a priori*. Hence, this allowed for my

data to be explored more inductively, rather than deductively, on what and how the CAS and SC lenses could contribute to my change management practice (and hopefully in a positive manner). In this sense, my AR could even be considered exploratory in nature. A key challenge in dealing with such massive qualitative data that is exploratory in nature was the absence of a tested/proven or commonly accepted approach to analyze it. Nevertheless, even before I could start analyzing my data, the next key step should be coding it so that the entire analysis process would be more manageable and sensible. In the next section, I would be explaining how I had conducted my coding processes to yield 3 levels of codes and the subsequent analyses performed.

Table 3-1 – Examples of Fieldnotes and its Accompanying Reflection-Action (also included the FIRST CYCLE Codes for the specific examples)

E.g.	Fieldnotes	Reflection	Action	FIRST CYCLE Codes
1	*"At this juncture, it seemed that people are getting more into giving their views and the situation seemed like a sense-making session at work and I decided to leverage on it although I am not sure if we are just wasting time or something useful will come out of it. It was quite a dilemma since I know that I am expending away the precious time I have with the team and I am under pressure to finish the workshop and also not to extend more workshops where possible. However, at this stage, I feel then that it is important that since the level of participation has gone up significantly and people are voicing their views, I would prefer to also participate in this co-shaping of the Events Division process/procedure development instead of dictating the direction just because I think it is more "systematic", i.e. Instead of me shaping it the way I think it is supposed to be."*	At the moment of action, I was under pressure to complete the session (i.e. gather all the required information to develop the procedure), yet the context had shifted to a much higher gear of active participation, particularly in terms of sense-making among the participants and more active voicing of their viewpoints. The choice between going by the book versus allowing emergence was not an easy dilemma, particularly when I was already pressed on time and number of workshops. The risk was also high that all the exchanges might yield no significant contribution after all. However, my inner arc reminded me that sometimes the interaction/exchanges (or attention) themselves are more valuable than the procedural outcome (knowledge).	I had then decided that it is worth a shot to take the risk to allow emergence at the detriment of losing time/workshop. My outer arc valued the exchanges for potential emergence as opposed to allowing one single party to dictate the shaping of the context.	1. Seizing Self-organization momentum

E.g.	Fieldnotes	Reflection	Action	FIRST CYCLE Codes
2	*"So far, everyone felt that this makes sense and I can see approval in their body language, and then Ahmed, though convinced, emphasized that his manager might not endorse this as this means the other divisions would require to take on more work and he would know the manager would side which side when these were being confronted. I told the team that if we do not try, we will never get to voice out this concern. If we try and try hard, I believe we can negotiate to a good and workable outcome. We agreed on this and made the decision that after the workshop I would setup a meeting with their manager and the division heads to present this to the department management team. I can observe that Hussein and Eton were both quite happy with the decision and Ahmed, though seemed expressionless then, did not voice out anything further and sit by the table, as if in deep thoughts. To me, it seemed that this is really starting to make some impact on the team. In fact, I felt that around the table, they all begin to have a different level of respect and trust for me. Hussein even told the team, "See, Peng is here to help us, don't keep thinking he is on the big boss side. Peng, thank you for the recommendation and the proposal to take this up to the manager, I will support you fully in the meeting with the heads and manager and let's work together as a team to make things work here and also to avoid any potential problem."*	My inner arc informed me that the participants in this context seemed to be the disenfranchised ones (due to past events/history or just the culture of the division/department) and their voices had been suppressed (though they did not explicitly confess or acknowledge). Their lack of confidence in my suggestion clearly indicated this. Moreover, observing that their change of attitude toward the subject matter (being more optimistic) and toward me (being more trusting), showed that they had finally found a voice (in me) or at least found that someone is willing to hear them finally.	My reflection convinces and encourages me that taking the step to hear out and even amplified out their seemingly silenced voice is necessary to help them achieve a more positive change experience. A more positive change experience, in essence, is a more permanent change outcome.	1. Amplifying weak/suppressed voice 2. Changing mindset 3. Eliminating doubts 4. Gained trust

E.g.	Fieldnotes	Reflection	Action	FIRST CYCLE Codes
3	*"I know what he is trying to express and I did not disagree with him but I reiterated that if we really want to change the culture of our workplace, the first thing we often have to do is not to assume that it can't be change, because by doing so it would mean we would not even want to try. I agree with him that oftentimes we can't change the culture and others, but we can definitely change ourselves, or at least our thinking. I encouraged the team that it is important to first get away from our assumptions and presumption and reflect on our mindset before we can have an impact on others. It is true too that regardless of how much patience and effort we try to impact our colleagues, co-workers and even supervisors, as long as they are not open-minded and reluctantly to accept our "challenge" to them to reflect on their mindset and see if there is a need to change considering the many factors around them, they will stay the same. However, we cannot assume that they will be like this without trying or just based on some assumptions which we did not test. I further the discussion by injecting hints that I sort of know what is happening in the media division and though it is not my responsibility and business to try to understand and deal with it, it is affecting me too."*	This is an example of how I attempt to "impose" my reflection on the participants to get them to reflect on their assumptions. At the moment of action, it was indeed none of my business to change the mindset of the participants or anyone. If there is any mindset that I should be aware of "changing", it would be mine – to be open and critically humble. I could also continue and complete the change project without engaging in this exchange. However, if change can be achieved without a change in mindset, I am not sure if the change would turn out to be successful or permanent. Indeed, this is also a good example on how I had engaged my colleagues with the "emerging flow of influence" that I had briefly discussed in chapter 2 (paragraph 2.3.3.1). As the change leader, I do possess certain power and influence over the participants. Although I do not explicitly possess any power to punish or reward them (instrumental power), they might perceive that I do have some kind of authoritative and expert power over them. Recognizing this, I had cautiously trodden whenever I attempted to exercise such influence in engaging the participants to reflect more deeply. Afterall, my purpose is to invoke an attempt to question their assumption and mindset, and not to really impose mine unto them.	I did not make bold claim about having the ability to make changes happen, but to challenge the participants to be always open to testing their own assumptions, especially those that they held deeply. I believe that that is always the best first step toward changing one's mindset. I did so by trying to sense-make together with them, as part of them in self-organized manner.	1. Sense-giving and Sense-making 2. Challenge existing mindset 3. Questioning assumption 4. Engage in Local self-organization

3.6 Coding Methodology – Coding Principles and Ethos

As with most qualitative research and inquiries, the quality of its accompanying qualitative data analysis rest largely on how effectively and efficiently the coding processes were being conducted (Strauss, 1987). Other than this importance of a quality coding approach to be adopted, I had also learned that the coding process itself was not just plainly to code the data, especially when I went beyond the first initial coding to perform more refining of the codes. It had its own analytical value which I found extremely useful as a process to really understand what the data is trying to "say" to me. Hence, I believed that coding should be considered as an integral aspect of the entire analytical process rather than just as a "pre-analysis" phase, which would probably be the common approach toward analyzing qualitative data.

Perhaps many might assume that the field work and data collection stage constituted the actual inquiry execution in a study, and in terms of a first-person inquiry, this meant that the principles that I had adhered to in my AR first-person inquiry, i.e. Marshall's (2001) inner and outer arcs of attention and Coghlan's (2008) emphasis of authenticity through the adaptation of Lonergan's (1972) 4 transcendental precepts, only applied to the field work and data collection phase. However, as I begun investigating on how I might start to code my data, I discovered that all the key first-person inquiry principles that helped me to ensure my study's quality and authenticity would not only prove to be very helpful but even essential in this coding phase.

In particular, I found Lonergan's guide to authenticity through the application of being *attentive*, *intelligent*, *reasonable* and *responsible* to be extremely critical when I started to code my fieldnotes for the purpose of yielding more condensed codes or themes that could be more meaningful and useful for further analysis. I heightened my *attentiveness* toward my data by reviewing my fieldnotes iteratively and as many times as I needed to really feel that I had given the full attention to all the details within the fieldnotes as I coded my fieldnotes, all the moment endeavoring to avoid missing out any issues (especially those that might be uncomfortable). Next, I ensured that I coded *intelligently* with a full awareness of what I was looking out for, i.e. anything that could give a hint of CAS and SC making a difference to my practice within the fieldnotes I had journaled. Constantly asking

questions as I reflected on my data/fieldnotes and the various levels of codes, seeking and exploring all possibilities. Instead of just looking out just for evidence that I was hoping to gather, I reminded myself constantly to also look out for any evidence that might challenge or contradict to the emerging findings that I had been gathering. While reflecting on the data and codes, I had also been constantly discerning what was the most *reasonable* manner to judge and assess my fieldnotes, data and codes, and doing so with an evidence-based ethos. Lastly, in order to uphold the authenticity of my coding process and the final codes to be utilized for analysis, I persistently remained fully aware that I was to be wholly responsible for the outcome of this coding process, hence, striving to ensure that the process and outcome were completely as true and right as I believed it to be.

Similarly, the continual engagement of self-reflexive iterations of inner and outer arc of attentions as proposed by Marshall (2001) during the coding process also ensured continuity in my entire inquiry journey. Indeed, the coding process consisted an extensive amount on the critical review and reflection of my fieldnotes/data, which permitted me to go deeper into evaluating how CAS and SC had impacted on my practice during the change project execution period. In fact, such deep reflexive moments had accorded me a unique "out-of-body" experience in a sense that I was seemingly able to "play back" what was happening at the moment when I was engaging with the change project participants through the CAS and SC lenses from a third-party perspective. This had helped me significantly in terms of developing meaningful codes from the data that I had generated from my own practice. The above discussion depicted the general guiding principle on how I had proceeded with my coding process as I emerged from my data collection phase. The next chapter would discuss my actual coding procedure in greater detail and explain how I had progressively developed and converged my data from the initial first level coding up to finally 3 cycles of coding done.

Chapter 4 – Coding and Analysis of AR Data

4.1 First Cycle Coding Process & Outcome

I had drawn significantly upon the advices from Saldana (2013) in regard to how I actually went about putting codes to my fieldnotes and subsequently converged these codes to yield a final set of meaningful codes/themes that would be more useful for building upon my analysis and findings for my first-person AR inquiry. It must hereby be emphasized that the primary purpose of my coding process was not to "quantify" my qualitative data (i.e. my fieldnotes) so that I could proceed with some forms of quantitative or statistical analysis, which could often be the coding objective of certain qualitative researches. Rather, my primary objective was for a thematic motive, i.e. to look out for key themes from my data and subsequently to draw insights from these themes and data to further discuss and uncover the issues that had emerged from my first-person AR inquiry.

Saldana (2013) suggests that coding would usually be executed as an iterated and cyclical process, and hence there would usually need for most, if not all, researches' coding phase to have more than 1 cycle. In general, he recommended to have at least two or more cycles of coding. The reason being that the first cycle of coding work would seldom be sufficient enough to capture the patterns or themes within the data, i.e. this initial level of the first cycle would tend to be too peripheral to allow for any core ideas to emerge easily or more meaningfully. It would often be a good practice to recode or perform a second cycle coding to uncover the most salient aspects of the qualitative data. Hence with this advice, I planned for my coding phase to consist of at least 2 cycles of coding processes. The first initial coding process, which I denoted as my first cycle coding, was done using a "generic" approach as suggested by Saldana since I was not sure of what to really expect from my data, except certain *a priori* CAS and SC concepts that had been commonly explored in literatures, especially those that had been discussed and presented extensively in the literature review chapter. Moreover, as I expected my data analysis to be geared more toward an exploratory nature, such a generic approach could allow my first cycle coding to be more "open".

Saldana (2013) recommended a series of about 29 "methods" of coding that qualitative researchers could utilize. However, he warned that the 29 odd coding methods should not

be treated as mutually exclusive and in reality, most if not all researchers tended to employ a mixture of methods or even hybrid methods. He meant for these 29 methods as a guide for qualitative data coding. Furthermore, he also advocated that the importance of applying the coding methods based on the research question, the nature and objective of the research and the data itself. As highlighted earlier, I had adopted his advice of utilizing a "generic" approach for my first cycle coding. This meant I did not go by any specific coding methods for this first cycle coding, and rather I started to work on my fieldnotes line by line and word by word iteratively to try to make sense of what code could be applied to the various phrases, sentences and paragraphs of my fieldnotes. In fact, "initial coding" was discussed as one of the 29 coding methods by Saldana and he specifically explained that this initial coding mainly referred to keeping an open mind and to allow for deeper reflection on the data and to take ownership of the data (i.e. having full control over the data).

In addition, I had applied a mix of the following coding methods for my first cycle coding with the objectives to try to cover as much ideas, concepts, patterns, themes etc. as possible.

- Simultaneous Coding: Application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum.
- Descriptive Coding: Summarizing the basic topics and gist of a passage/segment of the qualitative data using a word or short phrase.
- Process Coding: Using gerunds to connote action in the data.
- Emotion Coding: Labeling an emotion recalled and/or experienced.
- Values Coding: Encoding the values, attitudes, beliefs, perspectives and worldviews of individuals.
- Dramaturgical Coding: Encoding the intra- and inter-personal experiences and actions of social drama.
- Provisional Coding: coding the data based on a list/set of predetermined codes.

(adapted from Saldana, 2013)

As my AR was not based on grounded theory, and there had been sort of a set of *a priori* concepts that I was trying to investigate, I actually utilized provision coding quite

significantly. What this meant was that I had a kind of predetermined list of the several key concepts, as provided from literatures, such as complex responsive process, complex interaction, dynamic adaptation toward complex situation (and development), self-organization among local agents, sense-making, sense-giving, alternate voice/mindset, silenced voice, non-linear causality, unpredictability, co-creation of reality, socially constructed reality etc. to start off with for my first cycle coding. However, I did not restrict myself to this list of familiar CAS and SC concepts. This was where the other coding methods that I had employed really helped.

The mix of methods employed in this first cycle coding allowed me to remain open-minded on how to perceive, read, own and code my data. As the various concepts listed earlier could be quite multifaceted in its conceptualization, I elected not to use the same word/phrase. In fact, I had found it hard to do so when I started my first cycle coding on my fieldnotes because these concepts seemed to be more of a grander theme which should be of a "higher level code". Instead, I tried to keep the first cycle codes wording/phrases as simple as possible yet having these CAS and SC concepts at the back of my mind as I proceeded with my first cycle coding. I had to essentially review my data line by line and word by word to identify potential codes and denoted them with words/phrases that could explain the intra- and inter-personal engagements with and among the incumbents in the various social dramas and narratives recorded in the data. I also paid additional attention to the values and emotion being recorded in my coding process since my data did record both verbal and non-verbal nuances in situ. In order to aid me in capturing the essence of the text in the fieldnotes and denote with a code, I endeavored to put down the words/phrases/ideas that first come to my mind as I proceed with the first cycle coding, nevertheless always embracing the principles of authenticity as discuss in the preceding chapter. However, this had not always been possible and oftentimes, I did have to reflect on these first words/phrases iteratively for some time and I did find that the "critical humility" (Marshall and Mead, 2005) that I had been consciously putting into practice during my actual AR inquiry had provided a good grounding and guidance for me in the process, in addition to the constant and continual practice of authenticity (Coghlan, 2008; Lonergan, 1972) and self-reflexivity (Marshall, 2001) as I did in the data collection phase of my inquiry.

This first cycle coding had been extremely tedious due to a significant amount of data that I had recorded in my fieldnotes, but it was also a tremendously beneficial and enlightening process. Even with the advice and suggestions on coding methods, this first cycle coding experience informed me that coding could be much more complex than it seemed to be. A lot of thinking, reflections and even re-reflections had to be taken into account. In order to illustrate how I have conducted my first cycle coding, I had included a brief illustration on the above rationale and/or principles that I had upheld in conducting my first cycle coding for the 3 examples from my fieldnotes (see Table 4-1 below).

Upon completing this first cycle coding, I ended up with 222 “unique” codes from my data, which I had subsequently tabulated using excel worksheet to help me manage the vast amount of data and codes. When I said “unique”, I meant to refer them to be unique in terms of how they were spelt or phrased. As suggested by Saldana (2013), this first cycle coding allowed me to acquire a deeper appreciation of my data and the sense of ownership of the data also begun to feel significantly more tangible, i.e. more control over the data and thus subsequent coding and analysis. Since I had adopted a mixed/hybrid set of coding methods for this initial level first cycle coding, it was not surprising that my 222 “unique” codes consist of different nouns, gerunds, verbs, adjective, phrasing etc. As I was already mentally prepared to perform further re-coding or what Saldana termed as second cycle coding, I was aware that these 222 codes could and should converge to certain categories or themes. It would be challenging, if at all possible, to try to make sense of how these 222 codes could add value to my data analysis without further work. The detailed mapping of all my data and coding could be made available but instead of presenting them wholesale here in this thesis write-up, I would be taking a few examples (as depicted in Table 4-1) to discuss how I had approached the different cycles of my coding.

Table 4-1 – Examples on Rationale of First Cycle Coding

E.g.	Fieldnotes	Field Notes Location (Division / Workshop Session / Line)	FIRST CYCLE "CODES" Rationale	SECOND CYCLE "CATEGORIES" Rationale	THIRD CYCLE "THEMES"
1	*"At this juncture, it seemed that people are getting more into giving their views and the situation seemed like a sense-making session at work and I decided to leverage on it although I am not sure if we are just wasting time or something useful will come out of it. It was quite a dilemma since I know that I am expending away the precious time I have with the team and I am under pressure to finish the workshop and also not to extend more workshops where possible. However, at this stage, I feel then that it is important that since the level of participation has gone up significantly and people are voicing their views, I would prefer to also participate in this co-shaping of the Division process/procedure development instead of dictating the direction just because I think it is more "systematic", i.e. Instead of me shaping it the way I think it is supposed to be."*	EP Division Workshop No. 2 Line 106-114	As depicted in the field notes, I was under time pressure at this specific moment in my fieldwork, but as the workshop had progressed into deeper participation and dialogues among the participants, I allowed such "self-organization" to proceed. I had not created such "self-organizing" atmosphere but had likely facilitated it through sense-making. At this juncture, I could either put a brake on the evident self-organization at work or seize the opportunity to allow the self-organizing momentum to continue, which in my opinion could generate more dialogues and sense-exchanges - **"Seizing Self-organization momentum"**.	Since the first cycle code is clearly espousing self-organization at work, it obviously come under the second cycle category of "**Self-Organization**". Although from the context of the field notes, it would be true that the concepts of sense-making, sense-giving and co-creating shared meanings were also embedded within, the key idea of this segment of field notes was that I had seized the opportunity to allow the self-organization to continue its momentum. Indeed, we could also identify that whenever I had "self-organization" coded in my field notes, it would often accompany some aspects of "sense-making", "sense-giving" and" co-creation of shared meaning" to a certain degree[1].	1. Self-organization engagement through adaptive responsive processes and sense-exchanging

[1] It would be demonstrated in later sections of this chapter that some of these second cycle categories or elemental concepts were closely related to each other and hence presented a further opportunity to congregate them toward a certain theme, which would be explored further in the findings of my AR.

E.g.	Fieldnotes	Field Notes Location (Division / Workshop Session / Line)	FIRST CYCLE "CODES" Rationale	SECOND CYCLE "CATEGORIES" Rationale	THIRD CYCLE "THEMES"
2	*"So far, everyone felt that this makes sense and I can see approval in their body language, and then Ahmed, though convinced, emphasized that his manager might not endorse this as this means the other divisions would require to take on more work and he would know the manager would side which side when these were being confronted. I told the team that if we do not try, we will never get to voice out this concern. If we try and try hard, I believe we can negotiate to a good and workable outcome. We agreed on this and made the decision that after the workshop I would setup a meeting with their manager and the division heads to present this to the department management team. I can observe that Hussein and Eton were both quite happy with the decision and Ahmed, though seemed expressionless then, did not voice out anything further and sit by the table, as if in deep thoughts. To me, it seemed that this is really starting to make some impact on the team. In fact, I felt that around the table, they all begin to have a different level of respect and trust for me. Hussein even told the team, "See, Peng is here to help us, don't keep thinking he is on the big boss side. Peng, thank you for the recommendation and the proposal to take this up to the manager, I will support you fully in the meeting with the heads and manager and let's work together as a team to make things work here and also to avoid any potential problem."*	SS Division Workshop No. 4 Line 92-105	The field notes indicated the obvious assumption that Ahmed had, i.e. the department manager would always side another division and not theirs – "**Amplifying weak/suppressed voice**". It was subsequently clear too that their mindsets had also shifted and there was hope that the silenced/weakened voice could be first voiced and even heard – "**Changing mindset**". The conservation started with a lot of doubts earlier (due to the assumptions and old mindset), but these doubts were addressed, challenged and even could be said to be eliminated in the process of the dialogues – "**Eliminating doubts**". Finally, respects and trust (especially trust) were gained from the participants through the sense-exchanged dialogues – "**Gained trust**".	Two of the 10 initial elemental concepts identified for the second cycle coding were clearly visible from the 4 first cycle codes indicated, i.e. "**Addressing Silenced/Weak Voices/mindsets**" and "**Trust**". The codes of "**Changing mindset**" and "**Eliminating Doubts**" did not align to any of the 10 initial elemental concepts strictly, but they did carry the meaning similar to the of "**addressing silenced/weak voices/mindsets**" . Eliminating doubts was essentially a change in the mindset and changing the mindset was also part of addressing the mindset.	1. Addressing Silenced/Weak/ Alternate voices/mindset 2. Leadership 3. Trust

E.g.	Fieldnotes	Field Notes Location (Division / Workshop Session / Line)	FIRST CYCLE "CODES" Rationale	SECOND CYCLE "CATEGORIES" Rationale	THIRD CYCLE "THEMES"
3	*"I know what he is trying to express and I did not disagree with him but I reiterated that if we really want to change the culture of our workplace, the first thing we often have to do is not to assume that it can't be change, because by doing so it would mean we would not even want to try. I agree with him that oftentimes we can't change the culture and others, but we can definitely change ourselves, or at least our thinking. I encouraged the team that it is important to first get away from our assumptions and presumption and reflect on our mindset before we can have an impact on others. It is true too that regardless of how much patience and effort we try to impact our colleagues, co-workers and even supervisors, as long as they are not open-minded and reluctantly to accept our "challenge" to them to reflect on their mindset and see if there is a need to change considering the many factors around them, they will stay the same. However, we cannot assume that they will be like this without trying or just based on some assumptions which we did not test. I further the discussion by injecting hints that I sort of know what is happening in the media division and though it is not my responsibility and business to try to understand and deal with it, it is affecting me too."*	BC Division Workshop No. 4 Line 132-144	In the field notes context, I was challenging the mindset and assumptions of a certain colleague, in particular in the perplexing area of work culture – thus "**Challenge existing mindset**" and "**Questioning assumption**". I was trying to engage in sense-making and sense-giving with my colleague in these dialogues and even to the extent of engaging into the local self-organization of his division – hence "**Sense-giving and Sense-making**" and "**Engage in Local self-organization**".	The first two first cycle codes identified were related to the concept of "**addressing silenced/weak voice/mindset**" as questioning assumptions would be an impetus toward changing of mindsets. From the last 2 first cycle codes identified in this segment of my field notes, it would be clear that "**self-organization**", "**sense-making**" and "**sense-giving**" were immediately located as the second cycle elemental categories here.	1. Self-organization engagement through adaptive responsive processes and sense-exchanging 2. Addressing Silenced/Weak/ Alternate voices/mindset

4.2 Theoretical Memo for Further & Deeper Reflection

Before I proceeded to further coding work to try to identify patterns or themes, I began writing up theoretical memos as a deeper reflection upon reviewing my data, my first cycle codes, my research purpose and motivation iteratively, and revisited the key literatures that had influenced my perspectives in terms of CAS and SC. Essentially such theoretical memos were short conclusions of up to two A4 pages that summarizes my thinking and reflection on my first-person inquiry experience and my data. As Clarke (2005) put it aptly, such theoretical memos were often "sites of conversations with ourselves about our data", I found that writing up such theoretical memos at this initial phase of my data analysis helped me to go deeper and more critical into my reflection. Most importantly, the practice of writing theoretical memos allowed me to entrench further authenticity into my coding and analysis. At the juncture before completing a full comprehensive data analysis, such theoretical memos served more of a suggestive purpose (for subsequent coding and analysis purpose) rather than to provide any conclusive position for my AR (Dey, 1993). Table 4-2 shows a sample of my theoretical memo content.

Armed with more concrete groundings to help me make more sense of my data, I was then ready for another level of coding, which Saldana (2013) had described as second-cycle coding. The purpose of second cycle coding was essentially to relook at, reevaluate, reorganize, recode and then reanalyze the data and the output of the first cycle coding so as to yield "a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual and/or theoretical organization" (Saldana, 2013:149). The output of such second cycle coding was to converge the codes of the first cycle coding to produce a more concise list of concepts or categories for analysis. In the next section, I would be discussing on how I performed my second cycle coding using the 222 codes (i.e. output) of my first-cycle coding process.

Table 4-2 – Sample of Theoretical Memo Content

Theoretical Memo

Having reviewed all over again the data and codes that I have collected for my project, I have come to realize that there are 3 pertinent issues/themes that persistently attracted my attention in the course of my research project. As I approached my practice with the perspectives of CAS and SC, I realized that the following themes seemed to recur among the data collected and furthermore, their impact on the outcome of the actual real-life project has been significant as well as their impact on my practice as a manager.

1. Sense-Making and Sense-Giving: Sense-exchanging (A Complex Adaptive and Responsive Iterative Process/Cycle)
2. Addressing Silenced Voices
3. Trust, Alliance and Leadership

4.3 Codes to Categories – Second-Cycle Coding

About 6 methods were proposed by Saldana (2013) for second cycle coding. However, it must be noted that the methods recommended for first cycle coding could still be relevant for second cycle coding as long as it is applicable. I had elected to approach my second cycle coding with the same mixed methods approach and applied the following methods:

- Pattern Coding: identifying and converging together codes that could explain or infer a particular theme or concept (and elect a suitable name for the "heading" of the group) (Miles and Huberman, 1994)
- Focused Coding: looking for the most frequent or significant codes from the initial coding step and build up key categories from them.
- Axial Coding: an approach to reduce the large number of initial codes by grouping, sorting and even re-labeling similar codes into categories or concepts. It is like how the spoke of the wheel converge toward its axis, hence axial coding; Glaser (1978) described such coding as "the code is sharpened to achieve its best fit".
- Provision Coding (from the First Cycle methods): coding the data based on a list/set of predetermined codes.

(adapted from Saldana, 2013)

The general idea had been to assemble the massive 222 codes from the first cycle codes to a smaller set of meaningful and useful codes, categories, concepts or themes for further

analysis. It might be noticeable that I had employed one of the first cycle method, i.e. provision coding, for the same reason that I was still working with the same set of *a priori* CAS and SC concepts in this second cycle. Even as I proceeded with my second cycle coding, I noticed that there were quite a number of opportunities to converge or merge the first cycle codes utilizing a combination of the second cycle coding methods as discussed above. In fact, some of these first cycle codes could have very close meanings but phrased differently (e.g. "attention to underlying narrative" and "sense-making" – in essence sense-making was to allow a deeper reflection and appreciation of what is the actual underlying meaning of the narratives being exchanged at the moment). This prompted me to consider the option of assessing the first cycle codes to look out for unique elements or some sort of broader categories. These unique elements could thus be a "second cycle category" that could assist me to assemble the vast amount of the first cycle codes into a more manageable number for more meaningful analysis. Nevertheless, it must also be noted that the primary objective was not so much for the sake of trying to converge the first cycle codes so that it would be more manageable but rather I believed that these "elements" or categories could allow for a more practical analysis of my AR data and field notes.

Consequently, I reflected on the opportunity to think of how these first cycle codes could be categorized into certain set of "elements", for example sense-making, sense-giving, self-organization, changing mindset, adaptive response, leadership, trust, alliance, co-creation of reality, allowing weaker or silenced voice etc., which could be distinctive concepts, though not entirely mutually exclusive. This preceding set of "elements" were essentially wordings, concepts and ideas that were already recurring frequently among my data and first cycle codes. I believed the reason had been that they were the common observations or phenomena of a CAS and SC conscious practice. Therefore, I started to look out for obvious elemental concepts from the entire list of my first cycle codes. The idea was to apply and examine if these concepts could form my second cycle categories, which should be distinctive but not necessarily independent of each other.

As explained earlier in this section, I approached my second cycle coding with pattern, focused, axial and provision coding, hence, the instinctive action was to look for elements or words that were kind of similar or even recurring that among all my first cycle codes (i.e. the

222 codes) and examine for the opportunity to gather all the similar codes that espoused similar meanings. I could immediately identify a few of the very commonly recurring words or concepts across the 222 first cycle codes. At the same time, I was also referring back to my theoretical memos and the literatures within CAS and SC that had framed my AR inquiry as an on-going process of this second-cycle coding. One of the most prevalent words found among my first cycle codes was “self-organization”. Self-organization is a common concept within the CAS perspective, and I had already expounded quite significantly on the importance and need to allow self-organization to take place if we sincerely believed our organizations are CAS and our organizational realities were effectively socially constructed. Hence, it would not be accidental that “self-organization” had been one of the key and very common elemental concepts embedded within my data. In fact, a detailed examination indicated that the exact word “self-organization” was found embedded in 84 of the 222 codes, and effectively making it the most significant elemental concept for the second cycle categories.

Following the similar approach, I looked for the next most common wording and/or concepts among the 222 first cycle codes. Another very common concepts within the CAS and SC perspectives are “sense-making” and “sense-giving”. There were 44 out of the 222 codes having either sense-making or sense-giving or both in them. In fact, a noteworthy observation would be that both sense-making and sense-giving “appeared” together like twins quite frequently in the first cycle codes. This could mean that it was normal and usual for both phenomena to occur together. Even at this moment of my coding process, I was already suspecting that when I coded only either “sense-making” or “sense-giving” in my first cycle, I might have been referring to some sort of iterative cycles of sense-making and sense-giving, but for lack of a better term during the first cycle coding process, I had coded many of them as “sense-making” and unless it had been very specific that what was transpiring was sense-giving, it would then be coded as “sense-giving”.

The next most frequent elemental concept that emerged from my data had the effective meaning of “addressing silenced/weak voices/mindsets”, with a total occurrence of 43. Among these 43 first cycle codes, though not all of them would have the exact wordings of addressing silenced or weakened voices and mindsets, it would have the basic meanings of

the existing mindsets, biases, assumptions being challenged, and hence addressed, or that of paying attentions to any voices that could have been silenced or weakened within the context of my field work. Similar to the elemental concepts of "sense-making" and "sense-giving", "addressing silenced/weak voices/mindsets" had also been identified as one of the key pertinent issues/themes emerging from my field works upon my further reflection after conducting the first cycle coding and writing my theoretical memo. Such alignment to the theoretical memo written at this stage of my second cycle coding should not be particularly surprising if this had been what my data and field notes were telling me in regard to how I had conducted my practice with the CAS and SC perspectives. As I proceeded further with my second cycle coding, looking out for similarly recurring concepts or wordings in the 222 codes, I realized that there seemed to be no more elemental concepts with such high frequencies (i.e. into the 30-40s region). Nevertheless, there were still quite a significant amount of remaining codes that were not found to categorize into these first few major elemental categories. Instead of looking for recurring frequencies into the 30s, I lowered my expectation into the 20s or even just 10s because there was still quite a significant amount of remaining codes.

I continued with my second cycle coding, looking out for patterns and the most frequent codes among the remaining codes, and I could identify the following 9 most obvious and frequent elements emerging from my data and critical reflection at this stage as shown in Table 4-3. As depicted in the table, I had selected these 9 elemental concepts to form my initial set of second cycle categories because each of them was made up of more than 10 of the 222 first cycle codes. The decision to use a double digit occurrences (out of 222 codes) as a cut off could be deemed to be somewhat arbitrary, but as discussed above, I did not wish to terminate my second cycle coding process with just 3-4 categories while ignoring the rest of the codes identified in the first cycle. The reason for naming the first 9 elemental concepts as my "initial" set of second cycle categories was also for the purpose of continuing my second cycle coding with the rest of un-categorized codes, i.e. there could be more categories to be identified from the rest of these codes.

Table 4-3 – The Initial 9 Elemental Categories of Second Cycle Coding

"Self-Organization" (84)	"Adaptive response" (13)
"Emergence" (12)	"Co-creating shared meaning" (16)
"Sense-making" (44)	"Sense-giving" (44)
"Trust" (12)	"Leadership" (21)
"Addressing silenced/weak voices/mindset" (43)	

(The number in the parenthesis showed the count of unique first cycle codes categorized under the second cycle elemental categories.)

As I continued my second cycle coding to look at the rest of the yet-to-be categorized codes from the first cycle, it was more difficult to ascertain clear and significant elemental concepts or categories from them. They were actually quite diverse but yet somewhat conveyed very similar meanings. For example, there were 7 codes indicating the need to "manage power-relations", 8 codes identifying the issues of "managing conflicts, tensions and difficult people", 5 codes highlighting attentions required for "managing ego and emotion", and another 5 codes discussing on "risk management". From the perspectives of change management, these few concepts or categories mentioned were the usual issues and challenges faced by change management practitioners and managers, but since my AR was to investigate how different (if any) would my practice be impacted via the adoption of CAS and SC perspectives when I managed my work place change project, I believed that these codes should deserve some merits for further investigation and analysis. Upon reflecting on these 20+ codes relating to change management challenges and conflicts, I decided to add one more category the initial 9 second cycle categories identified earlier, namely "*managing challenging situations*". By challenging situations, it could refer to difficult people, power-relations play, ego, emotions, conflicts and project risks. Therefore, at this particular juncture, there were 10 categories identified in my second cycle coding process, constructed from more than 90% of my 222 first cycle codes.

There remained a limited number of my first cycle codes that were not classifiable into these 10 second cycle categories. Although the numbers were not significant, and I could choose to proceed with my analysis without considering them, I still preferred to take a deeper look at them to verify that I did not miss out any critical insights from my data. My objective at this point had been to see if either I could fit these remaining codes into the 10

categories already established or I might be able to draw insights from them to even establish additional distinctive categories. Upon taking another detailed review on these remaining codes, I found that they could be differentiated into two general sets. This first of which were codes that described how I had persisted or desisted in my actions, dialogues or discourses in my field work. As I investigated them more thoroughly by looking at the context of the field notes where these were derived, I discovered that oftentimes when I persisted or desisted, I was dealing with a difficult situation and frequently through applying adaptive response in the local self-organization, or even sense-making and sense-giving. Thus, I felt that for the codes that described persisting and desisting actions or dialogues, they could likely be categorized with the later addition of "managing challenging situation" second cycle category.

The second general set consisted of contexts where I was engaging in informal verbal and non-verbal interactions and engagements with the change project participants. In fact, there was also a code whereby I discussed on building alliances, especially through such informal engagement. I was reminded of Searl's (2008) and Gergen's (1999) highlights that the use of language medium and communications often underlined the co-creation of shared meanings within a self-organized group. This had prompted me to consider categorizing these codes of informal interactions and non-verbal engagement to be under self-organization or co-creating shared meanings, but similarly, it could also be categorized under sense-making or sense-giving. Furthermore, managers and practitioners had oftentimes leveraged on such informal and non-verbal engagement to building and develop alliances and trust too. Finally, as they were really just a very minority of the 222 first cycle codes, and that they could actually be categorized under one of the established 10 second cycle categories, this also implied that there was no need to introduce any additional second cycle categories. Therefore, the final output of my second cycle coding process had yielded 10 categories as shown in Table 4-4 below, which I would further proceed to analyze them in the next section.

Table 4-4 – The Final Set of Second Cycle Categories

"Self-Organization" (84)	"Adaptive response" (13)
"Emergence" (12)	"Co-creating shared meaning" (16)
"Sense-making" (44)	"Sense-giving" (44)
"Trust" (12)	"Leadership" (21)
"Addressing silenced/weak voices/mindset" (43)	"Managing challenging situation" (20+)

(The number in the parenthesis showed the count of unique first cycle codes categorized under the second cycle elemental categories.)

Although the outcome of this second cycle coding yield a much more manageable set of 10 categories, the general recommendation from established qualitative researchers advocated that most qualitative studies would finally reach a maximum synthesis of between 5 to 7 major concepts or themes (Lichtman, 2006; Creswell, 2013). Thus, I did not want to stop here at these 10 categories but more importantly, I elected to further analyze these 10 categories to investigate how they could provide further insights to my AR. As I reflected more deeply into the 10 categories at this stage, I began to observe that some of them could avail to the opportunity to be further converged together. For instance, self-organization, adaptive response, emergence and co-creating shared meaning seemed to offer a further opportunity to get them integrated into a single theme, since they all referred to the adaptive and responsive process by which a practitioner (i.e. me) had engaged with his/her practice with a CAS and SC perspective. Due to this, I decided to go for a further level of coding (i.e. third cycle coding) to attempt to refine this set of second cycle categories into more concrete themes that could be consequential to further my analysis. The development of third cycle concepts or themes would be a kind of a bridging process between my coding processes and analytical processes to allow me to reach a meaningful conclusion in my findings, which would be the focus of the next section of this chapter.

4.4 Third Cycle Coding – A Thematic Purposed Coding

I had opted to proceed with a further cycle of coding even though the general recommendation was for two cycles, mainly because as I reflected more deeply into the 10 categories as an outcome of my second cycle coding process, I felt that there were opportunities to uncover some underlying themes for further analysis. This third cycle

coding should still be considered as part of the second cycle coding (Saldana, 2013). The objective for this third cycle coding had not been so much of condensing the categories further but more for a thematic purpose, in particular to elucidate some of the traits that could surface from my practice as I introduced the CAS and SC perspectives into it. The thematic purpose of this third cycle coding process also offered an analytical opportunity at a deeper level. I could consider this coding phase to be sort of a bridge process to link my data analysis phases and the findings discussion of my AR, instead of just a purely coding one.

The manner in which this third cycle coding were conducted went beyond pure coding and looking at my data on piecemeal basis, i.e. looking at the first cycle codes, the second cycle categories and also oftentimes referring back to the original fieldnotes context. Facing the 10 second cycle categories as shown in Table 4-4, I began to ponder and reflect on what else could be done further. I could just proceed with what Saldana (2013) had recommended to look at the codes and data and try to converge them into meaningful themes. Nevertheless, I believed this would not be very effective if I did not take into account on how my entire AR and change project had been allowed to emerge under a purposeful employment of CAS and SC lenses. Therefore, in addition to relying on the previous 2 levels of coding experiences, I had elected to, at this moment, returned to my fieldnotes and tried to look for "thematic clues" that could potentially explore through discourses encountered in my field work. In addition to the similar mix of second-cycle coding methods, I had employed an additional method into the mix for this third cycle coding, i.e. theoretical coding. The essence of theoretical coding was to try to discover the link between the categories from second cycle coding to a few principal concepts or themes which are of interest, meaningful and relevant to the research objectives/goals (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), which was an attempt to ascertain the differences/impacts (if any) that the CAS and SC perspectives could make to my practice.

As highlighted earlier, I believed that several of the key second cycle categories seemed to espouse a similar theme. Furthermore, as already explored in detail in the literature review chapter, the notions of self-organization would often involve sense-making, sense-giving and adaptive response processes, and the outcome of an authentic engagement of self-

organization often would produce emergence and shared meaning co-created. Thus, the first action of my third cycle thematic coding would be to group the first 6 categories exhibited in Table 4-4 together to form a theme, which I would term as "**self-organization engagement through adaptive responsive processes and sense-exchanging**". I believed the term "sense-exchanging", which was also explored toward the end of the literature review chapter, might be a more accurate one to describe what I had experienced in my AR project, which had been essentially the iterated cycles of sense-making and sense-giving to co-engender a shared meaning.

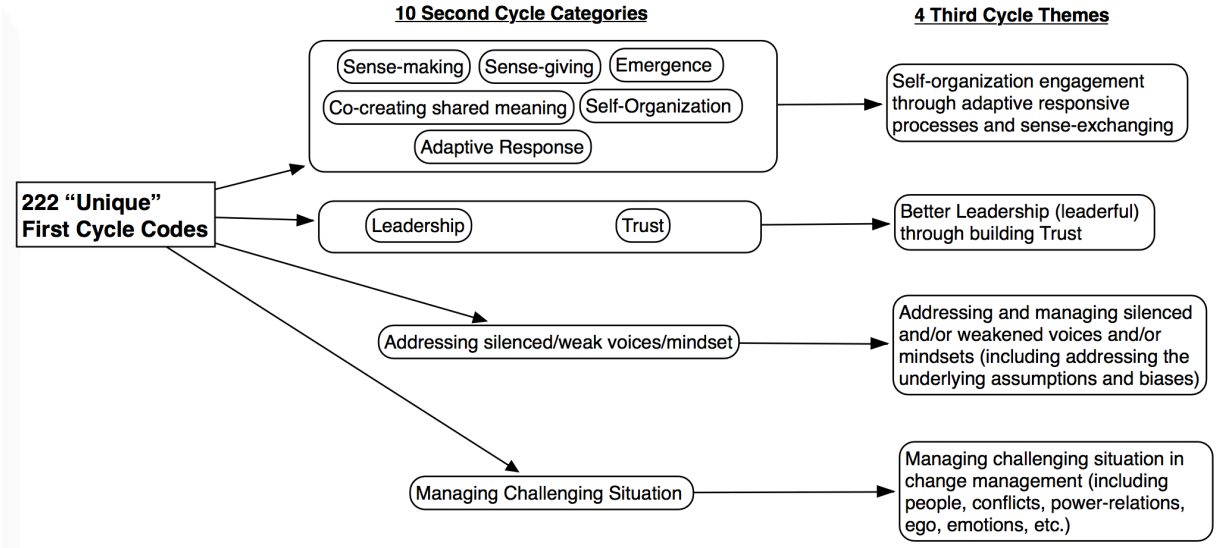
The 4 remaining categories in Table 4-4 looked like they were somewhat sufficiently mutually exclusive for them to form a standalone theme each by themselves. The two categories of leadership and trust were constituted from the lowest number of first cycle codes and I decided to investigate if there could be a common theme between these two categories. It had been widely accepted that effective leaders would often have the trust of his/her followers. Moreover, with the greater awareness and acceptance of leaderful practice (Raelin, 2003), which could possibly be interpreted to be also a kind of leadership practice that paid particular attention to the CAS and SC nature of organizations and its actors, it seemed plausible that one aspect of how CAS and SC perspectives had impacted on my practice had been that it allowed me to develop a more leaderful practice through developing trust. Thus, I believed that it would be relevant to combine trust and leadership categories into a third cycle theme. This would conclude that a further thematic approach of analysis on my second cycle categories yielded 4 key themes, namely:

1. Self-organization engagement through adaptive responsive processes and sense-exchanging.
2. Addressing and managing silenced and/or weakened voices and/or mindsets (including addressing the underlying assumptions and biases).
3. Managing challenging situation in change management (including people, conflicts, power-relations, ego, emotions, etc.)
4. Better Leadership (leaderful) through building Trust

Finally, it appeared that through 3 cycles of coding process, I had managed to go from a significant volumes of field notes and data to 222 unique first cycle codes, then condensed further to 10 second cycle categories and ultimately conceptualized into 4 key themes emerging from my AR. The final outcome of the coding processes had suggested that 4 key themes were embedded in my AR data. Figure 4-1 depicted the entire flow of the outcome from my three cycles of coding processes. In essence, this would be what my AR data is informing me about how I had conducted my practice, adopting the CAS and SC lenses. On a personal level, this really spoke volume to me as I could evidently identify with these 4 themes as I reflected back on my AR inquiry experience. Nevertheless, this had been predominantly from a coding perspective, in which I had applied certain methodologies toward analyzing and codifying my data.

As a result, I elected to further my analyses so that I could better ascertain, understand and present the 4 themes as the findings of my AR work. Furthermore, it would be crucial to substantiate further thematic based convergence of my data with more established foundation. It should follow that if these 4 themes were indeed key to my AR, then I should be able to present considerable evidence from my AR experience to back them up. Therefore, in the next chapter, I would be leveraging on the use of narratives/stories from my AR data and experiences to further illustrate that these were indeed key themes that would allow me to develop and explicate the findings for my AR.

Figure 4-1 – The Coding Map



Chapter 5: Findings Discussion

5.1 Bridging Data Analysis & the Findings – Themes, Insights and Narratives

Webster and Mertova (2007) argued that stories and narratives could be very effective tools to study the complexity and experiences of our social context and human interactions. Weick (1995) also postulated that humans had a preference to think and analyze narratively instead of via arguments and/or paradigms, and therefore narratives could be useful mechanisms to apply for investigating and understanding behaviors (hence actions) (Escalas and Stern, 2003; Holt, 2004). Interestingly, Bennett and Detzner (1997) espoused that stories and narratives could even allow us to sense-make both the current and future state of being. In essence, stories/narratives, if and when utilized appropriately, should have sustained learning as an outcome. Ramsey (2014) further underscored the value and advantages on the usage of narrative and stories to investigate and analyze empirical evidence from action research, and more importantly, how such narratives and stories encouraged and allowed management learning (or in her words "scholarship of practice") via different perspectives reflexively. Indeed, as implied by Ramsey (2014:11-12), such narratives and stories telling, especially when done so in separate perspectives, could possibly allow for a more dialogical and reflexive analysis and interpretation on the empirical data. In another word, when applied to my AR analysis context, this could provide me with a more nuanced exercise of further authenticity (Coghlan, 2008; Lonergan, 1972) and attentional discipline (Marshall, 2001) in analyzing my AR data. Furthermore, according to Dyson and Genishi (1994), stories/narratives could even have the ability to allow meaningful connections to be developed via the sharing traits of meanings and experiences, and this sounded a lot like how sense-making could manifest in self-organization among the organization actors.

Reiterating the four key themes that emerged from my coding process in Chapter 4, my subsequent analytical approach for these themes would be to relate each of them to noteworthy narratives from my field work, which should more evidently and clearly provide a substantial foundation for these themes:

1. Self-organization engagement through adaptive responsive processes and sense-exchanging.
2. Addressing and managing silenced and/or weakened voices and/or mindsets (including addressing the underlying assumptions and biases).
3. Managing challenging situation in change management (including people, conflicts, power-relations, ego, emotions, etc.).
4. Better Leadership (leaderful) through building Trust.

Although the first theme of "self-organization" is the most significant (in terms of the codes that it had been derived from) and also most interesting, the fact that this first theme seems to be the main one scattering all over my AR data implies that almost any narrative identified within my AR field work could be a likely candidate to be utilized to relate to and discuss on this theme. Therefore, I would defer it to be addressed last after having dealt with the other three themes. Moreover, there seems to be a strong indication that this key theme of "self-organization" might be a driving force for the other themes, so it might be more worthwhile to look at the other themes first to investigate if there could be some truth in this observation.

In the following sections, I would first present the narrative and subsequently elucidate the insights it provided, before relating it to the particular theme. Nevertheless, it must be noted that some of the narratives would likely to be embedded with more than one single theme, but each of them had been selected to discuss the most prominent emerging theme that it purportedly supports. All names in the narratives have been anonymized so as to protect the identities of the incumbents involved as agreed in my ethics approval.

5.2 Narrative, Theme & Insights 1

The following first narrative was highlighted to primarily illustrate support for the first theme of *"Addressing and managing silenced and/or weakened voices and/or mindsets (including addressing the underlying assumptions and biases)."* This narrative would be told in the form of a few inter-connected episodes to allow a more comprehensive development of the theme and insights.

5.2.1 Narrative 1

A cold war brewing (Eton & Ahmed)

This first narrative had to deal with the management of contracts for my directorate. Department A has been mandated to manage all contracts under my directorate and this process is managed by one of its division (SS Division). The senior staff who was responsible to handle and manage all contracts within this SS division is Eton. Eton is also assisted by an admin staff named Ahmed. I had conducted 4 workshops with the SS division to align all their processes. When it comes to the processes related to contract management, I had then realized that instead of Eton, who is the rightful process owner as a senior staff and was exhibiting extremely pessimism and passiveness, it was actually Ahmed who was much more engaged to provide all the information and actively participated my engagement with both of them. In the beginning, I attributed it to the fact that Ahmed has been with the department for almost 30 years and doing the same job, and hence he would be extremely familiar with the contract management processes. However, after the first 3 workshops, I began realized that Eton and Ahmed were in some sort of cold war through their non-verbal engagement. Since Ahmed had been quite cooperative to provide all the necessary information and also had been acting very forthcoming in these workshops, the lack of participation from Eton was not particularly concerning after all my objective in the project is to align all the processes and procedures. Furthermore, as Eton joined the department from another directorate as the result of the design phase of the corporate restructuring, his lack of engagement could easily be explained out due to his relative short time with the team. However, it must be noted that although Eton might be new to the department, he has been dealing with contract management processes for many years in another directorate within the corporation. Regardless of all these, I felt that this is also an opportunity for me to "test" my newly found approach to manage change by attempting to engage in any potential self-organization. I then decided to approach Eton on the pretext that I need to find out more how he was dealing with contract management processes in his previous directorate by meeting him privately.

An exit plea (Eton and me)

When we met up in his office, I was surprised then that he actually engaged me in conversation before I even started. He wanted to be excused out of all future workshop and even explained that he was not really needed as I could have known from the way the workshop had been conducted for the last 3 session. What he meant was that Ahmed had been too domineering in the area where he was supposed to be the subject matter expert and process owner. He even argued that "it is enough to have Ahmed in the department so why waste my time". As I probed further, he even declared that Ahmed had been the "superman of the process and there is no need for me" and he even sarcastically mentioned that "perhaps the one who would be retired is going to be me instead of Ahmed one year later". Apparently, Ahmed had reached 60 years of age and as per our organization's policy, the retirement age is 60 and hence he would need to go for retirement at the end of the year. Nevertheless, it was also possible to extend the retirement age on a year-by-year basis as long as a strong business case could be provided to justify it and with the final approval from the CEO of the organization.

What Eton was being sarcastic about was that although Ahmed was slated to go for retirement, he was holding onto all the contract management work and refused to get Eton involved at all. In fact, Eton even accused Ahmed for trying to manipulate the situation such that he would be fired, and Ahmed would get his wish to extend his retirement indefinitely. He complained that, "well, if he does not want to pass his knowledge to others and also does not want to involve me in the work, then he is critical right? Since no one else is able to do his work except him. So that's his way to prolong his stay, and management will ask me to leave then. Maybe that's the plan?". I tried to arrest this erroneous mindset by informing him that our CEO had given specific instruction to all EVPs that even critical staffs could be given up to 2 extensions since it would take at most 2 years to find another staff to be trained under the retiring person to take over the job. However, Eton did not seem very convinced even though he knew that my proximity to the top management would offer more reliable information. From this point on, I sensed that I had to try to sense-give and help him sense-make.

It is noteworthy to highlight that I was not expecting all these from Eton until I had this private meeting with him on my own accord. He actually offered me his meaning or interpretation of the situation (sense-gave to me) and this had allowed me to really know the deep concern that he was experiencing then. This would be a good example of how I had exchanges of sense-making/giving with the change recipient. It involved local parties to exchange and interpret meanings through iterations of sense-making and sense-giving within the context of self-organization. In fact, as we would see later, the exchange of meanings/senses taking place allowed both of us to individually sense-make the situation/reality with better clarity and in the event trying to co-create a shared meaning and develop a shared course of action to address the issue identified.

Sense-exchanged for a different and actionable exit – a new voice heard (Eton & me)

Eton might not be fully convinced that Ahmed would ultimately be required to retire within the next 2 years, but he did become more open and relax in our discussion, probably he believed that I was sincerely trying to help. I had then tried to explain to him some of the rationale behind the new organization structure design and offered to answer any questions that he had (i.e. sense-giving and allowing him to sense-make). Soon he realized that he was fully responsible as the lead process owner of the contract management process, whether he had liked it or not, just as he had been in his previous directorate. He began to make sense of his responsibility with respect to the head count handling the processes he was leading. After all, Eton was a responsible person and he tried to shift his mindset from focusing on the issue with Ahmed to the subject matter of the contract management processes. We went into discussing how his previous directorate and department had handled contracts and all the time referencing back to the man-hours and tasks undertaken. The fact that Eton was focusing back on the man-hours and tasks showed that he had been drawn back to the rational realm as we sense-exchanged. Eton and I started to realize that with only 2 staffs (himself and Ahmed) to handle the entire workflow of contract management as what Ahmed had confirmed, it would be detrimental to the team and the processes.

Eton highlighted a key difference: in the previous directorate, the execution of the contract was handled by the end-user of the contract rather than the contract management team.

However, as the current process and workflow design at this moment, it was to have Eton and Ahmed handled the entire contract management process from end to end. Eton believed that this was what Ahmed (and the previous team) had been doing and there was no question on the feasibility of continuing this practice although the attrition of head counts for the team had been significantly reduced (more than 50%) with increased work load. Eton tried to sense-give to me that with Ahmed and him alone, the number of man-hours required to handle the workload, if this legacy arrangement continued, would be so great that either the quality of work would be compromised or both him and Ahmed would be working overtime every day. I tried to make sense of the situation that Eton had just highlighted as it did not occur to me that their current workload was actually overloaded then, so I questioned further to ascertain this observation. Eton immediately highlighted a key point that at this moment there were likely two contributing factors. Firstly, although our directorate had completed the design phase and into the implementation phase, we were the first directorate to complete the design phase and most other directorates were still undergoing design phase and had not made changes to the workload and contracts work. Secondly, due to the significant budget cut as a reaction to the market downturn, contracts were reduced significantly too. This had resulted in the amount of contract work to be limited or at least slowed down. As such, SS division had not experienced any spike in workload.

Eton's argument was that by the time the dust had settled, and budget restrictions were relaxed, contract work would begin to pile up and what Eton had discussed earlier would really materialize! I settled in with the information that Eton had described (to sense-give to me), and not only did it made a lot of sense, I was very concerned that if this would not be addressed, it could detrimentally impact the SS division and even the entire department. I tried then to tap on his experience by asking him how he would have addressed this since there would be no way we could increase the head count in any manner possible. Eton reluctantly suggested that the only possible way then was to get the other "end-user" to manage the contract execution instead of just him and Ahmed. Usually, the BC division and EP division constituted to 80% of the contracts of the department as end-users. What Eton had suggested was essentially to get the staffs in these divisions to handle the execution of the contract directly, which in all fairness they were already handling part of it in the

execution of their own responsibilities as highlighted by Eton. However, Eton was not enthusiastic that this could even be possible because he felt that *no one in the department would listen to him*. In fact, he implied that I was by far the only one who had wanted to really listen to his experience and view on contract management work. He felt that Ahmed had been playing the "I know it all" card and refusing to listen to anything he wanted to bring forth. I could imagine how it was like as the head of SS division trusted Ahmed whole-heartedly and in a sense, although Ahmed was just an admin staff, he held considerable expert power and relationship power (with respect to the division head). After all, Ahmed had been doubling up as the personal assistant of the division head for the past 15 years the head was in this position.

Eton had actually been feeling really suppressed (and silenced), and before we closed up our meeting, he even asked me how possible it would be for him to be transferred back to his previous directorate. I advised him not to be so impulsive at this stage and just to work with me to try to resolve this issue. He did not believe anything could be done especially when everyone trusted Ahmed so much and Ahmed's character is quite domineering to begin with. This private meeting was a good example of how I had sense-exchanged with Eton and from the onset of just thinking that it was just a cold war, a deeper problem was identified. Furthermore, both Eton and I had co-created a shared idea/meaning that we need to commit to certain action before there could be a viable and actionable solution.

A chanced private investigation (Kelvin and me)

In order to know more about Ahmed, I had arranged another meeting with a very good friend and colleague of Ahmed, named Kelvin, who was also part of the SS division. However, it should be noted that Kelvin was not involved in the contract management processes. I was actually trying to resolve some issue not related to the change project with Kelvin and while with him, I took advantage to try to find out more about Ahmed and the situation between Eton and Ahmed. As we exchanged our views about what was happening (sense-exchanging), Kelvin disclosed that the "cold war" started due to Eton trying to convince Ahmed to suggest to the division head to move the execution phase of the contract management work to the end-user instead of doing the end-to-end function of contract management as there were only two of them to work on this. Kelvin also revealed

that Ahmed was actually very proud of his 30 years' work managing the contract processes. Kelvin told me that Ahmed not only took pride of his work but even considered his work "his own child". Ahmed had been worried that Eton was not capable to take care of his child when he retired, and in fact Kelvin shared that Ahmed had felt that Eton was not interested to take over "his child" at all.

I then asked about what happened when Eton raised the issue of moving the execution phase of the contract work to end-user, Kelvin informed that Ahmed was not receptive at all and the key reason was that Ahmed did not want to be seen as evading work and he did not want his reputation of "the strong man of the contract team" to be tarnished at all. Now all these started to make good sense: Eton was worried about the ultimate workload and the lack of a good working relationship with Ahmed, while Ahmed had been worried that no one would handle all the contract work properly when he retired and that he did not want to be seen as admitting defeat to increased workload. Although it seemed a misalignment of priority and misunderstanding, the fact that there had been no sense-exchanging at the local level between Eton and Ahmed contributed to such deadlock. I was then determined to break out of this deadlock and help them to find an actionable way forward.

Another battle, another day

Since I already had all the man-hour data, I realized that one of the key approaches to sense-exchange with the SS division would be using FTE data (Full-time-equivalent statistics). Hence, I prepared an FTE statistic on the contract management processes based on staff count of the old structure and another one based on the new structure. I presented this in the next workshop with the SS division and I also ensured that division head was present as I wanted to him to really understand what I had wanted to present. Essentially, I convinced the SS division that to conduct the contract management work based on the current workflow and process, we need to have 3.5-4 FTE (i.e. 3.5 to 4 full time utilization of staffs). Moving on, I shared on Eton's proposed approach to transfer the execution (or at least major part of this phase) responsibility to the end-users – i.e. the BC and EP divisions' staffs, the FTE could be reduced to 2.5 FTE or lesser.

During the entire presentation on how the contract management workflow and process FTE looked like and what could be achieved if we adopt Eton's proposal, everyone especially the division head and Ahmed were in full focus as I sense-exchanged with them. At the end of it, they were fully convinced that the contract management work would be a key issue if this were not addressed and Eton's proposal seemed to be the only way out. For the first time I could recall, Ahmed tried to work with the entire team there to try to make sense of the situation and search for alternatives. All my prior engagements (workshops and other meetings) with Ahmed had not been very pleasant in the sense that he often gave others the impression that his experience and knowledge were not to be questioned, although he was still very cooperative in providing all the information I requested. The reason for them not endorsing Eton's proposal was that moving workload across to other divisions would not be easy and especially so to the BC and EP divisions, both of which were considered the core operations of the department.

I was expecting that perhaps the division head would be leading this by announcing that he would be bringing this up to the manager, but instead he clearly informed the team that I would organize a meeting to present my findings to the manager. It seemed to me that it was not just Eton and Ahmed's voices being suppressed but even for the SS division head, as he displayed a certain unspoken kind of uneasiness when I tried to explain that I was supposed to just facilitate the change management and leading it, at least not in the sense that I would be bringing in key change such as this to the manager. Nevertheless, he argued convincingly that I had all the necessary data to fight this battle. I could imagine his discomfort to try transferring the responsibilities to other divisions since the manager had often shown his belief that BC and EP divisions were more critical than others. Therefore, sensing that the way to move this forward was for me to take up the responsibility to bring this to the department manager and all the division heads for discussion, I just proceeded with the plan. I was somehow relieved after the SS division head informed me that he would provide me with all the support I need for the meeting with the manager and the other division heads. At least this would not be my solo battle, or so I thought.

The Battle of Five Voices

The meeting with the manager and the other heads went on without much issue except that I did not get the support (not even vocal wise) that I was promised by the SS division head. He was totally silent throughout. It seemed clear that the SS division head did not believe in voicing out or that he was more concerned about being seen as being the one who rocked the boat. Either way this could mean that the SS division head's voice could have been suppressed somehow in the department management team. As I presented the statistics and proposal, most of the heads and the department manager felt that it made a lot of sense that the proposed approach would be the only option to ensure that the operation of the department/directorate would not be impacted subsequently, except for the head of the EP division, Mary. Mary was very against the idea as she had been wanting to be seen as "fighting for her staff" (as evidenced in the EP division workshops) and she tried to counter the proposal by asking several questions. Most the questions asked had no association with the proposal but were seen as more likely to distract the team to come to a shared agreement on what to be do.

Instead of getting back up from the SS division head, I found an ally in the head of the BC division, Fred, who helped me to bring focus back on almost every distraction imposed by Mary. Although the manager seemed to be quite firm that Eton's suggestion was the only way forward, he did not want to enforce it downward without any consensus made. Ultimately, Mary had no choice but to accept the proposal as all her points raised were not substantial to counter the proposal. However, Mary asked for this proposal to be piloted to check for any issue before a full implementation, which made sense and the team agreed to it. As I was trying to sense-make to Mary, it was clear that she was not interested but thankfully I found support from Fred, who helped me to strengthen our sense-exchanges. It could be that Mary was being "forced" to accept by default of majority rule. Nevertheless, it was also clear that sense-making and sense-giving put significant consideration on the autonomy of the actors involved and had its limitation in a top-down execution of action and/or decision. Sense-making and sense-giving would be just buzz words if no meaningful exchange took place, i.e. exchange that allow the creation of shared meaning/direction.

5.2.2 Insight & Theme 1

As depicted in the above narrative, what started with me interpreting that there was a cold war (temporary) going on between two involved parties, and with adequate sense-exchanging (iterations of sense-making and sense-giving), the situation ended up with a critical raising of weak voices (of Eton and the SS division head) and ultimately helping these weak voices to vocalize. In doing so, we also chanced on an opportunity to resolve a critical problem that could be detrimental to the department/directorate if it had not allowed to be voiced and no action taken upon. These were possible through a series of sense-exchanging conducted with the participants and the management to co-create a shared meaning and it was only with a shared meaning that authentic consensus could be built, and actionable solution developed and implemented. Although we also observe that sense-exchanging was not almighty, in the sense that it would and could not solve all organizational issues, conflicts, deadlocks etc., it has been nevertheless a useful tool to engender shared meaning and subsequently allowing silenced/alternative voices to be heard as we can evidently observe from this narrative that I have had the chance to personally experienced and learned in my AR.

A key challenge for most change managers/leaders had been that oftentimes due to the power endowed upon us, either by virtue of the organization position or through official mandate, our sensitivities toward the alternate, weaker or silenced voices or mindset among the actors could be significantly dampened (subsequent mention of alternate voices/mindset shall include alternate, weakened or silenced voices or mindset) largely due to managerialism as I had discussed in the literature review chapter. This would tend to be exacerbated, especially when there are resource and time pressure on us who are being given the responsibilities to deliver the results of the change required. In some occasion, our modern hierarchical, and oftentimes also bureaucratic organization models, could hamper practitioners from developing sensitivity toward such alternate voices/mindset. The danger of not addressing them could be at best missed opportunities to strive for better outcome, or at worst complete failure of change effort. Sometimes just by giving ear to these alternate voices/mindsets, it could already be sufficient to convince the incumbents that the desire to co-engender a shared meaning with them is authentic and genuine. This itself

would have already gained significant mileage toward what most change practitioners would be looking for, i.e. the buying-in of the change.

Given the situation as described in the narrative, I would previously not attempt to deviate from my project plan to entertain any of these alternate voices/mindsets, especially when there is time pressure on the project. Furthermore, in this situation, I could still perform my assigned role as the change lead without the need to delve into the conflict between Eton and Ahmed, since Ahmed was able to provide me with all the information that I needed to simply fulfill my project assignment. However, to simply pass this by would not align to the spirit of engagement in self-organization as prescribed by the CAS and SC perspectives. Hence, I elected to engage deeper into the local self-organization of the SS division beyond the usual action that I would take (without considering the practice of CAS and SC). Thankfully, the decision to engage deeper in the self-organization in this case did pay off handsomely. Indeed, my practice has been significantly enriched through the experience as narrated earlier, which I would elaborate more in the following paragraphs.

Being sensitive to such alternate voices/mindset and thus sending the message to the incumbents that “we hear you” could just be the very first step and when a change manager could further his/her course by addressing them, it would be an extremely effective and beneficial self-organization engagement and enactment tool for practice. Nevertheless, it should be noted that addressing these alternate voices/mindsets should not mean acceding to them, but rather we should try to first sense-make of them and as necessary sense-give to the incumbents with the objective to co-engender a shared meaning toward what is going on within the self-organization.

As many management literatures had cautioned the need to allow the weaker or alternate voice/mindset to be taken into consideration in organization, it should be particularly important when it comes to change management. Oftentimes, these silenced voices/mindsets could be the root cause of what most practitioners would term as “resistance to change” in their experience toward managing change. Although there is already a great deal of academic works on addressing this “resistance to change”, most of them are about putting in place processes to “reduce/lower” these resistances to enact on

the change rather than to really listen to and address these silences/weak/alternate voices and mindset, which I believe to be the root causes of these resistances. My fieldwork via this AR research suggested that sometimes it could be in these weak and alternate voices where the best and most actionable solution lied, particularly underlined through the experience shared in this first narrative.

This trait of increased sensitivity toward alternate voices/mindset and their subsequent addressing seems more of an outcome of employing the CAS and SC lenses, but as I had discussed earlier based on the concept of complex responsive processes as advocated by Stacey (2011) for CAS, this purported "outcome" could feed into subsequent actions that could result in other outcomes (i.e. positive feedback). As also would be illustrated in the later narrative, such a trait could actually engender greater trust and build alliances with the incumbents, which could in turn result in more effective and workable shared meanings/outcomes for the change project. Moreover, as Stacey (2011) suggested, it would be insufficient for managers to just focus or react to the "obvious" observable organizational undertakings because of the fact that they did not really know and could not tell beyond these obvious undertakings. The less transparent, not so obvious underlying undertakings, resulting from the local self-organization, should be equally, if not more, important. If we approach from another angle, such alternate voices/mindsets, which I have posited to be critical for practitioner to be sensitive to and subsequently address them, could and should provide sufficient clues for seeing and understanding these less transparent and underlying organizational themes. Thus, this could translate to more effective management and communication. Therefore, I advocate that "increased sensitivity to addressing silenced/weak/alternate voices/mindset" would be a key outcome of my CAS and SC practice as exhibited in my data. Nevertheless, the caveat remains: although these learnings surfaced repeatedly in my inquiry, it should be by no means making it a generalizable trait.

In summary, the following theme could describe this first narrative and its corresponding insight:

"Appreciation for CAS and SC perspectives can increase our sensitivity toward alternate, weakened or even silenced voices or even mindsets, hence allowing us to address them."

5.3 Narrative, Insight & Theme 2

Having to deal with difficult people, conflicts, ego, emotions and risks are some of the challenging situations that most change managers/leaders tend to encounter in their effort to managing and implementing organizational changes. Another key area of concern would also be managing the power-relations among the participants and stakeholders involved in the change. In fact, there were also cases from my data that I had faced with the need to deal with difficulties in addressing to expert power in the subject matter concerned, such as the situation described in the following second narrative. The following second narrative would aid to provide greater insights to this theme of managing challenging situation in change management project.

5.3.1 Narrative 2

There were quite a few narratives of dealing with difficult people and situations from my data. Ahmed and Eton from the previous narrative could also qualify as examples of dealing with difficult people. The reason for bringing highlights of dealing with difficult people and/or situations was that these were some of the most common scenarios we faced as change manager in our practice, and chances were that every one of us would have our share of such narratives to depict how difficult organization actors could act and react when dealing with them, particularly within a change management context. This second narrative had to deal with my experience in conducting the change workshop with the BC division. The BC division was often considered the “core” operation of the department because most of the essential and critical works/tasks would be handled, managed and delivered by them. 4 workshops had been originally planned for each of the 4 divisions in the department, but I had to increase another workshop for BC division due to the need to discuss and develop many procedures and also due to the details involved in their procedures and processes. Throughout the workshops, one of the key actors had not been present for most of the workshops although he was the process owner of several key functions in the division. His name is Murray and he is responsible for the communication function of the department/directorate and at times for the organization.

Issuing challenges or simply arrogant?

Murray had only participated in the last workshop but did popped by on two occasions in earlier ones. On the first occasion, he came by in the midst of our workshop to give a peep into the conference room we were in. He even arrogantly declared that “Hi guys, how's things going on? I just want to check if the BC division is still surviving without me,” but later dismissed it that he was just kidding. In fact, from the body language of most of the BC division staffs in the room, it was clear that they did not believe he was just kidding. He subsequently commented “And I am sorry for missing the first one but at least I am here for the second one, but so sorry again, I am still on call for the CEO for one important speech that he requested me to write for him. I hope I can join you for the next one but then you know I am always on stand-by for the CEO, so please do pardon me if I can't" and left. It was already disrespectful to the team enough (even when the head was in the workshop too) for not joining the workshop being a key position holder in the team, but it was even worse that he tried to use his proximity and important role to the CEO to play his power cards on the team.

During that instance, it was very obvious that Murray was not only unpopular among the team but even to the extent of being an obnoxious person. I felt then that Murray was not just trying to play his power cards on his colleagues but in fact it was somehow quite obvious that he might be challenging the division head, Fred. I accorded to the fact that perhaps Fred is younger and with lesser experience. I noted then that Murray could be a key trouble maker for the BC division in my change project and thus I would have to keep a close eye on this.

On the second occasion, in the midst of the third workshop, he came about in the middle of the workshop proper to excuse one of his staffs (Mohamed) from the workshop to address an issue and in actual fact, Murray seemed to be purposefully got Mohamed out of the workshop just to give him a dressing down. Again, he was very impolite in his very short engagement with the team and me. Firstly, he accused me of hijacking the entire team (he was the acting head during this period as Fred was away on leave) and even tried to play down the importance of the workshop by asking, “What meeting is this? Why was I not informed?" As I explained to him what we were doing, he reverted with a "Oh yes yes, I am

so sorry that I had missed some of the sessions. How many did I miss? I hope it is not more important than CEO's work. As you know, I need to be on stand-by in case CEO needs me to write anything. Anyway, I am looking for Mohamed, can I borrow him for a while if you don't mind. I am sure you won't miss him." He then turned toward Mohamed and summoned him to follow him out of the conference room.

Murray was not only being difficult to the project and workshops, but as I interacted with the rest of the BC team, I also realized that there was almost a level of consensus that he was a tyrant in the division and often abused his proximity to my EVP and CEO to even blackmail his way to get what he wanted. Needless to say, all these brief interaction with Murray had left quite a bad impression of him on me. I must also confess that these instances had also colored my perspectives on how I should be dealing with him. Even though I knew for sure that he was not directing all these “hits” on me personally, it was still disruptive to the workshops and to quite an extent demoralizing to the BC division colleagues.

An accusation and a confrontation sense-exchanged

Finally, he attended the last workshop with the entire team and even participated quite actively but with a purpose to disrupt the work that had been done. This was because he started by alleging that I was overstepping into his expert territory in drafting up all these procedures for his area. He further emphasized that he was the expert and process owner and found it unbelievable that I was able to understand the processes and procedures “in his area”. He used strong words on me and was obviously trying to pick a fight. However, I was not ready to give in to my emotion just like that. I tried to sense-make and sense-give with/to him and explained to him how we had developed these drafts as a team and insisted to him that these were just drafts and he was definitely welcomed to give his comments and we could discuss around the table. In fact, I also leveraged on the situation to highlight the point that it was also due to importance of these procedures that I had indicated in my invitation that attendance should be mandatory. I also moved the motion to spend at least thirty minutes to hear what Murray would like to add to the drafts and everyone supported it. It was then clear the he had probably not reviewed the drafts at all as he was trying to evade the situation and insisted that we moved on with our plan first.

We moved on based on Fred's advice and it was clear around the table that we did not wish to push Murray to the corner and embarrass him.

As we proceeded on, Murray decided to contribute on the linguistic phrasing of a segment in one of the drafts, and his recommendation did make good sense so we adopted it immediately. This depicted that we were not biased against him and worked based on what made sense. However, the next point he brought up was somehow problematic. He argued on the common use of the term "shall" in most of the auxiliary verb and suggested it would be better to adopt words such as "could, must and would". I tried to explain to him that the use of shall and should were governed by the corporate procedure (organizational wide procedures) for mandatory and non-mandatory actions respectively. Furthermore, this could reduce ambiguity as opposed to using a great variety of auxiliary verbs in the procedures. However, Murray iterated that from his linguist expert background, the corporate procedure seemed to be problematic and needed to be addressed. From this point onward, he was seen to be more for argumentative sake than to be considered really objective. I did not want to start a fight but attempted to sense-give to him. I tried to explain to him what and how we were being governed by and if he felt strongly that there was a need to change this, I could bring this up to the corporate department responsible for this to take a look at the corporate procedure and would subsequently keep him in the loop to get his input. Though he did not want to concede, he could also find no support for his argument and had to finally give in to my suggestion. Following this major unpleasant exchange, Murray also realized that for each and every argument he threw at the drafts, those that make sense, they were gladly accepted but those which did not make sense and work, either me or the rest of the team were able to sense-exchange to him why it was so. Clearly, a great deal of dialogues had taken place with Murray in all his "charges" against our work. Ultimately, we did not just discount all his contributions and inputs, but we sieved out what was useful for the division and threw the non-useful ones out through effective sense-making and sense-giving with a difficult person.

5.3.2 Insight & Theme 2

Under the previous circumstances similar to this second narrative, i.e. being confronted by an unreasonable character, I would try to avoid any further confrontation and escalating

into conflict. I had believed that as long as it did not matter to the progress or objective of the project, I would rather choose the route of avoidance than a futile attempt to get these characters to cooperate with me. Again, this situation provided me with a chance to "test" how I could leverage on the self-organization engagement and particularly the sense-exchange approach that I learned from my study into the CAS and SC perspectives. Avoiding tactics might prove to be an easy way out for change managers, but it certainly would also avoid the chance to bring further constructive value to the situation.

Of course, one could argue that it is a risk to try to sense-make with such a character as Murray, but after learning about SC and how sense-exchange could bring about a valuable co-creation and shaping of a shared reality, my assumption is that there is always a certain level of reasonableness in people that we can look for to sense-make and sense-give with them. It was with this premise that I elected to go beyond my normal practice to avoid such difficult character and instead to engage with Murray in sense-exchanging in an attempt to evoke whatever little reasonableness that we could from him. Afterall, if we could all co-create a shared meaning incorporating him and his perspectives, I believed we might just have found an avenue to manage such difficult character in our practice.

In this narrative, although we could not "convert" a difficult person to a team player, we did nevertheless learn how to deal with them in a more constructive and effective manner. Ultimately, difficult people and difficult situations would continue to be part and parcel of all organizational phenomena. Though there are many approaches in management theory to handle such phenomena, my narratives did depict evidence that awareness and application of CAS and SC perspectives had also been quite effective in managing these. The fact that quite a few of the BC division staffs came to me after the project to provide personal feedback to me on my approach to engage Murray had been seemingly unique and to quite an extent effective did show hints of success of my approach. Particularly, they highlighted that my ability, motivation and focus to work toward a shared meaning had been very apparent throughout the engagement with Murray. Again, I would discuss more on some of these unsolicited personal feedbacks provided to me in the final chapter, under the section "Sustained Learning" to further iterate how such active sense-giving, sense-

making and sense-exchanging with the local self-organization helped me to improve my practice.

Some of the most challenging situations that change managers/leaders would encounter in their effort to managing and implementing organizational changes are managing the conflicts and tension, dealing with emotions/egos, and handling the power-relations of difficult people. Sometime these difficult people often possess sizable amount of power, either hierarchical, expert or just plain political or relational powers. Hence, dealing with such difficult people often involved managing risks too, as the resulting outcome could have undesired and unwarranted consequences. This could often give rise to difficult situations which require both sensitivity and agility in dealing with them. Prudence and logic inform us that oftentimes there would be no one fix-all solution to these difficult people/situations and dealing with them would be more of an art than science. What would be "good/right" in one situation with one person might not be so obvious with another. It is highly dependent on the "self-organized" context that we are in at the moment.

Additionally, two specific phenomena were also identified from my data in regard to my project. There had been several occasions that I had realized that it was important to know when to persist in my action and when to desist to take any action or further action. My experience informed me that this had been more of an art than science, and oftentimes we, as change leader, had to really make sense of the situation in order to take the "right" action (i.e. either to persist or desist). "Right" because it is totally dependent on the self-organized context that we were in then. Probably the key words are to be agile and flexible in dealing with such sticky situations. This is also the reason why I believe that it also makes sense to group "persist (in action)" and "desist to act" under this theme of change management challenges. I realize that these often involved challenging situations to be managed and also agility is frequently required to navigate them. Sometimes we need to be persistence in our action but sometimes we just have to give in and desist to act. There should be no single formula even for the same person in different situation. Such unpredictability could really benefit from approaching the challenging situation with a CAS and SC perspective. Sense-exchanging with the actors in the self-organized local context could provide essential input on when we should persist or desist.

The persist or desist phenomena is not peculiar only to my AR context. In fact, with or without the CAS and SC perspectives, change leaders and managers often have to contend with the decision on when to persist or desist certain actions. I believe that the key difference that I want to highlight here would be that due to the CAS and SC perspectives involved, the decision to invoke this "power" to persist or desist certain actions or directions for the group is similar to the "emerging flow of influence" that Endres and Weilber (2017) had talked about. Before the transformation of my practice through the incorporation of the CAS and SC perspectives, I would most likely use such power and influence to steer the project in the manner I think it would be best for the project but largely based on my own perspective, with minimal (if at all) inputs from the change participants. I would not have considered the need or importance of a co-created shared meaning (hence decision) for the group via such emerging flow of influence.

Nevertheless, since power could be perceived and conceptualized as a socially constructed phenomenon (Dreher, 2016), it followed that it could actually be "shared" with the group instead of just residing with the leader. As the change leader, it is up to him/her to exercise this power only for him/herself or to "share" it. From my AR experience, one such manner of sharing would be to adopt the CAS and SC lenses when exercising such power/influence. Thus, there is a need to engage deeply in the local self-organization and allowing sense-exchange to take place so that a shared meaning could be co-created in the process among the group. In this manner, the emerging flow of power (i.e. when and what to desist and persist) would align to the shared meaning, instead of being based on the will of the leader or the elite few in the group.

Reflecting on the preceding discussion, it makes sense to rephrase the emerging theme to be the "Agility in managing challenging situations in change management". Oftentimes, "difficult people" are usually the source of challenging situations, thus, I posit that adopting the CAS and SC lenses could enhance our agility in managing challenging situations as change managers/practitioners, which led me to the second theme and insight identified for my inquiry:

"Appreciation for CAS and social constructionist perspectives can improve our agility in managing challenging situations when managing a change effort/project."

5.4 Narrative, Insights & Theme 3

This final narrative, which I would be presenting to correspond to the third theme of effecting better leadership through building trust among and with the participants and stakeholders, involved a situation whereby there were significant disconnected working relations due to the lack of trust and teamwork among the staffs within the division. It would also, hopefully, demonstrate how I, as a change leader, had managed to work through the local self-organization to achieve alliances and develop trust with the participants.

5.4.1 Narrative 3

This narrative was an extract from my workshops with another division handling community relations and corporate social responsibilities (CSR). When the project started to align the processes, the division head position was still vacant. Accordingly, the incumbent to take up this division head position needed to be approved by the CEO as s/he would be handling a significant CSR budget and also would likely to be the face of all CSR activities. Undisclosed to the division staffs, my EVP had separately informed me that the CEO's idea was for this head position to be filled by a male national employee. There were four senior staff positions reporting to this head, and one of them heading a team of six staffs taking care of all community relations tasks, while the other three (titled CSR Officers) were supposed to take care of all CSR activities. When I started the project workshop with the division, one of the CSR officers, Nancy, was being nominated to act as the head while still performing her normal duty. Problems began to surface even from the very beginning of the first workshop.

<u>A headless snake or a hydra?</u>

I reached the workshop venue on time but after a good thirty minutes from the agreed start time, not one of the invitees was there in this first workshop. It turned out that Nancy had called for a division briefing and it just went on and on despite another senior staff (named Sam) had reminded her of the workshop. Then when all the staffs from the division come to the workshop meeting room, Nancy herself was absent. Sam then explained that she had

went to see the manager to brief him on the division meeting. I was totally flabbergasted then and was wondering what the problem with Nancy was. I did not pursue the matter, but Sam, who took the lead since Nancy was not around, kept apologizing to me. I was focused to get the workshop started so that I could do what I was assigned to instead of dwelling on the subject. However, from this point, it was clear in my mind that I might be facing a great challenge in dealing with this division. I was reflecting on this after the first workshop and felt that it could be due to the lack of an official leader that make the team quite scattered as evidenced in the first workshop.

Furthermore, even from the first workshop, I realized that one individual by the name of William was exerting an unusual amount of power over the rest of the division although he was just an admin staff. During the entire first workshop (and subsequent ones), William had shown that he was as if the actual head himself and taking over the workshop and even instructing all the staffs more senior than him (organization hierarchy wise). The only one whom he was seen to be more respectful was Sam himself and the two of them seemed to be working quite closely. I had later found out that it was actually Sam who also contributed significantly in terms of allowing William to acquire such significant amount of informal power over the team.

Sam had 6 staffs under him, of which three were senior staffs and three admin staffs. However, I later realized that most (if not all) of the community relations tasks were only done by William while the rest of the five staffs were essentially redundant. Initially I was thinking this could be due to the fact that these five staffs were national employees and there was often this assumption that national employees were evading the real work and would depend fully on expatriate employees to do all the work. Nevertheless, as I would explain later that this was indeed not the situation.

Although William was extremely helpful in providing all the necessary technical information about the processes, it was as if he was giving the idea that he was the only one who was required and doing everything. Additionally, William was also extremely rude to me and accusing me that I was extremely arrogant. William once commented “There is no need to be sarcastic, if you are unhappy with me, just say so, I didn't know that CEO office staffs are

so arrogant!". Perhaps I had been a little sarcastic, but I sure did not expect to have such a heavy tone reciprocate to me, especially to an outsider (considering that I was not in the same department and that we just got to know each other).

The first workshop did not go on well in the sense of how I had interacted with the team as I was probably only talking to Sam and William while the rest of the staffs were just swiping and typing away on their smartphones. Thankfully, I still gathered all the key information about the processes and while I was trying to close up the first workshop, Nancy who was missing all the while came into the meeting room to join the workshop. The time that Nancy spent in the workshop was only a few minutes but her interaction with the team was not pleasant. She was using a very authoritative approach to communicate with her team and she was just acting like she was the actual head or even department manager. I suspected that perhaps that was what she thought would be the right way to manage people. Although there were no clear conflicts around, I could sense that there was also a lack of cohesion with the team. Almost every seemed disinterested and not wanting to relate to each other, especially for the five national staffs under Sam.

Trust can only be earned…

I proceeded to conduct separate meeting with Sam (and William – because he happened to be with Sam when I was supposed to meet up with him) and Nancy (separately) to try to find out more about the leadership issue with the division and if possible, try to sense-exchange with them to try to help in the situation if possible. As were with many of my "out of the workshop" meetings with the project participants, these meetings were initiated primarily by me as part of the "change" to my practice in putting on the CAS and SC lens. My meeting with Sam, in which William also joined as he was there when I went to him, was very informative and in fact it had even given me a chance to try to help in the situation. It was through this meeting, I realized that William was actually feeling very insecure about his job, which was making him try to hog all the work so as to ensure that he would be indispensable. Though this was against the principle laid down by my EVP, Sam seemed to condone his practice. In fact, the narrative of Sam and William was that the other five national staffs under Sam's team were totally not interested in doing the work. Sam highlighted that they even had problem with time keeping on a daily basis. It was then

confirmed that all the work under his team had been performed by both William and he only.

I did try to question them that it might be that the other five staffs were unsure of what was required to be done and to verify with Sam if any training were given to these five staffs. However, Sam and William insisted that the issue of training or job responsibility were not the issue, and that they were just plain lazy and not interested. William was extremely insistence on this, and it seemed to me then that Sam was just going along with the same mentality since he was extremely dependent on William to ensure that his area of responsibilities was well taken care of. This also explained why William had accumulated significant amount of power over Sam and in fact almost the entire division. I had observed the 5 national staffs under Sam during the workshop and I was not very convinced that they were the sort who would openly reject to work, but I did consider the fact that I might have sensed this wrongly. Sensing that Sam trusted William a lot and my suggestion that the five staffs were just uninformed or untrained did not make any sense for Sam, I decided to try to attempt to build more trust between Sam and myself (hopefully by exchanging more senses with him).

In the meeting, I was also informed that there had been some conflict in terms of how state and VIP visits were not handled properly by Sam's team. Due to the situation that William and Sam were the only ones working for all community location visits, there were situations when the workload on them were too overwhelming. Sam and William were suggesting that state and VIP visit should be handled by the EP division since they are also responsible for all protocol arrangement. This made sense to me as for all state and VIP level visitors, it was mandated to have protocol arrangement and since Sam's teams was not trained in protocol, it was indeed necessary to have EP division staffs involved. However, I was not convinced that these two types of visits could be fully passed over to EP division since the visit to the locations could only be arranged and conducted by Sam's staff due to security concerns at the location. I tried to make sense to Sam and William that it was neither workable to get his staffs trained in protocol nor to get EP division staffs take on additional responsibilities involving preparing the security arrangement at the operational locations.

William was adamant that EP division should take up the entire state and VIP visits as he and Sam are the only productive resources in their team. I reiterated that this would not be feasible since on establishment, they have a total of seven staffs working for their functions. It would be more plausible to work on getting the other five staffs to contribute more. Without promising them any outcome, I volunteered to discuss this subject with EP division to try to broker a deal with them. However, William was in the view that it would be better to just talk to the manager and get him to issue instruction to EP division to handle the state and VIP visits. I tried to talk sense into Sam and William that knowing how the EP division head (Mary) and her team works, it would be best for me to try to sense-exchange the proposal with Mary directly first. Sam agreed that they should let me try first at least.

I managed to convince Mary that due to the involvement of high-level dignitaries and VIP for both state and VIP visits, it was imperative for them to provide the protocol arrangement and hence they should be actively involved. However, they also realized that they would not have resources and expertise to conduct the entire state and VIP visits. In the end we agreed that the most optimal approach would be for them to manage the state and VIP guests up to the location (including taking care of the transport) and upon reaching there to hand over the guests to Sam's team to conduct the visit. Once the visit had been concluded, the guest would be handed over to the protocol team under Mary to bring the guests to the next destination. Initially William was still unable to accept this saying that this would remove only 20% of the work load off his side but I applied sense-exchanging (once again) and showed them that though the workload may only be 20-30%, the transfer of responsibility to the EP division was much more significant. Sam quickly saw this key advantage and agreed with me, who in turn supported me to sense-give and sense-make to William. From this point on, it was evident then that Sam had gained a lot more trust in me.

I tried further to help the division by getting managerial approval to conduct a training workshop for all of Sam's team, especially for the five national employees, to familiarize them with their work. When I announced this to Sam and the rest, he was surprised and felt that I should have spoken to him first. Indeed, I should have discussed with Sam on the plan before going to the department manager and in this instance, Sam could have interpreted that I was overstepping the situation. Nevertheless, I took the risk this time because firstly if

I were to discuss with Sam first, and knowing the situation he was having with William and the other five staffs, the chances of getting Sam to agree to go with it would be extremely low. If I was to still proceed to talk to the manager after getting a "no" from Sam (and possibly William too), I would not be able to give this training plan at least a try. Secondly, I figured that there would be nothing to lose for Sam, the division and the project when we proceed with this training plan, even if in the end it proved that the five other staffs under Sam were really not interested to work at all. I tried to sense-make the rationale to him and he trusted me that I was doing it for the best of the division and decided to give it a go, especially after the experience that he had with me in ironing out the collaboration of State and VIP visits with Mary's team.

However, when William got to know of this training arrangement, he was extremely upset, probably because he knew that this would make him less indispensable if it proven to be successful. This was just purely my own speculation at this point since the experiences and encounters with William seemed to point toward this. However, Sam tried to convince him to trust me and give it a go, but without much success. Nevertheless, Sam still agreed to support my idea, especially when it had also been endorsed by the manager. Ultimately, we conducted the training workshop for the five national employees under Sam and in fact, Sam himself volunteered to conduct the training and also prepared all the necessary materials.

The training went on very well and all the five of them were very glad that this happened. The relationships between Sam and them took a big turn since the training. In the end, 5 of them were able to carry out their job unexpectedly well, as opposed to what William had claimed. Furthermore, Sam's team had become a lot more cohesive and the trust, alliance and camaraderie among his team had improved tremendously since. I did believe that since this development, Sam had come to realization that perhaps trust (placed on William) had been abused, although we never talked about it. As for William, his seemingly hostile attitude toward me had never reduced a single bit since then, although I did not want to speculate if it had actually increased.

An unlikely alliance

On the occasion of meeting with Nancy, prior experience with her had not been pleasant and she was obviously showing distrust toward me in the beginning. However, after two private meetings with her to both gather information and direction for the workshop and also to address her concerns on her role as acting head, she seemed to also feel more at ease with me. From addressing me as “Mr. X”, I noticed that she not only dropped the “Mr.” but also begun to address me with my first name, when she often addressed her manager as “Mr. X” still. I speculated that it could be largely due to my adaptive approach to help her to sense-make the situation she was handling as she later voluntarily approached me a few months after the project ended to seek sincere advice from me on how to be a better leader and manager.

She called me one day after more than six months after the change management project had concluded to ask if I could mentor her for a period of 3-6 months in terms of management practice. I was totally surprised that such a phenomenon occurred. Nancy is a local national employee and it would not be usual for a lady (especially unmarried and she is not married) to approach a man privately to seek advice and mentorship. Furthermore, it was also uncommon because there was always a pride in the local culture that they should not show that they were inferior in any way. By requesting me to be her mentor would akin to admit that I possessed the knowledge, experience and capability to help her. I agreed to her request and we had a once a week session to discuss her work and how she could actually improve her management approach.

Although she was initially putting up a very tough and authoritative front during the project timeframe, I supposed she found that my discussion with her actually made a lot sense and subsequently lowered her guard toward me. Up to date, she was still often coming to me to seek assistance in trying to solve many of her work-related problems and issue. She often referred to me as her “teacher” in management and strategy. I could not tell exactly how and when she had turned to trust me and found me to be a supportive alliance, I chose to believe that it was through a lot of our sense-exchanges that we eventually managed to co-create shared meaning that helped us to build this trust and alliance. This development coming off from my AR informed me that the approach that I had adopted in the project did at least have a positive impact on some of the participating parties. I would be discussing

more in the next chapter on my sustained learning on a few other positive outcomes that in a way provided support for my adopted approach in this AR project.

5.4.2 Insight & Theme 3

Under previous similar circumstances (i.e. based on my pre-CAS and SC practice), I would have simply mind my own business by focusing only on the project objective and disregarding whatever turbulence or in-fighting that was ongoing in the under current, even when I had detected them and felt that these would be detriment to the productivity and effectiveness of Sam and Nancy's division. After all, I was tasked to align the processes and not to solve organizational conflicts by my EVP. Nevertheless, the CAS and SC lens demanded me to consider that everything that was going on, whether they seemed relevant or not at the moment, could or would impact one another. Furthermore, one key premise of a successful change would be for the group to co-engender a shared meaning. It is often that when the meaning, reality and power were shared, the change would be more genuine and permanent.

Once again, from the narrative of how I had taken advantage of engaging in the local self-organization with Sam, William and Nancy, I managed to turn what started as contentious and defensive relationships into trusting and collaborative alliances. Perhaps one argument against my observation in this narrative could have been that such development/interaction would also often be exhibited intuitively. However, the key to this narrative was that even though I could just proceed with the project for Sam and Nancy's division without the need to extend my interaction with them, I did so as part of my first-person inquiry as I put on the CAS and SC lenses for my AR project. If I had left the situation as it was, without the extra further interactions or interventions purposely conducted with Sam, William and Nancy, I could still complete my project objective, which had been to align the processes in the division. Incidentally, William and Sam had already provided me with very sufficient information to achieve this, but I took advantage of the opportunity to participate more deeply in the local self-organization with the key actors to see if I could achieve a more meaningful outcome, and true enough, deeper issues were unearthed and ultimately resolved with trust and alliances engendered.

I have also observed that, as embedded within this same narrative, an increased sensitivity toward alternate voices/mindsets and attempting to address them could provide a significant impetus toward building trust and alliances with the local actors, in reference to both William and Nancy. Simply, when the incumbents' voices are heard, or their mindsets appreciated by others, it would tend to gain their trust and even loyalty. Of course, there are still cultural and power-relation factors to consider but in general when they feel that someone iss finally interested to learn, hear, appreciate and even consider their perspectives, especially if these have been consistently silenced, they would tend to lower their defenses and allow trust and relationship to develop. I posit that once a manager/leader is able to engage effectively with the local self-organization through the lenses of CAS and SC, s/he would be able to more effectively and efficiently develop and build trust and alliance among the incumbents.

Again, this might be seen as an outcome, but the potential of the gained trust and stronger alliance could positively feed forward to allow for deeper self-organization engagement to better sense-exchange, as well as to be able to hear more of the alternate voices/mindsets. All these could prove to be a significant value-add to all organizational manager/leader, especially when it is critical for the team/group to work towards an objective. However, the caveat would be that for a manager/leader to genuinely believe in and engage with the CAS and SC perspectives, the "risk" would be that s/he has to expect the unexpected and unpredictable. Nevertheless, contrary to those who do not subscribe to the vantage points that CAS and SC could provide, instead of deviating from the planned objective of the project, I would argue that whatever objectives that are subsequently achieved could actually be more relevant, actionable and even valuable than the initially planned ones.

Although the element of addressing alternate voice and mindset had emerged briefly in this third narrative and insight, I believe that the primary theme that had elucidated here was more of that on building trust and alliances via informal means and even non-verbal engagement. It is not that the normal formal channels would not allow the development of trust and alliance, but that it could be a more effective approach. Moreover, referring back to the narrative, the insight that CAS and SC perspectives could empower change management practitioner with the competency to build and develop trust and alliance

through an active engagement in the self-organization with sense-making, sense-giving, informal interaction and non-verbal means are mostly evident. This has also been one trait that surfaced repeatedly throughout my fieldwork within the context of adopting a CAS and SC lens for effective change management.

The role of developing and building trust and alliances should be quite an intuitive one for managers and leaders whether it would be just a daily routine managerial job or for a change manager/leader. Furthermore, the process of developing and building trust and alliance should not just refer to the trust the participants/members have toward the leader, but it should also be vice versa and among the team. Hence, I would argue then that this theme of building trust and alliance should also involve a leadership aspect. If we referred back to my second cycle categories, there is one category, i.e. "Leadership", that seems to be a standalone theme initially. However, as I pondered on the need for strong and leaderful leadership to build trust and alliances so that there could be more authentic change and harmony, I believe that with this third narrative and insights, it would be plausible to converge this "leadership" category with the category of "trust" to form a singular theme.

Leaderful type of leadership was a concept pioneered by Raelin (2003), which is distinct from the normal charismatic/elitist type of leadership that organizations are used to. It involved everyone in the team for such leaderful practice, and the four key components of collective, concurrent, collaborative and compassionate leadership to be realized. Such leaderful phenomena could both engender trust and at the same time an outcome due to trust among the actors. Henceforth, a kind of leaderful theme could emerge from my AR data in the form of "better *leadership* (leaderful) *through building trust*" to reflect an important trait of change leadership and management practice within the CAS and SC space.

Thus, allowing the third insights to emerge: ***"Appreciation for CAS and SC perspectives can empower organizational managers/leaders with the leadership (leaderful) competence to build trust and alliance with and among their co-workers and subordinates, which will in turn allow for a more effective engagement with the local self-organizations."***

5.5 Further Insights: Sense-making and Sense-giving – The Final Theme

Table 5-1 summarized the three general insights provided by the three narratives extracted from my AR project. It must be reiterated that these three narratives were not the only notable ones in my fieldwork, and there are also other narratives that could be expounded in similar manners. Nonetheless I have elected to share these three narratives because I believe that the respective themes that are embedded in them are intriguing and sufficiently rich and relevant to address my research objective, which has been essentially "how different would my change management practice look like if I had put on a CAS and SC perspectives in carrying out my practice as a change manager". The three narratives, its insights and the themes identified had in one way or another provided relevant findings that had addressed my research objective, that is through the adoption of CAS and SC perspectives, my change project had brought about:

a. Enabling higher sensitivity toward alternate, weakened and/or silenced voices and/or mindset.
b. Enhancing greater agility toward dealing and managing difficult people and situations.
c. Empowering competence to build and develop trust and alliance among co-organization actors; this would be a significant asset required for a holistic leadership skillset

Table 5-1 Insights and Themes Derived from Narratives

Narrative	***Insights derived from Narratives***	***Themes***
1	*Appreciation for CAS and social constructionist perspectives can increase our sensitivity toward alternate, weakened or even silenced voices or even mindsets, hence allowing us to address them.*	Addressing and managing silenced and/or weakened voices and/or mindsets (including addressing the underlying assumptions and biases)
2	*Appreciation for CAS and social constructionist perspectives can improve our agility in managing challenging situations when managing a change effort/project.*	Managing challenging situation in change management (including people, conflicts, power-relations, ego, emotions, etc.)
3	*Appreciation for CAS and social constructionist perspectives can empower organizational managers/leaders with the competence to build trust and alliance with and among their co-workers and*	Better Leadership (leaderful) through building Trust

	subordinates, which will in turn allow for a more effective engagement with the local self-organizations.	

Even though narratives and stories could be compelling tools to allow us to present as evidence to support our argument and theories, they are after all just extracts or segments of our entire research data. I have presented the narratives with the purpose to provide as a more meaningful and richer analytical tool in conjunction with the outcome of my three cycles of coding process, and with the objective of substantiating the identified themes in the third cycle coding, as well as to stimulate deeper analyses and reflection on the impact of adopting CAS and SC perspectives into my change management practice. The above three narratives and its corresponding insights provided its respective themes of interest in Table 5-1.

I am positing that the three themes identified could be more of an "outcome" trait that had emerged from my CAS and SC "infused" change management practice. They are essentially what had happened due to my purposeful and choiceful use of CAS and SC perspectives within my inquiry. It would be essential to also note that while the way the insights and themes were phrased had been intended to highlight the enhancement and improvement of the particular traits observed, it must not be interpreted they could only be observed if one practice with a CAS and SC perspective.

If the three themes as discussed about were effectively the outcome observed in my AR data, the next logical question should then be "what could be the driver for these outcome themes/traits so to speak?". If we were to revisit the three narratives and insights above, we could associate many of the "actions" taken were in some forms of iterations of sense-making and sense-giving, and adaptive response to the self-organized context. The experience from my first-person AR and data informed me that a lot of such iterations were leveraged upon in order to successfully and effectively participate and engage in the numerous self-organizations (which were also evidenced in the codes, categories, themes and narratives), in which oftentimes were the better (or even only) forums to co-engender shared meanings pertaining to a particular organizational phenomenon. Although sense-

making and sense-giving are essentially two different concepts, they are highly interlinked or even intertwined.

As discussed in the final section of literature review chapter, if we look at the processes of sense-making and sense-giving as iteration of each other, we would likely be experiencing what would most aptly term as sense-exchanging, i.e. the exchange of meanings and senses via the iterated cycles of sense-making and sense-giving for the purpose of co-engendering a common, shared meaning of the shared reality and context. Sense-making and sense-giving have been accepted as key concepts within the perspectives of CAS and SC (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Gioia and Thomas, 1996; Weick, 1993, 1995; Weick et al, 2005), albeit they are often discussed and looked upon individually. From the readings of the literature, I believe that this could have been more of a terminology issue than a conceptual one, whereby sense-making has been widely used as the iterated processes of both sense-making and sense-giving (Weick et al, 2005). On the other hand, Gioia and Thomas (1996) did specifically differentiated both processes as one would be for self (sense-making) and sense-giving would be for others. The concept of sense-exchanging is not so much of a new one but more for the purpose of establishing better clarity on the processes involved when we, as change leader or manager, try to enact on the self-organization through complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2011).

I believe that sense-exchanging would be a richer and clearer term to explain what actually is happening when practitioners enact with a CAS and SC perspective, as observed from my AR data. In other words, sense-exchanging could be a key and common trait one would observe when engaging in complex responsive processes (i.e. within a CAS and social constructionist engagement). Sense-exchanging would also be a primary trait because my data had identified that it was the most recurring one as it should be discussed in later section in the chapter. Furthermore, the details in all the three narratives also exhibited evidences that I had depended a lot on sense-exchanging (as action) when I put on the CAS and SC lens to manage my change project.

Going back to the very beginning of this chapter where I presented the four themes emerging from my coding process, the very first theme of “self-organization involving

adaptive response processes, sense-making and sense-giving to allow for emergence and co-creation of shared meaning" had been deferred for a later discussion, though this theme, as my data suggested, seemed to be the most prominent and prevalent theme across my entire AR inquiry. As already highlight in the preceding paragraph and the coding process/outcome in chapter 4, I believe that this theme has been the driver or action theme of my inquiry. Out of the ten second cycle categories identified, six categories were assembled to construct this theme, of which these six categories were constituting the majority of the 222 first cycle codes. Although these six categories were termed quite differently, and hence could carry very different meaning, they were actually very closely related to each other if we were to relate them back to the literatures and concepts explored within the CAS and SC space.

Essentially, engaging in the local self-organization would require one often to do through adaptive response (or what Stacey (2011) termed as complex responsive processes), as by definition participating in self-organization is largely a complex adaptive activity. Referring back to my field work, data and coding outcome, it was obvious that some of the most prevalent of such adaptive responses that I had brought with me to the self-organization engagement had been the iterative processes of sense-making and sense-giving (hence sense-exchanging). Furthermore, the outcome of such self-organization engagement had brought significant level of emergence and/or co-creation of shared meanings. This was clearly evident in all the three narratives presented earlier, and there were also several occasions where I intendedly used the term "sense-exchanging" to highlight the iterated cycles of sense-making and sense-giving too.

It seems that right at the heart of CAS and SC perspectives, there exhibits this ability of change practitioner to engage through the self-organization of the change participants to effectively co-create an actionable and shared reality and meaning to bring about an authentic change. My data seemed to suggest that to do so, one very prominent "tool" would have been sense-making and sense-giving in my adaptive responses toward the self-organization of the participants in the various groups of workshops that I had conducted, and once again I would like to reiterate that this was significantly embedded within all the three narratives. Sense-making and sense-giving allowed me not only to participate

effectively in the self-organization but more so in enabling me to co-create shared meanings of the context with the participants. Furthermore, I discovered that such adaptive responses through sense-making and sense-giving allow me to also steer the co-creation process more effectively. Of course, other effects such as addressing silenced/weak voices, changing mindset, dealing with difficult people, managing conflicts etc. are also enhanced through these adaptive responses as my narratives also revealed.

The observed data seemed to further indicate that the active engagement through adaptive responses in the form of iterations of sense-making and sense-giving with the objective toward creating a shared meaning or narrative provides the impetus to bring about improved outcome of challenging situations faced by change manager (i.e. conflicts, tensions, power-relations, risks, egoism, emotions etc.), greater awareness of silenced/weak voices and alternate mindset and allowing these to surface and be considered as part of the co-creation process, and finally more effective leadership through developing and building trust and alliances. With all these in mind and reconciling back to the concept of "sense-exchanging" discussed both in the literature review chapter and earlier in this section, it would make sense that the theme that these six major second cycle categories could actually be having a focus on the term "*Sense-exchange".* After all, the adaptive responses are mostly iterative and often involving sense-making and sense-giving in several iterations.

The concept of "Sense-exchange" would thus constitute iterations of sense-making and sense-giving involving one having to sense-make the situation or context and in turn, as required, sense-give back as part of the local interaction in self-organization. However, this should not stop here, as most often than not, the sense-giving should also spark off a further wave of sense-making to the individual or team who had been sense-given to. Most of the time, at the local self-organized level, many would revert with a sense-give back to the one who made the initial "sense-giving" with a modified version of the meaning or narrative with their viewpoint, meaning and interpretation incorporated. This process witnessed was already a key manifestation of co-creation of shared meaning. As the process got iterated, it should go on with addition of information, discourses etc. and modification of the shared meaning until it settled down in to a group accepted shared meaning. Furthermore, such iterations of *sense-exchanging* themselves could actually be adaptive

responses to the evolving context of the self-organizing CAS during the change project. Hence, I posit that the final theme could be instead reworded to be "Active engagement of self-organization through *sense-exchanging* could bring about a more positive co-creation of shared meanings and emergence".

5.6 The Fourth Insights & Theme

I have discovered throughout my data that other than seeking for "entry points" to the self-organizations that were observed throughout the various groups of the project participants (which I would like to call as actors), other key "actions" to really enact on these self-organization often revolved around sense-making and sense-giving among the actors and myself, as evident in both my codes and the preceding three narratives presented. Ultimately, organizational actions were derived from the meanings that organizational actors are endowed with from the various organizational context (e.g. procedures/policies/processes), the management, and how they (as a group) had made sense of these meanings to give rise to a shared meaning, which would in turn drive their actions. Therefore, it would be critical that if we are able to steer the processes to create these shared meanings, we are in essence be able to "manage" organization action (hence outcomes).

Although these might imply that the "tampering" of such shared-meaning co-creation could be manipulative and even autocratic, this would not be the case within the context of CAS and social constructionism. Within such context, a local group would self-organize often via complex responsive processes (Rays, 1992; Reynolds, 1987; Stacey, 2011) and such interactions often follow a "local rules or schema", which is also arguably a product of the self-organization. Hence, such dynamism occurring during self-organization clearly makes it such that in order to effectively and authentically engage oneself in it, one has to acknowledge that it would be impossible to have full control over what would happen and to just steer the self-organization as one wishes. It would only be possible to do so if one acknowledges that meanings are co-created and not imposed upon. This means everyone might enter the self-organization with a certain mindset or meaning but in the end, the

emerging co-engendered shared meanings could be very different (or might not). In fact, what I had found from my inquiry had been that of a deep exchange of ideologies and meanings making often took place when I had engaged with the actors and their self-organization via an exchange of senses and meanings through iterations of sense-making and sense-giving, i.e. sense-exchanging. Indeed, such deep exchange of senses and meanings with the organizational actors through sense-exchanging could even have the opportunities to allow managers to be liberated from managerialism and pro-change biases, which I would like to reiterate these biases' negative impact on our current organizational realities, where individuals are mostly more knowledgeable and educated now.

Since sense-exchanging had been identified from my data as a key theme, and one that is distinct from the other three "outcome" themes exhibited in the narratives, I believe a fourth insight could be postulated to account for the action that had driven these outcome themes. This fourth insight is not only derived from the combined experience of the three narratives presented, but in fact upon reflecting further, I would even advocate that it is a (if not the) primary key driver for the entire learning experience of my first-person AR inquiry. Unlike the first three insights and theme, which conveyed the meanings and ideas of what had happened during the AR process due to the adoption of CAS and SC perspectives, the fourth insight and theme of sense-exchanging helped me to understand how I had actually incorporated the CAS and SC perspectives into action during the course of my AR change project. This had been important or even critical to my AR because it helped me to relate to the codes/categories/themes derived from my data as well as allowed me to become aware of how I had actually incorporated the CAS and SC lenses in my change project, or even into my professional practice and my personal life (i.e. in a sense a kind of operationalization of CAS and SC). Hence, theme four should be as follows:

"Sense-Exchanging (iterations of Sense-making and Sense-giving) is the primary "action" trait, which is required to create shared meanings among the organization actors, in particular when we approach our change project/effort or other organizational projects/tasks through a CAS and social constructionist lens; furthermore, sense-exchanging, when executed effectively, could bring about other positive "outcome" traits

of enhanced agility in managing challenging situations, improved sensitivity toward alternate voices/mindset and better leadership through building trust and alliances."

Table 5-2 shows a summary of all the four themes derived from my AR field work and data. In essence, these also summarized the findings of my AR and for this thesis. With these four themes emerging from my findings, I also find it plausible (and possibly ambitious too) to propose a "sense-exchange" practice for those of us who would give CAS and SC perspectives a more serious attention in our daily life and management practice.

Table 5-2: Four Final Themes Derived From AR Inquiry Field Work & Data

Final Themes
1. Appreciation for CAS and social constructionist perspectives can empower organizational managers/leaders with the leadership (leaderful) competence to build trust and alliance with and among their co-workers and subordinates, which will in turn allow for a more effective engagement with the local self-organizations.
2. Appreciation for CAS and social constructionist perspectives can improve our agility in managing challenging situations when managing a change effort/project.
3. Appreciation for CAS and social constructionist perspectives can increase our sensitivity toward alternate, weakened or even silenced voices or even mindsets, hence allowing us to address them.
4. Sense-Exchanging (iterations of Sense-making and Sense-giving) is the primary "action" trait, which is required to create shared meanings among the organization actors, in particular when we approach our change project/effort or other organizational projects/tasks through a CAS and social constructionist lens; furthermore, sense-exchanging, when executed effectively, could bring about other positive "outcome" traits of enhanced agility in managing challenging situations, improved sensitivity toward alternate voices/mindset and better leadership through building trust and alliances.

5.7 A Sense-Exchanging Practice for CAS and Social Constructionism?

As I approached my change project with an active adoption of CAS and social constructionist lenses, sense-exchanging had been identified as a key action trait that had been exercised throughout the project. This had driven the other observed traits of improved agility in managing challenging situations, sensitivity toward addressing alternate/weakened/silenced voices/mindset, and leadership through building trust and alliances. Sense-exchanging is not an entirely new concept but one that involves iterations of sense-receiving, sense-making and sense-giving. In this case, sense or meanings are not just made or given as in strict definition of what sense-making and sense-giving were about. Rather, sense or meanings

are exchanged with the objective to co-create a shared meaning or narrative that would be legitimate and actionable within the self-organized context. The codes, categories and themes from my data, and narratives have made a rather convincing argument that a practice, which took CAS and SC perspective seriously, could and should exhibit significant display of sense-exchanging. This could then in turn bring about positive experiences for both the change practitioners and its participants, and most important enhance the chance of a successful change effort. Nonetheless, it must again be noted that the sense-exchange practice advocated, though might be conceivable through my data and fieldwork, should be by no means generalizable in any empirical sense.

As the original purpose of my AR was to conduct a thorough investigation on how my practice would be affected (i.e. how different would it look) if I were to conduct it through a CAS and SC perspective, I hope that, by working through the coding and analysis of my data and telling authentic and impactful narratives of my fieldwork experiences, a significant difference had been observed. At least the outcomes of "allowing silenced/weakened/alternative voice/mindset", "better agility in managing challenging situation" and "more effective leadership through building trust and alliance" are all powerful and positive take-aways from my AR project. Of course, last but not least, all these, as the data had suggested, are significantly accounted for by the conscious exercise of CAS and SC perspectives in the form of sense-exchanging practice. I hope that more work could be done to explore this area deeper and further in future researches.

Although my inquiry approach and data would not be able to provide an empirical support for this sense-exchanged practice I had observed and experienced, I believed the presented data in the form of codes, narratives and insights provide clear support of it from my first-hand experience and its impact on my practice. Furthermore, this thesis had not set out to theorize any change model through the lenses of CAS and SC, so I would like to conclude that this is more of a result of what my learnings and experience had accumulated through this first-person inquiry AR process. I have hoped and believed that this would provide further insights to management practitioners on the traits and impact of a change project engaging with CAS and SC perspectives. If I have to account for my research motive as discussed in the introduction chapter, I would believe the answer would be that my practice

has been significantly impacted (in a very positive manner) through this experience and the CAS and SC perspectives have even become an integral part of me, not just in and for my professional practice but also in life in general.

Lastly, I believe that there remained significant potentials and values in furthering the investigation of the concept of “sense-exchanging” as a CAS and SC concept, particularly as an “action” concept, and could even be subsequently popularized for practical application if it does indeed proved to be a significant and effective manner to which change and organizations could be better managed. The next and last chapter of this thesis would be dedicated to my concluding reflection and to further illustrate the major difference that this AR change project experience had been from my previous change management initiatives, I would also share some sustained learning notes in the final chapter.

Chapter 6: Concluding Reflections

6.1 Introduction

Much had been achieved and learned through the course of my first-person AR. Other than a very rich change management project experience, this first-person inquiry journey had indeed left significant impact on both my professional practice and personal life. I would be dedicating this final concluding chapter to three key areas. Firstly, I would like to recapitulate on the sense-exchanged based practice, which I had developed and enacted upon in this change management AR project, through the adoption of CAS and SC perspectives. Additionally, I had hoped that this experience could provide a beneficial and valuable reference for other practitioners who had been facing less than successful change management experiences, i.e. I hope that the sense-exchanged practice that I would be reiterating in the following section would further elaborate some potential contribution to other managers or practitioners who would be interested to adopt the CAS and SC perspectives in their practice.

Secondly, I wish to take the opportunity to highlight the significant impact of becoming a "convert" of action research, and in particular a first-person inquiry type of action research. Not only had I been convinced that such first-person AR could be a 100% legitimate research method that could be on par with the most rigorous and scientific methods, I believed that the richer data that it generated could provide much more in-depth and comprehensive perspective of the research context and thus the research findings.

As my AR was a first-person inquiry on my own practice and due to the lack of approval from my organization's top management to sanction the collection of data from my colleagues, I was not able to provide any second- or third-party perspectives of my AR work, i.e. I would not be able to validate the observations, data and findings of my AR. Hence, the third focus of my concluding reflections of my AR thesis would be a brief presentation on some of the unsolicited feedback and follow-up actions from a few of my change management project participants, which I had termed as sustained learning, to highlight the impact of my "renewed" practice using the CAS and SC lenses on those who had participated in my project.

6.2 A Sense-Exchanged Based Practice

This following reflection on my lived experience of my "renewed" practice that had actively incorporated suitable CAS and SC perspectives was both to reiterate on how we, as practitioners, could put these perspectives into our practice and to highlight whatever potential contribution that my AR experience could bring to any interested third persons. I was not about to claim that my experience would be relevant and applicable to every manager out there who were facing issues with achieving successful change, but I do believe that it would offer a compelling alternative perspective in this area for them. In essence, I do not really think this "sense-exchanged practice" contribution toward change management (or management in general) from my AR is not really so much of a model or a framework. I tend to perceive this as more of a working philosophy that is hoped to inspire managers and leaders to espouse a more relational, adaptively and responsive practice approach that recognize the relevance of CAS and SC within our organizations.

The intriguing concepts of complex adaptive system and social constructionism, and its accompanying concepts of sense-making and sense-giving (and sense-exchanging) had informed me that if change practitioners could tap the potential of enacting change from within by being a key interactive element of the local self-organization of the participants and organization context, it is highly possible that a more entrenched and authentic change impact could be realized. I realized that if one could just pay more attention to the interactions of the participants and the nuances of certain level of subtle power-relations embedded within the organization context, one could quite easily identify how self-organizations at various levels were taking pace. Furthermore, with some deliberate enactment on these self-organizations, I discovered that there would be opportunities to potentially influence and steer how these self-organizations take place to certain extent. Nevertheless, care must also be taken that such "steering" (If any) should be conducted in the most ethical, democratic and fair manner possible. Every voice, every idea, every perspective should be respected and given the due attention to if one does aspire to have a genuine sense-exchange to take place. I would propose that the iterated practice of sense-making and sense-giving, i.e. sense-exchanging could be a good initial starting point to

incorporate into our practice as enactment on the self-organizations within our localized context.

In fact, from this first-person AR and reflecting back to the day-to-day organizational activities in my practice, I realized that such self-organizations seemed to be inherent to all organizational activities, not just pertaining to change management projects. They are almost always working in the background or as the under-current beneath the organization's surface or context (or what we would normally define as the observed organizational reality), whether we as organizational managers or leaders acknowledge it or not. However, if we chose to perceive the organization and its actors through a CAS and SC lens, then we could not ignore such self-organizations that were perpetually taking place under this observed surface of our organizational reality. A key basic assumed outcome of the CAS and SC perspective would then be that shared meanings/senses were being co-generated or co-evolved within the organization and among its actors. Such co-created shared meanings were vital if we were to deliver a more impactful organizational outcome, which in change management term, a more authentic and lasting change.

As discussed briefly in my literature review chapter, oftentimes we paid attention mainly to the change program or effort (i.e. episodic change) while we casually moved along with the daily continuous change. I would posit that such CAS and SC perspectives could be embedded in both types of changes. Although it might seem that when I discussed how incorporating the CAS and SC lenses in change management project could engender shared meaning and ownership of change, I believed too that incorporating the CAS and SC perspectives say through the application of sense-exchanging should not be the prerogative of just change management project. Since we undergo continuous change on a daily basis in organization hence, it would not be too far-fetched to posit further that the CAS and SC perspectives could be equally beneficial to general day-to-day management activities too.

Indeed, my inquiry and data had informed me that perhaps the embrace of what I termed as sense-exchange could be one very practical and appropriate manner to engage these self-organizations, both when engaging in a specific change program or on our normal routine daily practice. Further to this, it must also be noted that the so-called authentic

change does not necessary mean one that the management had envisioned it to be, but one that would surely be garnering sufficient buy-ins from most of the stakeholders and participants involved. In another word, it would be an outcome that had been co-engendered by and amongst the change leader and the change participants. Essentially, when a discourse or meaning had been co-engendered and thus co-owned, the higher the likelihood that it would be embraced and enacted upon.

Towards the end of my literature review chapter, I had presented a brief exposition on the concept of sense-exchanging, in which I was proposing it to be an iterative process/cycle of sense-making and sense-giving to allow actors within a specific contextual reality to have a genuine exchange of multilogues for the purpose of co-engendering of shared meanings. Throughout my inquiry process and as depicted in my data, this iterative cycle of sense-making and sense-giving had shown to be quite rampant as an "action" trait observed as I adopted CAS and SC perspectives. I believed I had not been not trying to conjure up another new terminology for what has been quite well established in literature in regard to sense-making and sense-giving. However, I do believe that using the term "sense-exchanging" allowed managers and practitioners to have the heightened awareness that the purpose of the sense-making and sense-giving processes would be to exchange our ideas, views, mindset, values, etc. It would be only through such an exchange that a genuine dialogue/multilogue could possibly take place, hence a more stable (and hopefully more permanent) co-created reality could be realized among all the actors involved, because it had been after all co-created by them together. I believed the tool of sense-exchanging could be proven to be an effective and valuable one to managers and practitioners alike.

Nevertheless, it must also be cautioned that like any management tool developed for the purpose of effective change or general management, sense-exchanging might also be subjected to abuse. The real question would then be if managers could apply sense-exchanging to manipulate the meaning co-creation process such that it would yield to their interests/objectives? I imagined this could definitely be possible, but for an authentic sense-exchanging process to take place, the notion that every actor would be both able to exercise their free will and also subject themselves to the will of the others should render an overarching control of the process by a single individual ineffective to certain extent. In my

opinion, if authentic sense-exchanging were to take place, we should caution for managers and leaders to be in constant awareness that every actors' voice, perspectives and ideas should be given importance. This should be one key challenge and struggle that managers/leaders should recognize if they were to engage into such sense-exchanging practice. In some ways, the ethos should be similar to Raelin's (2003) leaderful concept and Endres and Weilber's (2017) relational social constructionist leadership.

Although the concepts of power and influence were not purposely investigated as part of my AR, I had been observed that throughout the engagement of self-organization with the change participants and the countless sense-exchanging moments, there had been an "emerging flow of influence" in quite a number of instances. Perhaps it could be argued that much as the influence could be interpreted to flow from me (as the change leader) to the participants, it was not really the case. The manifestations of such emerging flow of influence and power were based largely on the co-created shared meanings as a result of the sense-exchanging, i.e. the flow of the influence should align to the shared meanings that emerged from the iterated sense-exchanging that took place within the self-organization. I perceived this to be more of what Gergen (1995) and Hosking (1995) called as "centripetal power" or "power to", in which such emerging flow of influence reinforced a certain positive state of being, in what Gergen (1995) called this "for the real and for the good", instead of a more conflicting "power over" or "centrifugal power". For example, there were several moments that I had discussed on when I was persisting or desisting on certain direction of the engagement of the self-organization, such decision to steer the emerging flow were largely based on the sense-exchanged, co-created, shared meaning at those particular moment. Moreover, as guided by the principle of CAS and SC, any decision or direction taken at any moment was not designated to be set in stone. As the sense-exchanging and the shared meaning better shaped, the decision and direction could (and should) move in alignment.

Additionally, since I did not have any line authority over any of the participants, the common forms of power that Popitz (1992) discussed about, such as power of instrument and authoritative power, which are often common powers observed and utilized in organizations, would not be relevant in my AR. Though one might argue that due to the fact

that I was sent by my EVP to lead this project, I was inherently given certain authoritative power. This would certainly be inaccurate as it was evident that in quite a number of instances where most just expect me to be a facilitator and even questioned my capabilities, e.g. Murray in the second narrative, William and Nancy in the third narrative. Hence, it is plausible to recognize that a different form of power and influence, different from the common forms of powers as discussed, were co-created via the sense-exchanging practice. If one could harness such socially constructed influence via an ethical sense-exchanging practice and coupled with whatever instrumental and authoritative powers s/he originally possesses, not only would change management be more effective and enduring, the change leader and change recipients would probably find the process more satisfying and rewarding.

As I had espoused in the previous chapters that even though my research objective was not to develop any empirical theory or model with regard to change management within the CAS and SC space, the findings derived from my inquiry and data could potentially provide very interesting proposal for future research. I believed that the sense-exchange model that I had proposed, though not empirically tested, might serve as a good approach for further empirical works in future. I would certainly be interested to continue working on or collaborate with someone in the field of organization change management to extend this work should the opportunity avail itself in future. Finally, I would reiterate again that I was not making any bold claim that my AR had indeed provided evidence of such a model, rather I would like to think of the findings from my thesis work as sharing an extremely impactful and valuable first-person AR inquiry experience. It is without a doubt that, through it all, both my professional practice and personal life had definitely been impacted and changed (for the better).

6.3 First-Person Inquiry – A Personal Impact & Invaluable Experience

This was the very first time I had conducted a first-person inquiry within an action research setting for my change project. Speaking of the experience as interesting and intriguing would be at most just an understatement. To be very honest, I was initially extremely concerned if such a first-person AR inquiry would be a sufficiently rigorous research approach, i.e. I was initially very skeptical that this thesis AR would even work out at all. As

discussed in Chapter 3, I was very apprehensive initially that I would have to conduct an action research for the DBA thesis instead of a typical empirical research involving the use of measurement tools (such as questionnaires) and statistical analyses. I happened to be very comfortable with quantitative methods and statistical analyses and felt very unsettled when I found out that for the purpose of the DBA thesis, I had to conduct an AR and deal predominantly with qualitative data.

Suffice to say that all these were proven to be unfounded because I realized how enriching such qualitative studies via AR could be. I began to really understand and appreciate why Marshall (1999) had coined the famous phrase of "living life as inquiry", as my AR experience informed me that I had not just conducted an inquiry, but I literally live through it. As I lived through it, the sustained learnings were not just from the knowledge and insights acquired but also from the lived experience. I was also beginning to get sufficiently convinced that qualitative data could be as rigorous as quantitative ones because the data is alive, being lived through by the researcher and participants alike, and more importantly much richer than quantitative ones. Of course, the caveat would be that the quality and rigor of such qualitative data would be highly dependent on the experience, knowledge and attitude of the researcher(s). Furthermore, the manner in which I strived for authenticity of my first-person inquiry by learning to conduct my inquiry and analysis with the 4 tenets of authenticity, as Lonergran (1972) and Coghlan (2008) had proposed, also had been extremely valuable and useful in the entire endeavor. In fact, I supposed too that it would even be beneficial if we could embrace such authenticity ethos in a general sense both in our professional and personal life.

Of course, I was not about to advocate that my data had been flawless and objective, and suffice to say, there would always be oppositions to the objectivity of qualitative data, but the key point for me had been that the qualitative data I collected was a first-hand, lived-through, experienced-through, live and real data. Indeed, it had been my very own data and experience, and not something anyone could just take it away. Compare this to a set of quantitative data collected from say a questionnaire, the quality of these quantitative data would be only as good and as real as how the measurement instrument, i.e. the questionnaire, had been conceptualized. Perhaps there were shortcomings and blind spots

in my inquiry approach, data coding and analysis or even the data itself, but I could not argue away the change that had happened in and to me. This experience had changed the way I looked at qualitative data, action research and even first-person inquiry, which I found to be doubtful at first. Additionally, I found myself becoming a more inquisitive researcher and practitioner after this inquiry experience. I believed one quality of a good researcher is one that s/he should often be critical and inquisitive about his/her realities and contexts. I had been "positivist" trained for most part of my life, be it work wise or academically, but this AR experience had not only been contrary to all my past training and experiences, it had shown me that the other possibilities toward conducting meaningful and rich inquiries, which I now believed that they were not in any manner inferior to the more widely accepted positivist traditions.

6.4 Sustained Learning – Examples of Unsolicited Feedback and Follow-up Actions

The value of learning acquired from this AR had been significant for myself, but I would certainly hope that there had also been good learning experience for the participants of my project. Although I could not actively seek input and feedback from my colleagues, perhaps due to the purposeful application of sense-exchanging in my project that had proven to be truly unique and impactful, I did receive unsolicited inputs, feedback and follow-up actions from my colleagues after the project.

I had received positive feedback from at least three colleagues, and I would like to also present my personal reflection on their feedback to further elucidate the impact of my action research on the participants. Before proceeding with that, I must also note that there could also be negative feedback, which due to one reason or another, were never presented to me (unsolicited). Since I could not solicit any feedback, this limited my opportunity to improve the rigor of my findings by cross-checking my data and findings with the participants. Nevertheless, I hoped the following summarized presentation of unsolicited feedbacks presented to me could offer a glimpse of the impact of my action research on the participants. Again, the following names are anonymized to protect their identity.

Example 1 - Nancy

Nancy is a single local national (i.e. citizen) lady who was brought up in local culture and religion. This note is critical in that it would normally be inappropriate for a single lady to approach the other gender to seek mentorship in the local culture and context. Nevertheless, Nancy had approached me to seek out my assistance to mentor her because she saw something in the manner, I had worked on the change project and would like to take some time to really learn from me.

Nancy had initially presented herself to be quite hostile toward me when we started the project, but she approached me to seek my assistance to mentor her in her career development to pursue a managerial position in the long run sometime after the change had been concluded. She was extremely intrigued by the way I had led and managed the project, which she had claimed to be significantly different from every manager she had worked with in the past. Nancy felt that my approach was very relevant, collaborative and professional. She also commented that she always wanted to be a manager who could be close to the staffs yet carry a great deal of influence and professionalism. This was something she had not experienced with any manager before until the project with me. Hence, she requested me to be her mentor for a period of 6-9 months to help her develop the kind of skills she saw in me during the project.

Furthermore, she also realized, in contrast to how I manage the project, that her approach to management and leadership had not been very effective. She felt that she wanted to have my kind of leadership who really allowed the team to work well and to trust her, in fact to trust each other. She was very fascinated that such kind of cohesion could actually be realized in our organization although she has been with the company for more than 6 years but she never actually experienced an authentic teamwork setting till the project.

Lastly, she wanted to really know how I was able to possess a significant amount of convincing power although she also realized that my communication approach was not those charismatic kinds. She had always thought that it was only those charismatic leaders who could actually convince and sway opinions. On the contrary, she experienced a different kind of convincing power to gel the team and come up with workable solution. She set her mind to want to become a manager who could also yield such similar leadership and

management competence as experienced from my involvement as the change leader in the project. Of course, I acceded to her request and introduced her to what I know about CAS and SC in addition to other management and communication skills that I felt she could use for her work. Although the mentorship was not a formal program, we did catch up almost once a week for an hour session to address any questions or concern that Nancy had for more than six months. Even up to this date, she would come to me to ask for advice and opinions for various kind of situations, especially when it was dealing with work. Much as I often cautioned her to stop calling me "teacher", she often addressed me that whenever we see each other.

Another interesting sustained learning that had arose from Nancy has been the manner power and influence were perceived through my deliberate practice of utilizing CAS and SC in the project. Compared to the charismatic leadership or power (i.e. heroic power), which tend to be more authoritative or instrumental forms of power, the kind of "convincing power" or influence that I had somehow engendered in my practice could be evidence of a positive practice of relational social constructionist leadership as briefly discussed in Chapter 2 by Endres and Weilber (2017). This come in the form of "emerging flow of influence" and proved to be quite difficult to be categorized into the common forms of power Popitz (1992) discussed about, i.e. "power of action", "instrumental power", "authoritative power" and "power of data constitution". As I had no line authority toward Nancy (and all the other participants), I do not actually possess any of these forms of power over them. Interestingly, a certain amount of power and influence did apparently emerge through my practice in this project that participants were being able to be influenced and convinced (though not always). I believe that such socially constructed influence that emerged through the self-organization could prove to be a very useful tool for practitioners and would definitely call for more attention in the study of power and control in management.

Example 2 - Harry

Harry was from the EP division and he was an expatriate with a great deal of experience in his trade. He was one of the first who came to provide unsolicited feedback to me after the project. Shortly after the project was completed, he approached me privately to ask for a

favor. He was enrolled in an MBA program and was then doing a course on leadership. His final paper on the leadership course was coming up and he needed to write a piece on an actual leader/manager in his work place whom he really felt he could learn a lot from.

I was not his manager and rightfully, his direct manager was the EP division head (Mary) and then the department manager. However, when he contacted me, he felt so shy and ashamed that he just could not approach the two of them, as he felt that they were really not "up to what he thinks a good leader/manager" should be. I was very surprised as from what I had observed, Mary had often projected to be a leader who fought for her team, which made me expect that Harry should be looking up to her. However, Harry was in the opinion that Mary and the department manager were just typical leader/manager who were not authentic at all. In fact, he felt that oftentimes, these typical managers did not actually know or hear their staffs, what they often wanted were to do things the way they thought it should be, the way they wanted it or the way their bosses want it. He frankly admitted that he did not respect these as leaders. Oftentimes, he felt that they were not interested to really hear what their staffs had to say or how they think.

Conversely, through the project, he really encountered something very different and unique from my way of handling the workshops and people, and in a good way. He felt that I was really interested to listen and to the extent of encouraging those who were shy and reserved to really voice out as necessary. Also, he felt that I never wasting time to bring attention to myself or getting into self-glorification as such phenomena were very common in big corporation such as ours based on his experience. He remembered he learnt about the 4Cs leaderful practice in his course and he saw that in my approach and thus, he would like to seek assistance from me to "use me as the good leader/manager" sample for his final course project. I acceded to his request and as he interviewed me, and I explained to him my idea of sense-exchanging, CAS and social constructionism etc. He was aware of the concepts of CAS and social constructionism approaches, but he was never a fan or did not even find these concepts to be practical or viable for the corporate world. However, he was intrigued by the concept of sense-exchanging and found it making a lot of sense. He commented that "now I know why you do what you did!". In fact, he got much more interested in CAS and social constructionism after that and wanted to have some discussion

with me after he completed his report, which I gladly agreed. He completed his report and got a high A for it and we became very good friends. We continue to exchange our ideas on management and various schools of thought up to this day.

Example 3 - Mohamed

Mohamed was in the BC division and he was the guy whom Murray called out to give a dressing down in second narrative from chapter 5. Due to his work nature and my work as the directorate approval of several ERP processes, we continued to have work contacts after the project. One day we were having a kick-off meeting with the IT department on a new ERP sub system, and while waiting for the meeting to start, he started to strike conversation with me out of the blue. In fact, we did not have any chance to communicate since after the project. He disclosed that he really wanted to know me more as he had found me to be very well-respected among all his colleagues in the department and particularly in his division. Just before the IT team came into the meeting, he managed to reveal that he (and many BC division colleagues) was very impressed by how I managed to deal with Murray "the big bully" as they called him privately. I told him that we could continue the conversation sometime after the meeting if he had time and he agreed.

After the meeting, he came to my office and we had a good long casual chat, particularly on how he and his colleagues in BC division felt about the "suave and fluid" manner that I handled and managed Murray despite his overwhelming outpouring of his connection to the CEO toward me. Mohamed believed that most people would have tanked at the mention of such CEO connection. I explained out that probably being an outsider of the department and with a mandate from my EVP, I could be bolder than them, who were reporting to him and having daily interaction with him. Mohamed agreed but noted that the BC team did also privately discussed about this, but they concluded that it had not been about the proximity or distance of me and Murray. Rather, it was about how I managed to navigate Murray out of the power-relations and use sensible arguments and facts to address the conflicting situations. He (and his colleagues) was particularly impressed with how I managed to make Murray focused on the subject matter and resolved it instead of getting distracted into the power games and struggles. Mohamed further explained that such ability to focus on the

subject matter within that context of power dynamics was rare in our organization, or perhaps even outside.

He also commented that he really liked the way I did not insist on a particular idea but rather somehow able to create an environment for the team to come to a common ground. To him, this was really "artistic", and he also told me that he did hear from Harry about how I was actually a very well-learned scholar and would like to also keep a relationship with me to exchange ideas if I did not mind. Of course, I agreed, and we continue to really sense-exchange on many ideas – both work and private.

6.5 Final Conclusion

The above 3 unsolicited feedbacks from my project participants really encouraged me greatly even on a private basis but more importantly I had a glimpse, no matter how small, that the "renewed" approach of how I conducted my practice in the change management project did make a difference, at least to the Nancy, Harry and Mohamed, and I was glad it did. Nevertheless, I did not doubt that there would be some who might disagree to my approach/style and I would love to hear from them too if chances permit. Nonetheless, I sincerely hoped that this action research had been really as impactful to the rest as it had been to the three of my colleagues who provided feedback to me and for myself.

Certainly, the primary sustained learning achieved from this endeavor had been the ability to take advantage of CAS and social constructionist perspectives to add the competence of sense-exchange to my practice such that I could produce greater impact as a manager/practitioner in terms of my agility in managing challenging situations, sensitivity toward alternate/weakened/silenced voices/mindsets and leadership in building trust and alliance. From the onset, my research objective had been to conduct a study on my own practice through another lens of how I could see organizational reality. I believe that not only had I achieved my objective for my project, I had also learned a new way of living life as inquiry, and more importantly, I had sustained significant positive learnings that had enhanced my practice as a manager and leader in a major and permanent manner. Regardless, there would always room to argue about how I had collected, coded, interpreted, analyzed and presented my data, but I believed there would have been few, if

any at all, ways to argue about my own very positive experience and sustained learnings achieved through this action research change project at my work place.

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