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"There was a whole lot of resistance, to put it that way…" - a systems thinking perspective on resistance to change in organizations

Gro Margun Børresen Sevle

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank

My father, the man that has taught me to keep on going although things get tough, to never give up and always think positive. For teaching me that there is possible to integrate and interpret every aspect of everyday life in a humorous way, no matter what life throws at you. Even in the hospital bed, these recent months, facing one of the most dreaded diseases, with very negative prospects, he was the one who kept family, friends and the hospital staff, smiling at all times, while fighting for his life. I admire him beyond words, and am thankful to my core for having him as my utter inspiration and one of the two main rocks in my life.

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I am also grateful for having learnt more these last two years than I have learnt the previous twenty-five all together. Much like systems thinking, life will present countless challenges and opportunities for learning and growth. The challenges wont get easier, but one will be better prepared for the rest of the journey.

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Gro Margun Børresen Sevle

Abstract

Today's society demands increasingly more from organizations' ability to innovate and perform. "Resistance to change" is seen as an obstacle that stands in the way of change implementation, and as something that needs to be overcome. These challenges are often explained as coming solely from the behavior and attitudes of the change recipients, while the change agents are the ones that are forced to tackle it.

The objective of this study is to provide a perspective on some of the knowledge that exists regarding this particular topic. A selective literature review, and rich case citations from my previous Bachelor's Thesis (2012) in Tourism management, creates the data collection of this thesis. The problem formulation is: *"What does research based knowledge say about the underlying nature of resistance to change in organizations?".* The findings from the case study and the literature review are interpreted and analyzed in light of the systems thinking perspective.

The findings show that resistance not only exists among the recipients, but at all levels of the organization. They also show that resistance can enhance the quality of the change process. The resistant behaviors, can be explained by the underlying forces of human reasoning. Behavior and attitudes are reflected by these limited thought patterns, and can explain why organizational change often is challenged. The expressed features of these underlying forces, can contribute to sustaining a poor culture for innovation and learning.

The findings show that the underlying generic structures of our thought patterns, makes us susceptible for interpreting behaviors, attitudes and events in light of our previous experiences. This limited reasoning can contribute to less creative change processes. The purpose of this research is to provide an explanatory perspective on the underlying nature of the phenomenon of "resistance to change", that often complicates change implementation.

Sammendrag

Mye av den eksisterende teorien og oppfatningene rundt endringsmotstand er i stor grad preget av et fokus på "motstand mot endring" som en utelukkende negativ faktor. Den ses ofte også som et bidrag som kan forklares kun med endringsmottakernes atferd og holdninger, mens endringsagentene fremstilles som de som må bruke ekstra tid og ressurser på å overkomme motstanden.

Jeg har gjennom et selektivt litteraturstudie søkt å finne frem til kunnskap om "motstand mot endring" som kan tilby et forklarende perspektiv på hva som er fagfeltets eksisterende oppfatning av fenomenet. Problemstillingen som danner forskningens utgangspunkt er: *"Hva sier forskningsbasert kunnskap om bakgrunnen for motstand mot endring i organisasjoner?".* Systemtenknings-perspektivet fra organisasjonslærings- teorien danner utgangspunktet for analysen av funnene. Avhandlingens formål er å tilby et forklarende perspektiv på den bakenforliggende grunnen til at fenomenet "motstand mot endring" så ofte kompliserer endringsprosesser i organisasjoner.

Gjennom arbeidet mitt med Bacheloroppgaven i Reiselivsledelse fra 2012, studerte jeg et omfattende reiselivsprosjekt som feilet til tross for at alle forutsetninger for å lykkes var til stede. En av hovedfaktorene som kunne forklare dette, var faktoren "motstand mot endring". Jeg fant det interessant og relevant å benytte disse funnene videre i masterarbeidet. Gjennom fyldige sitatgjengivelser som supplerer litteraturfunnene i syntesen, danner dette datamaterialet for denne studien.

Resultatene viser at "motstand mot endring" ikke er et ensidig fenomen som endringsmottakerne står bak, men at endringsagentene i stor grad bidrar til det de oppfatter som og kaller "motstand". Fenomenet er også en naturlig del av endringsprosesser, og kan bidra til å kvalitetssikre det endelige resultatet. Funnene viser også at underliggende generiske strukturer i tankesettet vårt, gjør at vi har en tendens til å tolke atferd, holdninger og det som skjer rundt oss i lys av tidligere erfaringer. Dette kan bidra til begrenset kreativitet og utvikling i endringsprosesser.

Innholdsfortegnelse

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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In this introductory chapter I will focus on presenting the background and foundation for the topic, and explaining some of the most relevant concepts and theories about organizational change. The first section introduces the concepts of organizational learning, systems thinking and resistance to change. The next section presents the highlights from a real-life tourism project case, named "The Medieval Valley", which will exemplify the topic and contribute in shedding light on the problem formulation. In the end of the chapter I will describe the purpose of this study, the narrowing of the scope, the problem statement, and the three research questions.
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"The only thing that is constant, is change" ~ Heraclitus

1.1 The need for change

Both organizational adjustment and innovation are critical in today's society, which keeps changing with a quick pace. It has become common knowledge that the frequency of change initiatives in organizations and businesses is increasing more and more every day, as the need and requests for improved and more effective solutions calls for change and innovation. This is what enables the world to continue advancing its way of living, like it gradually has from the very beginning of time. The competition is rising and the pressure to deliver quality results within a deadline is a well-known challenge for most people in organizations today. Usually the products and services that do not stand the test of diffusion cease to grow and are eventually liquidated. This ultimately creates a healthy awareness and competition among organizations and businesses to always stay ahead of the game; to always improve the quality; and to always have new and challenging goals and visions to work towards accomplishing in the distant future. It is common to picture change as a solution to a problem, or as ceasing an opportunity (Miles & Snow, 1984; Jacobsen, 1998). The change is often based on an analysis of the existing situation, or on future prospects or threats. The change can be implemented through different techniques; project and participation, manipulation or by raw power (Dunphy & Stace, 1988; Jacobsen, 1998). To conclude with that a change initiative has been successful, there must be a certain correlation between intended efforts and the

actual result. Change is both a necessary and vital action in organizations today. For organizations to maintain their competitive position or to restructure status quo. Individuals or groups of people is assumed to be able to control the development in an organization, and the ones that succeed with implementing a change initiative in a sustainable way, will be the organizations that succeed and achieve a clear competitive advantage (Miles, Snow, 1984; Jacobsen: 1998).

"The brutal fact is that about 70% of all change initiatives fail" (Beer & Nohria, 2000:133).

1.2 Resistance to change

"Resistance to change involves the leader group trying to implement change, somebody reacts and will not adjust the suggested change. Resistance to change appears when the reactions contribute as a barrier to the change initiative being implemented" (Jacobsen, 1998).

While some organizations thrive and succeed, most organizations are known to be slow at adaption and change, and one of the reasons why organizations struggle with implementing planned changes, or why the result of a change process seldom meets the foreseen expectations, might be explained by the resistance a change initiative meet from internal and/or external groups, according to Jacobsen (1998:1). Talking in a negative way, complaining and criticizing are communication that is commonly labeled as "resistance" (Caruth et al., 1985; Ford, 2008: 368). Popular assumptions around the concept of "resistance to change" is that the employees makes irrational choices based on self-interest. Most of the resistance to change is, however, based on rational considerations (Jacobsen, 1998).

"In the majority of work on resistance to change, researchers have borrowed a view from physics to metaphorically define resistance as a restraining force moving in the direction of maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, most scholars have focused on the various "forces" that lead employees away from supporting changes proposed by managers" (Piderit, 2000: 784).

The official debate around the topic of "resistance to change" mainly emphasize an understanding of it as being solely negative. The word "resistance" in it self, has a negative ring to it, amongst most people today. The change recipients are viewed as the

source of the resistance, a problem that needs to be cleared out of the way. The existing popular-scientific literature focus on strategies for coping with and reduce or remove the behavior and attitudes of the resistant change recipients; without saying anything about the actions of change agents. This choice of focus provides an incorrect picture of reality (Ford, 2008: 365). There is, however, an increasing body of knowledge and research on resistance to change - and how resistance can in fact be something positive, and that questions the perspective on resistance as "something to be overcome".

"Resistance can be a valuable resource in the accomplishment of change. Accessing its benefits, however, requires a shift in managers' tendency to blame resistance for the failure of change. This may be difficult, because over half of all organizational changes fail and, according to the managers involved, the primary reason for those failures is resistance to change" (Ford & Ford, 2010: 24).

The biological perspective of organizational change, emphasize that there will always be more limiting processes; when one source of limitation is removed or made weaker, growth returns until a new source of limitation is encountered. The skillful leader is always focused on the next set of limitations and working to understand their nature and how they can be addressed (Senge, 2006: 1799).

Challenges in organizations are often symptomatic of deeper issues. The most obvious "problem" is rarely what is most in need to be "fixed". According to Senge (et al.,1999:997) the real problem is "the forces that have kept people form doing anything about these symptoms for so long". To tackle these underlying issues requires time for reflection, and a deliberate focus on challenging difficult and "undisscussable" issues. Senge (et al., 1999:261) states that managers have a habit of attacking symptoms and ignoring deeper, systemic causes of problems.

"Even though there are several examples of successful, planned change initiatives, it is oftentimes found that the result of a change process is very different from the original intentions" (Burnes, 1992; French & Bell, 1990; Sætren, 1983; Jacobsen, 1998).

According to Senge (et al, 1999: 248) to sustain change, it requires that the manager of the change initiative to understand the reinforcing growth processes and addresses the limits that hinder change from occurring (Senge et al., 1999:248). Only through the development of skills of reflection and inquiry, people are enabled to talk openly and

constructively about complex and conflictive "undiscussables", *without invoking defensiveness*. These are the skills of systems thinking. The development of these enable people in organizations to start seeing and dealing with interdependencies and the deeper causes of problems. Senge (et al., 1999:261) considers that the lack of basic learning capabilities like these, represent a fundamental limit to sustaining change. Growth in all natural systems occurs through an interplay of reinforcing processes and limiting processes (Senge et al.,1999:1330). In their studies, Senge (et al.,1999:1339) puts forward how it works in nature; the "power of limits" (reducing factors like resistance) determines the extent to which growth follows. In the context of organizational change, the power of limits, in the form of "challenges" similarly determines to which degree projects grow to realize their intended result. According to Senge (2006:603), problems and challenges originate in basic ways of thinking and interacting, more than in peculiarities of organization structure and policy.

1.3 Introducing the field of interest
1.3.1 Organizational learning
Learning organizations are by Senge (2006) defined as organizations where people *"continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together"*. The organization that will truly excel in the future will be the org that *"discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization"* (Senge, 2006:163). Learning organizations is the opposite of the traditional authoritarian "controlling organizations". A learning organization is a place where people *continually* discover how they create their reality, and how they can change it (Senge, 2006:335). The basic meaning of a "learning organization" is that it is *"an organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future".* This means that the focus is not merely on surviving or adapting – it is also on the generative learning – learning to "enhance our capacity to create" (Senge, 2006: 369). A learning organization means being committed to lifelong learning; the concept is often misunderstood for a one-time effort to be enjoyed for the rest of time. Organizational learning is powerful precisely because it represents a

fundamental change in our beliefs about who holds knowledge and power, it is a more healthy and self-generating way to be (Senge et al.,1999:9272). By involving people throughout the organization in developing a clearer view of options and constraints, and by **remaining open to ideas from every involved actor,** this will build the capability for strategic thinking (Senge et al.,1999:10478).

1.3.2 The five learning capabilities

The five disciplines are the result of the research of hundreds of people, having its origin in the work of Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Peter M. Senge has refined the ideas and is one of the latest pioneers in Organizational Learning. His thoughts and research will make up a large part of this study.

Organizational learning builds on the idea that fundamental learning is depending on "the core learning capabilities of teams", by Senge (2006:47). There are constructed five summarizing disciplines that represent different and interconnected approaches for developing the core learning capabilities: *fostering aspiration* (personal mastery and shared vision), *developing reflective conversation* (mental models and dialogue), and *understanding complexity* (systems thinking). This connection is symbolized as a three-legged stool, to visually convey the importance of each of the capabilities; the stool would not stand without all three of them.
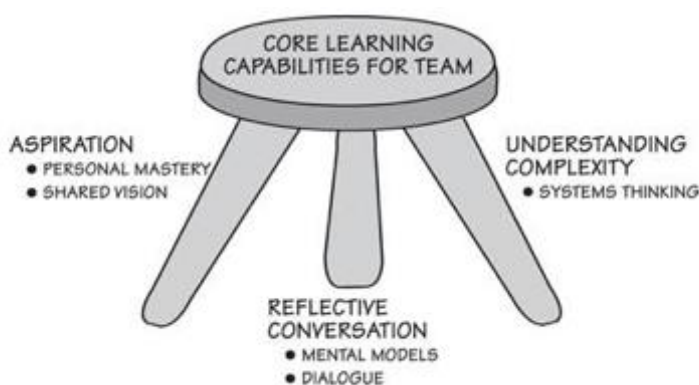
Picture 1 The five learning capabilities

Senge (et al., 1999:1427) argues that organizations should develop a continuous process of hypothesizing (think), testing (interact), and experimenting (learn), through

embracing the learning capability approach. Some of the experiments will fail, and the results will not match the expectations, but in turn, they will enable the design of new experiments based on these results. It is also emphasized how merely reacting to a crisis is not enough and not a preferable solution to the problem, since it will not lay a foundation for learning. The crisis should be used as an awakening that directs attention to the deeper, underlying issues. The five learning capabilities, provides a vital and interconnected part of building organizations that can learn and continually enhance their capacity to realize their highest aspirations:

1. Personal mastery

Proficiency. People who are able to realize what results matter the most to them – and becomes committed to their own lifelong learning. PM is defined as *"the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively" (2006: 231).* The spiritual foundation of the learning organization. The organization's commitment to and capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members. *"The discipline of PM starts with clarifying the things that really matter to us, of living with our lives in the service of our highest aspirations".* The focus is on the connections between personal learning and organizational learning; *"the reciprocal commitment between individual and organization, and in the special spirit of an enterprise made up of learners."(2006: 249).* Without PM people are so steeped in the reactive mindset (something external is creating my problems) that they are deeply threatened by the systems perspective (2006:335).

2. Building shared vision

The idea of holding a shared picture of the future that are sought be created, has been a popular idea that has inspired organizations to mobilizing their energy to reach goals, for years. Goals, values and missions lead the way. It is about *"binding people together around a common identity and sense of destiny".* There is a difference between a genuine vision and the "vision statement", in genuine visison, people learn because they want to, and not because they are told to. The vision should not be based on the dictating charisma of a leader or a crisis that engages everyone until the crisis is averted. The

shared vision discipline involves fostering genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance.

3. Team learning

When teams are truly learning, they produce extraordinary results and the individual members are growing more rapidly than what they could have oterhwise. The team learning discipline emphasize *"dialogue - the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine "thinking together" (2006: 265).* A free flow of meanings, allowing the group to discover insights not attainable individually. Involves learning how to recognize the patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning. Patterns of defensiveness is often deeply ingrained in how a team operates; if it is not recognized it will undermine learning; if recognized and surfaced creatively, they can accelerate learning. Teams are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations; unless the team can learn, the org cannot learn. (2006:300).

4. Mental models

Mental models are the deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, and perceptions that influence how we understand and reason around the things that happen around us; they decide how we make sense of the world and how we take action. This is an unconscious mechanism, which makes most of us unaware of its "existence" and the effects it has on our behavior. This discipline focus on learning to bring our internal pictures of the world out in the open, by reflecting on how they influence our behavior and attitudes (Senge, 2006: 265). When we are unaware of these models and they remain unexamined, and thereby unchanged, this undermines many opportunities to foster a deeper understanding of things (Senge, 2006:3040).

Systems thinking[1] and mental models are intertwined; one focuses on exposing hidden assumptions and the other focus on how to restructure the assumptions to reveal causes of significant problems. The tools of systems thinking (e.g. causal loop diagrams) are developed with the objective of improving mental models. Mental models are very often systematically flawed; they miss critical feedback relationships, misjudge time delays, and often focus on variables that are visible or salient (2006: 3292). The payoff from

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[1] See upcoming paragraph.

integrating systems thinking and mental models will be both that we improve our mental models (what we think), and also altering our ways of thinking: shifting from mental models dominated by events to mental models that recognize longer-term patterns of change and the underlying structures producing those patterns (Senge, 2006: 3309).

The fifth learning capability is "systems thinking", which is the cornerstone of the disciplines that tie them all together. It integrates the four previous into one coherent body of theory and practice, and creates the foundation for understanding how the other four orientations interrelate; it is this last discipline that makes the system exceed the sum of its parts (2006:317).

1.4 Systems thinking
The principles of Systems Thinking

- *1. Thinking of the "big picture"*

  There is a human tendency of focusing on the most obvious and immediate problem, focusing on the effects and not the causes. Systems thinking emphasize how the source of problems always is part of a larger system (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:18).

- *2. Balancing short-term and long-term perspectives*

  There is a human tendency of focusing on assessments and behaviors that leads to short-term success. Systems thinking emphasize the balance between short-term and long-term approaches. The key is to be aware of the potential impacts of the chosen strategy (Andersen & Johnsen, 1997:19).

- *3. Recognizing the dynamic, complex, and interdependent nature of systems*

  Systems thinking emphasize how simplification, structure, and linear thinking have their limits, and bear the potential of generating as many problems as are solved. This is by engaging in systems thinking prevented as one becomes aware of all the system's internal and external relationships, and how they are all interconnected and interdependent (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:19).

- *4. Taking into account both measurable and non-measurable factors*

There is a human tendency of focusing most of our attention to the measurable and quantifiable data, and overlook the information that is harder to "relate to a certain number". The systems thinking perspective emphasize how both kinds of information is valuable (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:19).

- *5. Remembering that we are all part of the system*
  There is a human tendency of explaining the reasons behind problems by pointing to external factors (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:20). The systems thinking approach emphasize how we are part of the system in which we function – and that we therefore contribute to how those systems behave and also to our own problems.

Systems thinking is not only a perspective, but also a framework and practical tool with qualities that sustain the work on complex and systemic challenges. The systems thinking "language" enables communicating in a productive way to understand and solve complex problems (Anderson & Johnsen, 1997:21). By focusing on "closed interdependencies" and on explaining and understanding how different factors influence each other in a circular way (i.e. x influences y, y influences z, z comes back and influences x), this contributes to less ambiguities and miscommunication that can appear when complex matters are discussed (i.e. by focusing on the dynamics of the problem, instead of individual blame, defensiveness can be avoided). Some of the most important and widely used tools, is "Causal loop diagrams" and "Behavior over time graphs". These diagrams are rich in insights and implications, and facilitate learning by visualizing the interconnections in a graphic way.

Events, patterns, structure

Systems are defined as *"a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent components that form a complex and unified whole"* (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:3). They are built on "structures", which is defined as *"the interrelationships of a system's parts"* and described by Anderson & Johnson (1997:5) as *"the overall way in which the system components are interrelated"* – which means the mere way that the system is organized. This also means that it is not the parts themselves – structure is invisible. The system structure, gives rise to all the events and trends that we can observe and experience in the world around us, and therefore it provides the underlying explanation

of their occurrence. Human thinking, or reasoning, can be either on the events level, pattern level or the structure level.
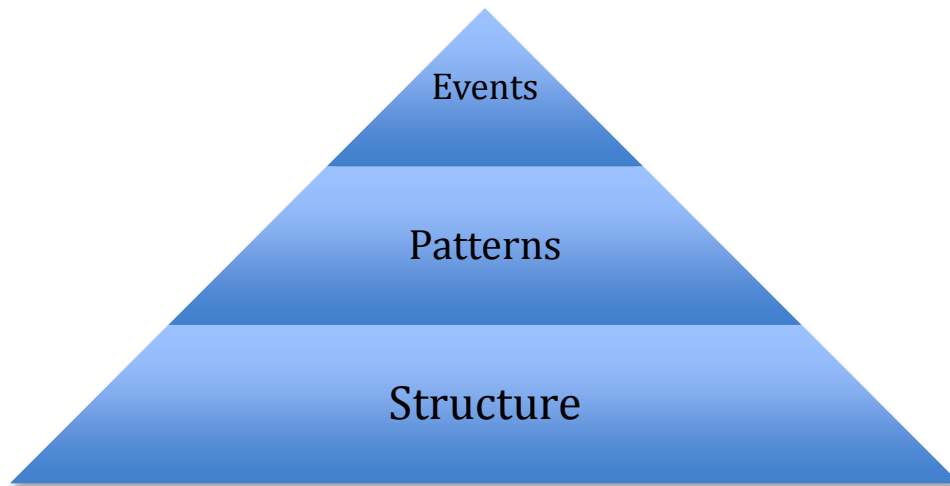
Figure 1 The Events/Patterns/Structure Pyramid

1. Thinking at the event level

Today's society is highly event-focused and tend to focus on events rather than the underlying causes or how these events fit a larger pattern. This makes us susceptible to not grasping the full picture of an event, which makes us *react* to each new event rather than anticipate and engage in it. The event level tend to be based on immediate symptom-treatment and short-lived solutions, while not focusing on altering the fundamental and underlying structure that caused the event.

2. Thinking at the pattern level

Whereas events are like snapshots that conveys single moments in time; patterns enables an understanding of reality at a deeper level. Patterns are changes over time that results in a reoccurring trend. To show this trend it is valuable to draw a simple graph to represent the trend. This enables a recognizing and understanding of the systemic structure that drives the pattern, and ultimately enables anticipating the event and change the pattern (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:7).

3. Thinking at the structural level

This most substantial and last level represents a deeper understanding. The structure lies behind the pattern of the behavior, and behind the obvious event. Thinking at the structural level means thinking in terms of **causal connections**. It is the structural level that holds the **key to lasting, high-leverage change.** To address the reason for the problem (event) one needs to recognize the structure that gives rise to the pattern. **Actions taken at this level are *creative*,** because they enable the shaping of a different future, the future that is wanted, and this is where the real power of this focus lies (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:8).

To uncover the systemic structures that are generated by the patterns of behavior and that most likely are the root cause of the problem, the tools of the systems thinking perspective, such as BOT graphs and CLDs are recommended tools.

1.5 Generic structures

Systems thinking is a relatively young field of science, and one of the most important and potentially most empowering, insights to come from it is that certain patterns of structure recur again and again. These are called systems archetypes, or "generic structures", and mastering them is the key to learning to see the patterns of structures that underlies events as we see them (Senge, 2006:1673). The structures have been registered and established as archetypes, by observing recurring management problems. Archetypes indicate that the underlying structures of what appears to be complex managerial issues are in fact very simple. One of the promises of the systems thinking perspective is that the practice unifies knowledge across all fields, meaning that the following archetypes arise in other types of systems as well (e.g. families, ecosystems)(Senge, 2006:1673).The fundamental purpose that lies behind the system archetypes is that; merely discovering a problematic incidence, can lead to solving it, but will not change the thinking that produced the problem in the first place.

The purpose of using systems archetypes is that it enables us to become more attuned to seeing structures at play, and to see the leverage in those structures. All of the systems archetypes are made up of the systems building blocks[2] (Senge, 2006:1690).

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[2] Reinforcing processes, balancing processes, and delays.

1.6 Case description

In my Bachelor's Thesis on Tourism Management from 2012 I chose to investigate a substantial tourism project initiative that failed to meet its goals. Based on the results from this report, I found the inspiration to formulate the problem statement of this thesis, and to include the findings as an example.

This case describes one potential way in which resistance can manifest during the implementation of a planned change initiative in a project group. It will in this thesis function as a relevant real-life example to shed additional light on the topic. Substantial/extensive citations from the findings will be included in the synthesis, and will be discussed further in the analysis.

I have chosen to integrate the main findings from my Bachelor's Thesis, since this case directly relates to the topic I chose to investigate in this thesis. The different findings in the form of relevant citations from the in-depth interviews will be used as examples in the sections of the different categories that have evolved through the synthesis.

The project failed, the project management said that things had not failed, the promotional material was exchanged with other promotional themes after some while. I was curious to find out what *really* happened - which underlying mechanisms were involved, and why the valley didn't manage to deliver the desired results.

The interview participants consisted of the following selection: there were three representatives from the project management (the first project manager, the third project manager and the DTO); two representatives from the tourism industry; the one and only representative from the tourism industry that did not want to partake in the project at all; one local cultural-historical person (with substantial knowledge regarding the project); one representative from the county; and one representative from The Regional Board.

The findings showed a clear division between two different perspectives on how the project progressed and ended. To draw a more understandable picture of which actors had which perspective, I will divide the actors into two different groups; "the

supporters" and "the critics" (not to be confused with "the positive" and "the negative" ones). "The supporters" consisted of; the third project manager, the DTO, the county representative, and the representative from The Regional Board. "The critics" consisted of; the three tourism businesses, the first project manager, and the cultural-historical person. This division should make the citations in Chapter 3 more easily understandable.

1.6.1 Background

The title of the Bachelor's Thesis was "The Tourism Project: The Medieval Valley – Mechanisms that Challenge Successful Tourism Development. Planning – Anchoring– Communication – Utilization – Comprehension"[3]. The problem statement was: *"Which key factors must be present, to enable a successful project implementation to enhance the tourism development in this valley?"*

The valley of Numedal was in need of getting more tourism products. Since a basis for cultural experiences through 4 stave churches and more than 40 buildings from before 1536 (the medieval period) was present, a group of people concluded that creating and developing a "medieval valley" would be "the chance they had waited for". The tourism businesses believed in developing historical experiences; and the substantial tourism project "The Medieval Valley" - was conducted in the period from 1998 to 2005. The development of historical experiences was also set forward in the first project plan; it contained good ideas for creating products and involving the tourism businesses. However, as soon as the main project started, the new-employed project leader left the plan and started out, far too early, at a much later step to come - the promoting phase. In the project description the main objective of the project was formulated as follows:

"Project Numedal the medieval valley will create the foundation for making cultural experiences and activities that will become a leading star for the tourism businesses in Numedal. The goal is to increase the visitor statistics in the region by promoting the profile externally. This goal will be reached through development of the cultural based experience proffer and the marketing of Numedal as 'The Medieval Valley'. The project will

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[3] Norwegian title: "Reiselivsprosjektet Middelalderdalen – mekanismer som utfordrer vellykket reiselivsgjennomføring. Forberedelse, forankring, formidling, foredling, forståelse."

*furthermore strenghten the identity of the inhabitants in the region. The medieval history
and the traditions will be the foundation for this project."*

1.6.2 The results of the project

The main project was meant to last for two years (2000-2002), but the time frame was
extended several times, first until 2003 and then till 2005. The county, who had the final
responsibility for the grants, asked for the participation and involvement of the tourism
businesses throughout the whole project. The mayors in the valley's three townships,
representing a steering committee[4] for the project, took over the project the last year
(2005), and they, like the earlier project leader, seemed to have a resistance to involve
the tourism companies. Until they finally decided, at the end of the last project year, to
choose to cooperate, for a while, with 5 chosen so-called "positive" companies. In
cooperation with these 5 businesses they suddenly, launched an important meeting to
all inhabitants in the valley, in order to get the tourism businesses to take over the
project. To this meeting the farmers from that particular part of the valley were in
majority whereas very few tourism businesses turned up. The tourism businesses were
reluctant to be in charge of the projects continuation, especially when not having been
involved earlier. The meeting established an Interim Board, however, and the few
tourism businesses being present consented to sign for membership in this board,
whereas some of the 5 "positive" did.

The actual result after five years of project execution and more than four million
Norwegian Kroner used, was – an arrangement called "The Medieval Week"[5], a road sign
in each end of the valley saying "Welcome to The Medieval Valley", an advertising
brochure and the use of "The Medieval Valley" logo on letter material, which was printed
and used by the township's for some time after the project ended. When I conducted the
interviews - seven years after the end of the project - the logo was no longer in use and
the marketing value of "The Medieval Valley" had begun to fade away. The DTO and
other actors in the valley had, however, started working on new projects and new

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[4] The Regional Council.
[5] "The Medieval Week" (Middelalderuka) is a yearly one-week traditional arrangement, with both medieval and non-
medieval activities and concerts for inhabitants and visitors (source:
http://www.numedal.net/default.aspx?ArticleID=9038&MenuID=5818)

development initiatives, by the same model as before and without any evaluation of previous projects.

1.6.3 Evaluation

In 2005 it became clear that the project was officially finished, and there were different theories regarding what had gone wrong. Kaizen AS, A professional consultancy company[6], that had been hired to evaluate the project, concluded as follows:*"The Medieval Valley' project can not be said to have accomplished its goals".* They also claimed that the amount of resources used did not match the results. This conclusion was later rejected by the project management and the other parties involved in the initiation, presented both in the local newspaper, as well as in the interviews I conducted. They also seemed convinced, when I interviewed them seven years later that Kaizen was wrong in their conclusion.

1.6.4 The main findings and conclusion

The conclusion in the Bachelor's Thesis was that the project had not reached its goals, due to several key factors not having been properly prioritized or emphasized. The findings indicate that the following factors prevented a successful implementation of the project:

- Lack of ability to listen to the needs of the participants that were going to use and benefit from the results of the project
- Lack of dialogue and cooperation between the management and the businesses
- Lack of openness between the parties
- Lack of local ownership/anchoring
- Too much central authority
- Too little emphasis on the industry specific product development ???
- Confusing distribution of roles and responsibility
- Lack of basic understanding regarding tourism development
- Political prestige
- Lack of competence among the management in what was a demanding and ambitious project

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[6] Kaizen AS (1984) is an analyzing counseling company specialized in the culture- and tourism industry.

The tourism businesses' (change recipients') resistance to change was one of the main issues that were mentioned by "the supporters" in the interviews as to explain why the project failed. "The critics" on the other hand, found the project managements' (change agents') overall comprehension to be the reason why the result failed. After having evaluated the findings thoroughly I found that the most prevalent factor was "comprehension". The concluding remark was as follows: *"The lack of managerial competence and overall comprehension of project implementation resulted in the failed project implementation".*

The project management's perception of the tourism businesses "resistance to change", however, captured my interest. And that is why I chose to conduct a study regarding this topic for this report.

1.7 Problem statement

With the findings of the Bachelor's Thesis in mind, and my curiosity about the field of change management, I constructed the following problem formulation and research questions for the Master's Thesis:

"What does research based knowledge say about the underlying nature of resistance to change in organizations?"

> I. *How do change agents understand and act upon resistance in change processes?*
>
> II. *How do change recipients understand and act upon resistance in change processes?*
>
> III. *Can resistance be positive for the change process?*

1.8 Purpose

The aim of this study is to getter a clearer perspective on how the phenomenon of "resistance to change" is understood by actors in a change process. The aim is also to stimulate the reader to reflect around this widespread organizational challenge, and perhaps challenge some of his or hers own assumptions and perspectives on this topic. I

am hoping that this summarized and evaluative contribution of a case study and adjusted literature, can be used as an inspiration for the reader.

Important to note

Readers should take into account that this report is highly tailored to the presented case. It should be seen as a composite picture using selected portions of relevant knowledge. The information and findings should therefore be treated as evocative rather than definitive. The findings should not be interpreted as the only answer to the problem formulation, but solely as one relevant perspective on this particular phenomenon and case study. It is also important to note that I will not provide a total and holistic picture of *all* existing knowledge in this field; but merely the part of it that I found relevant for this particular topic, the problem formulation and the case study.

In this report I will use the term "change agents" when referring to those that initiate change; the leaders and general management (i.e. the project management and project leader in the case). Consequently, I will use the term "change recipients" when referring to those that are directly affected by the change initiative somehow and adopts it but are not in charge of leading it; which is the employees (i.e. the tourism businesses in the case). In the literature and the case citations, the terms "employees" and "change recipients" – and "managers" and "change agents" are occasionally used interchangeably.

2.0 METHODOLOGY
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This chapter presents the methodology that is used in this study. I will present the purpose, strategy and reflections that were made in regards of conducting this research, from the early start of the problem formulation to the finalized research report.

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"The true method of knowledge is experiment" ~ *William Blake*

2.1 Research purpose

The objective of this thesis is to explore and understand what the existing knowledge in the area of change management and organizational learning say about the phenomenon of "resistance to change", by seeking answers to the following problem statement:

"What does research based knowledge say about the underlying nature of resistance to change in organizations?"

and more specifically looking into the three following research questions:

IV.   *How do change agents understand and act upon resistance in change processes?*

V.   *How do change recipients understand and act upon resistance in change processes?*

VI.   *Can resistance be positive for the change process?*

The intention with every qualitative study is to develop the text into a tool of thought, which can initiate debate and discussion and by that develop and improve the practice of similar settings (Postholm, 2010:108). The purpose of the literature review is to provide a background to and often a rationale for further research (Jesson et al., 2011:437).

Postholm (2010:85) explains that it is the goal and purpose of the research, that decides which strategies are the most relevant to gather sufficient amounts of information, to

reach some understanding. As the problem formulation of this report points out, the goal and purpose of the research is to get an *understanding* of the underlying essence of the phenomenon of "resistance to change".

The aim of this study is to provide *one* perspective and understanding of the phenomenon of resistance to change. I will also focus on shedding light on some common and underlying mechanisms of the behaviors and attitudes associated with resistance in change processes. I will in this study organize some of the current knowledge on this topic into an easily understandable and reliable format, and provide citations from the case study as relevant examples.

There is a growing body of knowledge in the area of resistance to change. My unique contribution to the knowledge and research in this area is the combination of a synthesized selection of literature that answers the problem formulation, in combination with a case study that illustrates the literature findings.

2.2 Research approach

I have chosen to make use of a "selective" literature review as the main approach in this study. This particular method seemed relevant to be able to answer the problem statement in a thorough way, and because of the increasing amount of knowledge on the topic. I also had a desire to get an in-depth perspective of the knowledge regarding the particular topic of "resistance to change".

Machi et al. (2012:4) defines a literature review as *"a written document that presents a logically argued case founded on a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge about a topic of study".* Ridley et al. (2012:189) states that "*a systematic literature review is in it self a research study, addressing research questions and using the literature as data to be coded, analyzed and synthesized to reach overall conclusions".*

Literature review has only recently become a major area of methodological development, although reviews of literature have been advocated for very many years. Systematic reviewing is still a young and rapidly developing field of study and methods for reviewing have not yet been developed for all areas of science (Gough et al.,

2012:10). According to Jesson et al. (2011:437) the purpose of the review is *"to provide a background to and often a rationale for further research."*

The reason for making use of a review is to make large amounts of information available in a more easily digestible form, by using an explicit and rigorous method. Just as primary research is expected to report transparent methods the same standards applies to systematic reviews (Gough et al., 2012:6).

There are two different approaches to carrying out a literature review. There is both a traditional review and a systematic review. A traditional review aims to present a summary review of the current state of knowledge about a particular subject. The downside to this approach is that there is no protocol and quite often no description of how the review was carried out – and therefore a lack of transparency and no possibility of the research being replicated by others. Despite this note, it is the most common literature review to carry out at the undergraduate level (Jill et al.,2011:1331). Because of the natural time constraints of this study, I chose to make use of the traditional approach.

A traditional literature review is, according to Jesson et al. (2011:292), *"a written appraisal of what is already known – existing knowledge on a topic – with no prescribed methodology."* Within the traditional review I have chosen to use the approach of the "conceptual review", which aims to *"synthesize areas of conceptual knowledge that contribute to a better understanding of the issues"* (Jesson et al., 2011: 375). The traditional review, as undertaken by undergraduates and Masters-level students, aims to be comprehensive, by presenting a summary review of the current state of knowledge about a particular subject. It also seeks to add new insights on the topic, according to Jesson et al. (2011: 1323). The appeal of this style of review lies in its claim to be a more neutral, technical process, which is rational and standardized, thereby demonstrating objectivity and a transparent report to the reader (Jesson et al., 2011:400).

The limitation of using this method is that it does not contribute with any new knowledge. Because of this, I found it interesting to combine the literature review with a case study[7], to bring in examples and contribute with a unique perspective on the topic.

The method I have made use of in this thesis has been of the iterative kind. The original intention was to create a systematic literature review. As I started reading through the data, the links between my previously written Bachelor's Thesis, and the material became obvious. My curiosity regarding "The Medieval Valley" project was awakened. I found it relevant to use the findings from the case study, as integrated and indicative examples in the synthesis. The method might be best described as being a "selective literature review".

2.3 Data collection

I started the process with my general topic of interest – change management and resistance to change, and decided on an issue for inquiry. I made use of the following data bases to locate the literature:

- *Search strings from searching electronic databases (e.g. JSTOR, Google Scholar)*
- *The records retrieved from database searches*
- *Bibliographic databases (i.e. BIBSYS)*
- *Official websites (i.e. Fagbokforlaget, Universitetsforlaget, Amazon)*
- *Library*
- *Digital electronic library*
- *Journal databases*

The only data that is used in this study is secondary data. The benefit of making use of these kinds of sources is that they are "stabile", containing the concrete names, references and information, which increases the possibility of replicating the study. I also made use of the snowball teqnique[8].

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[7] The findings from the case study that I investigated in my Bachelor's Thesis from 2012.
[8] Finding relevant sources through already collected data.

The number of references to include depends very much on the topic and the body of literature that exists on that topic (Jesson et al., 2011:636).

2.4 Data selection

The number of selected articles consists of the number I found necessary to illuminate the problem formulation. I focused on including the main theoretical perspectives of "resistance to change". The review is in a way a "meta-review"[9], as it conducts a review of previously reviewed articles that covers similar topics.

Rich citations

I have chosen to include "rich" citations from the case study findings to provide an opportunity for the reader to consider the findings for his or her self. This descriptive format in combination with the synthesized literature that was found relevant to interpret the case citations, should provide a sufficient foundation to get a thorough understanding of change agents and change recipients understanding "resistance to change", and the potential contribution of the phenomenon.

The case citations have also acted as the "identification of the problem area". In a real-life setting with a learning organization that engaged in systems thinking, the first step towards increased understanding would be to map the problem area. In this thesis the citations function as this evaluative mapping, and the following causal loop diagram and analysis provides the rest of the "simulated systems thinking approach".

I found it relevant to include citations from the previously mentioned case study to in a clearer way illuminate the findings. I chose to include the citations in the synthesis, so that the placement of the given citation indicates my interpretation of them, without explicitly stating it. This enables the reader to make up his or her mind of the relevance. In the analysis I have more explicitly stated my interpretation of the findings.

It is important to note that the findings from the case are based on interviews that were conveyed seven years after the project ended. This may have affected the memory of participants to some extent, and subsequently, the findings in this thesis. I chose to make

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[9] A review of reviews.

use of a document analysis in addition to the interviews to seek confirmative findings that could support the memory of the interview participants.

2.5 Synthesis and analysis

In the synthesis, I have chosen to divide the literature findings between the three research questions. The case citations are integrated where it seems relevant to provide a real-life example. I have sorted the information according to the main categories and themes that appeared in the different literature, and that was relevant to include to shed light on the problem formulation.

The data analysis is the process where the researcher subtracts meaning from his or her data, by first tearing apart the findings and thereafter analyze and put them back together again. A better understanding of the different parts can contribute to a deeper, more holistic understanding of the phenomenon or the setting that are being studied, according to Postholm (2010:105).

To analyze the findings I have chosen to consider the literature findings and case citations in light of the Systems Thinking perspective. By first considering the literature findings and the case examples in relation to the generic structures, and thereafter sketching these forces in a causal loop diagram to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the different underlying forces in the case, that explains how the change agents and recipients understand and act upon "resistance to change".

In the analysis, I have used the causal loop diagram as an analyzing tool. The loop shows the interrelatedness between the forces that was at work in the case, and through this reflective and analytical process, the leverage points became clear. The choice of using this as a framework therefore served a dual-purpose; it worked as the analytical framework it is meant as - for organizations taking on a systems thinking approach in a setting that aims for organizational learning, and also acts as a demonstration in this thesis, of how it can be used as an analyzing tool for understanding challenging and complex problems in organizations (i.e. "resistance to change").

2.6 Evaluating the data

2.6.1 Reliability

The "reliability" of the study, means to what degree the conclusions of the study can be said to be consistent and replicable; whether they are trustworthy.

The main issue regarding the reliability of the literature findings in this report is whether the searches are substantial enough.

The question that should be asked in relation to this, is; "can this result be reproduced at a different time and by other researchers? Would a different researcher have selected other articles?" In this instance it could be said that there is a potential subjectivity bias (Kvale, 2009: 250). The articles that I found was considered in regards of their potential of shedding light on the problem formulation. This consideration is based on my subjective opinion regarding what seemed relevant, and this may have affected the reliability of the study to some degree.

When addressing qualitative research the researcher are often influenced by his or her subjective, individual theories – and also his or her existing worldview. This means that they have with them a set of biases, in the form of assumptions or a perspective of the world, which may affect the research (Postholm, 2010: 33).

2.6.2 Range of validity

The validity clarifies whether the findings and results reflect the aim of the study, and whether it represents the reality that the researcher wants to capture.

As in all qualitative studies, the researcher cannot be completely objective. This research may be influenced by my interpretation of the findings in light of existing understanding, knowledge, attitudes, values, competence and theoretical background. This may have affected the validity.

3.0 SYNTHESIS
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In this chapter I will provide a summarized review of the existing knowledge and major research done by the selected theoreticians and their perspectives on resistance to change. I have integrated the findings from the bachelor thesis, in the form of the citations, which will function as real-life examples to shed further light on the research questions of interest. The different articles from the literature search and the case citations are sorted under relevant categories and topics that evolved throughout the process. The literature will be combined with relevant citations from the case of "The Medieval Valley", to create a coherent synthesis. I have segmented the findings from the literature in-under the three different research questions, as I found this to be the most structured and understandable way to present it. I will start out with RQ1, pointing out the existing knowledge's perspective on how managers understand RTC. Following this section is the findings regarding how existing knowledge views employees understanding of RTC. The next section looks at whether RTC can be positive for the change initiative.

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"If you keep on doing what you've always done,

you'll keep on getting what you've always got" ~ W. L. Bateman

In the case one of the main findings was that the change agents felt that the change recipients worked against them through resistant attitudes and behaviors.

The first section of this chapter emphasizes change agents' understanding of the behavior and communication associated with resistance to change. The research question that will be investigated here, is: *"How do change agents understand and act upon resistance?"*

3.1 Roadblocks to be overcome

"Someone holding the hypothesis of, or actually believing in, resistance to change, will plan on resistance, will plot ways to minimize it, will be tempted to disguise or hide the change, will keep it a secret, in short take any and all actions to overcome this assumed resistance, which then, surprise, surprise, leads to the appearance of the very phenomenon that was hoped to be avoided" (quoted in Dent & Goldberg, 1999a: 38; Ford, 2008: 364).

Managers often see employees who resist as disobedient, and therefore immediately perceive resistance solely in a negative way (Watson, 1982; Piderit, 2000: 784); they see it as

a barrier for them to implement a planned change successfully, and something that needs to be overcome. They think it creates more work for them, that it hinders progress, and that it is based on the self-interests of the "resistors" (Ford&Ford, 2010:24).

«Early on we made a decision that there was not possible to focus solely on the true medieval aspect of the valley. All the businesses in the region were part of 'The Medieval Valley'. The tourism industry was probably anticipating something more, and for us to create something that could be marketed under the branding name of 'The Medieval Valley'. Instead, we chose to focus on a promotional program that was quite costly.»

Senge (et al.,1999:1377) considers how "limits to growth" situations (i.e. resistance) tend to develop in two stages. At the outset there is an initial phase of accelerating growth, and then a slowdown as a result of the balancing (limiting) forces. When the first balancing forces confront a leader, it is easy for him or her to feel them as an external, disempowering bothersome and inconvenient event that is attacking from the outside.

Ford & Ford (2010) argues that managers often find resistance threatening. These managers may become competitive, defensive, and uncommunicative, more concerned about being right, looking good (or not looking bad), and winning (having it their way) than about accomplishing the change. By doing this, they may alienate the relationship with the change recipients, who are essential to accomplishing the change (Ford&Ford, 2010:24).

When people feel fear and anxiety, perceive open anger and shouting, their first instinct is to grab "unilateral control"; to do whatever is necessary to take charge of the conversation in an attempt to make the threat go away (Senge et al, 1999:5312).

3.1.1 Self-fulfilling prophecies

There is a tendency of managers to set up self-fulfilling prophecies. This is a person's belief or theory about a certain event that they believe will happen in the future. At the time they start to hold the belief, it is false. Then the person often behaves as if the event is an inevitable occurrence, and makes sense of the behavior and communications of others in a way that confirms what originally was merely a prophecy. The person then approaches situations and perceives them as a correct perception of reality, rather than a product of his

or her own theories. This tendency often makes managers end up explaining ny difficulties and failure with having met "resistance" along the way (Ford & Ford, 2010: 34). These expectations are by Ford (Weick, 1979; Ford 2008:364) shown to have significant impact on how change agents makes sense of the world around them. They have also found that these expectations predispose change agents to actively and unconsciously *look for* resistance. Through these sense-making tendencies managers validate their expectations – and sustain the "common knowledge" about how "people resist change".

«Concretely, the resistance appeared as emotional unrest at the meetings, and heated disagreements. It actually became quite personal. It was pretty heated at some meetings – and this was of course because it touched on the aspects regarding their identity. I expected that there would be some resistance – I understood that I was entering 'a bee cube'. So that part was not surprising to me.»

Managers who are expecting to meet resistance when they introduce a change proposal can still be overwhelmed by the tone or style of the communication from the recipients. This makes them unresponsive and disables them from subtracting valuable information from employee input (Ford&Ford, 2010:32).

Resistance has become a concept that managers use to categorize the behaviors and attitudes that they do not like, want or think should take place. What they term "resistance" does, however, not depend on the behaviors observed, but on the interpretation and judgment of the observer doing the labeling (Ford&Ford, 2010:25).

The isolated hero-leader

The realization that they cannot do this alone is also vital; they need the rest of the team. Becoming isolated "heroes" will cut them off from the support and assistance that they must have to implement a sustainable change initiative (Senge et al.,1999:483). Many leaders set out to fix issues single-handedly. By sharing their efforts with partners who are part of the "same" system, they could have operated much more effectively.

«At first, I[10] was very overwhelmed by the project plan and taking in all it contained – it was a lot. The project was to boost the industry, strengthen the identity, strengthen the cultural aspect – and generally; cover everything. I chose to continue working with the profile, since this was very concrete.

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[10] The second project leader.

I had thought that I would accomplish much more, but I was probably too ambitious. I believe that the main problem was that there were too many main chores and objectives in the project plan. If I had known then, what I know now – I would have at least reduced the project plan to contain only half of what it said. I was frantically trying to do many things at the same time, because I tried to make all of it happen at once. It was not possible to accomplish everything.»

3.1.2 Defensive reasoning, blaming and labeling

Argyris (1994:79) explains the underlying reason for why people react to change in the way they do, is because of the tendency to engage in *defensive reasoning*. This is the tendency to sidestep all responsibility and e.g. defend oneself against the lack of results by pointing to the responsibility of others. The purpose is self-protection. This mechanism is grounded in the set of deeper and more complex psychological motives in us humans. People that engage in defensive reasoning rarely acknowledge that they act in this way, reflect on whether it is the ideal behavior for the given situation, and acknowledge that they do it to protect them selves. According to Argyris (1994:81) defensive reasoning is a universal phenomenon that inhibits valuable insights and genuine learning.

The reason why people, and often managers, fail to question their own behavior and thereby avoid double-loop learning – has to do with their existing mental models; the models that are retrieved whenever we need to interpret an event, diagnose a problem or come up with a solution, and are there to simplify life by letting us interpret events in the light of our already existing models. Whenever managers are trying to get at the truth about problems that are embarrassing or threatening, they are likely to reason defensively. They are also likely to tend to superficial, single-loop responses, that lead to superficial single-loop solutions, and to be unaware of their own defenses because these are so deeply ingrained in their thought patterns. If they are aware of any defensiveness, it's the one they see in others, leaving their own behavior unexamined, and avoiding any objective test of their decisions and conclusions (Argyris, 1994:81).

The fundamental attribution error

The tendency to dismiss employees' objections to change may be a manifestation of the fundamental attribution error (Jones & Harris, 1967; Piderit, 2000: 784); that is, managers in

charge of rolling out a change initiative blame others for the failure of the initiative, rather than accepting their role in its failure.

«In hindsight, there is possible that I did not have the sufficient background and competence myself. I wouldn't say that things failed, but it didn't turn out the way one had envisioned – I think that those who were involved when the project plans were developed, did not have enough knowledge regarding tourism.»

There is a tendency to blame resistance when intended results are not achieved, and the label are often used to dismiss employee concerns about proposed changes. These concerns may be valid, but not wanted by the change agents, according to Piderit (2000:784).

«Despite some attempts to try and anchor the project with the industry, the results were fruitless. I do not think it is an overstatement to say that a lot of the tourism businesses had a very negative attitude.»

«There should have been developed many more concrete things for the visitors. That was really the main idea the whole time, but to make that happen one needs to have some strengths that contribute to making it happen.»

In the science of psychology, it has been found that people make attribution errors[11], when it comes to explaining successes and failures. There is a clear tendency of human reasoning towards explaining a success due to our own abilities and efforts; taking credit for positive results and accomplishments, and explaining it by "my talent", "my effort", "my persistence", or "my work habits". On the contrary, we are likely to explain failure or setbacks to external factors such as bad luck or inappropriate actions of others. Failures are therefore explained by "problems regarding resources" (e.g. market conditions and economic turbulence), "personnel", "unreliable distributors", etc. – all in which are "factors that I cannot control" (Ford&Ford, 2010:25). The managers are therefore failing to consider their own behavior and attitudes, and considering the possibility of them contributing to the experienced "situation of resistance" (Ford&Ford, 2010:25).

The forces at play

Ford & Ford (2010:25) have found that three different forces can explain change agents' tendency of perceiving and explaining the attitudes of the change recipients as resistant: a)

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[11] The fundamental attribution error (FAE) suggests that social perceivers attribute other people's behavior primarily to dispositional causes, rather than to situational causes. (Source: http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199828340/obo-9780199828340-0114.xml)

cognitive biases (i.e. believing the best of ourselves), b) social dynamics (i.e. a social need to explain mistakes or failures), and c) managerial missteps (i.e. the undermining of trust and credibility). These forces are natural and with a wide variety of expressions, and shape their responses to recipients' reactions during change. These factors reinforce each other and together they represent the hidden, almost unconscious pull managers have towards blaming resistance and labeling it as such.

By locating resistance "over there, in them" (i.e. the change recipients), rather than treating it as the interconnected systemic phenomenon that it is, change agents shift responsibility for resistance from things under their control, to the characteristics and attributes of recipients – which they cannot control (Caruth, Middlebrook, & Rachel, 1985; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; O'Toole, 1995; Ford, 2008: 365). This in turn, conceals the specific behaviors and communications that lie behind it, the true reason for the "resistance".

«There was some who refused to take part in the medieval concept, because they didn't have any positive associations with it. It was a terrible, dark and sad period. 'The black and heavy medieval age?, We don't want to have anything to do with it'. Additionally, they disagreed with the use of resources – also the spendings of the monetary resources, which they believed should have been used on other things. Some of them were a little aggressive, and they thought that it was poor use of funds and they did not agree with us regarding the concept of the branding.»

Creating Distance

Blaming resistance is a natural solution and coping strategy, but by explicitly accusing employees of resisting the managers are distancing themselves from the people who are expected to implement and in the future work the closest with the change (Ford and Ford, 2010:27)

3.1.3 Socially accepted to blame resistance

"Blaming resistance is a socially acceptable explanation, because 'everybody knows' that people resist change. It can also be socially functional, in that it may provide managers with a "legitimate" way of securing resources and support they might not otherwise had been able to obtain" (Ford&Ford, 2010:26)

The Social Acceptance of Pulling the Resistance Card

Blaming resistance has become a legitimate reason for not having accomplished the planned change within the time frame and the resources put down in advance. When a manager declares resistance – this is in an organizational change context commonly translated into "a call for help". By declaring this, the manager tends to get attention, empathy and support from others. It is therefore a way to excuse oneself from failure, solicit concern and interest, and shift the focus of the problem to those who are resisting. This can have the beneficial effect of freeing up resources and giving managers the permission to use strategies to overcome resistance which they might not otherwise use or consider appropriate (Ford&Ford, 2010:26).

What Will the Audience Think?

According to Ford (et al., 2008) this kind of sense-making[12] occurs when action is subject to evaluation, particularly when there is a gap between action and expectation or between promise and performance. After the recognition of the gap, the change agent often engage in conversations that involve self-justifying explanations of events and activities. If the change agent is expected to mobilize action and fail to do so, a legitimate explanation for the failure is expected (Eccles, Nohria, & Berley, 1992; Ford, 2008: 364). The explanation is used to address unfavorable behaviors or outcomes that will contribute in helping the speaker maintain a positive relationship with the audience hearing the explanation. This shifts the blame and makes the manager "look good" (e.g. Bettman & Weitz, 1983; Ford, 1985; Kelly, 1973; Salancik & Meindl, 1984; Ford, 2008: 364).

Explanations that appeal to what "everyone knows" have a higher likelihood of being accepted (Scott and Lyman, 1968; Ford, 2008: 364). Resistance is seen as an acceptable account in a change context. This means that when change agents' explains how they have faced resistance in a change process, this diverts attention from other factors; for example their own failings (Meston & king, 1996; Ford, 2008: 364). By making the blaming of resistance (e.g. for the lack of results) an acceptable explanation, change agents are in a way encouraged to engage in sense-making that entails laying off responsibility (Ford, 2008: 364). The reason why managers engage in these intentional misrepresentations is to avoid losing

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[12] I.e. the change agents' way of making sense of failures, setbacks, or complaints for an interested audience.

face, often in the eyes of their subordinates or an interested audience (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, & Wyer, 1996; Ford et al, 2008: 367). There is also an unwritten expectation of how the manager should always be in control.

3.1.4 Assumptions

«I think the intention regarding making this project work, was good. We thought about the tourism industry and about letting them partake, the whole time, but I don't think it was thoroughly investigated in advance whether they thought it was a good idea. A whole lot of assumptions took place.»

The better mousetrap theory

The theory of "The better mouse trap" is based on the assumption that if an innovation is successful, interest will spread, and the wanted results will ultimately follow. The managers assume that by making use of an approach where they let the results speak for them selves, the employees will understand and accept the change initiative, and the challenge of diffusion will be overcome. Senge (et al., 1999:976), among others, considers this to be a misunderstood description of how change initiatives should spread throughout an organization, and one that is not sustainable in the long run.

If the agent choose to engage a small group of recipients in identifying the need for change, and then later aiming to gain broader employee support and commitment for that proposal, this will often not be as effective (Weick & Quinn, 1999: 362; Piderit, 2000: 791).

«It was challenging to promote a whole valley as 'The Medieval Valley' when only half of the participants wanted to partake. After a while we chose to not use any more energy on those who said that 'this doesn't interest us' – because it was pointless. During the course of the process, there were fewer open meetings. We chose to work with those that wanted to partake, and we assumed that once we had created some results, the others would want to become a part of it.»

Distribution of information

Change agents often mistakenly assume that understanding is sufficient to produce action. They are likely to emphasize conversations for understanding over conversation for performance and as a consequence, they are likely to see little or no action (Beer et al.,

1990; Ford & Ford, 1995; Ford, 2008: 367). It is a naïve assumption to think that recipient understanding and acceptance will lead to action. If change agents make this assumption, they may inappropriately attribute the lack of action to resistance (Ford et al, 2008: 367).

«Many participants found it to be a good initiative, and we put representatives from the tourism industry in The Internal Board. Thus, we thought about letting the tourism businesses partake the whole time. But many of them weren't to positive regarding the idea. We engaged different speakers, who explained during seminars, that calling oneself 'The Medieval Valley' was something positive. This was hard for the tourism industry to grasp. Many did not trust it fully; while other participants were not very excited about it.»

Grabbing fter the low-hanging fruit

By engaging in behavior related to the better mousetrap theory, people are often motivated by quickly being able to show to observable results. This often makes them overlook the deeper issues that are being sidestepped, and fail to develop the learning capabilities that leads to the wanted sustainable change. Believing that the results will speak for themselves, is a classic assumption made by leaders (Senge et al.,1999:5913).

The fundamental flaw in most change agents' strategies is that they focus on their innovation, on what they are trying to do - rather than on understanding how the larger culture, structures and norms of their organization or company will react to their efforts (Senge et al., 1999: 657).

A unilateral phenomenon

Change agents tends to objectify the resistance as if it existed independent of them and as if they had nothing to do with its creation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Ford, 2008: 364); assuming that resistance is a unilateral phenomenon. The reality is that resistance is at least partially dependent on the behavior of the agents themselves, and it is important to see both sides of the story. It is both inaccurate and simplistic to view resistance as coming only from "over there, in them"; and from the behaviors and attitudes of the change recipients. This perception assumes that only the recipients must alter their behaviors, and that the change would easily succeed if it were not for their irrational actions that purposefully block the implementation (Ford&Ford, 2010:24).

What they fail to realize when they blame resistance is how this approach causes a distance between the managers and the people who are expected to implement, and

most likely work the closest with the change once its implemented. Approaching a change context with the perception of the resistors being the roadblock will rob managers of a powerful lever in the conduct of change (Ford&Ford, 2010:27).

«The question is how one interprets the term 'The Medieval Valley'.
I think that car racing is just as much a medieval activity as anything else.»

3.2 "RESISTANCE TO CHANGE"

In the case one of the main findings was that the change recipients felt that the change agents had treated them unfairly and that being labeled "resistant" and "negative" did not match their perception of what took place. In the first section the change agents' understanding of resistance was looked into, in this upcoming section I will take a look at how the *recipients* understand the phenomenon and its implications, and how this knowledge can be interpreted in light of the case of "The medieval valley". The research question I will investigate in this section is: *"How do change recipients understand and act upon 'resistance'?"*

3.2.1 The source of the resistance

«The DTO is good at providing the monetary resources and engaging consultants, but not so good at anchoring, continuation, and successive implementation of the initiative. This is a huge challenge, since projects has become the way we 'do things' in this valley. Even though, some of us often think: 'Here we go again' when we hear about upcoming initiatives.»

In light of the before-mentioned human tendencies to perceive different events as totally different things, it is unreasonable to conclude that people are intentionally resisting. That they are doing it "just to be difficult", to sabotage or that the motivation lies in their self-interests, is assumptions change agents often make (Graham, 1984, 1986; Piderit, 2000: 784). The anger (or fear) that some people have towards organizational change does not necessarily mean they are against the entire change, believe management is incompetent, or suspect that the plan is a cover for something else (Ford&Ford, 2010:30). Ford (et al. 2008: 262) also states that resistant behavior and attitudes does not just appear for any reason.

«We felt that 'The Medieval Valley' was a cultural thing, and found it positive that all of the cultural tourism businesses were going to cooperate and be gathered underneath the one and same promotional name. All of a sudden, a second project leader was hired, who instantly defined the project as a promotional project. Subsequently, the project took a whole new turn, and there were substantial groundwork and necessary phases of the process that were skipped - for example, creating a feeling of identity, mapping out which resources we had to work with, and what those resources could bring in the form of development at the different farms (i.e. the medieval buildings and the tourism businesses) and so on.»

Motivation

Managers often introduce and decide on planned change initiations without taking into consideration whether the proposed change will affect change recipients' personal values and aspirations in a negative way (Senge et al, 1999:4321). To avoid this, and the potential of this being expressed through "resistant" behavior, an emphasis on clarifying personal values and developing a compelling case for change should be prioritized at an early phase of the process. Not explicitly articulating relevance, or that the individual manager focus on pursuing his or her own agenda, can prevent any significant momentum from developing and the entire effort may cease before it has even started (Senge et al., 1999:3432).

«I was very surprised that it suddenly started to evolve around promotion as a main activity, instead of product development. This departed from the objectives in the project description, and it should have been much more debate around this choice.»

«Should a whole valley use a profile with something they could not identify with?! That is hard to pull off.»

«The medieval buildings are unique but they're not accessible. Then it is pointless, because you cannot use it. It is not correct to use the concept of 'The Medieval Valley' in the context of marketing for this entire valley.»

Senge (et al.,1999:1067) have found that *direct personal benefits* constitute the first source of reinforcing energy for sustaining deep change. It is also found that the recipients find it motivating to work in a team where people feel aligned to a sense of common purpose.

«I envisioned that this project would be a culture project. Not that we would just market the valley under a certain name – and not that <u>all</u> of the businesses in in the valley (even those who did not participate) had to accept and use this name; also the businesses that did not have a cultural profile; for example gas stations; every business in this entire valley. I thought 'The Medieval Valley' should have been a cultural project for the participating tourism businesses with a cultural product. It should have captured all the aspects of culture in this valley – and that that should have been the concept and the foundation.»

Aspiration

The recipients' "resistance" is often an expression for something they find concerning. In the initial phase after a change proposal most people are focusing their attention towards what the change proposal means to them, and their communications often

reflect their immediate concerns regarding how the implementation of the change will affect their everyday lives and their future in the organization. Human beings are predisposed to search for meaning in their lives, and establishing relevance has always been important for any change initiative. People will not commit fully if the goals have little real meaning to them (Senge et al.,1999:1266).

Natural expression

The change recipients' acceptance of and participation in the initial stages of a change has been linked to their assessment of the likelihood that the change will lead to personal and organizational benefits (Kim & Rosseau, 2006; Ford et al., 2008: 366). For this reason recipients engage in investigative behavior by questioning and evaluating the elements of supporting arguments in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of the change proposal (Knowles & Linn, 2004b; Ford et al., 2008: 366). The perceived "resistance" may therefore be said to be a completely natural expression.

3.2.2 Compliant versus committed change recipients

Sometimes one "difficult" person can slow a change proposal, or prevent it from moving into a more productive phase by being active in his or her resistance. However, people who are outspoken about their objections to a change proposal are often people who genuinely care about getting things right, and who are close enough to the inner workings of an organization to see the pitfalls in a plan (Ford&Ford, 2010:30)

According to Senge (et al., 1999:6092), the key to the success of change initiatives is based on "activating the energizing commitment and energy of people, around changes they deeply care about".

Chasing contentment

The managers tendency to emphasize being positive is counter-productive, according to Argyris (1994:85). Firstly, it overlooks the critical role that dissatisfaction and negative attitudes can play in giving an accurate picture of the reality. Secondly, it assumes that employees can only be productive if they are content. This bias provides superficial answers to critical questions, which in turn will lead to adequate results. Argyris (1994:

85) further argues that the mind-set associated with external commitment and positive thinking at any price, may produce lack of honesty and single-loop learning. It will however, never result in the kind of learning that might actually help a company change (i.e. double-loop learning).

Ford et al. (2008: 369) proposes that there are a potentially higher level of psychological involvement and commitment at work, among people who are demonstrating "resistance" than among those who seemingly accept the proposal right away. Change recipients who are highly committed to the success of the organization but disagree with a proposed change because it threatens something of value to them or the organization often express their concerns.

Senge et al. (1999:348) have found that most management-driven change efforts are built on employee compliance instead of commitment. Effective managers appreciate the fundamental difference between superficial compliance and genuine commitment, and seek to foster an internal motivation (Senge et al.,1999:357). Committed people differ from compliant people in the way that they have their own ideas and passions, and this can be intimidating for managers used to being in control (Senge, et al.,1999:1096).

Senge (et al, 1999:3442) makes the point that the people who are to work the closest with the implemented change (i.e. the change recipients), needs to connect personally with the change initiative. They need to see that the implementation will lead to a fulfillment of key needs for the organization - and thereby them selves. They also want to understand how they can contribute in the process, and how they personally will benefit from engaging in the tasks. If these needs are not met, a "commitment gap" will arise and their participation will not be internally motivated. This will therefore participate because they feel they have to, and not because they feel genuinely committed to it (Senge et al.,1999:3442).

Argyris (1994:83) states that managers explicitly embrace the language of intrinsic motivation, but fail to see how firmly in the old extrinsic world their communications really are. Once employees base their motivation on extrinsic factors – e.g.

unquestionably believe in the manager's opinions and promises – they are much less likely to take chances, question established ways, or explore the underlying properties of the organizations' vision. In other words, they are much less likely to learn (Argyris, 1994:84).

Resistance may, in many cases, reflect a higher level of commitment than immediate acceptance, since it often is grounded in thorough reasoning and evaluation. Treating resistance as "irrational", assumes that it is the result of an shallow, unconsidered, and uninformed choice (Brunsson, 1986; Ford, 2008: 369).

If the recipients' changes in attitudes are based on high levels of information processing, this represent a significant benefit for change agents, since it will give them highly committed and motivated recipients to contribute in the process (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003; Kotter, 1995; Ford et al, 2008: 369).

"Unthoughtful" acceptance, although it provides pleasant immediate agreement and support, are likely to erode as change progresses, making this adoption little sustainable – and wanted - in the long run (Duck, 2001; Ford, 2008: 369).

The Value of Functional Conflict

Resistance is a form of conflict. And since conflict has been found to strengthen and improve decisions and participants' commitment to the implementation of them (Amason, 1996; Ford, 2008: 369), it is likely that resistance can provide a similar strengthening value during change initiatives. By treating resistance as a dysfunctional conflict, change agents lose the potential strengthening value that functional conflict can contribute with (Ford et al, 2008:370).

Resistance as a necessary precursor for change

In a world with absolutely no resistance, no change would stick, according to Ford (et al, 2008:370), and recipients would completely accept the arguments behind all the instructions and messages they receive, including those detrimental to the organization.

According to Piderit (2000: 790), moving too quickly toward congruent positive attitudes regarding a proposed change might eliminate the discussion that may be necessary for revising the initial change proposal in a way that ultimately leads to adoption and genuine commitment (Piderit, 2000: 790). Agents should consider the absence of resistance as a sign of disengagement and a warning regarding potential future problems resulting from shallow acceptance (Wegener et al., 2004; Ford, 2008: 369).

Creativity and innovation

Managers need employees who think constantly and creatively about the needs of the organization. They need those with much intrinsic motivation and a deep sense of organizational stewardship (Argyris, 1994: 85). If groups that have a deep sense of responsibility for the business do not have the "space" to expand their thinking toward fundamental new ideas about strategy and purpose, a significant source of innovation is lost (Senge et al.,1999:10419).

3.2.3 Individual Perception and Ambivalence

Piderit (2000: 787) discusses that an employee's response to an organizational change proposal often will be affected by the individual's perception of the given change, and that the degree of the response may vary along several different continuums of the following dimensions. Along the **cognitive dimension[13]** the belief can range from strong positive beliefs (e.g. "this change is essential for the organization to succeed") to strong negative beliefs (e.g. "this change could ruin the company"). An employee's response along the **emotional dimension[14]** might range from strong positive emotions (e.g. excitement or happiness) to strong negative emotions (e.g. anger or fear). An employee's response along the **intentional dimension[15]** might range from positive intentions to support the change to negative intentions to oppose it (Piderit, 2000: 787). The conclusion in Piderit's research is that change recipients' often feel ambivalent

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[13] Definition: *"Beliefs that express positive or negative evaluation of greater or lesser extremity, and occasionally are exactly neutral in their evaluative content"* (Piderit, 2000: 786).
[14] Definition: *"The feelings, moods, emotions, and sympathetic nervous-system activity that people have experienced in relation to an attitude object and subsequently associate with it"* (Piderit, 2000: 786).
[15] This dimension has no clear definition. It reflects an individual's evaluations of an attitude object that are based in past behaviors and future intentions to act (Piderit, 2000: 786).

towards a change proposal, for example can both excitement and fear, often be experienced simultaneously (Vince & Broussine, 1996; Piderit, 2000: 787).

Senge (et al.,1999:2322) states that, leaders should be compassionate towards peoples concerns, and aim to connect with their employees. Even though a leader may like some people more than others in a group, he or she should be aware of the range of personae that lives within each person, and that the way they act toward the recipients will elicit the behavior and attitudes that can be seen. Leaders should acknowledge and respect the different views, skills, and learning styles that different people bring to the table. The manager should allow both skeptic and enthusiastic views to be heard, and let people sense that they are heard and recognized. The more the recipients feel connected to their employees, the more completely they will trust the change agent and this in turn will likely secure an effective implementation (Senge et al.,1999: 5224).

An employee that feels ambivalent towards a change process might plan to oppose a proposed change, but might support the change publicly because of uncertainty about how the management will respond to criticism of the change initiative (Piderit, 2000:787).

Unreadiness
Piderit (Watson, 1982; Piderit, 2000: 786) also suggests that what is often labeled "resistance", is in fact only reluctance or "unreadiness". Participation is however shown to have motivational and positive cognitive effects on the "resistance". The local knowledge will also be needed for the change agents to understand what the change proposal really means for the people that will work the closest with the implemented innovation, and for the process as a whole. People who are closer to the action will need to be included in formulating the proposal for change, and change agents must be prepared to listen and to modify the plan as needed (Ford&Ford, 2010:34).

«One needs to create a process that surrounds the initiative. Many people in this valley are tired of getting their hopes up every time there's presented yet another project initiative.»

Ambivalence and its acknowledgement might have positive effects, by functioning as a needed stimulus for unlearning[16] - which is a necessary precursor to change (Pratt & Barnett, 1997; Piderit, 2000: 790). Honest expression of ambivalence is found more likely to generate constructive dialogue than the expression of either absolute refusal or clear support. It is argued that acknowledging ambivalence can provide a basis for motivating new action, rather than the continuation of old routines (Weigert & Franks, 1989; Piderit: 790). The ability to understand a situation from a different angle or to apply a novel interpretation is often the key to finding a previously unconsidered alternative that may lead to novel and wanted behavior. By reframing the understanding of status quo through fostering of ambivalence, organizations will be better able to generate new understanding and action. The strategy of fostering ambivalence rather than support in the early stages of a change initiative, can lead to a new perspective and expectation of how the first stage of a change process should play out (Piderit, 2000: 791).

«Things were done in the wrong sequence. Promoting something that doesn't have any real content, wont work. One had not determined what could be related to 'The Medieval Valley' in advance, this was only made clear during the course of the project. The phases of the project were not properly sequenced.»

If change agents are tempted to persuade, bribe or threaten people in any way, to get their will, those approaches will merely increase the resistance that people feel (Senge et al.,1999:3479).

«The anchoring of the idea is an elementary part of the process, for those who are knowledgeable about project implementation. If there had been a process, where they had listened to our needs and we were taken seriously, the project could have been more successful. An environment of coercion without consultation and the approach of 'forcing something down someone's throat' never produces good results. There were many rushed conclusions and long-term strategies were not followed.»

When managers become aware of increasing fear or anxiety, they often respond by pushing harder believing that that will provide the wanted behavior and attitude. In stead this often increases anxiety. They often talk about why the initiative is important, and remind people how bad it will be if nothing is done at all (Senge et al.,1999:5254). Unilateral control blocks

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[16] The discarding of obsolete and misleading knowledge (Piderit, 2000:790).

openness, and there is not possible to get people to stop doing something by preaching at them (Senge et al., 1999:5322).

«The speaker which the management engaged was a cultural expert who spoke a good deal about details from the medieval age. I believe that this initiative had more of an opposite effect, than what they had expected. There should have been a person that talked about the potential positive impact of a tourism project of this size – and who also explained to us how the product development would be conducted.»

If people learn about new ideas from others they trust and who have no authority over them, they are not threatened and more likely to remain open-minded (Senge, dance, 1144).

3.2.4 Trust and broken agreements

Expectations

According to Ford (et al, 2010:27), expectations that are unfulfilled will make people become more cautious about upcoming change proposals. They will also be more likely to question intentions and challenge assumptions and conclusions. Unfulfilled expectations that can be linked to management's actions will lead to recipients distrust and will reduce their belief regarding how agents will successfully avoid making further mistakes. Resistant responses a manager receives to a change proposal may therefore have little or nothing to do with the current plan (Ford & Ford, 2010: 33), their reactions could be grounded in previous actions or inactions that the change agents has engaged in.

«I think that one was not good enough regarding the activity concept. That is after all, what the point of executing a tourism project is – being able to offer something concrete to the tourists. They don't travel to this valley to look at logos – they don't just want the headline, they want the actual content. I think it's a pity that so much money was spent on the 'medieval signs'[17]. It is embarrassing if we're saying that we are something we're not. There is no point in marketing a profile if the profile doesn't contain anything. That being the case, one needs to remove those signs.»

Credibility and managerial missteps

People often have a need to know whether or not those that initiates the change seems trustworthy and committed - especially if they are in positions of authority, and especially in the initial phases of the change process (Senge et al, 1999:4189). Senge (et

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[17] I.e. the two signs in each end of the valley that says 'Welcome to The Medieval Valley'.

al.,1999:4158) states that, people seldom expect perfection, but they recognize sincerity and openness - and the absence of it. The credibility of the change agents will, before the efforts has resulted in any real progress, be the primary source of credibility of the initiative.

«The participants did not have trust in those who tried to work with the medieval concept (i.e. the management). When initiating theses kinds of big projects, the process is often characterized by rush, because things are starting to fall apart somewhere, and one needs to just do something. The reality seldom becomes what one had anticipated in advance, and the whole thing becomes a lot of small rushed measures, aimed at salvage, in order to secure the survival of the project. Every time one (i.e. the management) tries to 'keep it alive'; one gets less and less trust from us 'ordinary people who live here'.»

«To give this kind of project the optimal benefits that affects the area surrounding it in the positive way that we want and need in a tourism district like ours, everything depends on good management of the project. One needs someone who feels an ownership to the idea, and who eagerly works for it and believes in it.»

Every manager makes mistakes, but every manager do not recognize and admit having made them (Ford & Ford, 2010: 26). One common example is the mistake of breaking agreements[18] (i.e. psychological and implied contracts) and failing to restore the resulted loss of trust. Ford (et al., 2008:365; Caruth et al., 1985; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; O'Toole, 1995) suggests that resistance may be the result of perceived injustice and broken agreements, which leads to reduced recipient trust and agent credibility. These are broken whenever agents of the organization knowingly or unknowingly pulls back from a promise, or do not act in an expected way (Axelrod, 1984; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rosseau, 1989; Ford et al, 2008:365). When recipients see themselves as having been treated fairly, on the other hand, they develop attitudes and behaviors associated with successful change (Senge et al.,1999:4206).

The breach of agreements tends to happen both before and during change. Ford (2008:365) claims that by breaking agreements, the change agents contribute to the resistance they perceive. By failing to restore the distrust; misrepresenting reality; and their own resistance to change, the change agents contribute to recipient reactions which leads to actual "resistance to change" from the recipients. This accounts for both the initial loss of trust, and the evolving kind.

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[18] Agreements are the underpinning of most executive and management communications with others in the organization (Ford & Ford, 2010:26).

Schedules and deadlines are agreements that tend to be easily broken or set aside without the communications needed to restore confidence that the organization remains committed to the given agreements. The cost of broken agreements to organizations is both financial and cultural. The cultural cost is a loss of credibility, trust, and confidence in organizational management (Ford&Ford, 2010:26). When the change recipients' expectations are not met, this will affect the employees cooperative will. Widespread corrective communications may be required to make the damage right (Ford&Ford, 2010:26).

Unresolved issues from the past

Unacknowledged failures in past change efforts, is by Ford & Ford (2010:33) found to be part of an "invisible background" for the planned change implementation. This background will affect the behavior and attitudes of change recipients, as past broken agreements have been found to have an effect on victims' expectations of being let down in the future (Shapiro & Kirkman, 1999; Tomlinson et al., 2004; Ford, 2008:365). Managers who listen carefully to the response from recipients after having introduced a change proposal, has the opportunity to identify issues from the past that need to be resolved in order to add momentum to the current change process. Restoring the trust is vital in the initial phase of the change initiative. If this need is recognized and addressed, it can also provide the opportunity for agents to strengthen their relationships with recipients (Tomlinson et al., 2004; Ford, 2008: 370). If there is a case of previously taken-for-granted low trust that are not restored by the change agents, it can suddenly become an issue that challenges the overall change implementation (Senge et al.,1999:4198).

The authentic apology

When change recipients have experienced the breach of agreements from the change agent, they are often willing to resolve the issue and repair the relationship if the change agent offers a sincere, formal apology that comes at a suitable time. The degree of seriousness of the violation, will determine how extensive the apology needs to be (Ford&Ford, 2010:33). The agent should state how he or she clearly takes on the blame and responsibility for the broken agreement through an explicit recognition of the

injury, a concern for the relationship, and a desire to restore trust. (Tomlinson et al., 2004; Ford, 2008: 365). Change agents who repair damaged relationships and restore trust both before and during the given change are less likely to meet what they perceive as resistance (e.g. the tendency to engage critical behaviors toward both the change in question and the change agents, lower work motivation and productiviety, reduced work quality; cooperativeness and commitment) than agents who do not (Duck, 2001; Knowles & Linn, 2004b; Ford, 2008: 366). If the change agents fail to do so, the recipients will expect a recurrence of the betrayal and may demonstrate *increased* resistant behaviors toward the change implementation and the change agents (Ford&Ford, 2010:33).

Research shows that admitting mistakes actually earn empathy and respect from their subordinates, which in turn increases the change agent's credibility. Many managers are however, reluctant to do so, because they fear that it will make them look weak or incompetent or undermine their authority and respect (Ford&Ford, 2010:33).

«It seemed to me as though The Internal Board applauds everything the project manager does, whatever it is. I also feel that there was no acceptance for trying to influence internally in the internal board – something I tried to do at several occasions.»

3.2.5 A Unilateral phenomenon

The fundamental attribution error[19] results in failing to describe how management actions and decisions contribute to poor performance. In other words, the managers are failing to consider their own behavior and attitudes, and considering the possibility of them contributing to the experienced "situation of resistance"(Ford&Ford, 2010:25).

Unreceptive and Defensive Change Agents

Ford (et al, 2008:367) finds that traditional theories and approaches of organizational change, ignore the possibility that change agents may be resistant to the ideas, proposals, and counteroffers proposed by change recipients. This research indicate that when change agents fail to treat the communications of change recipients as genuine and legitimate, they may be seen as resistant and unreceptive by the change recipients.

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[19] See section 3.1.

If the change agents respond to "resistance" with defensiveness, the cost of this defensiveness often is the persistence of resistance and its development in a vicious cycle (Powell & Posner, 1978; Ford et al, 2008:368). As Senge et al. (1999:5119) states; it is hard to fight defensiveness with more defensiveness. The agents inflexibility to corrective input, will make them lose credibility in the eyes of the recipients, who in turn may feel motivated to withhold their specialized knowledge and potentially to sabotage the implementation of the change initiative (Ford&Ford, 2010:34).

«In the letter we sent to the project manager regarding the results of the brainstorming we had conducted, on own initiative, we wrote that we thought it had been fun and that we gladly would continue working with this in our spare time. We wanted this for our valley. We had also gotten sort of an ownership to the ideas and thought it would be fun to contribute to the further development.»

3.2.6 Inviting feedback

Resistance can be understood as the legitimate response of engaged and committed people who want a voice in something that is important to them. It is a sign of engagement; an opening for a dialogue about the realities of the organization and the ways managers can implement their plans and strategies in coherence with those realities. Working with people in an organization to clarify their concerns is a strategy for improving the success of change initiatives. Change planning can be made smarter, faster, and cheaper by listening to the feedback embedded in the "resistance". (Ford & Ford, 2010: 35).

The Contribution of the Concerns

When responses to a change proposal are immediately critical and vocal, the change agent must consider that there is a serious flaw in some aspects of the plan. Although such responses can be intimidating or unwanted, they still bear the potential of learning what revisions that needs to be made to the proposal (Ford&Ford, 2010: 34).

Resistance is actually feedback, and instead of blaming resistance, a more clever approach would be to listen to resistance (i.e. comments, complaints, criticisms) and use it to improve the change and the success of its implementation (Ford&Ford, 2010:27). This may also require adjustment of the pace, scope or sequencing of the process (Amason, 1996; Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989; Ford, 2008:369).

«Very few of the medieval buildings are accessible today. Hardly any of them are located where it is possible to visit them. Many of the medieval buildings are not even marked in any way, so that the visitor without local knowledge would not be able to find them.»

Rather than trying to remedy or ignore negative responses to a change proposal, it can be useful to take a closer look at what the objections really mean (Ford&Ford, 2010:31). Mangers who are willing to work with "resistant people", by inviting it and displaying it for all to see, may discover that even "negative opinions" may have a core of information that should be captured, and that ultimately can improve their planned change for the better (Ford&Ford, 2010:32). Ford & Ford (2010:28) also suggests that shifting our objective from "overcoming" the objections, worries and fears - to use it as feedback, will add valuable information to the change and the implementation process for all concerned.

Protecting the organization

Employees might try to get the change agent to pay attention to issues that they find to be vital to produce the wanted results (O'Neill & Hayes, 1997; Piderit, 2000: 784). What may be perceived as opposition by the change agents, might in fact be individuals' way of protecting the organization's (and thereby their own) best interests. It would be worth the efforts to take the change agents' expressed concern more seriously and not simply label them as "resistance" (Piderit, 2000: 785).

«We had plastic bags with 'The Medieval Valley' on it

– now we have plastic bags with 'Closer To Nature'.»

3.3 THE CONSEQUENCES OF OVERCOMING THE RESISTANCE

After having looked at both the change agents' and the change recipients' understanding of resistance to change, I will in this section look at what the literature says about communication and involvement in relation to a change process that is characterized by "resistance". In the case study, one of the main findings was that the change agents used an authoritative communication approach towards the recipients throughout the project. Sufficient dialogue and anchoring was mentioned as something the project lacked. The case exemplifies how an emphasis on this in the early stages of the change process can be vital for the ultimate result.

3.3.1 The authoritative approach

In the beginning of a change process, the atmosphere among the participants will be set by the choice of whether or not the process will be authority-driven. This choice reflects whether the drive and the planning come from the energy of the initiators alone, or if it will be a collective effort driven by widespread commitment. According to Senge (et al.,1999:938), the first mentioned approach characterizes most change initiatives, and the latter characterizes the strategies of leaders who appreciate the development of learning capabilities.

«My impression was that the project management wanted to execute something in an easy way, without having to be confronted with questions, where the real answer was different from what they wanted it to be.»

When there is an obvious gap between where the organization wants to go and where they are, Senge (et al, 1999:5244) recommends leaders to clearly recognize the gap, and then take modest steps towards closing it. This will be a much less anxiety-provoking approach than having a manager that suddenly decides on how things will be done.

Challenges in a change process are often signals of underlying and urgent issues that are deeply ingrained in the given organizational system, Senge et al. (1999:1258) states. These challenges should not be overcome by force or willpower, but rather a realization of the need for counter-intuitive strategies.

«One cannot expect the participants to blindly accept management's concept and believe that 'if you accept this profile, then your revenue will increase, everything will get so much better, we will save businesses and positions in this valley, and the youth will stay'.»

When a change is driven by authority the change initiative and its potential success will become dependent on being pushed by the initiators from the start until the end. When the leader moves on or loses interest or energy, or actions fail to produce desired results for some reason, then an authority-driven initiative will begin to fade (Senge et al.,1999: 947).

«The DTO's job is to stay positive to projects and initiate these. While others often experience that such projects are not implemented in a realistic way that ultimately makes sense and has sustainable value to locals as well as visitors to the area. One should in an early phase consider how the results will survive in the years to come. This is not the management's strongest feature. Their job is of course to grasp every opportunity that presents itself[20], plant it and make it thrive. But they plant it – and then they don't follow it to fruition.»

Senge (et al.,1999:1038) asserts the example of how people saying "this is the way it is", should rather say "this is the way I see it". Leaders who takes on this more modest approach will be more effective at handling ambiguous and messy issues. They will also be more comfortable with differing opinions. They understand that their personal view does not necessarily represent the absolute truth, and that other people may see things differently; they will make sure that everyone's assumptions are open to inquiry, including their own. Senge et al. (1999:368) also states that, top-down driven changes do not reduce fear and distrust; unleash imagination and creativity, nor enhance the quality of thinking in the organization.

«The philosophy is that initiatives and the engagement should be bottom-up and not top-down. This is often accounted for in theory, and not in practice.»

A process of change implementation should not be about mindlessly following orders. It is suppose to be a game of ball play, with the execution of the actions that the

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[20] I.e. project opportunities and funding.

organization has agreed on and as documented in the strategic plan, as a foundation or starting point (Senge et al., 1999:11025).

«When the idea of 'The Medieval Valley' was born, the people behind the idea[21] should have approached the industry, in the form of a meeting or a correspondence, suggesting that: 'We now have monetary resources from the county, which we can spend during the course of so many years. Is this something you would want to be part of? Are you interested in partaking in this?' Furtheron they should have gotten feedback from the industry before it was decided to start the project. In the next round of discussions the management could have met with the industry and planned exactly what this project should contain. This was not done. The cooperation with the industry did not work and the understanding of what cooperating with the industry really meant was not good enough.»

One approach agents use to "tackle resistance" is to not talk about it in the mistaken belief that to acknowledge something is to give it power and acceptance. However, as Ford (Tomala and Petty 2004; Ford et al, 2008:368) points out; not talking about or acknowledging resistance may actually increase it, while acknowledging that there is "resistance" and bring it out in the open, will have the paradoxical effect of defusing it. Among the efforts that are found to reduce resistance and strengthen change, is; communicating extensively, inviting people to participate, providing people with needed resources, and developing strong working relationships (Caruth et al., 1979; Kouzes &Posner, 1993; Ford, 2008: 370).

Leaders as mentors

To succeed with an implementation of a profound change initiative, it is vital that the leaders efforts create an environment for continual innovation and knowledge generation. Effective leaders take on the role of being mentors and coaches, by focusing more on the basic design than on making key decisions. They also focus on engaging the front-line people in the decisions that need to be made (Senge et al, 1999:5088).

«If the management had guided us in the right direction, the project would have run more smoothly and with greater success. It should not have been the project manager who worked with the project development – the tourism businesses should have worked with it and created the results.»

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[21] The project management and the DTO.

3.3.2 Asking the critical questions

Few people in most organizations feel they are given the opportunity to ask questions about the strategy and purpose of the change initiative, nor given the opportunity to influence them (Senge et al, 1999:10354).

Denying recipients to ask questions is wide-spread in todays corporate cultures, despite the fact that asking questions is essential for creating a sustainable change implementation that is in the organizations best interest. Many employees are instead experiencing that they are forced to simply "live with the futures they get" (Senge et al,1999:10685).

Senge (et al.,1999:474) have found that for leaders to foster a more learning-oriented culture, they must give up the perception that they have all the answers. They must also become more comfortable with asking the difficult questions, and being prepared for them to not have easy answers.

Social dynamics, Ford & Ford (2010: 26) states, is that people naturally hate to fail, because it risks embarrassment, reduced level of status, and loss of respect. The fear of failure is particularly intense in the competitive business world, where a mistake can mean losing your reputation, a promised bonus or promotion, or even your job. Managers are expected to be competent, make things happen, and get things done.

«If one does not have an exchange of meaning, one will not bring out the potential opportunities – and are not able to correct the mistakes that are potentially being made. This is a vicious cycle that evolves because someone does not want to hear that they could potentially be wrong in their conviction, and do not want to consider the possibility of it being done another way.»

When people within the team raise concerns about the speed of progress or the process development, it is important to avoid regarding these individuals as not being "team players". The concerns they are raising are often always valid, and may in fact make the change agents aware of concerns that many people share, and which therefore may become problematic in the long run. When people are denied raising what they regard as legitimate concerns and questions, the concerns wont go away; the recipients will merely bring them with them further into the process (Senge et al.,1999:6093).

«I don't want to say it, but I believe that there is a culture in boards of not caring for asking too many questions regarding how things are done. The project manager is in a way supposed to be unprejudiced regarding his or her ideas, and the board is just to intervene if something is particularly wrong. I got the feeling that it was not viewed positively, for one to express one's opinion. At the end of summer that year, I became aware that some other tourism participant had taken my place in the board. I wasn't even informed about this in advance.»

Senge (et al.,1999:1359) discusses how every company has its own implicit cultural norm around the appropriate level of controversy and argument. If someone breaks that norm by speaking out too stridently, and they may well feel the pressure to quiet down.

«Some people in this valley, tends to talk to some people at some times, and other people at other times, and you often get the feeling that 'now that person has been talking to that person – and what is going on over there?' Suddenly someone decides that 'now that person said something that we did not want to hear, we must remove him and find a new one'.»

3.3.3 Innovating through communicating

Piderit's (2000:791) finds that the first stage in establishing a change initiative should be generating widespread conversation among the involved parts.

«The experience of being inside a medieval building and seeing what living was like in the medieval age – these are features which other places in Norway can offer. Being ambitious and calling ourself 'The Medieval Valley'; these are the kinds of things that visitors are expecting to find. Along the way I lost faith in the appropriateness of the term 'The Medieval Valley'. I felt that the concept had been poorly thought out and applied. There was not enough brainstorming.»

If an initiative is driven by learning[22], as opposed to authority driven initiatives, the change would be built on true commitment and therefore be more sustainable in the long run. The team would experiment with the approach and design, and learn from their successes and mistakes; they would also engage in open and candid conversations with each other regarding the development and results (Senge et al.,1999: 947).

«My thoughts back then, and even today are that I believe the politicians and the industry are not communicating effectively with one another. The politicians embrace certain concepts, and these concepts may have little basis in actual fact and subsequently they make decisions based on these somewhat dubious assumptions.»

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[22] I.e. introduces opportunities for individuals to engage in the process and implement the change themselves.

Resistance, such as fear and anxiety, should not be seen as obstacles to be overcome, but as natural and healthy responses to change, Senge et al. (1999:5088) argues. Openness requires both the willingness to speak ones mind and listen genuinely, recognize the existence of different views, and if it is called for; change ones mind. People in organizations are often less resistant to change than people think, but when their freedom to act and speak are cut off, they often get frustrated, which in turn leads to the expected resistant behavior (Senge et al.,1999: 4369).

«The management just wanted to make this profile, and if one did not agree, one could risk being complained about in public. I remember that the project leader complained about us tourism businesses in the news paper in 2003. She said that 'As long as we keep the project going, the tourism industry don't do anything. The tourism industry cannot handle the task, so therefore we need to do it for them. We have tried to cooperate with them several times.' We were in shock after having read that in print; and did not agree with any of it, of course: it wasn't true!»

«The project leader was not happy with the tourism industries. She even stated it in the newspaper, a couple of times. We experienced that as very unfair. She said that it was difficult to get us to cooperate, and that we did not want to buy-in on 'the things they tried to force down our throats'.»

Diffusion is by change agents often treated as an objectlike phenomenon that moves in the same way physical objects move and is slowed by contact with recipients (Latour, 1986; Ford, 2008:366). Innovations and changes are, however, not objects; they are conversations, discourses, and texts (Barrett, Thomas, & Hocevar, 1995; Czarniawska & Sevon, 1996; Fairclough, 1992; Ford, 1999; Ford, 2008:366), and change agents should therefore focus on conveying justifications for the importance and relevance of the change and its adoption.

«My impression is that things fail because we don't meet and talk about things in this little valley with 7000 inhabitants; to clear up in misunderstandings and so on. It seems to me that we are not good at accepting each other's differing opinions. We should respect each other's versatile perceptions and be interested in meeting half way to understand each other.»

Openness

It is prompted as highly important, by Senge et al (1999:5433), that any effective process requires people talking openly about undiscussable issues. This can be painful, but it can also release an enormous amount of creative energy. Raising objections or posing questions and other "resistive" behaviors, may therefore be translated into an authentic commitment to and concern for the organizations future success. Seen in light

of this knowledge, change agents who tackle what appears to them as "resistance", are in fact instructing change recipients to not engage in the very thing that originally was the aim of the proposal (Ford et al., 2008: 369).

3.3.4 Innovating through participation and anchoring

The findings from the case suggest that there were a lack of anchoring of the project among the change recipients (i.e. those who supposedly were to use the results after the end of the project). A continuing trend that repeated itself throughout the period was that the project management continuously ignored the change recipients' efforts to influence. Senge (et al, 1999:8550) further argues that the process of building ownership and partnership is just as important as the outcome of the process.

«There was an anchoring of the idea within the tourism industry that was lacking; it should have come from the front-line people. Regardless of the idea coming from the management, one is dependent on the change recipients to catch onto the idea and for them to want to be a part of it, for it to succeed.»

«Those who succeed with these kinds of projects cooperate with the industry. One says that one has anchored the idea within the industry, but then the industry might not have even heard of it. The industry doesn't have trust in the project management – and this is what makes up most of the problem.»

«There needs to be a sufficient thought and planning process in relation to it. It can't just move forward on an initiative and hope for the best outcome. However, this is what happened. 'The Medieval Valley' was served as an already-made profile with an already-made content and an already-made opinion surrounding it. The participants were neither included in the process nor given the opportunity to partake.»

The resignation

After the pilot project period, the first project leader resigned. He did not believe that the chosen approach would lead to success.

«I felt that there was not possible to achieve results from 'The Medieval Valley' project. It was not properly planned and executed; there was no well thought out project plan that created the foundation for the project, which explicitly stated what 'The Medieval Valley' should be. The project started out prematurely and with a poor foundation. The rest of the management and the county did not see the point of having the tourism industry thoroughly involved in the project.»

The first project leader previewed the scenario of the project failing because of the lack of anchoring within the tourism industry from the start.

«The tourism industry didn't buy into the idea, because we didn't have enough of a foundation to market it appropriately. We also started out far too early in the project. We didn't have sufficient preparation and planning in place. What you need is anchorship, through a structured process – if you don't have this, then the chances of succeeding are minimal.»

«It is a positive thing to get hold of resources to develop something, since that kind of monetary resources are hard to get hold of otherwise. But when it comes to the phase where the results are to be implemented and made use of, that is when it becomes clear that something has failed along the way.»

3.3.5 Resistance as a resource

"Managers who label certain reactions as resistance should ask themselves, "Why are we calling it resistance?" and "If we considered it feedback, what would it tell us that might be useful in refining the change process?". Authentically asking these two questions can shift a manager's perspective from blaming resistance as a barrier to using it as a resource" (Ford & Ford, 2010: 25).

Genuine listening

As proposed in the previous section, people naturally have reactions to change proposals and initiatives. Ford & Ford (2010:25) discuss how some of them may be detrimental to the accomplishment of the change, but that there could also lay potential value in listening to the underlying communication.

Ford & Ford (2010:24), argues that change agents need to become aware of the almost unconscious pull they have towards blaming and labeling resistance. This will enable them to learn to listen in a new way that are open to the opportunities the "resistance" present.

To deal with resistance, leaders need to listen deeply to what is said (or not said) and how it is being said. Leaders must learn to listen "between the words", and being considerate towards the fear people may be experiencing (Senge et al, 1999:5119).

Effective leaders have learnt to understand growing fear and anxiety among recipients as indicators of progress, instead of challenges to be overcome (Senge et al,1999:5108).

Ford (Knowles & Linn, 2004b; Ford, 2008: 368) states that recipient reactions can have value for the existence, engagement, and strength of a change process, thereby being a resource in the process of implementation and successful accomplishment of the planned change.

Keeping the idea alive

In the early stages of a change process, any talk, even negative talk, might be the only thing that keeps the change proposal alive. Although managers may perceive complaints, criticisms, and objections to be forms of resistance, complaints or a highly charged dialogue can serve a useful function by making more people aware of the change, it can deepen the discussion and keep conversations about the change circulating (Ford&Ford, 2010: 27). When the resistance keeps the conversations regarding the change proposal going, this gives agents an opportunity to clarify and further legitimize the change, so that the recipients may achieve a greater acceptance of the idea. Rather than being an obstacle to successfully implement change, resistance can therefore paradoxically be seen as a critical factor to accomplish a wanted and sustainable result (Caruth et al., 1985; Ford, 2008: 368).

Actively engaging in it

Ford & Ford (2010:28) suggests that rather than trying to suppress or eliminate negative reactions during the early stages of change, change managers may want to let these reactions happen and even interact with them to ensure they serve a useful function they have the potential of providing (Ford&Ford, 2010:28). When the agents allow, or in best case, encourage the recipients to question, evaluate and consider the pro and con arguments and give them their feedback, the agents will get the opportunity to provide compelling justifications that help recipients reassess their opinion (Ford, 2008: 366).

3.3.6 Unintended consequences

Sometimes the problem facing us today is the unintended consequences of a solution implemented yesterday*.*

«The project was meant to last for approximately three years. When the project management, had worked on this project for three years, they said 'It's time for the industry to take over!' – but the industry had no relation to it.»

«One can ask oneself: 'Is the project here for the project managers or the other way around?'. Because of political prestige things ended the way they did; both administrative and political prestige. The project management said: 'Look at what we can do!', and the politicians backed them up. They could not get the project anchored within the tourism industry, so they had to 'anchor' it with someone else; the ones that write and deliver the applications.»

The result of the change agents approach ultimately resulted in a problematic final delivery phase of the project. The change agents had to face the consequences of their previous strategy of overcoming the resistance.

«I was a bit desperate when it became clear that there wasn't possible to find anyone that could carry on with the work in an active way after the end of the project – and focusing it towards the industry. There was no organization such as e.g. a tourism office which was appointed to carry on and that is why the project was given to the counties of the valley. One should have had someone who continued to work with the project, this would however prove hard to find.»

Planning

When the project management tried to deliver the project to the tourism industry, it soon became obvious that the tourism businesses did not want to adopt the project and continue its development. The project management therefore delivered the project to The Regional Council.

«Some things could probably have been prepared more thoroughly. But sometimes one just have to start doing things, and then ultimately quit doing if it becomes obvious that the efforts doesn't work out. This was what we decided to do when the tourism industry didn't want to take over the project. We decided that The Regional Council had to take over the responsibility for the further development of the result (i.e. 'The Medieval Week'). We realized that the initiative wasn't something that the tourism industry wanted, and that we just had to end it.»

Excluding the roadblocks

The Regional Council chose to work with a selected number of participants for the rest of the period. This was a main event in the project. The following citations demonstrate the perceptions of both agents and recipients regarding this choice.

CA: *«We didn't exclude anyone. If some of the project participants felt excluded, then they are in their full right to feel that way - but I find it peculiar if they did. However, after some time we chose not to use any more energy on those who said that they didn't had any interest in partaking. That is pointless.»*

CR: *«I never understood why those five participant were 'chosen'. At least I was never 'negative' regarding 'The Medieval Valley'-project. On the opposite side I was one of the few who have a medieval costume that I use. I have used the profile elements on my homepage this whole time, and I tell my guests about the concept of 'The Medieval Valley'. If one means that being 'negative' means asking questions and having a debate at the beginning of a project, then (…)»*
exchange of

CA: *«We could probably have engaged several of the project participants, and those could have been equally engaged in the process; but we stopped at five. We found that to be a manageable amount of participants. We thought that if those that weren't included felt assaulted by that, then we just had to explain that that wasn't in our intention – we just wanted five participants that were clearly demonstrating that they were positively attuned to the initiative. If one are to get things done, and one has to be considerate of everyone – that would have been very demanding.»*

CR: *«I was not surprised when they chose to cooperate with only a few of the tourism participants after a while. They selected five of the tourism participants, who seemed 'positive' towards the concept. It is very easy to work with 'the positive ones'. What one doesn't realize is that 'the positive ones' create even more distance from the others. One didn't have the conviction to host a meeting where one could get a – possibly heated – but also a reasonable and constructive discussion. There wouldn't be any development without engaging in such conversations. This is because one doesn't dare to engage in the conflict that potentially lies underneath. This is cowardly. I believe the reason for this is lack of competence. Additionally, there is fear because one knows that one doesn't have that competence. That is when one takes the easy way out, and taking that way destroys a lot – and builds up huge walls between the so-called 'positive' and 'negative' participants.»*

CA: *«We decided that those five that we were including in the continuing phases of the project, needed to have a positive attitude towards the concept of 'The Medieval Valley'. We did not want to have the negative and contra-productive ones aboard. The five 'chosen' companies were positive; we wanted to work with those who wanted this. I thought the whole thing ended rather positively, actually.»*

CR: *«It is the 'positive' ones that are included and it is the relationships with the 'positive' ones that are nurtured. The management does not dare to invite to a meeting where one could get a – heated, but also reasonable and constructive dialogue or debate. By not daring to engage in the underlying challenges, they are ultimately burying the potential for development. This is cowardly. There will never be any true and sustainable development without engaging in and facing the challenges.»*

Walking the talk

One of the challenges that Senge (et al.,1999:1438) discuss regarding the

implementation of a change initiative, is the change agents ability to "walk their talk".

When they fail to align explicitly stated intentions with what they actually do, this points

to a lack of reflection that may create a gap between values and actual action.

«After The Regional Council[23] took over the responsibility of the project, they were imposed by the county to talk to the industry and to include us in the rest of the process. The next year went by without us hearing anything from them.»

«We were told that The Regional Council had agreed on using the year that had past, to involve the industry more than what they had done that far. What they did, after quite some time, was that they invited the whole valley to a meeting. An invitation was suddenly sent out to all the houses in the valley about this meeting – and with one weeks notice. To us, this seemed like a rushed and desperate move. And why on earth would they invite all of the inhabitants to participate?»

"Starting in 2006, The Regional Council wants the tourism industry to take over the continuation of 'The Medieval Valley' project. This will be done by establishing a board with that will coordinate, develop, quality assure, market and sell the attractions and experiences in this valley. We wish to increase the activity offer, by making proper use of the existing resources in this area. This will create a foundation for increased migration, and sustainable and attractive working places. 'The Medieval Valley' will be the valley that people want to visit and the one they will long for when they have left."[24]

Some time after, "the five positive" participants were in the newspaper and the article stated the following: *"The townships in the valley have through the previous eight years built the brand 'The Medival Valley'. Now the time has come for the tourism businesses to take over the project."* A representative from The Regional Council expressed the following in the article: *"The industry have expressed desire to take over the responsibility for the project, and thereby we pass the torch on to them."* This comment was followed by one of "the positive" participants[25], which stated the following on behalf of all the tourism businesses: *"There is positive attitudes in every node of the group; and that both enables us to do this and makes us want to do it".[26]*

«I remember that some of us from the tourism industry asked each other, after having seen the article in the local news paper; 'who is that woman – and why does she say that we are going to take over the project?'»

«Right before this meeting we were eight-nine tourism businesses involved – some of the most influential ones from the industry in the biggest county in the valley – who wrote a letter to the The Regional Council, asking questions regarding this approach. We thought it was an honest and open letter, which one could expect to be answered – if the council had taken us seriously. The letter had

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[23] The townships in Numedal.
[24] Source: Letter found through analysis of document's in the DTOs archive.
[25] A woman that had recently moved to the valley and had recently been added to the group. The rest of the tourism businesses had not yet met her at this point.
[26] Source: The local newspaper.

'not been interpreted in a positive way', we were told a while after. We never got an answer to it. That doesn't inspire one to try again.»

«At the meeting a list was put forward, where those interested in partaking in the upcoming process of the project and becoming part of The Interim Board, were encouraged to sign. Not very many the tourism businesses were there. It was mostly local people and farmers. Some of us tourism participants who were there, felt obliged to write our names down. Later on there was another meeting, where 'The Internal board' were to be established, and where the tourism businesses felt almost pressured into taking over the project.»

«First, the industry was pressured into taking over The Medieval Valley project. Right after this, the township applied for the RDF-funding[27] for the development of the webpage. All of this was done without informing The Interim Board that they themselves had argued for the necessity of and put together, and they continued working with the project behind our back. This was not appreciated by The Interim Board. Subsequently and without knowing that The Regional Council had applied for the funding; The Interim Board searched for the same funding, to improve and manage the webpage and to organize the tourism industry and the project through 'Destination 'The Medieval Valley'. It all ended with the county giving the township 300.000 Kroner, to improve the homepage and the development of it; and with the repercussion of cooperating with The Interim Board.»

«The Regional Council continued as a competitor against the group that they themselves had made sure was established. And one may ask oneself; 'Do they respect their own tourism industry? Are they taking us seriously?' In my experience, The Regional Council managed to create problems. Instead of allowing the industry to partake in the decision-making – they chose to ignore our efforts.»

The reinvention gap

If deep questioning about the organizations purpose and strategy is pushed down and never given serious audience, internal innovators often disengage emotionally or leave. They often get frustrated because they cannot exercise their strategic thinking in service of the outcome. The consequence is a loss of imagination and passion, and eventually a decline in the willingness of people to commit to new learning initiatives. If, on the other hand, this "reinvention gap" is met, it can lead to overall and significant increase in the quality of the organization, and consequently to its business results (Senge et al.,1999:10409).

«When The Internal Board tried to clear up in this incidence, The Regional Board were determined: the funding was going to be used on the webpage, and none of it to the organization of the tourism industry, like The Interim Board had wanted. And this, despite the fact that 'organizational framework' was on the agenda at the aforementioned meeting. When the townships reconsidered and wanted to cooperate after all, The Interim Board had given up and ended their initiative.»

This marked the end of the 'The Medieval Valley' project. What was left behind was 'The Medieval Week', which is still in existence as of today. "The supporters" and the "The critics"

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[27] "Regional developmental funding".

differed in their opinion regarding whether this result was satisfying. The following statement from one of the change recipients sums up the *essence of how most of the participants felt that their creative influence was limited:*

«I did not like 'The Medieval Week' and the way they have done it at all. There is a lot of arrangements spread over a large area[28] and it is anchored with only a few of the tourism businesses. Additionally, it is one of Norway's biggest secrets. A lot of other areas also have medieval festivals. Is this unique?»

«There is a need for putting down criteria, since after all there was a good deal of money allocated to this project, and we have not gotten any sustainable results. We have 'The Medieval Week', we have a webpage – but then that poses the question, is that enough?!»

«In a tourism context we are not 'The Medieval Valley'. One needs something to put behind the marketing besides just a marketing profile. One cannot market something that has no content.»

3.3.7 Feedback and evaluation

In learning organizations, practical results play a part through providing a context for experimentation, adaptation, and feedback. When members of a group becomes aware of the consequences of their efforts this enables the opportunity to reflect upon their actions and adjust them thereafter (Senge et al.,1999:1190).

Innovation means mistakes, and there will be many failures among innovative change efforts. Rather than ignore or suppress these problems, innovators need to continually reassess their own efforts and adjust (Senge et al.,1999:6093).

Senge (et al.,1999:748) argues that no strategy is ever completely fit to the given issue. All courses of action should therefore be continually assessed. But most people, are mainly focused on moving forward, and stop paying attention to how this focus affects the things that goes on around them. Since challenges of profound change are so complex, it is vital that the agents remains open to continually see the effects of their actions more clearly.

The different tasks and actions must be integrated in line with the development of new knowledge that arises through continuous evaluation of the previous task (Senge et al.,1999:3836).

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[28] The three townships that stretches along the entire valley.

Failed initiatives of the past may offer valuable lessons, by considering and closely think about what failed and what succeeded (Senge et al.,1999:1397).

Senge (et al.,1999:5224) states that when one really understand the source of errors, the perceived resistance can become a "treasure", to indicate the potential learning that can occur. Developing a similar curiosity about "defects" in our human systems is a clear indicator that management transformation has taken place, according to Senge (et al.,1999:5224).

«There was a whole lot of resistance, to put it that way…»

4.0 ANALYSIS

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As illustrated in the synthesis, the case of 'The Medieval Valley' contains some complex underlying structures. Through the thoughts and feelings of the participants, and the selected literature, I have looked at some explanations for why things was experienced and perceived the way they were, and why the project ultimately failed. This chapter will look at why a project with every chance of succeeding, did not. In the end of the chapter I have sketched a causal loop diagram to summarize the analysis and the main findings from the case.

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"When you change the way you look at things,
the things you look at change" ~ M. Planck

4.1 The way things get done around here

In the "The Medieval Valley" project the chronic problem, which had prevailed over many years, was that the project initiatives repeatedly failed to deliver results. The variables that caused the problem, as identified through the citations in the previous section, works as the different interrelated parts of the "system" (i.e. the project). Considered in light of existing literature that was found to be relevant, I will in the following present a summarized list of the main factors that complicated the succession of the planned results in the case. The whole process was characterized and affected by two main forces;

1) *The first force to affect the system was **the change recipients' existing mental models.** After several years of failed projects and unfulfilled expectations, they were skeptical of the change agents' actions right from the start.*

2) *The second force was **the change agents' existing mental models** that made them perceive the change recipients' skepticism as resistance. The perceived resistance made them fearful by the thought of failing. They made use of authoritative behaviors in an attempt to overcome the resistance, throughout the process. First, by ignoring the questions and concerns from the change recipients. Then, by expressing their challenges with overcoming the change recipients resistive behavior in the news paper (i.e. labeling and blaming). After some while*

they decided to exclude half of the team. Then they made the change recipients take over the project. And ultimately, they did not let go of the control when the change recipients finally had agreed to adopt the project. All of these choices and behaviors made the change recipients' trust diminish more and more throughout the period.

Besides from these two main forces, the following features characterize the behavior and attitudes of the change agents:

- Focused on short-term results

- Devalued the intangible results

- Favored the compliant participants

- Feared public failure

- Excluded the "resisting" participants

- Decided the course of actions and set the target

- Held the change recipients accountable for the lack of results

- Emphasized technical problem solving

- Discounted the systemic and underlying problems

- Perceived diverging opinions as a problem to be solved

- Suppressed conflict in favor of superficial agreement

- Managed by controlling

- Focused on planning, organizing, controlling

- Viewed the recipients questions as demanding and best avoided

- Seemed to believe that unilateral control was necessary to achieve the desired performance

- Ignored the comments from the change recipients

- Did not follow the original plan that was agreed upon

- Fragmented the group

- Did not see the importance of including the front-line

I have on the following page illustrated the main forces that were at work in the case, through a causal loop diagram. The diagram shows how the underlying forces of the system are related and how feedback is returned throughout the system.
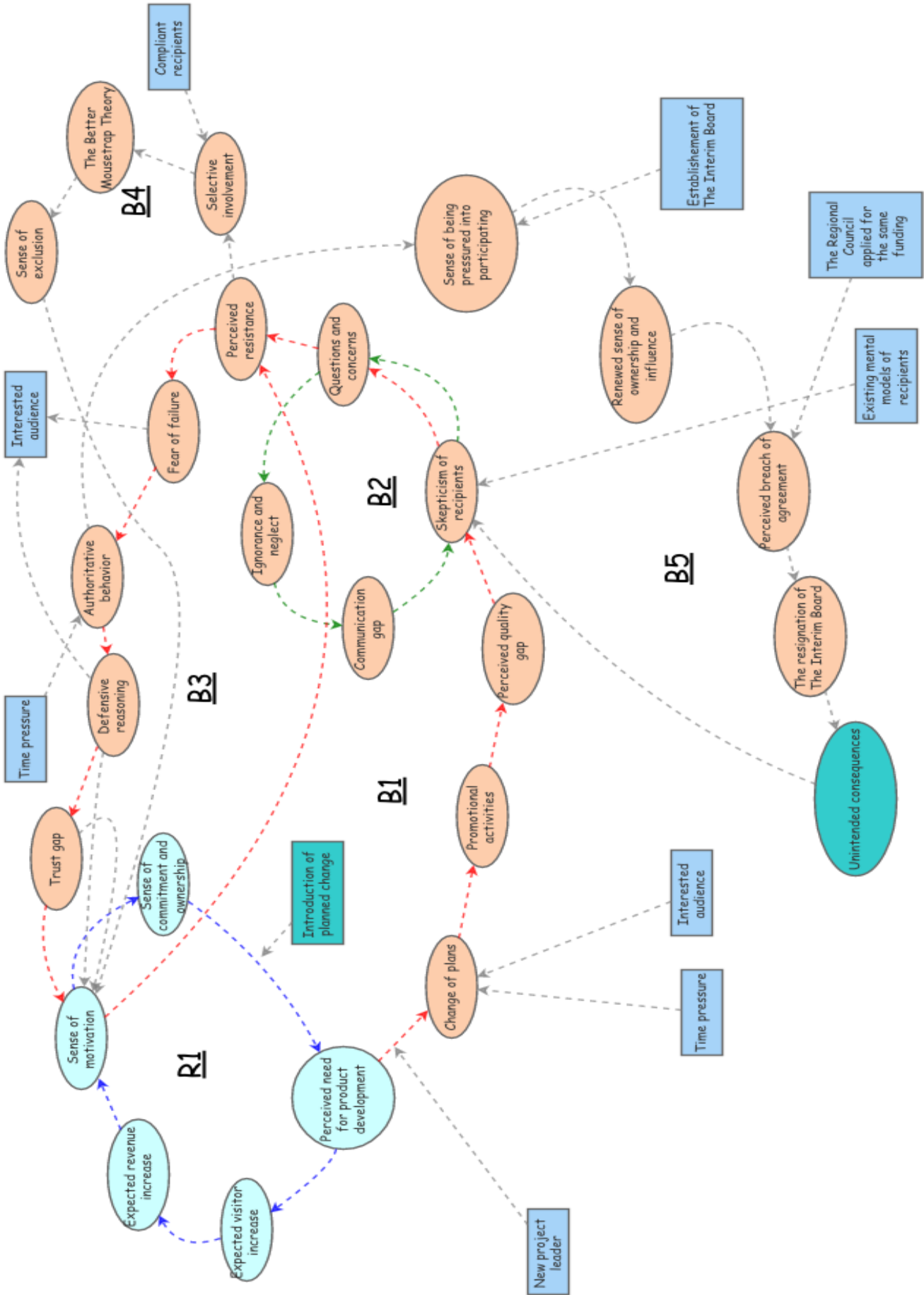
Figur 1 Causal Loop Diagram

73

4.2 Explaining the causal loop diagram

This multi-loop diagram shows the complexity of the case. It also shows how there was one reinforcing process and five balancing process at work in "The Medieval Valley" project. R1 depicts the reinforcing growth forces that affected the project. B1-B5 depicts the balancing equilibrium-seeking forces of the project.

R1

This loop shows the only reinforcing force in the project. The loop begins with the initial sense of need for the project and its implementation, with a project plan that indicated that there would be a main focus on product development. This was in turn expected to lead to increased visitor statistics and subsequently increased revenue, which effected the change recipients' personal motivation to participate and their sense of being actors with influence in the process. This first loop indicates that the project had the potential of growth in the very beginning of the process.

B1

"Resistance" or skepticism, arose amongst the change recipients after the new project leader's announcement of the sudden change of plans; focusing on promotion instead of product development. This also decreased the change recipients' original sense of need for the project.

B2

When in became clear that there would be no product development after all, it arose a perceived quality gap among the change recipients. They expressed their concerns and asked questions regarding the chosen coarse of actions (the previous experiences with project implementation had led to a sense of distrust that affected the project the whole way through). The change agents chose to make use of an authoritative communication and did not respond to their efforts to influence. This affected their personal motivation for contributing in the project.

B3

The change agents reacted in a defensive manner to the skepticism (questions and concerns) of the change recipients. They interpreted it as "resistance", and also labeled it

as such in the local news paper. This led to a trust and credibility gap, which further affected their skepticism ("resistive behavior"), personal motivation and sense of ownership to the project.

B4

After some time the change agents chose to cooperate only with a few selected actors; which were labeled "the positive ones". Despite the knowledge that the mere objective of the project was that the tourism industry would take on the project results together. After several years of project work, and despite the excluding and authoritative behavior of the change agents, the change agents agreed on participating through The Interim Board. The Regional Council engaged in contradictory behavior by choosing to apply for the same funding as the Interim Board. They did not want to let go of the responsibility, after having tried to make the change recipients adopt the project for years. This behavior severely damaged the sense of engagement among the participants. The Interim Board tried to clear up in the misunderstanding, but The Regional Council did not respond. When The Regional Council eventually wanted to communicate with The Interim Board, they had given up and put down their initiative.

B5

The level of trust and credibility was gradually decreased throughout the process, and was at a low already before the project started. The behavior of the change agents also gradually reduced the personal motivation of the change recipients, and led to a decreased sense of ownership to the project, despite the project being a constellation put together with them as the main interest. Ultimately, this led to the unintended consequence of the change recipients not wanting to take over the project when it ended in 2005.

4.3 The way things (should) get done around here

To cope with the complex forces that are at work in "The Medieval Valley" case, it will require a thorough understanding of the different limits that are operating, and which actions that needs to be taken to reduce the influence of the balancing processes.

Reducing the distrust may be the single point of highest leverage in this case, as this was the underlying force that all of the other forces interrelated with. This force, will affect any future innovative change initiation, which bears the potential of being interpreted in the light of this strong underlying force. It has taken many years of failed projects to establish it, and will presumably take many more for the change agents to reestablish the lost trust caused by continuous disappointment and unfulfilled expectations.

It is also vital that the project team understands how the change agents' existing mental models and perception of feeling threatened by resistance from the recipients, reinforces the dynamics that led to their authoritative behaviors, which in turn led to even more skepticism (i.e. "resistance") from the change recipients. This vicious cycle continued throughout the project, and can explain the underlying dynamics of why the project ultimately failed, as shown in the loop diagram.

As shown in the citations from the case, the change recipients' and change agents' understanding of the resistance, was based in non-systemic thinking patterns. "The Medieval Valley" shows characteristics of being a complex case with complex challenges. To ultimately succeed, there is a need for engaging in more learning oriented behaviours. The implementation of new projects should be seen as experiments, which will be followed by either success or failure. If the experiment is followed by failure, this presents the opportunity for engaging in genuine curiosity and interest, and by conducting an evaluation of why the project failed. By engaging in reflective communication; question own assumption and allowing the other actors to question that same behavior, inviting to dialogue regarding the things that are done, and drawing conclusions around meaning the complexity of the underlying structures can be understood. Looking at this process as a valuable learning opportunity, by making use of systems thinking tools such as e.g. causal loop diagrams, will further lead to creative hypotheses and collectively fostered aspirations. The hypothesizing contributes to altered thinking patterns (i.e. mental models) and newfound and creative approach to the challenge may or may not lead to success once the solution is implemented and experimented with. And so the cycle continues, and the learning organization gradually manifests and it becomes a habit to engage in this reflective reasoning, because of the gradually changed mental models. This will in the long term lead to innovations with

greater potential for thriving and survival.In other words, the project team should use the perspective of systems thinking to get a better understanding of the underlying reasons for why they cannot seem to implement planned results.

The process of systems thinking reveals mental models, and by engaging in the behaviors associated with the systems thinking framework, the project team increases the potential for developing the skill of recognizing general patterns of behavior and the structures that produce them on a general basis. The mere goal becomes to achieve a greater understanding of challenges or problems, because of the realization of how this will pay off in the long term.

The loop diagram in the analysis presents a summarization of the project participants' understanding of the complex problem that the "The Medieval Valley" project was challenged by. It also presents the essence of the explanation as to why the project failed; because of the underlying forces in the form of the underlying thinking patterns of the participants. The deeper understanding of the structures that produced the chronic problem of implementing projects with success, presents an alternative to the non-systemic reasoning and perception of resistance as something to be overcome.

By learning to look at problems in new ways, and getting an understanding of the deeper, structural causes of problems, the way change agents' and change recipients' understand resistance to change in organizations, can be altered for the better. Understanding how systems work under the surface, enable a more effective and proactive functioning within the given system. readily anticipate behavior and work *with* the system, instead of against it

The payoff from integrating the systems thinking approach will be a shift from mental models dominated by events to mental models that recognize longer-term patterns of change and the underlying structures producing those patterns.
By actively engaging in uncovering the systemic structures that drives the obvious challenges, the project group can begin identifying higher-leverage actions

I am hoping that this report can prove useful to the tourism industry in "The Medieval Valley", and that it has introduced a valuable framework that can be used in future interventions.

5.0 CONCLUSION

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This final chapter summarizes the main findings of this study. The empirical findings will be related to and discussed in relation to the problem statement. I will contribute with my understanding of the topic and the findings, and reflect on what the result means in the "bigger picture". Finally, I will conclude with a suggestion for the actors of the case, in regards of what this study indicates that should be emphasized to a larger extent in upcoming efforts of implementing project initiatives.

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"It is good to have an end to journey toward;
but it is the journey that matters, in the end" ~ E. Hemingway

Systems thinking is meant as a tool that should be used in the group or organization that are facing challenging issues. My recommendation for "The Medieval Valley" is to make use of the findings in this report and experiment with the implications that are presented here.

In the case study, both the change agents was the limiting force that inhibited change. Before the actors expect that a new technical change (innovation) is to be implemented, there should first take place an recognition of the need for a cultural change. The systems thinking perspective and its belonging tools - like suggested and sought exemplified through this report - can act as one relevant way of doing this. The upcoming change initiatives (i.e. projects) can be used to develop these learning capabilities. By consequently sustaining an awareness of the "higher objective" of the process; to develop learning capabilities, the group of actors can become skilled at paying attention to and understand the patterns of limiting forces that naturally occur in complex processes. For example when a process meets a challenge, or when an improvement stops, structures can be discovered, and worked *with* in a more constructive and sustainable way - instead of being treated as an unnecessary and time-consuming barrier that needs to be overcome and that the actors are forced to work against. An understanding of the underlying mechanisms make it obvious how the case of "The Medieval Valley" - a project with great growth potential – could fail to realize its potential.

Survival of the fittest

If the county had allowed the project to fail, by not providing additional support and extending the deadline, this would have been a valuable lesson necessary to understand how things needs to change. In similarity with how rich countries have no need to innovate and be creative to sustain their economies, projects that have unlimited with resources may become less. The high project failure rate is only a symptom of deeper problems that afflict the project implementation efforts in this valley – if they would have died and had no mor money for development that might have forced them to think createively and different , if they have a "shallow" spill for galleriet suksess that nobody outside the project org questions, they may manage to survie, but will never live up to their potential. The DTO may continue initiating projects in this valley, but without...

Change agents contributed to the resistance, by expecting to find resistance, and in many ways taking a proactive approach to it all, by being authoritative and focusing on "overcoming" the resistance instead of engaging with it and understanding *why* the change recipients was skeptical right from the start. Instead, by trying to overcome the resistance – they contributed to reinforcing it, by the mere act of overcoming it.

This study found that by understanding resistance as an obstacle to be overcome, not only can the cooperative will be lost, but also the opportunity to learn how to improve future efforts of implementing change. "The Medieval Valley" was a complex system, who made use of non-systemic thinking.

In the case study findings, the change recipients concluded that the reason why the project failed was because of the change agents' authoritative behavior. The change agents' explained the failed outcome by the change recipients' resistance. After having conducted this study, it becomes clear that these kinds of answers are simplistic and founded in non-systematic thinking. The answer to the problem formulation is: resistance to change should be understood through the perspective of systems thinking.

The change agents of this case needs to realize that their way of implementing change, is in need of being innovated. This process and recognition would require patience,

genuine curiosity regarding the process, understanding the value of the front-line, an understanding of how things and cultures grow and develop over time.

The conclusion in the bachelor's thesis' was that there was a lack of understanding regarding project implementation among the project management. After having taken a deep-dive into the topic of resistance, I have now found that this is a truth that needs some moderation.

The problem in the case of "The Medieval Valley" was the mental models and the non-systemic and non-learning behavior and attitudes of the actors. This makes the systems thinking perspective and tools the obvious and potential solution.

Laying down new neural pathways
Change agents and change recipients and human beings in general, perceive the world through existing mental models. These thought patterns guide our interaction with and within systems. By understanding them, it is possible to change them.

The forces that work as the explanation for how reality are perceived and coped with. The strength of the growth forces and the understanding of them. The forces that are at work constitute the mere essence of change process in complex systems. Balancing and reinforcing.

Just like in life, where there is continuously new things to learn, and for every new thing we learn we realize how little we in fact know – by realizing this, it becomes logical how A learning organization is not something to accomplish at one single moment in time, it is a group of people that continuously learn and adjust by trying and failing and reflecting on what *really* happened. It is not a one-time effort and then floating along on the benefits.

Realizing that there is no end of three process of becoming a learning organization – that is the mere point. By adopting this perspective, or worldview, organizations are better suited to handle the complex issues that will keep occurring as long as the organization is an operating organization.

To implement change, the first thing to do, is to understand the systemic underlying causes of problems. Openness, reflection, conversations about the uncomfortable issues, developing the five disciplines of learning organizations in general, will enable this. What it is all about: Seeing the patterns of change clearer, enables us to change them. Changing the way they implement change, will not be done over night. The beliefs and behaviors are deeply embedded in their mental models.

To deal with challenges in a creative way, where the mere effort of learning about the underlying forces is the main goal. Realizing that organizational learning is about the individuals of the organization – which *are* the organization, and their individual learning. The lifelong journey-aspect of building a learning organization will take time and patience. Fragment the world, list and organize – should in stead see closely at the consequences of our actions through reflective conversations and evaluations, practicing seeing the larger whole of things, realizing that the world do not consist of separate and unrelated forces. As I worked with this report, I suddenly realized; it is not the change agents or recipients that are resistant, its their *mental models*.

Contribution

To understand future complex issues, there is a need to look at what has been done in the past, through evaluations and conversations. In this report I have included rich descriptions from the evaluative interviews I had with most of the project participants in the project. My hope is that this report can function as a perspective that summarizes the different actors opinions regarding what took place.

Final thoughts

As mentioned in the beginning of this report, the non-systemic thinking is wide-spread in organizations today, and resistance is perceived as a threatening occurrence. The findings of this thesis finds that when an organization or group is challenged by complex problems and events – the objective of these occurrences should be to make the challenge become immediately associated with "a chance to reflect on own way of thinking".

Ved å adoptere en nysgjerrig og eksperimenterende holdning til ting som skjer, med det å prøve – eventuelt feile – og lære noe som hovedmålsetting. Fokuset på veien som målet. Dette vil gjøre at man endrer til approach and attitude and motivation towards the issue. Mens man gjennomfører det som er den underorndede målet – vil det overordnede målet være i bakhodet som hovedmålet hele tiden. Da vil det endelige og ønskede resultatet – om det intreffer sooner or later – be a bonus. The main objective will be learning to understand the system + making new neural pathways, that enables adjusted mental models – enhanced communication, enhanced process, changed underlying structure of the obvious change and events.

The underlying motivation and focus will be founded in making use of systems thinking and learning capabilities, to change and adjust the culture in the org, so that the mere change (as a result of the experiments and the reflection) will be an improved and more purposeful understanding of the system, that leads to a better and more sustainable result in the end.

The importance and relevance regarding conducting research in this field is that to build sustainable and efficient organizations, there is a need for enhancing organizations ability for innovation and creativity, by understanding underlying structures that guide human behavior, and ultimately through assimilating new capabilities. By dividing the focus between innovating both technologically and biologically (i.e. human behavior) and by emphasizing individually enhanced learning – as individuals and as organization, this will create better skills for coping effectively with complex challenges.

The underlying main finding of this report is that "resistance" should be perceived as a desirable development in any change process.

Future scenario
The Medieval Valley's challenge of not managing to not achieving planned project results can be called a "chronic problem", as it has become a trend in this valley, and the failed project initiatives keep recurring. Many of the change recipients seemed to think that the solution to this problem would be to get more qualified consultants and change agents to lead the process, someone with more tourism competence and experience.

Relevance and contribution

The project group will hopefully draw some relevant insights from this report. I also think that this particular case has some challenges that can be of value for other readers, that are challenged by similar issues in their organization or project group.

The initial motivation for devoting this thesis to the phenomenon of resistance to change, evolved when the findings from the Bachelor's Thesis showed that the change agents had another perspective on why the project failed (i.e. "resistance") than what the change recipients had (i.e. comprehension). With organizations' continuous need for innovation and change, and with a limited amount of time to implement the initiative, a more substantial knowledge as to how one in a more effective but also sustainable way handles resistance, this contribution might be of interest for other project groups and organizations, besides from the case described in this thesis.

The essence of what existing knowledge regarding resistance to change in organizations say, is that a thorough reflective recognition and a deep understanding of underlying structures and a focus on the change implementations as experiments to learn from – and this being the ultimate goal, will create more successful and sustainable innovations in the long term.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF CONCEPTS

Balancing loops The balancing loops are known to be counteracting, goal seeking, and stabilizing. The contradictive forces tighten the reins on those wild reinforcing loops. B loops try to bring things to a desired state and keep them there, much as a thermostat regulates temperature. Balancing processes are generally stabilizing or goal seeking. They resist change in one direction by producing change in the opposite direction. Balancing loops are designated with a "B". There is always an inherent goal in a balancing process, whether the goal is visible or not. What "drives" a balancing loop is a gap between the goal (the desired level) and the actual level. As the discrepancy between the two levels increase, the dynamic makes corrective actions to adjust the actual level until the gap decreases. Balancing processes always try to bring conditions into equilibrium; to bring a system to a desired state and keep it there (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:55). Goal-seeking behavior characterizes a balancing process. If certain conditions keep coming back to some kind of "norm", no matter what anyone does, then a balancing process is likely at work. If conditions seem to resist change, if growth falters or never quite starts, or if unproductive behavior never gets dropped, then a strong balancing dynamic is likely present (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:56).

Behavior Over Time (BOT) These graphs are one of the ten systems thinking tool. They are similar to standard graphs in that they have horizontal and vertical axes, and a line shows how something is changing over time. The purpose behind doing this is to depict patterns of behavior that is in need of being considered from a systems thinking perspective. BOT graphs capture the history or trend of one or more variables over time. By sketching several variables on one graph, you can gain an explicit understanding of how they interact over time. These graphs often reveal "signature" patterns of behavior in the organization, which indicate that a particular systemic process is at work. There is also possible to graph several variables in the same graph, which can in a more clear way indicate how two things might be related. The sketching of a BOT graph enables forming theories regarding why things are as they are in the given organization (Goodman, 1991)**.**

Causal Loop Diagrams Is one of the ten tools of systems thinking. CLDs capture the interrelation among variables in a system. A CLD takes the form of a closed loop that depicts cause-and-effect linkages (Goodman 1991). Is a tool used to depict the different parts of a system in a diagram. In addition to the other tools in systems thinking, this sketch conveys information about how a system works and how its behavior might be altered. The diagrams are meant as a starting point for further work on problematic issues. They provide insight into systemic structures, and they identify ways that might change the system's behavior (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:8). The CLDs consists of one or more feedback loops that are either reinforcing or balancing processes. The CLDs uncover the cause-and-effect relationships among the variables and the delays in the process. Two or more variables connected by links, which usually take the form of arrows. A closed circle of variables and links makes up a feedback loop (Anderson & Johnson, 1997: 52). The links are shown through arrows that indicate how the variables are interconnected and how they affect another. The arrows in the diagram is labeled with either an "s" (sustaining), which means that when the first variable changes, the second one changes in the same direction; or an "o" (opposite), which means that the first variable causes a change in the opposite direction in the second variable. The loops are labeled with an "R" (reinforcing) or a "B" (balancing) in the middle to indicate that the causal relationship within the loop creates growth or collapse (i.e. R); or that the causal relationship within the loop keeps things in equilibrium (i.e. B). CLDs enable an organization or a group to get a rich array of perspectives on what it is that is actually happening, and enables the "systems thinker" to make changes to improve the way things are (Goodman, 1991). In other publications the loops are marked with the signs "+" or "-" to indicate the direction and force of the loop (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:54).

Delays Are described as "the hidden troublemakers". They play a hidden but important role, but there are several ways in which people fail to take delays into account. We can take too long to perceive feedback, to measure results, to decide how to respond to results, and to implement solutions. Misperception is one of the most insidious effects of delay; people often fail to take delay into account at all, or to realize that it even exists. In a CLD, a delay is depicted as a pair of lines (//), or the word Delay crossing the given link. Delays are important to notice because they can make a system's behavior

unpredictable and confound our efforts to control that behavior (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:57). By understanding the relationship between the length of time it takes to increase capacity and the delay between changes in price and level of consumer demand, one can get a better understanding of the implications of these delays. Ps. This is an all-too-common dynamic (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:58).

Drifting Goals A systems archetype. In a "Drifting Goals" scenario, a gradual downward slide in performance goals goes unnoticed, threatening the long-term future of the system or organization (Goodman, 1991).

Dynamic behavior All dynamic behavior is produced by a combination of reinforcing and balancing loops. Behind any growth or collapse is at least one reinforcing loop, and for every sign of goal-seeking behavior, there is a balancing loop. A period of rapid growth or collapse followed by a slowdown typically signals a shift in dominance from a reinforcing loop that is driving the structure, to a balancing loop. This is a key point to remember (Anderson & Johnson, 1997: 57).

Dynamic system structure CLDs are like simplified maps of the connections in a closed-loop system of cause-and-effect relationships. Every feedback loop depicts either a reinforcing process or a balancing process. In fact, these two kinds of loops are the building blocks of any dynamic system structure, and they combine in an infinite variety of ways to produce the complex systems that work within and around us (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:54).

Escalation A systems archetype. In the "Escalation" archetype, two parties compete for superiority in an arena. As one party's actions put it ahead, the other party "retaliates" by increasing its actions. The result is a continual ratcheting up of activity on both sides. Examples: price battles, the Cold War (Goodman, 1991).

Feedback The return of information about the status of a process.

Fixes That Fail A systems archetype. In a "Fixes That Fail" situation, a fix is applied to a problem and has immediate positive results. However, the fix also has unforeseen long-term consequences that eventually worsen the problem" (Goodman, 1991).

Flow The amount of change something undergoes during a particular unit of time. Example: the amount of water that flows out of a bathtub each minute, or the amount of interest earned in a savings account each month (Goodman, 1991).

Genuine learning Or double-loop learning (DLL), requires a curious and questioning approach of genuinely wanting to engage in and understand the reasons and motives that lay behind the way we act.

Growth and Underinvestment A systems archetype. In this situation, resource investments in a growing area are not made, owing to short-term pressures. As growth begins to stall because of lack of resources, there is less incentive for adding capacity, and growth slows even further (Goodman, 1991).

Leverage Point An area where small change can yield large improvements in a system.

Limits to growth dynamic Change initiatives that are facing limits to growth situations, occur "when a reinforcing process runs up against a balancing process: some form of naturally occurring resistance", as discussed by Senge et al. (1999:1359). Balancing processes are the means by which systems maintain integrity, continuity, and stability. They represent the continual search for some natural balance point. These "balancing points" are not always obvious or explicit, but they nonetheless govern the boundaries of system activity.

Limits to Success A systems archetype. In a "Limits to Success" scenario, a company or product line grows rapidly at first, but eventually begins to slow or even decline. The reason is that the system has hit some limit—capacity constraints, resource limits, market saturation, etc.—that is inhibiting further growth. Also called "Limits to Growth." (Goodman, 1991).

Mental models Are the "deep beliefs and assumptions we hold about how the world works. These models shape the decisions we make in life, the actions we take in response to events, and the way we interprets others behavior. To practice this discipline, involves surfacing and testing your deepest assumptions and beliefs, and contributing in helping the others do the same (Goodman, 1991).

Organizational learning is focusing on the practice of five core disciplines, or capabilities, of which systems thinking forms the cornerstone. The others are: team learning, shared vision, mental models and personal mastery (Goodman, 1991).

Organizational learning This field of science explores ways to design organizations so that they fulfill their function effectively, encourage people to reach their full potential, and also helping the world becoming a better place.

Personal mastery The art of identifying what mark you want to leave on the world during your lifetime. This involves figuring out what your unique purpose in life is, and how you want to approach to fulfill that purpose. To practice this discipline, some honest exploration of own life experiences and desires and a willingness to take some risks (Goodman, 1991).

Reinforcing loops The reinforcing loops are known to be growth producing and destabilizing; the engines of growth and collapse. They compound change in one direction with even more change in that direction. The more one variable changes, the more another changes. These loops are known as virtuous or vicious cycles, depending on the impact. Sometimes you can detect a reinforcing loop at work simply by sensing exponential growth or collapse. A visual way to spot an R loop is to count the number of o's in a CLD, and there does not need to be any S links.

Shared vision The outlook that emerges when everyone in an organization or a group understands what the org is trying to achieve, when they are genuinely committed to achieving that vision and the subsequent goals, and clearly apprehends how their individual effors and roles van contribute in fulfilling the vision and goals. Practicing this

discipline requires knowing how the parts of the organization work together and being clear about how your own personal goals align with those of the org (Goodman, 1991).

Shifting the Burden A systems archetype. In a "Shifting the Burden" situation, a short-term solution is tried that successfully solves an ongoing problem. As the solution is used over and over again, it takes attention away from more fundamental, enduring solutions. Over time, the ability to apply a fundamental solution may decrease, resulting in more and more reliance on the symptomatic solution (Goodman, 1991).

Structure The manner in which a system's elements are organized or interrelated. The structure of an organization, for example, could include not only the organizational chart but also incentive systems, information flows, and interpersonal interactions (Goodman, 1991).

Success to the Successful A systems archetype. In a "Success to the Successful" situation, two activities compete for a common but limited resource. The activity that is initially more successful is consistently given more resources, allowing it to succeed even more. At the same time, the activity that is initially less successful becomes starved for resources and eventually dies out (Goodman, 1991).

System A group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent components that form a complex and unified whole. A system's components can be physical objects, but they can also be intangible, such as processes; relationships; company policies; information flows; interpersonal interactions; and internal states of mind such as feelings, values, and beliefs (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:3). Anderson & Johnson (1997) view systems as nodes embedded in a giant network in which everything is connected. Natural systems, as opposed to human-made non-living systems that are self-contained, have an enormous number and complexity of components and interactions among those components. They also have virtually an infinite number of connections to all the systems around them. Natural systems are more open in their connections to surrounding systems.

Systems Archetypes Systems archetypes are the "classic stories" in systems thinking—common patterns and structures that occur repeatedly in different settings. SA are a class of systems thinking tools that capture common tendencies of challenges that occur in all kinds of organizations. The archetypes consist of causal loop diagrams depicting typical and problematic systemic structures. They consist of the following structures: "Fixes that fail", "Tragedy of the commons", "Drifting goals", "limits to success", "Growth and underinvestment", "escalation", "success to the successful" and "shifting the burden". They can provide a valuable insight into at the structures and reveal the actions that can be made to manage them (Goodman, 1991).

Systems Thinking A school of thought that focuses on recognizing the interconnections between the parts of a system and synthesizing them into a unified view of the whole. Systems thinking can serve as a language for communicating about complexity and interdependencies (Goodman, 1991).

Team learning Indicates the feeling of synergy and productiveness that happens when a group of people that are working together experiences a flow, and where things are running smoothly. When the group is truly learning, this is based on interacting in different kinds of conversations and a high degree of honesty and mutual respect (Goodman, 1991).

The learning capability approach The development of learning capabilities, by engaging working groups of teams, and by focusing on the organization's goals, can lead to powerful and reinforcing growth processes (Senge et al.,1999:6093).
This is the focus on enhancing the ability to see the world in terms of wholes, by looking at how relationships among the parts of the system are affecting each other. This enables the effort of working with, in stead of against the system, to create enduring solutions to stubborn problems or challenges. Practicing this discipline is based on learning to recognize "signature" systemic behaviors of a given system[29].

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[29] A system is a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent elements forming a complex whole. Almost always defined with respect to a specific purpose within a larger system.

Used to communicate the relationships among important variables in a problem context. Identifies feedback loops. A feedback loop exists when decisions change the state of the system, changing the conditions and information that influence future decisions.

Values and beliefs Deeply held values and beliefs can lock us into counterproductive ways of making decisions (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:20).

Variables Things that change over time (Goodman, 1991). Variables are the components of the system whose value can vary over time; that is go up or down (Anderson & Johnson, 1997:40). A good variable should fit into phrases such as: "the level of", "the amount of", "the number of", "the size of". Use noun and noun phrases. Use a neutral or positive term whenever possible to name a variable.

APPENDIX 2: SYSTEM ARCHETYPES

ARCHETYPE 1: Limits to growth
The limits to growth archetype is defined as follows: *"A process feeds on itself to produce a period of accelerating growth or expansion. Then the growth begins to slow (often inexplicably to the participants in the system) and eventually comes to a halt and may even reverse itself and begin an accelerating collapse. The growth phase is caused by a reinforcing feedback process, or several. The slowing arises due to a balancing process brought into play as a "limit" is approached. The limit can be a resource constraint, or an external or internal response to growth. The accelerating collapse (when it occurs) arises from the reinforcing process operating in reverse, to generate more and more contradiction" (Senge, 2006:6779).* The Limits to growth archetype is defined as *"a reinforcing process that is set in motion to produce a desired result. It creates a spiral of success but also creates inadvertent secondary effects (manifested in a balancing process) which eventually slow down the success" (Senge, 2006:1690).* A reinforcing process of accelerating growth will eventually encounter a balancing process as the limit of that system is approached, and the growth will slow down and may stop. Continuing efforts that produce diminishing returns can be an indication that the growth is approaching the limit (Andersen & Johnson, 124).
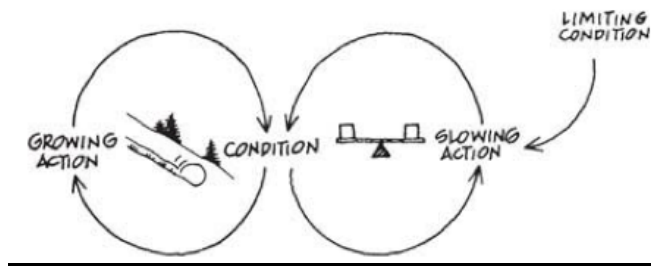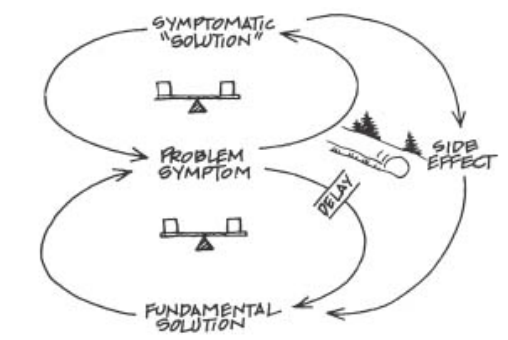
Archetype 2: Shifting the burden

"A short-term solution used to correct a problem, with seemingly positive immediate results. As this correction is used more and more, more fundamental long-term corrective measures are used less and less. Over time, the capabilities for the fundamental solution may atrophy or become disabled, leading to even greater reliance on the symptomatic solution" (Senge, 2006:6795). A problem symptom can be resolved either by using a symptomatic solution or applying a fundamental solution. This structure hypothesizes that once a symptomatic solution is used, it alleviates the problem symptom and reduces pressure to implement a more fundamental solution. There is often produced a side-effect that systematically undermines the ability to develop a fundamental solution (Anderson & Johnson: 125).

This structure consists of two balancing (stabilizing) processes. Both which are trying to adjust or correct the same problem symptom. The top circle represents the symptomatic intervention; the quick fix. The bottom circle has a delay; it represents a more fundamental response to the problem, one whose effects take longer to become evident. The fundamental solution works far more effectively – it may be the only enduring way to deal with the problem. There is also an additional reinforcing process created by "side effects" of the symptomatic solution, these make it even more difficult to invoke the fundamental solution. The pressure from the county of engaging the tourism businesses was a vexing problem that needed to be taken care of, and by engaging the positive ones, the problem was relieved. The downside is that it reduced any perceived need to find more fundamental solution to the problem. The underlying problem in the meantime remained unaddressed and worsened, and the side effects would make it even harder to apply the fundamental solution. Over time they relied more and more on the

symptomatic solution, which seemingly become the only solution. They therefore had shifted the burden to increasing reliance on symptomatic solutions. STB structures often underlie unintended drifts in strategic direction. The subtle reinforcing cycle that is fostered, increases the dependence on the symptomatic solution. The structure tend to produce periodic crises, when the symptoms of stress surface (Senge, 2006:1920). These crises are usually resolved with more of the symptomatic solution, causing the symptoms to temporarily improve. Less evident is the slow, long-term drift to lower levels of trust and ultimate solution. The longer they wait to confront the fundamental causes, the more difficult it can be to reverse the situation.


Archetype 3. Eroding goals

"A shifting the burden type of structure in which the short-term solution involves letting a long-term, fundamental goal decline" (Senge, 2006:6839).
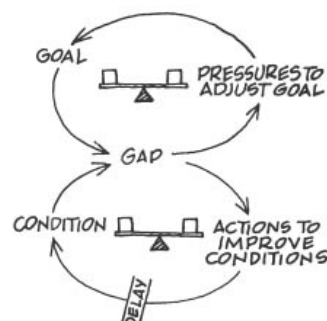

Archetype 3: Escalation

"Two people or organizations each see their welfare as depending on a relative advantage over the other. Whenever one side gets ahead, the other is more threatened, leading it to act more aggressively to reestablish its advantage, which threatens the first, increasing its aggressiveness, and so on. Often each side sees its own aggressive behavior as a defensive response to the other's aggression; but each side acting "in defense" results in a buildup that goes far beyond either side's desires" (2006:6852). Occurs when one party's actions are perceived by another party to be a threat, and the second party responds in a similar manner, further increasing the threat. The archetype hypothesizes that the two balancing loops will create a reinforcing figure-8 effect, resulting in threatening actions by both parties that grow exponentially over time (Anderson & Johnson, 123).
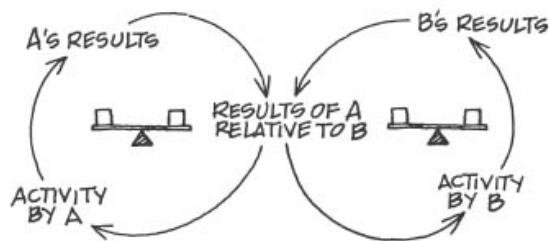

Archetype 5: Success to the successful

"Two activities compete for limited support or resources. The more successful one becomes, the more support it gains, thereby starving the other." (2006:6868). States that if one person or group (A) is given more resources than another equally capable group (B), A has a higher likelihood of succeeding. The archetype hypothesizes that A's initial success justifies devoting more resources to A, further widening the performance gap between the two groups over time (Anderson & Johnsen, 125).
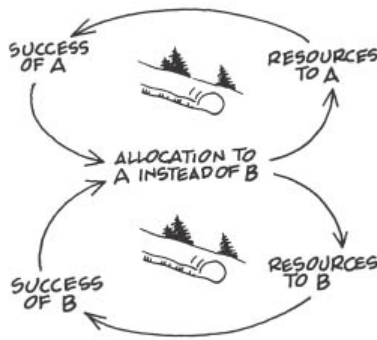
Archetype 6: Tragedy of the commons

"Individuals use a commonly available but limited resource solely on the basis of individual need. At first they are rewarded for using it; eventually, they get diminishing returns, which causes them to intensify their efforts. Eventually, the resource is either significantly depleted, eroded, or entirely used up." (2006:6900). The archetype identifies the causal connections between individual actions and the collective results (in a closed system). It hypothesizes that if the total usage of a common resource becomes too great for the system to support, the commons will become overloaded or depleted, and everyone will experience diminishing benefits (Andersen & Johnsen, 125).
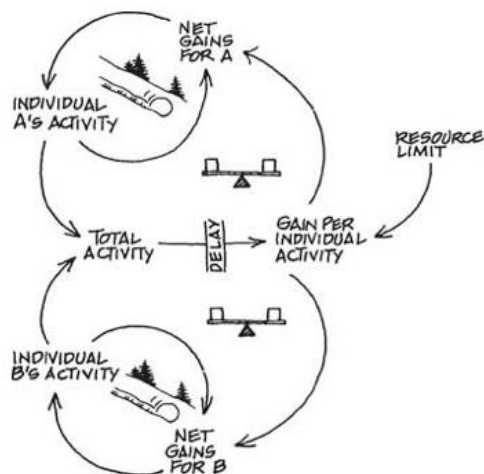

Archetype 7: Fixes that fail
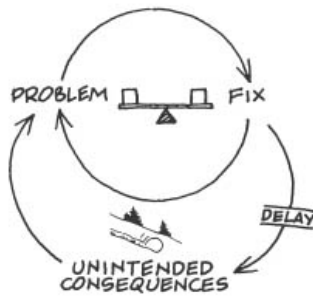
"A fix, effective in the short term, has unforeseen long-term consequences which may require even more use of the same fix." (2006:6912). This archetype states that a "quick-fix" solution can have unintended consequences that exacerbate the problem. It hypothesizes that the problem symptom will diminish for a short while and then return to its previous level, or become even worse over time (Anderson & Johnson, 124).

Archetype 8: Growth and underinvestment
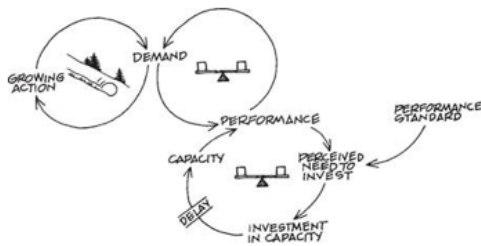
"Growth approaches a limit which can be eliminated or pushed into the future if the firm, or individual, invests in additional "capacity". But the investment must be aggressive and sufficiently rapid to forestall reduced growth, or else it will never get made. Oftentimes, key goals or performance standards are lowered to justify underinvestment. When this happens, there is self-fulfilling prophecy where lower goals lead to lower expectations, which are then borne out by poor performance caused by underinvestment." (2006:6928). This archetype applies when growth approaches a limit that can be overcome if capacity investments are made. If a system becomes stretched beyond its limit, however, it will compensate by lowering performance standards, which reduces the perceived need for

capacity investments. This reduction also leads to lower performance, which further

justifies underinvestment over time (Anderson & Johnson, 124).

Appendix 3: The system thinking skills

TRADITIONAL/CONTRASTING THINKING	SYSTEMS THINKING
STATIC	DYNAMIC
SYSTEM-AS-EFFECT THINKING	SYSTEM-AS-A-CAUSE THINKING
TREE-BY-TREE THINKING	FOREST THINKING
FACTORS THINKING	OPERATIONAL THINKING
STRAIGHT-LINE THINKING	CLOSED-LOOP THINKING
MEASUREMENT THINKING	QUANTITATIVE THINKING
PROVING-TRUTH THINKING	SCIENTIFIC THINKING

The seven critical thinking skills to effectively apply systems thinking

Systems thinking require mastering several different thinking skills, which are said to improve the quality of human thinking. By identifying the different competencies that are needed to accomplish different tasks, it is possible to practice each skill in isolation, before putting them all together (Richmond, 1997:1).

There is an iterative, four-step process that is commonly used to apply systems thinking.

1. Specify the problem/issue to be solved/explored/addressed.
2. Construct hypotheses to explain the problem.
3. Test the hypotheses using models (mental models or pencil and paper models).
4. Communicate the perspective to others to test the hypotheses, and begin to implement the change (Richmond, 1997:1).

Ps. The use of the term "models" in this article, are referring to something that represents a specifically defined set of assumptions about how the world works. (Richmond:1). Richmond starts from a premise that all models are wrong because they

are incomplete representations of reality, but that some models are more useful (help us understand reality better) than others. There is a tendency in the business world, to view models (especially the computer based ones) as "answer generators" – plugging in a set of numbers and getting a set of answers. Fro a systems thinking perspective, models are seen as "assumptions and theory testers" – we formulate our understanding and then rigorously test it. The fundamental premise that underlies this approach is that: all models are only as good as the quality of the thinking that went into creating them (Richmond, 1997: 2). To effectively apply ST is not easy. Thinking skills needed are many, and stand in stark contrast to the skill set that most of us currently use when we grapple with business issues (Richmond, 1997:5).

1. Dynamic thinking

Practicing this skill enhances the task of defining the problem that needs to be tackled. Frames a problem in terms of Pattern of behavior over time. Considering what will happen with key variables over time. The Systems Thinking approach is best suited for problems or issues that unfold over time. The contrasting skill found in traditional thinking is termed Static Thinking (the underlying mechanism that causes people to focus on particular one-time events). (Richmond, 1997:2).

2. Systems-as-a-cause-thinking

The second skill will be developed by constructing a model to explain how the behavior arises, and then suggest ways to improve that behavior. Helps determine what aspects of the problem to include, and how detailed to be in representing each. Places responsibility for a behavior on internal actors who manage the policies and designs the system. This skill emphasizes that one should only include elements and interrelationships that are within the control of managers and are capable of generating the behavior that one seek to explain. Instead of defensive reasoning, it is sought to question ones own responsibility in the matter. The contrasting skill is "System-as-Effect Thinking" (viewing behavior generated by a system as driven by external forces. This can lead to including more variables than needed in the model) (Richmond, 1997:2).

3. Forest thinking

It is often assumed that to really know something, one needs to focus on details. This skill practices not being too detailed-focused; including not focusing on life as a sequence of detailed events and day-to-day existence. As in the previous skill, Forest Thinking also helps determine what aspects of the problem to include, and how detailed to be in representing each. It emphasizes that to know something; one must understand the context of relationships. Grouping details to provide "on average" picture of the system. Focus on similarities, rather than differences. Regardless of the involved individuals, realizing potential within an organization comes from the same generic structure (e.g. focusing on finding out the relationship among factors that tends to govern an individual's motivation). The contrasting skill is called "Tree-by-Tree Thinking" (believing that really knowing something means focusing on the details. These models are often large and overly detailed. Focusing on the details and not the overall trend/pattern). (Richmond, 1997:3).

4. Operational thinking

This skill, in addition to the following two (5-6), are vital for representing the hypotheses (mental models) that you are going to test. Focuses on understanding causality and how a behavior is actually generated. The generation of behavior – causality. Operational Thinking captures the nature of processes by describing its structure. Contrasts with Factors/correlational thinking (Steven Covey). Mental models and lists of factors "to be successful". Lists do not explain how each causal factor works its magic. Correlation/influence is not the same as causality. Captures the nature of the process by describing its structure (Factors thinking = enumerates a set of factors that in some way "influence" the process). The contrasting skill is "Factors Thinking" or "Correlational Thinking" (Listing factors that influence or are correlated with some result – merely imply that each factor "influences" the result in some way – this is however not the same as causality; the factor can not be used to explain the result) – e.g. all the "critical success factors" that one needs to fulfill to reach organizational success. There is a human tendency to like the idea of how a list of factors can influence or drive some result (Richmond, 1997:3).

5. Closed Loop Thinking

Tendency to list factors – assumptions behind this thinking is: A) causality runs only one way: causes → effect. Sees causality as an ongoing process with the "effect" feeding back to influence the causes, and the causes affecting one another; B) Each cause is independent of all other causes. In reality (and as shown in the CLD on page XX), the "effect" often feeds back to influence one or more of the "causes" and the causes themselves affect each other. This skill sees causality as an ongoing *process*, rather than a one-time event. When testing this skill on models, try to observe how the different drivers affect each other and how the dominance between the variables might change over time. The contrasting skill is called "Straight-Line Thinking" (viewing causality as running one way, with each cause independent from all other causes) (Richmond, 1997:4)

6. Quantitative thinking

Practicing the acceptance of how it is possible to always quantify, but not always measure. "Measuring" thinking dominates, and the practitioners often get obsessed with "getting the numbers right". Measuring soft variables: self-esteem, resistance to change, motivation, commitment – cannot be measured – but can be quantified. Because soft variables are not possible to measure in the standard measurable way, they are often not considered in analysis. But they can be quantified. The model can shed light on how to increase "strength of commitment" (variable) – as opposed to predicting the value of the commitment in the future (?). 0 = absence of commitment. 100 = as committed as possible. The skill will make you give up the ability to achieve perfect measurement. Regarding "hard" variables, these can also be difficult to measure accurately, because of the speed of change, the delays and the imperfections in information systems. The contrasting skill is called "Measurement Thinking" (searching for perfectly measured data – assuming that "to know, one must measure precisely / the quest for numerical exactitude + getting the numbers right) (Richmond, 1997:4)

7. Scientific thinking

The last skill is useful for testing the models and recognizes that all models are working hypotheses that always have limited applicability. Important to acknowledge that progress in science is measured by discarding falsehoods. Most models are unscientific – assuming that models must be true because they track history. System thinker's resist

the pressure to validate their models by tracking history → instead they work to become aware of the falsehoods in the models and communicate to the team. System thinker's also focus on robustness/practicality, and torture-test their models. They want to know the margin where the models "breaks". They also focus on choosing numbers that are easy to understand, simple and make sense relative to one another – instead of using exact numbers. The contrasting skill is named "Proving-Truth Thinking" (seeking to prove models to be true by validating with historical data). SYSTEM DYNAMICS? (Richmond, 1997:4)

Appendix 5: Additional information from the case study (2012)

5.1 The actors and roles in the project

The project leader(s) were throughout the project three different individuals. The first project manager worked with the pilot project, but resigned after one year when the main project was about to start, because of lack of faith in the project being able to deliver the planned results. While trying to find a new project manager, there was one local person that had the role as the project manager for some months, before the third project manager was hired. This last project manager was in charge of the project from 2000-2003. The project leader reports to the project responsible (DTO).

The Developmental Tourism Organization (DTO)[30] was in charge of the project; formulated the applications, provided the funding, hired the project manager(s), and they were also the responsible actor of the project results. This was the biggest project that the DTO had ever initiated and led, and the expectations were high as to whether this would lead to a new direction for Numedal. The DTO reports to both the Regional Council and the county.

The county had one representative in charge of these cultural projects. They grant the funding's and put down criteria's.

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[30] The DTO was a corporation that functioned as a connecting link between the county, the townships and the tourism industry. They initiate projects and provide the financial resources, aiming to create development and workplaces in Numedal.

The tourism businesses consisted of two central actors in the tourism industry in the valley – one of them was referred to as "positive" and the other as "negative". The tourism business that did not want to partake could not relate to the cultural aspect of the project, but followed the process closely even so.

The Interim Board was the group that was put together by the The Regional Board after the designated meeting (år:), and after the county had demanded cooperation with the tourism industry. This group was supposed to take on the responsibility for the future of the project and continue working with the promotion of the area as "The Medieval Valley".

The Internal Board consisted of different actors from the project; one representative from the tourism industry, the DTO, one representative from The Regional Counsil, the project manager, among others.

The Regional Council Consisted of the three mayors in the valley. They were temporarily in charge of the project from 2005-2006.

5.2. The objective and method of the Bachelor's Thesis

In the work with my Bachelor's Thesis I wanted to provide a rich description of what experiences and benefits the participants retained, six years after the project ended; an evaluative report. I wanted to find out what the most central participants in this project thought and meant and their experience of the process. Additionally I sought to offer a holistic view that could potentially confirm or dispute whether the Kaizen evaluation report was correct or not. I focused on the central project participants' experience of the project execution and tried to locate the factors that contributed to the project's struggle to reach its goals. Furthermore, I wanted to find out which alternative approach the interview participants meant would have resulted in a different outcome and to enable a successful tourism development in this particular valley.

The method

The data in this study was obtained through the use of in-depth interviews as a primary method, in order to get a descriptive picture of the participants' experiences, attitudes and general conception regarding the topic of interest. The selection of interviewees consisted of nine of the key participants directly involved in the project, both from the project management and from the project participants (a few tourism businesses). The focus of the interviews was on the managements' and the participants' perceptions regarding their opinion of why the project seemed to not have accomplished its desired results.

One possible weakness of this method was the potential for reduced memories of the participants, since the project ended seven years earlier. Despite this fact, the participants had a surprisingly detailed knowledge and memories about the project period. To ensure that I got a holistic understanding of it all, I also conducted a document analysis of the meeting memorandums and strategy documents that were collected throughout those years.

The reliability of the study was also challenged by the relationship between the interview participants and me as the interviewer - as a former resident of Numedal. This might have affected their choice of wording and made them selective regarding the information they provided. Another potential limitation was the human tendency of rewriting the truth or holding back information since this was a "sensitive" topic in many ways. To make sure that my interpretation of the findings would not be affected by existing mental models, assumptions and/or my theoretical background, I chose to make use of rich descriptions of the analyzed material, to provide the reader with the opportunity of making up his or hers own mind regarding the implications of the findings.

Generalizability

The results of my study found that there is a greater potential for further development in the valley, than this project seemed to accomplish. The findings were therefore found to be generally applicable to future project initiatives. The findings from this study also indicate that these aspects should be examined with respect to a regional and possibly a national context.

5.3 The main findings from the case study

Based on these factors, I categorized the findings into five key

categories. These categories sum up the factors that should have been emphasized in

order to get a successful project result. The categories were as follows:

1. Planning According to the findings there was a clear lack of a thorough planning in

advance of the project, despite the pilot project in advance.

- The project was meant to follow the framework of "The project leadership process"[31].

This framework had not actively been made use of, as the working tool it was meant to

be, despite it being a criterion for receiving project funding from the county.

- The planning phase should also have made sure that they had the right competence to

successfully implement the project.

- The project participants had not agreed on what kind of project it was meant to be.

This contributed to a lot of confusion throughout the process, as the findings indicate.

Struggled with defining the project – was it a tourism culture promotional.

- There was experienced a lack of mapping of the tourism businesses' needs.

2. Anchoring The findings show that the lack of anchoring of the project, and the

participants lacking sense of ownership to the idea, was a continuous challenge that

followed the project from its very beginning and until its very end.

- The findings suggested that the project and what it should contain should have been

initiated by the front-line, which were supposed to use the result after the

project completion.

 - The tourism industry and the project management had differing views regarding

which marketing/promotion the tourism businesses in the valley should be identified

with.

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[31] The Project Leadership Process (Prosjektlederprosessen) was a phase-focused framework and method developed by Innovation Norway (Innovasjon Norge). By following different phases and check-lists in it, the implementation of projects should be made easier. The framework was developed for townships and regional change projects, and where there is a cooperation between politicians and industry. It is described as well-suited for businesses, organizations, townships in their work towards development and change. *"Through personal anchoring, demands to ownership decitions and the project responsible's quality assuring role – the PLP puts focus on the project owner's role in the process"* (http://www.plputvikling.no/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/PLP-Prosjektlederprosessen_2.pdf).

- After the project ended, the tourism businesses that was supposed to work most closely with the implemented project, thus ensuring its further implementation and benefits from its results did not have any relation to the results. Their participation would presumably have motivated them to adopt the results after the project ended. This resulted in a very challenging deliverance phase at the end of the project.

3. Utilization (of resources) The foundation for the concept of the initiative was the medieval buildings in the valley. This concept was not product developed to the degree that the project description enumerated and in keeping with the **tourism** industry's expectations.

- The project plan clearly stated that the medieval buildings would be the foundation for the project. The tourism businesses had hoped for product development, which initially was part of the plan and the strategy document. The valley was promoted as "The Medieval Valley", without it being any concrete results – or products related to the medieval age.

- The project manager did not see fit to make proper use of the human resources throughout the process. There was not delegated responsibility to the tourism businesses that showed interest, despite their explicit desire to partake and contribute – and despite the obvious time pressure the project was under. This was also a part of the PLP framework; to include the participants so that they would develop an ownership to the results.

4. Communication Findings indicate that the communication between the tourism industry and the project management was a challenge right from the start.

- There was an authoritarian communication from the project management's side. "Critical questions" was ignored and bypassed, and after a limited anchoring phase, the management chose to ignore the businesses' comments, suggestions and questions regarding the project. There was neither a culture for asking questions regarding how the management – and especially the project leader, operated.

- When the project started to evolve around promotion instead of product development, the tourism businesses became skeptical about the way the management handled things

and about the sudden change of focus. The management interpreted the tourism industries' skepticism as "resistance".

- In the findings it was stated from both "the critics" and "the supporters" that the project management had based most of their decision making on assumptions, throughout the project.

- The lack of effective internal communication and response to approaches, contributed to a continued reduction of the trust the tourism businesses had to the management of the project. "The critics" pointed to how these comments and questions should have been embraced and taken into consideration to assure the quality of the end result.

- The project management chose to make use of the local newspaper as an internal (and external) communication channel, at several occasions. Through this channel the management criticized and blamed the industry for the lack of interest in the project, saying that the industry was *"negative towards the medieval concept and expressing resistance".*

- The lack of sufficient and constructive dialogue between the management and the industry was mentioned as one of the reasons why the project failed. This was something change recipients had expected and the change agents avoided.

- The results show that the project management on several occasions chose to do the opposite of what they had previously stated that they would do. This led to further lack of trust amongst the tourism businesses.

- The management went behind the back of the tourism businesses, and did not respond to their efforts to contact them. This aspect was termed as the behavior that created irreparable distrust amongst the change recipients.

5. Comprehension This was the overall factor that summed up the four previous factors; the findings indicated that there was a considerable lack of holistic comprehension amongst the project management and the other decision makers (the county), regarding the implementation of such a demanding project as "The Medieval Valley".

- There was a clear lack of fundamental comprehension regarding the competence that a project with this comprehensiveness, would require from the ones leading the project. Neither the project leader nor anyone from the internal board (incl. the DTO) had any competence in tourism development or previous experience with project management.

- Lack of comprehension regarding the importance of involving the tourism businesses in the project right from the beginning.

- Lack of comprehension regarding the purpose of following plans and making use of step-wise evaluation forms as tools for ensuring completion of tasks in the different milestones in the project description.

- The lack of comprehension regarding how product development was needed to ensure the planned result, and which at the same time would have assured the tourism businesses' main motivation to partake in the project – and thereby have secured the anchoring. The importance of the different phases was not properly recognized, and the project management chose to take the easy way out.

- The managements' needs of quickly being able to show to measurable results, was prioritized before following the actual plan.

- Both "the critics" and "the supporters" stated that the project management did not want any "critical questions" directed at their chosen approach. This indicated a lack of comprehension for the importance of feedback.

- The management chose to divide the project group/participants as respectively *"the positive ones"* and *"the negative ones"*, and thereby choosing to focus on the so-called "positive" participants for the rest of the project period. Lack of comprehension regarding how the management should have aimed at establishing a good relationship with the front-line, and how this exclusion would affect the project in the long-term.

- The industry's comments were at an early point referred to as "resistance". The management chose to ignore it, by continuing with their plans for the project for the following five years.

- Tourism, as a complex industry area with both societal and developmental challenges, demands substantial understanding of and insight into these aspects, from the individuals that are to lead the project.