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A Clash of Ideologies: A Case Study from the NGO Industry

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of commitment in competing ideologies, using narratives as proxy. We take a processual and continuous view on change when researching a Danish NGO, and use abductive reasoning. By diving into context we address how stakeholders are able to influence the organization through employees' perception. Thus directing it in certain directions. We apply the sensemaking framework described by Hernes et al (2015), by demonstrating and explaining how two competing narratives are enforcing a change process at the NGO. Therefore this thesis explores the ongoing sensemaking process for the *business as usual* narrative, meeting an ambiguous future. To support Hernes et al (2015), the importance of narratives described by Søderberg (2006), and a processual framework of change presented by Dawson (2003) is applied.

A lack of pre-existing frames provides a possible explanation of the low level of commitment to the competing narrative. In our research we identified a pre-commitment, assumed relevant for the general NGO industry. We suggest this commitment goes beyond ideology. Our contribution to the sensemaking literature lies in relating context and pre-commitment to the narratives that underlie the change process. At a more general level, the analysis shows that dynamics inherent in the process might be a hinder of organizational change.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1. Introduction

1.1 "NGOs in the Spotlight"

"Foreign Assistance is not an end in itself. The purpose of aid must be to create the conditions where it is no longer needed." **– President Barack Obama.**

The global picture of NGOs is subject to rapid change. With an increasing number of differentiated organizations, and persistent issues of poverty, emergencies, refugees and world hunger, the environment of NGOs is getting challenged (Edelman, 2002). Central dilemmas are related to how the growing industry, bureaucratization and stakeholder interests challenge values and legitimacy.

NGOs are the most trusted institutions in global governance (Edelman, 2002). Their role is to partner with major actors such as business and governments in making sure that their solutions are apt. There is no common agreement on the definition of an NGO. However, according to Willetts (2006) there are some fundamental features attached, matching the conditions recognized by the United Nations. Clearly, an NGO should be independent from any direct governmental control. Additionally, an NGO is not for profit, not affiliated with a political party, refrains from crime and is non-violent (ibid.). However, the boundaries are often blurred. In practice many NGOs identify with a political party, generate income from commercial activities, and some might even be associated with violent political protests. Thus, we understand NGOs as; *independent organizations of people acting together on a continuous basis, with a common purpose of making the world a better place.*

NGOs are built on ideologies, which are *systems of ideals that creates a set of opinions or beliefs of a group or an individual, which characterize a particular culture* (Clarke, 1998). However, the ideological diversities found in many NGO communities can lead to political conflict. NGOs are not only important actors in their own right. They have become important institutional vehicles for other actors, such as; foreign donors, industrial or agricultural interests, religious groups, or underground movements, in articulating conflicting ideological positions (ibid.). NGOs are grounded on long-term values, but their supporters often force program-based projects, and the public often perceive ongoing

world-problems never to be resolved (Edelman, 2002). This can be challenging when NGOs are raising funds for specific causes, as it is crucial to have support from the general public to achieve legitimacy.

With basis in ideology, we choose to distinguish between two types of NGOs. As our thesis concern the Danish market we follow the distinction made by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA, 2016). The first one is humanitarian aid, which focus on emergency relief; the second is development, focusing on long-term aid. NGOs that are working with emergency relief contribute in times of crisis, while long-term development organizations attempt to strengthen the developing countries with knowledge and expertise. Emergency relief organizations constitute the largest group of NGOs, and engage in charitable activities that are exclusively non-political. Development aid organizations have activities such as long-term programs and cooperatives.

Common strengths for the industry are related to values, expertise, communications and networks (Edelman, 2002). Despite the enormous variety, NGOs share a strong core value-base with a focus on improving quality of life for disadvantaged people. Values are key in their ability to attract expertise and create momentum, to powerfully communicate and build robust local, regional and global networks. Thus, gaining public trust and successful partnerships, which in turn contribute to the legitimization of the organizations. Another key strength for NGOs is their ability to communicate stories through media, and getting support from high-profile people. However, these elements are subject to intense competition, even if it is hard to find evidence.

Although the success of NGOs has been important during the 21th century, their weaknesses can render them vulnerable to impending threats. This could potentially make them fail at grasping emerging opportunities. A typical example is the cultural gap that separates NGOs from the business sector. When facing corporate businesses, professionalization can become a challenge, and a hinder of potential collaborations.

Confusion, counterfeiting, stagnation, alienation and succession are risks the NGO industry could potentially be faced with (Edelman, 2002). Background noise might drown out messages, and too many voices confuse audiences. This emphasizes the need to stand out in the environment with a strong profile. Additionally, there are many reasons for governments and businesses to dismiss the

NGO agenda. Therefore, NGOs need to show consistency and integrity. NGOs have become more bureaucratized in recent years, making it easier to alienate supporters. Hence, a challenge often occurs between the complex nature of sustained development issues, and the need for communicating simple and clear messages. The greatest threat of NGOs is the lack of ability to move fast enough for organizational survival.

When consumers can buy any product and feel that they are creating real social and environmental value in the process, one can ask why there is a need for NGOs? We would still need *watchdogs*, but the risk is that there will emerge a niche to which in the long run, they might be confined.

1.2 Background and motivation - "Travelling through Africa"

The eagerness to investigate an NGO initially emerged due to a common ground of interest in these types of organizations, based on prior experience. One of us has travelled multiple times through Ethiopia and other countries in Africa, visiting various humanitarian organizations. Additionally she has been a member of a youth driven organization, focusing on environmental preservation. The other has been an active supporter of the World Wildlife Organization for several years. These experiences sparked an interest in what challenges NGOs might face.

When discussing NGOs, and how NGOs are different from corporates, we realized we had some assumptions about values and commitment. We speculated that a challenge for NGOs could be how employees identify with the organization on a personal level. Since ideology plays an important role in these organizations, it is focal to have some kind of match between personal and organizational values. Due to the fact that organizations grow, a challenge might be that increased focus on reporting and results achievements could create a distance between the personal values and the organizational values. We suspected that everyday routine could lead to an overshadowing of personal values, and the reasons behind the choice of working in an NGO. We also assumed commitment to the organization would be more important in these organizations than in the corporate sector, as they do not have the same kind of monetary incentives. This led us to the investigation of Danish NGOs to find a possible case company.

1.3 "Caring for CARE"

Our choice of using CDK as case company was based on a combination of accessibility, and a curiosity about the organization. After realizing our common interest for NGOs, we contacted a number of organizations in Copenhagen. CDK was very positive towards our project. During our first meeting with the General Secretary, we settled on mutual interests, and established the grounds for a collaborative relationship.

In the first interviews we tried to uncover possible problem areas, related to our assumptions about NGOs. Contradictory, we quickly discovered a strong correlation between personal and organizational values at CDK. It appeared the organizational routine had become a means of achievement for their personal values, where the core seemed to be related to *"making a difference"*.

CDK is one of the smaller development organizations in the vast environment of NGOs in Denmark. As such, it can prove difficult for CDK to differentiate itself enough to achieve sufficient funding. It has traditionally characterized itself as an organization working exclusively with long-term development aid. The ideology of development is thereby deeply ingrained in its identity, together with the assumption that long-term aid is what works. The long history within this type of aid has enabled it to develop special expertise within climate programs, from which it has received international acknowledgement. Additionally, their primary founder, DANIDA, proves recognition to their work as sustainable.

However, during our interviews we uncovered a shift in the political environment in Denmark, where the government has started to prioritize emergency relief over development aid. The shift is exemplified with DANIDA choosing to no longer earmark funding specifically for long-term development. This is not *business as usual* for CDK, and has led to re-evaluation of its options. The management has therefore considered the possibility of including emergency relief in their portfolio. Emergency aid represents a different ideology than development aid, as it proposes a fundamentally different approach to dealing with crisis. The assumption inherent in development ideology of emergency relief as *"aid that comes too late"* emphasizes the conflict between the ideologies.

During our involvement at CDK, the management made the decision to include emergency relief. It means that the organization, as of now, operate with competing ideologies. A curiosity about what the implications would be for CDK, in addition to our assumptions about the importance of commitment in NGOs, is what led us to our research question.

1.4 Research area and purpose

1.4.1 Research question

With an aim of guiding the aforementioned topic, the following research question of investigation leading the thesis is:

What is the role of commitment in competing ideologies in an NGO?

1.4.2 Explanation of research question

We choose to apply sensemaking theory to address differences in how competing ideologies will unfold. Commitment is essential in our research question due to the assumption we have about its importance when being employed at an NGO. In our thesis we use narratives as proxy for ideology. We adopt the view of commitment as evolving around certain narratives, which serve to hold activities and people together, during times of change. Therefore, as ideologies (Narratives) are considered sets of values and beliefs, it is important to understand how these are affected when they get challenged. Commitment is what makes organizations move forward and is central for organizational survival. Having commitment around a common mission is thus important. All individuals are to some extent committed to something, and act based on a given system, that helps them make sense of their actions. We have identified two competing narratives; a grand historically based long-term development narrative, and an emerging competing emergency relief narrative. Our research will revolve around how these narratives engender different kinds of commitment.

Ideologies are assumed to be more important for NGOs than for corporate organizations. This has implications for how CDK views stakeholders; how important they are considered to be, and what kind of influence they have. The perceptions stakeholders have of CDK are reflected back to the organization, thus affecting the sensemaking process. We consider the external organizations to be limited to the view the employees hold at CDK. It means that we will not be conducting a stakeholder analysis, but merely consider these from CDK's internal perspective. The totality of internal and external influencing forces constitutes the context and is the backdrop for our thesis. Uncovering the forces of influence at CDK might enable us to understand how and why the conflicting narrative arises. As the organizational environment is changing we have adopted a processual view of change, understanding it as continuous and evolving.

1.5 How to make sense of change

Commonly, change has been argued to be punctuated states of stability. The organizations are trying to catch up with changes in the environment, with a desired outcome of a stepwise alignment with external forces (Hernes, Hendrup & Schäffner, 2015). This implies that organizations are in a constant state of chasing environmental forces. However, catching up or outperforming the market is virtually impossible. Hence, organizations need to find ways to adapt.

Change should hereby be understood as forces of change already at play, and the dynamics by which they interact (Hernes et al., 2015). Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld (2005) claims that the language of sensemaking captures the realities of agency, flow, equivocality, transience, re-accomplishment, unfolding and emergence. We understand change as ongoing, in terms of being processual and continuous, hence, organizations are forever in a state of becoming (Hernes et al. 2015). Both a processual view of change and sensemaking are suggestive of organizing taking place in a world of flux. In these terms one can ask, what is driving change, and is it impossible for organizations to ever find a stable state?

1.5.1 Forces of change

As the future is ambiguous and the market may take unexpected turns, it is necessary to understand the factors that influence sectors, and specific organizations. By taking a processual approach to

change: politics, context and the substance of change are focal elements to address, in order to understand organizational change processes (Dawson, 2003). Power relations and political processes have been identified as central in steering a company and its change programs (Buchanan and Badham 1999; Dawson 2003). As an example, management's commitment to strategy implementation should not be taken for granted, and variations in commitment can be determining in the reshaping of change.

The context in which a change takes place, both internal and external is central for understanding the opportunities as well as constraints following a change process. The existence of competing histories can significantly shape ongoing change programs. The contextual and historical dimension can therefore create and devalue options during a change process (Dawson, 2003). This aligns with the belief of Hernes et al. (2015), which explains sensemaking as an activity of making sense of the past to understand the present in meeting the future.

The processual framework of change adopted in this thesis refers to the past and present, external and internal operating environments, and the influence of future on current operating practice. Thus, it will capture both multiple and competing narratives. The substance of a change is equally important to understand, as it defines its scale and scope, characteristics, timeframe and centrality. Knowledge of the substance of change and clarification of what the change means for the organization can itself become a political process, influenced by external contextual views and the setting of internal agenda around the management of change (Dawson, 2003). Hence, there is a continuous interplay between the three determinants. Corresponding with a sensemaking process, it is difficult to define when a change is starting and ending, as organizations are continuously evolving.

It is not uncommon to have confusion surrounding the introduction of a new organizational direction; this is where the importance of narration and storytelling comes into play. An emerging question is how organizational change processes can be studied through narratives, and how organizational members' sensemaking around narratives contribute in creating commitment.

1.5.2 The importance of narratives

Narratives may construct the same events differently, and interpret actions of selected actors from a different point of view (Søderberg, 2006). Narratives and storytelling become important when organizations undergo change, as a means to create coherence and order in the cognitive universe of organizational members. Thus, storytelling and narratives can be influential when members of an organization attach meaning to events and activities. They do so by entering them into the plot they have created, on the basis of their personal experience. However, managers spearheading organizational change processes are not just involved in sensemaking activities - they also have the power to define the situation (Søderberg, 2006). They can make conscious efforts on influencing the sensemaking processes of others, in trying to offer an interpretative pattern to the organizational members.

1.6 Aim and scope

By conducting a qualitative case study we aim to contribute to already existing theories on sensemaking, narratives and change theory. However, we limit ourselves to only consider the NGO-industry. The thesis will utilize the framework offered by Hernes et al. (2015), although we make some suggestions as to how it could be understood differently, based on our research. This leads to a deeper discussion about which elements could be included to enable a better understanding of the processes at CDK. When applying the processual framework of change described by Dawson (2003), we have chosen not to adopt the full structure of the model. We do not believe his visual presentation is representable for our research, although he describes some interesting elements that seem important for our understanding.

We have combined empirical data and our findings for a continuous interplay during the process of writing. Our understanding of the case is emphasized together with elaboration on cultural meanings, and context specific sensemaking (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). We have actively engaged in the everyday life at CDK and believe we have achieved an impression of management and employees' commitment to different narratives. Our findings have resulted in a slightly different way of interpreting the sensemaking process described by Hernes et al (2015). We believe

we have found new elements of importance, and therefore suggest an extended version of their model, considered suitable for our case study.

1.7 Thesis outline
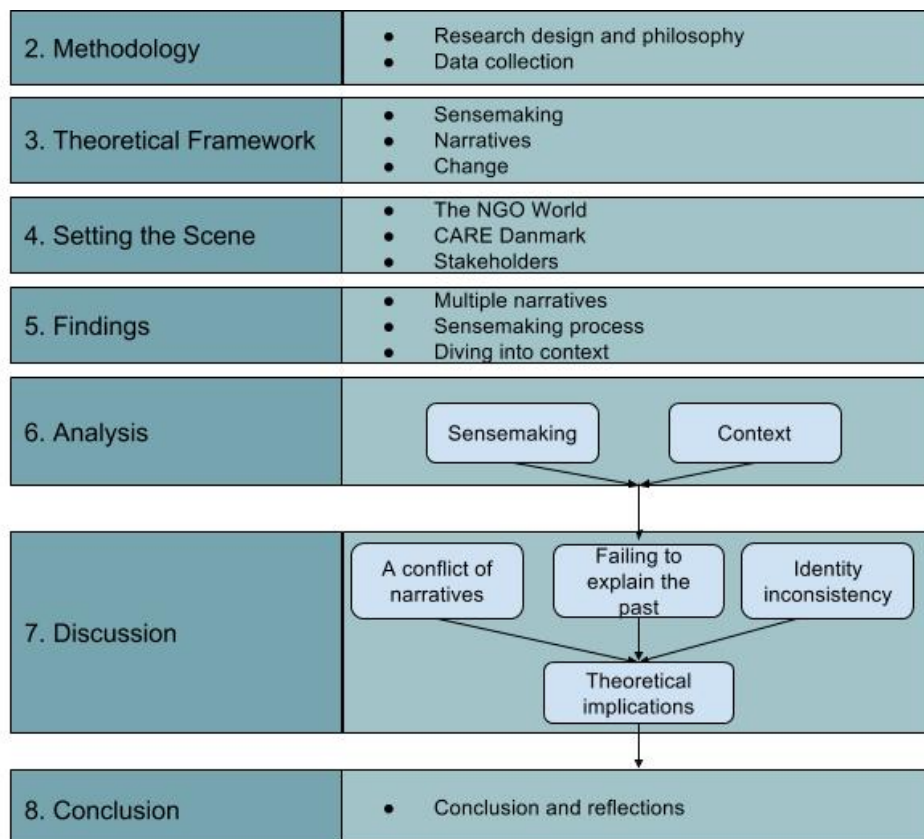
Figure 1: Outline of the thesis

2. Methodology

This chapter describes the execution of the research and the underlying logic supporting it. First we describe the research design, which presents philosophies. Secondly the methodological reflections are elaborated, including methods and techniques applied when generating and analyzing data for the analysis.

When deciding on the research design, we established which philosophy our thought-process belonged to. We assumed this would affect the link between the research question, methodology and theory (Ankersborg, 2011). According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008, p 26: De Vaus 2001: p 16) research design refers to *the structure of an enquiry*, as it identifies the *"possible types of data and evidence needed for answering the research question convincingly"*. Deciding on the research design enabled us to identify the data necessary to answer our research question.

2.1 Research philosophy

Paradigms are basic belief systems that guide the researcher in understanding reality, building knowledge and gathering information about the world (Tracy 2013, Guba & Lincoln 1994). In the context of our thesis, the paradigm we considered ourselves within, has framed our thoughts and the choices made throughout the process.

The main theoretical foundation of our thesis is sensemaking theory; therefore we consider the thesis to follow the social constructionist paradigm. This means that our understanding of the organizational reality is based on the stories told by the staff and management at CDK, in line with Berger & Luckmann (1967). They established that social constructionists seek to understand how seemingly 'objective features', such as a narrative, are constituted by subjective meanings of individuals, and intersubjective processes, such as discourses. An example of a socially constructed entity is gender difference. It represents the difference between men and women, in how they talk, describe and perceive situations. As researchers our understanding of reality might have been unconsciously affected by the gender of the person telling us their stories. When talking to staff at CDK, some women appeared to be more emotionally affected by

various processes in the organization. Thus, we might have interpreted this situation differently based on the gender of the interviewee.

The social arena at CDK is important to consider as a vital socially constructed reality. We had to be aware of the possible impacts the organizational members could have on our understanding of reality. Their stories should not be considered organizational facts. They are merely guidelines for achieving a complete understanding of the organizational processes and the context.

Reflexivity is considered an important aspect of social constructionism (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). It suggests that we should be adaptive to how societal phenomena may be subject to change, in relation to context and time. Behaviors and attitudes among employees might be subject to change, during and after our involvement. Hence, failing to be reflexive in our study could lead to a distorted image of the change processes at CDK.

2.2 Research design

Methodologies are concerned with how we come to know the world, and the intention is to describe how a given issue or problem can be studied (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, p 15). Our research can be considered a study of a momentary stability, and almost a snapshot of a specific plot, in a set context and time. Concurrently, the evident changes in the industry of research are investigated in relation to the response and development of our case company.

2.2.1 A qualitative study

We considered a qualitative approach to be most appropriate as we sought to obtain first-hand knowledge from organizational members. Interviews and frequent observation were used as means to answer our research question. Our prior knowledge was solely based on the *organizing processes* course at Copenhagen Business School. Qualitative research is considered particularly relevant when little is known about the phenomenon prior to the study (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). It is exploratory and flexible in nature, as a way of dealing with 'unstructured problems' (ibid, p 5: Ghauri & Gronhaug 2005, p 202). A major interest in qualitative studies is to understand reality as

socially constructed: produced and interpreted through cultural meanings by organizational members (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, p 4).

In our study we apply abductive reasoning. It derives from pragmatist philosophy and applies specifically to the contingent and explorative nature of process-based studies (Pierce, 1978). It is defined as the process of moving observed descriptions and meanings to categories and concepts. This creates the basis for understanding or explaining the phenomenon of investigation (Eriksson & Kovalainen p 23). Thus, abduction is distinct from induction and deduction.

Abductive reasoning is applied both intentionally and intuitively in our research. We consider the flow of information, both the theories utilized in this thesis and our empirical results, to necessitate and facilitate an adaptive thought-process. It is particularly evident in the research process, where we found it necessary to change our problem statement and interviewing-style several times, as the level of information increased. An elaboration of the research process is presented later in this chapter.

2.2.2 A case study

The main purpose of our thesis is to understand the role of commitment at CDK during an ongoing change, which makes our research a case study (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, Yin 2014). The research process of a case study is according to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) best described as a continuous interplay between theory and empirical data, which correlates to abductive reasoning. Continuous interplay is closely linked to what Dubois and Gadde (2002) refer to as 'systematic combining'. It is defined as the interaction between what is going on in reality combined with available theories, the case that evolves, and the analytical framework (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008: Dubois & Gadde 2002, p 3). Sensemaking theory is the theoretical foundation for our thesis. However, the analysis of the phenomena we observed at CDK necessitated a continuous search for theories that could provide possible explanations. An example was the discovery of multiple narratives, which required us to revisit the theory to understand how they might affect commitment. Consequently, the direction of our thesis changed multiple times as our knowledge and understanding increased.

Our study can further be considered an *intensive* case study, with a purpose of constructing a good story worth reading (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, p 120: Dyer & Wilkins 1991), as it draws on the qualitative and ethnographic research traditions. Our interpretation and understanding of the case is emphasized together with elaboration of cultural meanings, and context specific sensemaking processes (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, p 119).

2.3 Methodological reflections

Using the social constructionist paradigm as a point of departure means we assume the research object is unique, and as such, that no generic theories can be developed on the basis of this study. This is in accordance with the strict definition of a case study offered by Yin (2014). Contrarily, Flyveberg (2006) considers this to be a misunderstanding with regard to case study research, stating that one can often generalize on the basis of a single case, while maintaining that generalization is overvalued, and 'the force of example' is underestimated (ibid., p 12). Weick (1979) support this statement by regarding learning from a particular case, conditioned by environmental context, to be an opportunity, *"researchers should try harder to make interpretations specific to situations"* (p 37, in Dubois & Gadde, 2002, p 554). Hence, in our thesis, we do not aim to propose a theory based on our research. However, we hope our suggestion of an extended version of existing theory can function as an example to draw on, for organizations in similar situations.

2.4 Data collection

Our data collection is based on appropriateness in relation to research design and availability, both in regards to the information we sought, and practical considerations such as resources. The data we have collected derived from first-hand in-depth semi-structured interviews, non-participatory observations at different meetings, and informal conversations with employees at the office of CDK. Second-hand data is in the form of organizational documents intended for both internal and external parties, information from the organization's homepage and news articles related to the industry. The documents include CDK's Results report September 2014, the Strategy and Results report November 2015, several information brochures and an article about organizational structure and leadership. In this thesis we have used methodological triangulation by combining interviews, observations and documents, which allows for giving depth to findings. It adds a complexity and

richness to the analysis, which can increase the quality of our findings (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2005, p 112) and provides a holistic understanding of ongoing processes (Tracy 2013). An overview of collected data is presented below.

Data Types	Data Amount	Data Description
Interviews	Approximately 10 pages of questions and answers per interviewee, amounting to 140 in total.	15 in total, where 6 was with employees, 7 with the Senior management, 1 with the Chairman of the Board, and 1 with a Storyteller.
Observations	Approximately 40 hours, of which 18 hours' are non-participatory observation at meetings, constituting about 24 pages of notes.	Observation at 12 meetings including 1 senior-management meeting, 3 department-meetings, 1 meeting with a consultancy firm, 3 meetings with facers and 4 Friday-morning meetings. Additional observation in-between meetings, and before/after interviews.
Documents	Approximately 250 pages.	Strategy and Results report September 2014 and November 2015. Brochures about CDK's work, annual report 2014, scheduled work 2015 and 2016, Vision 2020. Article providing inspiration for internal organization *"Tail organizations"*.

Figure 2: Data collection

2.4.1 Interviews

The interviews were intended to provide us with valuable insights into the employees' perceptions and understanding of the change process at CDK. The information obtained takes form as social constructions of knowledge, and constitutes stories and different narratives of their reality. When we conducted interviews we were additionally interested in tapping into the effect of the external

environment on narratives at CDK. As mentioned in the introduction we believe narratives are both directly and indirectly affected by context.

To commence the interviewing-process we first conducted an explorative, unstructured interview with the General Secretary. The intention was to learn more about the organization and acquire general understanding of the organizational structure. We discussed whom it would be relevant and possible to interview later on. He was very generous and humble in meeting our requests and truly appeared to be interested in our work. This allowed for a good collaboration throughout our time at the office.

The conducted interviews were all in-depth and semi-structured. As such, the interviews were intended to resemble everyday conversations, but with preplanned questions as triggers (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). Initially, our intention was to conduct narrative interviews, as we were interested in the stories people tell spontaneously (ibid.). However, there were some challenges with regard to this, particularly because the interviewees seemed to expect an interview in the more classical manner. Most of the interviewees appeared confused and they were reluctant to answer when presented only with a theme, and asked to elaborate. Another challenge was time restrictions. They might have elaborated more if their time was not limited. However, the interviewees seemed appreciative of the opportunity to speak freely when we touched upon areas of their interest.

Prior to the interviews we identified four (five) topics of interest, and guiding backup/sub-questions. The chosen topics reflected our problem formulation, and included values, commitment, culture (identity) and organizational change. It was therefore easy for us to follow and adapt to the situation, and use a semi-structured approach when interviewing. In finalizing the process, we conducted a shorter follow-up phone-interview with the General Secretary. We sought to clarify concepts and structures pertaining to the organization, in order to improve our understanding of previously gathered material.

Choosing informants

As primary data, we conducted 15 in-depth interviews as follows: 2 with the General Secretary, 5 with Senior Managers, 6 with employees, 1 with a Board Member and 1 with a "volunteer". The

interviewees represent the three levels of management at CDK. We interviewed employees from all four departments; administration, fundraising, communication and program. This was to ensure diversity and enable us to reveal possible department-specific differences. The number of interviews was decided based on our aspiration to achieve answers that were representable of the organization as a whole. Accessibility and time limitations determined the final number of informants. The amount of interviews constituted almost half the staff at the Danish office. The data is thus considered representable of the general tendencies at CDK.

Developing interview questions

When developing questions, we spent a lot of time on the formulation, trying to make them as neutral as possible. We wanted to avoid theoretical words and concepts that could lead to misunderstandings and framing. In the interview process we came to expect certain answers, and can therefore have been more biased in the last interviews than the first. We tried to ask open-ended questions, allowing the interviewees to interpret them based on their own perceptions. We hoped to reveal information that we might not have thought of ourselves. Although questions did not always follow the interview-guide precisely, the thought-process behind them enabled us to identify alternative approaches to the themes we were interested in.

The interviewees appeared to appreciate the opportunity to steer the interview the way they wanted, and although some answered more freely than others when explaining and telling stories, the overall impression is that it was a positive experience. The questions became more specific as we changed our problem formulation in the middle of the research process. It might have posed an impediment for what they wanted to share with us. In some instances, the response we got from interviewees led to exclusion or reformulation of questions, either because of misunderstandings or irrelevant feedback. However, we perceive this to be a natural part of the interviewing process, especially in the beginning. The interview-guide is enclosed in appendix 1.

Conducting interviews

The interviews were mostly held at the CDK office in one of their meeting rooms, during a period of two weeks. We assumed that hosting the interviews in their environment would make them feel

more comfortable. Only two of the interviews were held outside the office. The Chairman invited us to his home, and the Storyteller invited us to his church. The last interview however, was conducted six weeks after the others, due to vacation. Considering the change in interest, we wanted to be as sure as possible of the direction we were going in with the last interview, which lead to some changed questions.

We agreed that both researchers should be present during all interviews, where one of us had the main responsibility of leading the interview. The other paid attention to reactions and asked follow-up questions, whenever it seemed relevant. This allowed for a natural and pleasant interplay between all of us. We wanted to tap into anything interesting revealed by the interviewees, and therefore let them go in the direction they wanted. However, we used follow-up questions as a method of steering them away from topics irrelevant for our thesis. An opening script was used both to inform interviewees about what was to come, and to ask for their consent to record the interviews (Appendix 1). After the interviews we gave them the option of being sent a copy of the transcript. We emphasized that the transcript would not be included in the thesis as well as deleted from our personal desktops after extracting the needed information. This was a conscious choice in hope of encouraging openness by showing transparency.

The majority of the employees seemed comfortable in the interview situation. However, when asked about management it was easily observed that they chose their words carefully, as they did not want to expose negative emotions regarding their managers. The same was observed with the Senior Managers when asked about the General Secretary and the Board. We applied different tactics when approaching sensitive topics. In the first interviews we were quite forward, and early on posed triggering questions for emotional response. The reactions we got from employees led us to change the order of the questions, as the atmosphere on some occasions became quite tense. As an example, during one of our first interviews one employee began to tear up when talking about one of the more sensitive changes that had occurred at the office. As a consequence, we reevaluated the order of our questions, presuming we would be able to obtain the same information without making interviewees feel uncomfortable. Thus, we decided to start the interviews with *light* topics, before digging down into the *deep*, and resurfacing to *lighter* topics in the end.

The interviews were conducted in English, and although there was a high level of proficiency, we noticed that some showed signs of discomfort when trying to express themselves. Hence, the language barrier might have limited the quality of the interviews to some extent. However, we specifically stated in the opening script that it was okay to speak Danish, their mother tongue, if they felt lack of vocabulary. Some did a few times in order to express themselves accurately. We transcribed the interviews, in the manner of writing down all relevant words including emotional responses. Afterwards the interviews were coded in relation to topics that represented the research question, theoretical framework and the structure of the analysis. We chose to remove the interviewees' names in our coding, with the exception of the General Secretary and Chairman, in order to avoid framing ourselves.

2.4.2 "While getting coffee"

We engaged in informal conversations during breakfast before Friday morning meetings, during lunch, in-between interviews and also before and after observations. In total it amounted to around 20 conversations, with durations of 5-15 minutes each. Some employees popped into our meeting room to say hi, ask about our research, talk about their work, or just for a chat. We also took the liberty to initiate conversations with them in their offices. In addition, we had some dialogues before and after observing at their meetings, while getting coffee or waiting for the meetings to start.

We wrote down the findings from the informal conversations as notes, and structured them as seen fit. Their main function was to clarify concepts, organizational buildup, and to gain insights into the employees' understanding. We hoped to uncover interests, communication and commitment, as well as power-distance, leadership style and the hidden culture at the office. The majority of the staff was welcoming and interested in our studies at Copenhagen Business School, which ensured a natural connection and positive reactions to our presence. Although, we noted that employees seemed reluctant to sit with us during meetings. We believe it might be due to the relatively short amount of time we spent at the office, which may have been a hindrance for trustworthy relationships with employees.

2.4.3 "Silent Bob"

Observations were a means of complementing the interviews, by studying human behavior in different settings. We hoped that observations could reveal something about the tacit culture, adding complexity to our analysis.

We chose to do non-participant observations, where we tried to be as unobtrusive as possible - watching rather than actively taking part. However, if they had not engaged in talking to us beforehand, we usually had to present ourselves and the purpose of our study, to make them feel comfortable before the meetings started. The observations were done at senior management meetings, department meetings, Friday morning meetings, and meetings with "facers" (the people collecting money and signing up members in the streets), to add diversity, and see how the employees acted in different settings.

When observing, we wrote down what happened, actions and behaviors (responses), verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as what did not happen (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). In total we observed during 12 meetings, with very different contexts, ranging from more formal senior management-, to department- meetings and more informal Friday morning meetings. The duration was typically 1 hour, with the exception of the meeting with the consultancy firm, Deloitte, which lasted for 2 hours. On at least three occasions we were provided with the opportunity to use the meeting rooms for thesis-related work, after observations or interviews. Considering the time we spent at the office before and after appointments, we estimate a total amount of 40 hours of observation.

2.4.4 Realization and cognition

As we carried out the interviews, we felt we developed both personal skills and understanding, leading to a higher quality in the last interviews. Our mid-way change in interest made it possible to tap into this area more efficiently in the latter interviews. However, as the interviewees overall had a very similar perception of the grand narrative and supporting narratives, we noticed that we to some degree became expectant of certain responses.

Therefore, the last interviews were most likely more effective in achieving the information we sought, but also less neutral and more biased.

2.4.5 Supplement methods

Organizational documents and reports were used to elucidate relationships that could not be observed directly, such as the relationship between CDK and DANIDA. These written sources include reports, brochures, an article and the information provided by the organization's homepage. According to Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008), the relevance of this kind of data to a qualitative study is in the form of transparency. The documents can be considered a representation of the organizational perception of reality.

2.5 Data analysis

The purpose of the analysis is to discover and interpret meanings and connections, through identifying themes and narratives in interviews and other data. Data collection and data analysis are often presented as separate processes, but as Eriksson & Kovalainen (2008) propose, they are not so clearly separable in practice. Yin (2014) suggests a strategy for the analysis, where one develops a case description, from which the research question and a framework for organizing the case study emerge. Our data analysis makes use of this approach in combination with our abductive method of reasoning, aiming for a holistic understanding by engaging in a circular analysis (Tracy 2013).

To initiate the more structured part of the analysis, we carefully read through our transcribed interviews several times. As mentioned above, we identified themes and common narratives that were relevant to our research question. Since sensemaking is the focus of our thesis, it was equally important to include evidence of common themes or narratives, as it was to include evidence of variation or contradictions, as the latter could indicate a broken or unfulfilled sensemaking process. As sensemaking theory highlights the degree of commitment, interactions and narratives, we considered these elements focal to address. In addition, particular stories related to organizational changes in the past were important, in order to understand the changing present and organizational structure. As we read through the transcripts the third time, we selected quotations that seemed relevant for the predefined themes. When new themes or narratives were discovered, we consulted each other as to whether they should be added. The quotations we ended up using were typically chosen either because we considered them representative of general tendencies, or because they stood out as an opposing view. Where it seemed relevant for the understanding of the quotations,

the context was included. We have transcribed about half of the interviews each and chose to code the ones we had not transcribed ourselves. By doing so we hoped to avoid some biases resulting from an over-familiarization with the data, such as overlooking relevant information.

2.6 Closing remarks

In this chapter we have presented the buildup of our research, with a basis in the social constructionist paradigm. The assumption is that interpretations that derive from data analysis are subjective. It necessitates a high degree of transparency, consistency and reflexivity to ensure that the research holds high quality. Our research was conducted as an abductive, intensive case study, with use of qualitative methods. The chosen methods generate the empirical data we use in our analysis, and consist of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, non-participatory observations and documents. An evaluation and critique of our choice of methods will be presented in the perspectivation.

In the next chapter we elaborate on the theoretical framework we have chosen to support our analysis. The specific theory and supplement theories contribute to answer the research question in that they are inspirational, thus offering possible ways to understand what happens among members of an organization.

3. Theoretical framework

The theories presented in this chapter are a guide both for the investigation and analysis of our case study. The aim of the research is to gain insight into how organizational members commit to the current and evolving narratives at CDK. Therefore the concept of sensemaking introduced by Weick (1979) with focus on the sensemaking process discussed by Hernes et al. (2015) will be elaborated. In order to understand the ongoing processes in the organization, and how it is affected by external pressure, we have found it necessary to address theoretical concepts about change. We adopt the view of change as processual and continuous when combining the understanding of Hernes et al. (2015), with the processual framework of change, described by Dawson (2003).

3.1 The sensemaking phenomenon

Weick (1993) describes sensemaking to be that reality is an ongoing accomplishment. It emerges from efforts to create retrospective sense of what actually occurs, where turning circumstances serve as a springboard to action (Weick et al., 2005). He explains that the person who is trying to make sense, the *sensemaker*, seek to carve out temporary stability in a continuous flow of change (Weick, 2001). There is a common understanding between process thinking and sensemaking that organizing takes place in a world characterized by flux (Hernes, 2008; Weick, 2011). Thus, organizations are in a continuous state of becoming in the ever-changing environmental market. According to Weick (1995), sensemaking involves placing items into frames, comprehending situations and interaction in the pursuit of mutual understanding of an event. However, he makes it clear that sensemaking differs from interpretation, as sensemaking is what happens before one starts to interpret what happens, meaning that sensemaking is *"the way people generate what they later interpret"* (Weick, 1995).

Wieck et al. (2005) suggests that sensemaking is an approach to arrive at labels, acts, or stories that serve to provisionally organize the flux that actors may find themselves in. Therefore, *"sensemaking enables understanding of ongoing change processes, precisely because it does not begin de nuovo"* (Hernes et al., 2015). This corresponds to Weick et al. (2005), stating that *"sensemaking occur amidst a stream of potential antecedents and consequences"*. In other words, a sensemaking process does not have a specific starting- nor an ending point, as it is a retrospective

and continuous process of understanding the context. Hence, it enables groups of people to arrive at socially committed explanations of the ongoing.

The following section will describe how the sensemaking process is carried out by focusing on the theory described by Hernes (2014; et al. 2015), which has its basis in theories by Weick (1995; 2001; et al., 2005).

3.1.1 Making sense of the process

In order to better understand the series of actions and changes at CDK we will elaborate on the sensemaking processes described by Hernes et al. (2015). Hernes (2014) explains the process as continuous, where acts create interacts, contingent on the involvement and response of several people. These acts may create social commitment and committed interpretation. However, as he believes sensemaking is a continuous process, there is no strict order to the process.

Weick (1995) explains interactions as engendering social commitment to what is going on, and that various acts are creating commitment to continue acting, in accordance with the interacts (Hernes, 2014). Committed interpretation appears as the justification of actions and their meaning (ibid). This is in line with *collective sensemaking* (Weick, 2001), referred to as the emergence of interaction and commitment. Collective sensemaking can contribute to varied perspectives and cognitive attributes on addressed or unaddressed issues, assuming the involvement of several people. Even though sensemaking is typically applied in retrospect or during change, we believe it could pose as an applicable framework for companies to antecedent plan for an ambiguous future.

The framework presented by Hernes et al. (2015) is based on Weick's (1995) action-driven process of sensemaking. The most important difference is that narratives are seen as key drivers of the sensemaking process, serving as constantly evolving repositories of acts. This is the determining reason for applying Hernes et al's (2015) framework in our thesis, as we believe it more accurately explains the dynamics we observe at CDK. Another distinction is the divide in commitment, where Hernes et al. (2015) describe both social and interpretative commitment, while Weick does not differentiate between the two.

The sensemaking framework demonstrates how elements of the sensemaking process are distinct yet connected and amenable to change, and explains how distinct processes may build up to different degrees of momentum (Hernes et al., 2015). Sensemaking takes place through interacts, setting the stage for further interacts and the creation of narratives. This, in turn engenders social commitment and/or interpretative commitment to the change process, while opening up for new interacts. The process is shown in the figure below (ibid.).
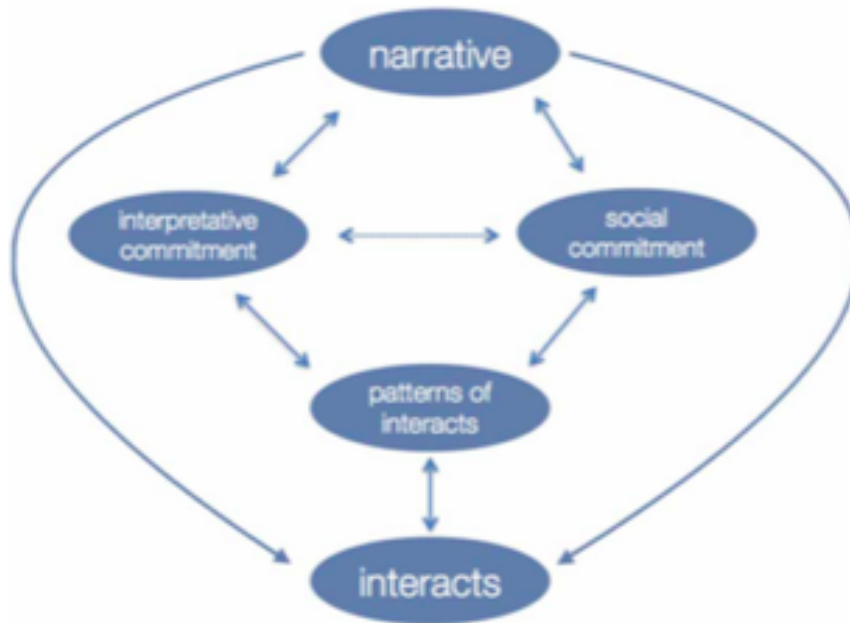
Figure 3: Analytical framework for sensemaking (Hernes et al., 2015)

The figure directs attention towards the creation of momentum in an organizational change process, which is the prime focus for a process view of change in a world of competing forces. The different stages of the model will be further elaborated in the following sections.

Interacts and Patterns of Interacts

Interacts evolve from acts of individuals and can be verbal or non-verbal (Hernes et al., 2015). As the actors respond to another's acts, patterns of interacts are created (Weick, 1993). Double interacts, described by Weick (ibid.), signify that the process of interaction requires a pattern of *act – response – act*. Thus, interacts go beyond the isolated communicative situations, as they engender reciprocal obligation between actors to the interactive process (Hernes et al., 2015). In an

organization, interacts can start for example with a socially influencing person through conversation, discourse or shared meanings.

Hernes et al. (2015) suggest that patterns of interacts may become habitual and create expectations of those patterns to be continued. A possible event is a meeting that is characterized by specific patterns of interacts or a series of situations, for instance as a repetitive pattern of interaction between the Board of Directors and the employees at CDK. The pattern could be the way they are communicating by taking turns or interrupting each other during meetings, or the way the general structural setup is outlined.

Commitment

In the process of interaction, commitment tends to be created as people engage in shared activities. There are several types of commitment, and the level of commitment varies depending on many influencing factors. All individuals are to some extent committed, whether they are employed at an organization, a student at a university or a member of a political party. An example of commitment that is evident at CDK is the commitment to the narrative of being employed in an NGO. However, some employees may engage to a greater extent than others by continuously interacting both with employees and other members of the NGO environment, leading to an increased level of commitment.

As mentioned above, Hernes et al. (2015) distinguish between two forms of commitment. The social commitment (similar to Weick's committed mindset) ties the social group to the narrative through socially binding interacts. Patterns of interacts articulate the identity of the social group and reinforce social commitment, as individuals feel tied to a change process with basis in the commitment to the group (ibid.). Interpretative commitment (similar to Weick's interpretation mindset) signifies commitment to the underlying idea of a change process (ibid.). However, interpretative commitment is not conditional upon social commitment, or vise versa.

Over time, if a group experiences repeated interacts around the same idea, it may begin to see itself as a social entity by virtue of being involved in the idea, thus creating strong social commitment. On the other hand, social commitment may influence interpretative commitment, for instance if a

group of socially committed members influence one another to find a common interest for special events. Social and interpretative commitments are distinct, although in practice closely entangled (Hernes et al., 2015), meaning that they might overlap, and be co-created.

Narratives

The unfolding of a sensemaking process depends on the activation of narratives (Søderberg, 2006), which is seen as the underlying forces for sensemaking (Hernes et al., 2015). This way, narratives become a dynamic force in a subjective field of sensemaking activity. Narratives can be strong potential drivers of change in organizations, as narratives enable transcendence of the limits to the current experience, and can be the substitute for relations. Converging labels and events that are related to another may generate momentum for change processes through interaction among actors (Hernes, 2008; Søderberg, 2006, Weick, 1995). Hence, it is not individuals who are assumed to be drivers of change, but the degree to which commitment evolves around a certain narrative, serving to hold activities and people together in the direction of change.

Interacts are producing and reproducing narratives, and as narratives become locally stabilized, the narratives influence interacts and become important elements of their interactional order (ibid.). In this thesis we adopt the concept of Hernes et al. (2015), which refer to narratives in relation to change, and investigate different narratives among the employees at CDK.

According to Weick's (1993) sensemaking framework, a narrative is a way of explaining the idea of micro stability. The importance of narratives is highlighted by Weick (1979) in the statement, *"how can I know what I think until I see what I say"*. Thus, narratives and stories are important parts of trying to make sense, as knowledge is intertwined with action. According to Søderberg (2006) narratives have a chronological dimension, to portray events and periods over time. They are retrospective interpretations, which order events from the past including their "flash-backs" and "flash-forwards", and have a plot structure (Hernes et al., 2015). Narratives are suggestive of meaning, and interpreted in light of a current task or process. They may serve to maintain interacts as well as engender added interacts to be reinforced, as the added interacts feed into the established patterns of interacts (ibid).

3.2 Narratives and sensemaking

To better understand and address the issues of the narratives that CDK is currently facing, theories about storytelling and narratives will be further elaborated and explained. This is due to the changing perspectives in the NGO industry, whereby organizations like CDK need to change direction with the environment to survive. Additionally, as the future is perceived to be ambiguous, the commitment to narratives becomes important during times of change.

The degree to which scholars distinguish between narratives and stories varies. Czarniawska (2001) suggests, *"stories in contrast to narratives evolve around critical events and dramatic actions where people meet serious obstacles in relation to their ambitions"*. It implies that a story plot always entails predicaments, not only a transformation from one state to another (Søderberg, 2006). Narratives however, may construct the same events otherwise and interpret the actions of the selected actors from a different point of view, depending on the narrator (ibid). Narratives are the driving force of sensemaking (Hernes et al., 2015), hence, the creation of meaning may differ between individuals.

According to Boje (1991), storytelling is the preferred sensemaking currency of human relationships among stakeholders, where individuals engage in a dynamic process of incremental refinement and reinterpretations of storylines. Consequently, stories are created retrospectively of events, corresponding to sensemaking as a retrospective activity, making sense of the past, understanding the present and preparing for the future. This is in line with Brody (1987, p.5), *"the primary human mechanism for attaching meaning to particular experiences is to tell stories about them"* (Colville, Brown & Pye, 2011, p.7). Thus, providing a clear link between sensemaking and storytelling, as stories come about to help creating a common social understanding of certain events.

Based on the discussed theories above, it is reasonable to say that a story is a structured narrative, with a beginning and an end. Narratives on the other hand are a sequence of events continuously evolving, and are refined by a particular narrator. The performance of stories is essential for organizational members' sensemaking in situations of change, as they shape and convey sensemaking. However, each performance is never the complete story. It is an unraveling process of

confirming new information and interpretations as these become part of an endless storyline (Boje, 1991).

3.2.1 Narration

A narrative is co-authored by the narrator's audience, as narrators often want to create impressions of their rationality (Søderberg, 2006). This is in line with Boje (1991), stating that storytelling is done in conversation and involves listeners. They are co-producers with the teller in an embedded and fragmented process, in which the blanks are filled in with previous experiences in response to cues (ibid.). This is important when managers are attempting to make sense during times of change. The performance of narratives and connecting stories are focal elements, when managers attempt to get the employees socially committed to new emerging narratives.

Further, in situations where an organization undergoes a dramatic change, there is a need for stories to create coherence and order in the cognitive universe of organizational actors (Weick, 1995). Storytelling is part of the process through which actors in an organization attach meaning to events and activities (sensemaking), by entering them into the plot (narrative) they have created based on their personal experiences (Søderberg, 2006). Storytelling is a useful tool for managers attempting to cope with a changing environment, which may make it a focal tool for managing the ongoing change at CDK.

Organizations are evolving in an environment in flux. Therefore, it is imperative that companies take into account the interests of stakeholders in order to survive and to create legitimacy. CDK is faced with challenges in the market, which has enforced a change process in the organization that will unfold over a longer period of time. The next section will therefore outline theory of change, under the assumption of a process perspective.

3.3 Change theory

When assessing whether there is a change, it is commonly considered natural to address the concept of stability, as one is assumed to exclude the other. These concepts are elusive, in that change and stability are subjectively experienced, and the subjective perception can be difficult to communicate to an outsider. Evaluating whether a change has come about often results in considerations of time, and a comparison of the sets of actions pertaining to the present versus those pertaining to the past. Since the actor, in this case CDK, is in the middle of the change and the contour of the act is still indefinable, it can be difficult to determine whether an act represents stability or change. Stability can be defined as *"a stable state of recurring patterns of activity"* (Hernes, 2014). Thus, change occurs when the patterns of movement alternate. Stability should, however, not be understood as limited to a perception of a before and an after.

In this thesis we adopt the processual perspective, contrarily to common assumptions about change, meaning we regard stability and change as continuous processes, where organizations are forever in a state of becoming (Hernes, 2014). We also adopt a temporal view on organizational life when studying the changing contexts at CDK, by replacing stability with continuity, and directing our attention to how the past and the future are brought into the present (ibid.).

3.3.1 Sensemaking in times of flux

As proposed by Colville et al., (2011), change challenges organizing and sensemaking, in that it brings about a search for meaning or a story, thereby explaining the ongoing situation. However, such a search may also reveal flawed assumptions about the previous meanings, or stories that the organization has held.

If sensemaking is to be understood as keeping in connection with context, the challenge for organizations and organizing is twofold; during times of flux the past may no longer serve as a reliable guide to what is going on; and it is difficult to outline a proper response in an unpredictable equivocal world (ibid.). Langer (1989) suggests that frames aid staying in connection with context

or sensemaking. These frames consist of prior experiences grouped into assumed categories of meaning. The meanings become institutionalized in the form of organizational routine. Context therefore depends on the present, the past, and the view one takes, "*a premature cognitive commitment*" (Langer, 1989, p 37, in Colville et al., 2011 p 7). This corresponds to Hernes (2014), who writes that what is important is to "*study how change make incursions into the processual reality of actors, what they do to the understanding of the past, and how they influence the expectations of the future*" (sensemaking).

The past is important when making sense of the present, thus pre-existing frames are conditional for organizational change processes, where historic experiences are of influence. When a change situation occurs where pre-existing frames do not aid the organization in understanding the significance of it, the organization might fail to make sense of it (Colville et al., 2011). Wildavsky (1983) explains it as a result of bias. Organizations choose the portions and aspects of the environment they attend to, because they cannot attend to everything. Similarly, Tsoukas (2005, in Colville et al., 2011) states that it is a result of abstraction, "*what has been done before leads to generalization of recurring behaviors by means of institutionalized roles*". Behaviors and organizational perceptions are thus dependent on what has been done in the past. Suppression of information is essential, and at every level of an organization there is compression of information and also absorption of uncertainty (Wildavsky, 1983). The sensemaking processes at CDK might be influenced by the dynamics of information described by Wildavsky (1983), resulting in misperceptions of context.

3.3.2 Changing narratives

As mentioned before, narratives can be strong potential drivers of change in organizations, as narratives enable transcendence of the limits of the current experiences, and can become substitutes for relations. Converging the labels and events that are related to another may generate momentum for change through interaction among actors (Hernes, 2008; Søderberg, 2006; Weick, 1995). As narratives are seen as underlying forces of change, the unfolding sensemaking process depends on the activation of narratives (Søderberg, 2006).

The need for sensemaking during narrative-change directs attention towards identity - from individual identity construction to organizational-level identity (Boje, Burnes & Hassard, 2012). When organizations are faced with big changes they need to communicate with organizational members. By the use of meaningful narrative frames, the members can seek temporal stability and re-identify with the organization (ibid.). As such, narratives can be considered constructions that stress and/or elaborate the organization's identity, and the perceptions that management has of employees and their roles (Demers, Giroux & Chreim, 2003). This indicates that organizational identity can provide a constant for employees, during periods of instability. What may be true for large-scale changes may not be in the context of subtle changes. Brown, Humphreys & Gurney (2005, p 314) argue that organizational identities are subject to subtle change. The identities are comprised of *'multiple, changing, occasionally constant, sometimes overlapping but often competing narratives centered on them, authored by those who participate in them'*, which relates to Søderberg's (2006) co-authored narratives. However, as proposed by Chreim (2007), multiple and varying narratives can also lead to numerous interpretations of identity, depending on the social and temporal contexts. The existence of multiple narratives at CDK combined with ongoing changes, makes it important to address sensemaking.

Based on the theories discussed, changing narratives necessitates an evaluation in regards to the scope of the change, context and the effect on identities, two of which will be addressed by applying Dawson's (2003) processual framework of change. Organizational context matters when explaining patterns of change. These are affected by how issues are interpreted by members of the organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). In organizations, context is often defined by relationships of influence and political structures (Pfeffer & Moore, 1980 in Gioia et al., 1994).

3.3.3 A processual framework

Dawson (2003) has developed a framework comprising of three clusters, or dimensions considered to interweave and overlap over time, as individuals and groups make sense of the process of change. These clusters consist of factors considered to shape change, and include politics, context and substance. The framework is presented in the following, with the intention of applying it in our analysis to understand the changes that are occurring at CDK.

Politics of change

According to Dawson (2003), the politics of change refer to internal and external political activities. Internal political activities include interacts between and among individuals and groups in the organization. They have the possibility of influencing decision-making and defining critical links in the process of organizational change. External political activities pertain to governmental pressures, and the influence of international organizations on internal operations. This dimension includes the consultations, negotiations, conflicts and resistance that occur at different levels, both internally and externally, within the organization during the process of change (ibid.). However, covert forms of political processes may also influence individual and group responses to change in the legitimization of certain norms and values. Power relations and political processes have been identified as central in steering company change programs (Buchanan and Badham, 2008).

Context

The second dimension addresses the context in which changes take place. Dawson (2003) suggests that to understand the opportunities, constraints and *"organizationally defined routes to change"*, a historical perspective on context is central. Contextual and historical aspects can affect the process of organizational change by the promotion of certain options, and the devaluation of others. As such, both past and present external and internal operating environments, as well as future expectations should be considered. External contextual factors include governmental legislation, changes in social expectations, and changes in competitors' strategies (ibid.). Internal contextual factors include resources, structures, products or services, and the history and culture of an organization (ibid.). The latter is included to accommodate the possible existence of multiple narratives, and competing stories of change. Organizations may post-hoc rationalize changes to service present objectives, which in essence is a retrospective sensemaking process (Hernes, 2014).

Substance of change

Dawson (2003) suggests that the final cluster relates to the substance of change, and is divided in four main determinants: 1) *Scale and scope*- how radical the change is in the organization; 2) *Defining characteristics*- referring to the labels attached to change projects, and the actual content

3) *Timeframe*- that change varies in regards to how rapid or fluid it is; 4) *Perceived centrality*- how critical the change is viewed for the survival of the organization. The determinants are not static. Instead, they develop over time and overlap with the other dimensions. It underlines that change from a processual view is complex, ongoing and dynamic.

How the present is understood at CDK and together with expectations for the future may influence the interpretation of past events, thus shaping the experience of the process. We argue it is relevant to address the dynamics described by Dawson (2003), in order to achieve a better understanding of the sensemaking process at CDK. Its relevance is emphasized due to the breach between past, present and future operations. It causes narrative changes, thus affecting the commitment to the organization.

4. Setting the scene

This chapter presents the context for our thesis. It will gradually introduce data, before the evaluation of the findings and the analysis is presented. In order to understand the circumstances of the empirical framework, the chapter provides a descriptive introduction of CDK, the environment it finds itself in, and identifies stakeholders capable of influencing the organization.

4.1 The NGO world

In a world in flux adaptation is focal to keep track with trends in the market, and potentially gain a stronger market position. Regardless of the industry, change is important to ensure survival in a competing environment. However, it is easy for companies to get caught up in routines, and the taken-for-granted way of conducting business. Therefore they often tend to ignore a rapidly developing world.

The UN originally introduced the term NGO. Although there is no commonly accepted definition, there are some fundamental features attached to NGOs (Willetts, 2006). First and foremost, an NGO must be independent from direct governmental control. In addition, Willetts (2006) identified four characteristics for an NGO; *it will not be formed as a political party, it is not-for-profit, it is not organized with criminal intentions, and it is non-violent.* However, the boundaries are obscure in regards to political affiliation, commercially induced income, and independence from governments. The latter is a cause for debate, as governmental influence is often difficult to measure. NGOs design their own programs, but may be indirectly influenced if the program's aim is to attract future governmental grants or contracts (ibid.).

It is rarely acknowledged that NGOs compete for media attention, members, funds and other resources. Some specifically design their fund raising strategies to avoid competition with other NGOs. Others actively discourage collaborative engagements with co-existing NGOs, as they believe it can lead to confusion for stakeholders about a given NGO brand platform (Edelman, 2002). The importance of developing and maintaining a powerful brand is something NGOs are increasingly conscious about. However, many are also able to collaborate effectively. This is especially applicable among field staff that share resources and collaborate where their missions

overlap. CDK has chosen to work independently, but due to the direction in which the environment is moving, it may have to reevaluate its strategy for the future.

4.2 CARE Danmark

Background

CDK was established in 1987, as an independent foundation, and is located in Copenhagen. The organization is managed by a Board of Directors, which is elected by a Board of Representatives, who appoints a General Secretary. The office is divided into four departments, namely *administration, communications, fundraising and programs.* Each department has a Senior Manager, constituting the management group together with the General Secretary. His Royal Highness, Prince Joachim, serves as protector, is responsible for increasing the awareness of the organization, and inspires to support the work of CDK. The fact that CDK has a royal protector may signal its political standpoint. In addition, there are volunteers who are affiliated as Ambassadors and Storytellers.

"Help to self-help"

With the slogans *"Help to self-help"* and *"Everyone has the right to food",* CDK distinguishes itself from other NGOs in Denmark. It works with a focus on long-term development in nine different countries in Africa and Asia, where it closely collaborates with local communities (CARE, 2016). CDK is part of CARE International, which is one of the largest humanitarian organizations in the world (ibid.).

Today CDK has more than 15 000 individual members, and had just under 24 000 private financial contributors in 2015. It has a turnover of more than DKK 100 million a year (CARE, 2016). The organization's funding comes from the Danish Government through a *framework agreement*, other national governments, the EU and private members. While more that 18 percent of revenue comes from contributions of; private individuals, companies and foundations; DANIDA is the primary donor with a contribution of nearly 40 percent.
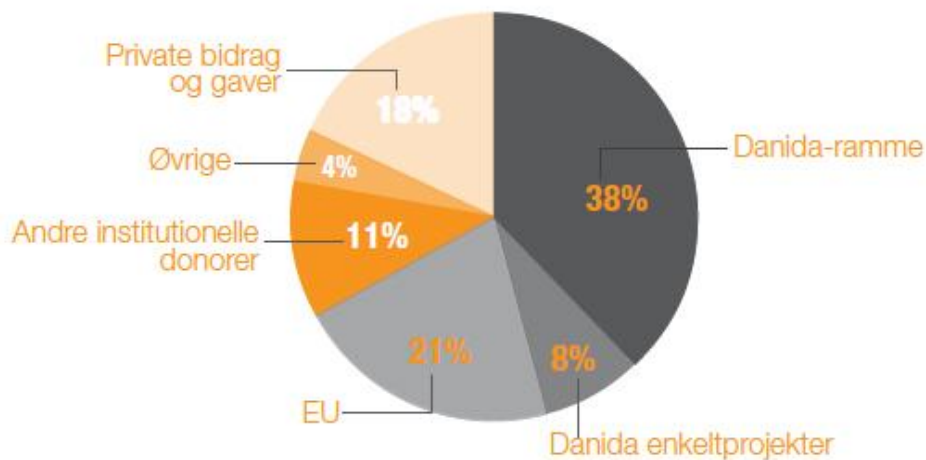
Figure 4: CARE annual report, 2015

4.3 Stakeholders

In the following paragraphs the most relevant stakeholders with interests in CDK will be presented.

DANIDA

DANIDA is part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (um.dk). The aim of Denmark's development policy is to fight poverty through promotion of human rights and economic growth. DANIDA holds the responsibility for planning, implementing and quality, thereby assuring Denmark's development cooperation. In 2014, DANIDA provided USD 390.4 million in funding for NGOs. CDK received 2,38 percent of the total sum, amounting to just above USD 9 million (openaid.um.dk), which contributed to 38 percent of their overall turnover (CARE, 2016). CDK is defined as a development policy partner and a framework organization, meaning it is granted funds that can be used flexibly within the programs (ibid.). Organizations without a framework partnership have to apply for funds for each individual project, which utilizes more resources. It is therefore considered an advantage both for DANIDA and for NGOs to have a framework agreement. However, such a partnership is dependent on a capacity assessment, whereby DANIDA evaluate financial and

program capacities. DANIDA also conducts a global analysis of the organization's ability to meet its demands, and public recognition (DANIDA Report 2013).

CARE International

CARE International is a world leading humanitarian confederation, with a primary purpose of fighting global poverty. The organization strives to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities of the world and delivers emergency aid, while drawing on strengths from their global diversity, resources and experience.

It started out offering a CARE package that aimed to reduce hunger and show solidarity with the people in Europe after World War II. The packages contained small shipments of food and relief supplies. Over the following decades CARE International changed its primary focus, from Europe to assistance in developing countries. The scope and point of view widened to include poverty caused by the absence of rights, opportunities and assets, largely due to social exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination (ibid.).

In 2015, CARE International worked in 95 countries throughout the world, supported 890 poverty-fighting development and humanitarian aid projects, and reached over 65 million people (careinternational.org). The confederation has 14 National Members. Each member is an autonomous NGO and implements programs, advocacy, fundraising and communication activities in its own country, and in developing countries. The Secretariat is located in Geneva and supports the confederation. Partnerships are the foundation of any CARE International project. In working with local NGOs and more informal community-based humanitarian organizations, CARE taps into the knowledge of a community's language and culture, and develops a deeper understanding of the people it serves.

5. Findings

To analyze the phenomenon of sensemaking, we present the existing narratives and influencing forces at CDK, along with selected data from the field. It will be a practical presentation of the ongoing sensemaking process in the organization. This chapter is divided in four parts.

First, we present findings related to the grand narrative, supporting narratives and the competing narrative. We follow the sensemaking process described by Hernes et al. (2015). Lastly, findings concerning external and internal forces of influence are introduced, in relation to the processual framework of change described by Dawson (2003). In order to keep the promise of anonymity, the names and job titles of employees are not revealed. However, we are allowed to address the General Secretary and the Chairman with their titles.

The evaluations made in the analysis will be based on the data from this chapter, along with additional quotes and thoughts when considered beneficial.

5.1 Multiple Narratives

A global narrative of development is difficult to construct as the industry is faced with increasingly unclear objectives, and a downward trend in public support for development aid (Epinion, 2013). Narratives are important tools when constructing an organization. Collective narratives about key actors and critical events compete in defining the organization, and making sense of the challenges faced in organizational change processes (Søderberg, 2006). This corresponds to Hernes et al. (2015), stating that narratives constitute forces of change.

5.1.1 The NGO Narrative

CDK has managed to reach consensus across the organization in legitimizing itself as an NGO. Even if the definition of an NGO is that the organization should be independent from direct governmental control, it seems that CDK believes it is meeting the requirements. As one of the Senior Managers stated, *"I think it's very important to stick to the fact that it is an NGO. If you look at the funding, 25% comes from private donors. These are individuals who pay on a monthly basis*

a certain amount of money (...) What is our constituency? That is the question you should ask, and how many. We have a membership base, which is what makes us an NGO (...) without we wouldn't have access to the government funds (...) it's the same set up for all Danish NGO's". The manager appeared agitated during the explanation, suggesting it is a topic that might be sensitive. This could lead to further discussion about the meaning of being fully independent from the Government.

CDK communicates that it does not take any political stand, (in line with the definition of an NGO). It was explained by an employee, *"I would say we are politically aware. I wouldn't say political; because I think actually we are not connected to a political party at CARE. I think other NGOs are known for aligning with a certain political specter. Usually it is left wing. But CARE is actually an exception".*

However, several other employees did not agree that the company is non-political. One employee stated, *"We say that we don't take any political stand, but everybody knows that we are more on the left side. Actually we might be more into politics and the governmental setting than other places".* This is supported by another employee's statement, *"Overall it's on the left-wing, but among the development organizations it's to the right. It's one of the more liberal ones (...) to support a system where people get the opportunity to work themselves out of poverty, that's a very liberal approach to development-work in the third world".* Another expressed that the people in the organization are very *in sync* with political values, thus the political context is affecting the employees' identity.

5.1.2 The grand Narrative

There is consensus around a grand narrative at CDK. The majority of the employees at the office agrees on their work with long-term development and takes pride in their strategy. When asked about their profile and their work in general, all of the interviewees mentioned long-term development. One of the employees stated, *"We are a humanitarian organization (...) We are working with long term projects, we are not in emergency relief (...) We believe we can change things by being there for longer periods".* Another employee contributed that, *"Our profile is long-term development. That it is not an easy fix, this is not something you do overnight, you have to get involved, you have to stay there, you have to get relations with civil society organizations, and in the countries where we work".*

Employees elaborate on CDK's work in various ways, but the focus revolves around long-term development, and the belief that they are doing a good job. One employee identified that, *"We have sort of placed ourselves in a niche, where we take pride in being focused on the long-term development (...) Emergency aid is aid that comes too late"*. Thus, long-term development seems to preclude the opportunity to work with emergency relief.

As an organization, CDK is interested in changing the mindset of the people in the countries where it operates. The organization's slogan, *"Help to self-help"*, seems to be in focus when the staff explained their work. As clearly expressed by the General Secretary, *"It's about their mindset and changing attitudes, so we are better at coming with good questions. You think it's more sustainable if the solutions are in those people's' minds, instead of your mind (CDK)"*. The Storyteller clarified the value of CDK's slogan by saying that, *"If a man is hungry, don't give him a fish. Give him a fishing rod and teach him how to fish"*.

The focus on long-term development is also what distinguishes CDK from other NGOs in the Danish environment. As one employee indicated *"We often talk about where we are different from other NGOs - we are not into emergency help. We are more into thinking about working in the countries and helping them to make a better life out there (...). I think that is our trademark"*.

When we asked the employees whether they experience elements of volunteer work in their roles, their answers was consistently that they do not, as they are paid employees. One of the Senior Managers appeared to be offended by expressing, *"I'm not a volunteer. I'm hired, and everybody here is hired, nobody is volunteering (...) I've chosen to work in NGOs, but I'm getting paid, and our salary is good. Therefore I'm not considering myself a volunteer"*. The belief that they are not volunteers may be linked to an identity and value-attribution of being a professional organization. One employee stated that, *"I think CARE is well known to have a high academic level, and we are often in the media with qualified chronicles from our staff (...) It is a high level of professional input in the daily work you have, and also the respect you have from outside because you are working with CARE"*.

However, some employees acknowledged that they could have potentially worked elsewhere and received a higher salary, and thus, can relate to volunteerism to some extent. When conversing with the Storyteller he described how he perceives volunteer work, *"A volunteer is a person that describes himself or herself as a person with surplus of time, and defines himself or herself from a perspective of being at the service of others (...) There is always something in it for yourself, there is something in the pocket of your heart. Unless you have that incentive, you wouldn't be a volunteer"*. This may be how CDK communicates the value of volunteering. If this is correct, it is understandable that the employees at the Danish office do not identify with volunteerism.

5.1.3 Supporting narratives

There are several supporting narratives to the grand narrative that undermine the meaning behind the work of CDK. In the following, we demonstrate the two main supporting narratives we discovered; the relationship with DANIDA, and the success with the climate program *Poverty, Environment, and Climate Change Network* (PECCN).

As we mentioned in setting the scene, the relationship with DANIDA is essential. Receiving the highest ranking from DANIDA holds great value at the CDK office, and was a focal element whenever the interviewees told their stories about the NGO. One of the employees explained, *"They have been doing quality checks of our work, and we came out with the highest score among the 11-13 NGO's in the test (...) That was very positive, and it can be used in a good dialogue for the future with DANIDA"*.

The feeling of satisfaction towards the DANIDA ranking was apparent. The General Secretary described what the ranking was about; *"It's our strategy, whether it's coherent, it's our impact in the field. They have been visiting projects and seen results; it's a number of factors. You could say that we had to shift our strategy two years ago, so our policies and our strategies are coherent (...) Our challenge is now also to prove that we can deliver"*. He gave the impression that long-term development is also grounded in the cooperation with DANIDA by stating that, *"We have deliberately chosen to be in long-term (...) we have agreed with DANIDA that we wouldn't do emergency"*. The agreement is, according to the General Secretary and the Chairman, based on the high number of NGOs already working with emergency relief. He went on to say that, *"In every*

crisis where DANIDA has been using NGOs as partners, there are too many NGOs to focus on (...) One of the problems in the field, is (...) the logistics, we saw it in Nepal, it doesn't work. There is no infrastructure, no coordination". He therefore indicated that the high number of NGOs already working with emergency relief, funded by DANIDA, was part of the reason for CDK choosing the focus of long-term development.

CDK is known to have the best climate program among the members of CARE International, and is responsible for assisting other CARE offices in carrying out projects related to climate issues. One of the managers told us that the program has been running for approximately five years, and was the first big climate program for CDK. For this reason CDK receives funding from other CARE offices. CDK trusts the program and believes in its success. One of the managers stated, *"I wouldn't be surprised if it's going to run for 8-10 years or so. If you find something that particular and manage to get a number of these big donors on board, it will be successful".* The Chairman explained that PECCN was a result of a strategic decision, *"It led to CARE Denmark being a center of expertise in CARE International, regarding issues of climate adaptation".* The program is highly cherished by the employees interviewed, and is clearly an important part of the concept that CDK is working towards.

5.1.4 Competing narrative

The grand narrative appears to be weakened by a changing environment, leading to uncertainty about the future direction of CDK. As elaborated by an employee, *"I think long-term development is being phased out, I think it's a little bit of an era that's coming to an end. So I think in the future we will probably see more of humanitarian aid (emergency relief), which CARE currently doesn't do (...) I think there's a risk to our overall existence for sure. I think we can count the years that organizations like CARE will be around, because of what's happening in the political environment these days, in Europe and Denmark".* The political environment of Denmark is changing by placing more focus on emergencies closer to home. The Chairman mentioned that DANIDA would combine the funds that were previously earmarked for long-term development, with the funds for emergency relief. This, together with the movement of other NGOs has lead to the discussion about the current strategy of CDK, and comprises a competing narrative.

The General Secretary is aware of the shifting market, but is being cautious in broadening the focus too much. He indicated that, *"CARE is realizing that the world is changing, maybe we are going to move, maybe not into the traditional emergency market, but more into prevention, more into addressing crisis in a long-term perspective, so we are involved before the crisis, we are during the crisis, and after the crisis"*. Further, he elaborated on reasons for providing emergency relief, which has its foundation in the collection of funds. He discussed that it is easier to raise money for emergencies than it is for long-term development. However, CDK has managed to build a strong brand and profile, so a possible shift cannot be completed overnight.

The decision about emergency relief is complex. One of the Senior Managers stated, *"It's a very political decision. It has to be in agreement with the Board (...) They have made the agreement that we don't work with this (emergency relief) (...) But you have to challenge it sometimes, and especially now it has been challenged"*. The Chairman elaborated on the issue and appeared to have a slightly different perception than the employees in stating, *"When CARE is involved in a long-term development project, like we are in Nepal, where there was a catastrophe (...) should CARE's employees step over the wounded, hurt and dead, and say "sorry, we don't do humanitarian work, we only work long-term"? That doesn't sound sensible"*. He clearly supports the idea of changing the direction of the organization, *"It's not really a shift from long-term development to offering emergency relief, but, if there are catastrophes hitting countries where we are already present, then we should get engaged"*.

The emergence of the competing narrative

The main reason for The Boards' and Senior Managers' consideration about emergency relief is related to the recent governmental shift. DANIDA has decreased its focus on long-term development in favor of addressing concerns closer to Denmark, such as the ongoing refugee crisis. The General Secretary explained, *"30 years ago it was important to be a Danish organization, then it became, for obvious reasons, better to be linked to an international organization. Now we are probably getting back to Danish again"*. He believes that it is easier to raise money for emergencies than it is for long-term development, which is supported by one of the managers who said, *"We lose a lot of opportunities within a lot of areas, because we don't work with it at all (...) we are losing a lot of publicity, a lot of press and a lot of money"*. This is in contradiction to the Chairman's

opinion that, *"If CARE started funding money for catastrophes, it wouldn't change the sum of money that we get in, we wouldn't get more".*

The Chairman further explained that two notions evoked the discussion of emergency relief; *"The first one was that there was an experience in the field, in relation to the earthquake in Nepal, and a similar catastrophe in Haiti a few years ago".* The fieldworkers felt it insensitive not to provide emergency aid in disaster hit regions where they were already present. The second notion was, *"There has been a relative development, where long-term development support has been reduced, while refugee-help has increased. And, also there is an element of, I don't like to admit it, but if all our money is based on long-term development, and the grants are put together (by DANIDA), then we should be able to apply broader than just long-term development aid".* The previous statement that including emergency relief in their portfolio would not increase the sum of funding is slightly contradictory to this statement.

The story of the firing process

When we first established contact with CDK, the organization had recently been in a process of laying-off people, due to financial cutbacks from DANIDA. It was readily noticeable that the process caused frustration amongst employees and managers, in particular because it extended over a long time. In addition, communications were unclear and the majority of the employees considered the decision-making process to be muddled.

Financial cuts were announced by DANIDA in September 2015, and the General Secretary was notified of the cuts in October. However, there were some uncertainties as to what the implications would be for CDK. The financial plan was not approved until late December, because of a possibility for further reductions. CDK did not have sufficient funding for severance packages to lay off employees during the current year. Therefore, the management waited before informing the affected employees. Employees were aware of financial cutbacks and anticipated that some would have to be discharged. The managers had to continue planning for the coming year, which unintentionally lead to some employees feeling *safer* than others. Furthermore, there were information leakages, which contributed to confusion and uncertainty amidst employees. Frustration that centered around the length of the process was recognized by the management, as a

manager suggested, *"I think we should have speeded up, and maybe we should have told the staff representatives that "ok, we have to finish this within say two weeks". It actually took about two months"*.

During the process of communicating with the employees, the General Secretary discussed with staff representatives, who functioned as middlemen between the management and employees. When evaluating options, different suggestions were made on how to retain one of the positions. As is often a problem in organizations, there was some confusion among the employees as to the options, and how much influence they would have in the decision-making process. One employee explained, *"I think they tried at one point to get us involved, and we could be into a discussion about it (...) I think it's better to just make the decision (...) Maybe we could have saved one of the three. I've been through many downsizing rounds so I know that what is real today might not be real tomorrow"*. Several other employees shared the impression that, to some extent, they had been involved in the process, but without actually having any influence. One employee said that, *"The feeling you had was that the decision was already taken (...) I think it would be better if they did not ask us, if we had something to say, we couldn't do anything anyway"*.

Management perceived the situation slightly different. A manager identified that *"There was a little bit of a hiccup (...) there was a list of serious proposals from the staff put in writing, as to how we could save money (...) The interesting thing was that it came from the staff group, not from us. When they eventually had to make the final decision they said no"*. Several managers recognized that the process was not optimal, and one of them said, *"I think we didn't do the communication very well (...) We didn't communicate the whole package at once and the solution of how we were going to solve it, so it was leaking. We did it by mistake (...) the two people concerned didn't get the information at the same time. One was told on a Friday, and the other the following Tuesday (...) All the mistakes that you can read on page three in the book about how to perform these kinds of operations, we missed"*.

When we conducted the interviews, the process was over. Most of the staff admitted it was an unpleasant situation and process, and they did not necessarily agree on the decision of who was terminated. Nevertheless they all seemed to understand why it had to be done. An employee

explained, *"We have re-assigned tasks (...) and in one sense we have more, or the same resources, but with different tasks assigned. So that quickly becomes the new norm"*.

5.2 The sensemaking process

In the following, we present findings that relate to the sensemaking process described by Hernes et al (2015). In addition, significant and diverging tendencies on different leadership levels are included. It is difficult to distinguish between interpretative and social commitment. We have therefore chosen to approach commitment from a more general standpoint, while identifying elements considered to pertain particularly to social commitment.

5.2.1 Interacts and Patterns of interacts

Our first impression was that the organizational environment facilitated informal interacts in that the doors to all offices were open, and offices were shared by at least two persons. We observed that people would *pop* into each other's offices when they had inquires. This was stressed by one of the employees by saying, *"I'm usually going down to talk to them in person, I feel it gives me something and it is important not have misunderstandings"*. Thus, the way they interacted could have facilitated conflict-solving communication.

Most communications seemed to be direct, although not very spontaneous, mostly due to a hectic work environment An employee pointed out that, *"It is a small place so I think it depends on what you need (...) The best thing is to make an appointment in the agenda in order to make sure people are actually there (...) You meet at lunch time and say what has come up, and sometimes you just deal with it"*. Besides the organizational environment, one of the employees indicated that the small size of CDK's staff facilitates increased direct communication. One employee stated, *"We have a size where personal communication is easy and where it works"*. Finally, there seems to be an organizational culture that enables observed direct communication. Another interviewee expressed that, *"It's very informal between the employees, and I think everybody can talk to everybody. I go to the employees and don't have to go to the management first. They all do it the same way"*.

However, the level of informality is not incontestably considered positive. A Senior Managers stated, *"The communication is very informal, sometimes too informal (...) it is okay, people mostly pull themselves together (...) but it's not always the fact".* The manager implied that perhaps in some settings, the level of informality comes at the cost of productivity and efficiency.

The organizational structure at CDK, with the office split into four departments, naturally has implications for the communicational patterns. Employees usually seem updated within their departments, as a result of weekly meetings and working collaboratively. The communicational patterns, although mostly considered positive, could be considered an area for improvement. An employee stated that, *"The only thing we hear from them (other departments) is at Friday morning meetings. That is a good thing. You can get a feeling of what is going on, but we have to work more together"* thus, referring to the possibility of silos within the departments. As a result of the interviews we learned projects were determinants for communicational patterns. Another interviewee stated, *"I think it's project oriented, as when you work on a project, you naturally stick together at lunch. When the projects are between the parts of the organization, they mingle more".*

A recurring point made during the interviews was the importance and appreciation for Friday morning meetings, both as a platform for social communication and information sharing between departments. A manager explained that, *"We try to use the Friday morning to get together and to keep people informed about the main things that are happening in each department. If there is something important for managers to inform about, we do that as well. We try at least to keep people up to date in discussions and what is decided. Everything is open".* Friday morning meetings are conducted weekly, unless there is a holiday, or vacation. We were permitted to observe four of the meetings. Our impression was that to some extent the social values surpassed the professional levels. Part of each meeting agenda included a short presentation by each department about their current projects. Both the level of preparedness and the structuration of presentations varied.

Several employees also reflected on how the introduction of a common lunch improved communication between different departments. One employee said that, *"It helped a lot when we got the common lunch, because suddenly we started sitting down together much more. (...) It sounds funny, but it really worked, it really made a big difference".* Other social arrangements that were

discussed and considered positive were yearly seminars. During these seminars, employees participate in different activities, such as devising slogans and discussing strategies for the future.

5.2.2 Commitment

Commitment seems to be centered on values at CDK. There is a correlation between personal values and organizational values, and as one employee stated, *"We stay here because the way we define ourselves matches well with where we work"*. Within the values, purpose was highlighted as a source of commitment, when another interviewee concluded that, *"We are committed to something, and that something is the idea of a common course, and it's about the good things that an organization like CARE can do"*. The link between organizational values and personal values was observed in the motivation for working for CDK, as expressed by one of the employees, *"Definitely to make a change (...) to have work whereby feeling you reach out and projects that will make life better for poor people or people hit by climate change"*.

However, we question whether the commitment is to CDK specifically, or if it is a broader commitment to the NGO industry. There is a strong tendency among employees to explicitly seek out work within the world of NGOs, implying that many of the employees had adapted or identified with a set of values inherent in this sector. One of the managers stated, *"I chose 20 years ago that I would like to work in this sector, and I have stayed, because I feel that it's a sector that means something to me (...) I think everybody who works here has taken a choice, based on which sector they want to work in"*. The quote strengthens the suspicion of pre-commitment to NGO values and was elaborated by another of the managers, *"I think I knew from the very start I would go into this kind of business (...) Of course sometimes it's by chance, but generally I think there are values here which are interesting for people (...) a culture and a mission which is very powerful and important for a lot of people (...) If they are interested in not only generating economic value, but also social movements in other parts of the world"*. It seems the employees, to some degree, have created a shared identity and commitment, by differentiating themselves from people working outside the NGO environment. An employee stated, *"I think they are very committed, and it's the same as when I worked for another NGO, it's a special breed of people (...) It is not for everybody"*. There might also be a lock-in effect within the NGO sector, as it appears most employees consider

employment at an NGO a career choice. An employee stated, *"I think it's normal that when you get your foot within, it's like a closed thing that you want to keep doing, and be part of"*.

When discussing commitment to CDK, the employees often mentioned the working environment as a factor reinforcing commitment. One employee especially stressed the aspect of independence; *"You work under your own responsibility. Creating a very good working environment (...) What is really nice and brings commitment is that people respect you because you are able to plan your work yourself (...) I feel that at this place I can really go in my own tempo (...) I feel that I can use what I'm good at"*. Managers also discussed mutual respect as one of the appreciated factors that may be creating commitment, together with personal involvement and challenge. A manager expressed, *"They (employees) feel they can and have a wide degree of influence on what they are actually doing on a daily basis (...) "I like to do something that is interesting, and I have something to say etc" (...) I think that is why people like to work here (...) you have a much wider challenge than in a big corporation"*.

In addition to the working environment, professionalism seems to be a valued part of the CDK-identity. It is implied as something that differentiates CDK in the NGO environment, enforcing commitment to the grand narrative. As stated by several employees, *"I think we are a professional organization"*.

Some of the interviewees pointed out that although they may seem more committed to CDK than to the NGO sector in general, it may be explained by automatic commitment. This can be understood as the justification they make for themselves as to why they are working in that particular job and organization. The Chairman stated that, *"Most of us find a mission, and adopt the culture, the norms and values at the workplace. I am an example of it myself"*. A manager elaborated, *"If you have a job, you have a job description, you are committed to that, whether it's a private sector or if it's an NGO (...) I think when it comes down to the daily work the commitment is not a lot bigger than it would be at other places, if you work in a hospital or Coop or another place (...) you don't have that NGO commitment at CARE, that you meet in Greenpeace"*.

5.2.3 Social Commitment

At CDK, social commitment appears to be created around a shared perception of identity, especially in relation to the NGO spirit discussed above. The staff has a tendency to use *"we"* and *"them"* when referring to people not working in NGOs, based on differences in personal value attribution, and the educational background of the employees.

There seems to be consensus on central organizational attributes, such as cultural sensitivity, open-mindedness, a humanitarian understanding of what is right and wrong, in combination with a professional attitude. These attributes are inherent in the employees and within the organization, as an employee stated, *"You really feel when you go to work either you do administration or projects, it's a caring job you do together. It's more meaningful because it's an NGO. I think it's kind of a little family (...) It gives a sense of loyalty and community, because it's such a small organization. A lot of people have been here for a long time (...) I think what then creates that commitment is the sense of oneness, we're doing something as CARE"*.

An event that could have contributed to either the enhancement or reduction of social commitment was the firing process. The process created a lot of stress among the employees, both in regards to how they themselves and their colleagues and *friends* might be affected. When we talked to the employees, the process was about to be completed, with an overall review of job descriptions. One of the employees described how the process affected them, *"Then something happens and you cringe together and you start talking. We are in this period right now. We have to re-organize and have to find the new roles, because people have been moved around in the organization"*. Another employee indicated the process had also been a reminder of how much the employees enjoy working at CDK by stating, *"We are so happy about being here. The conditions, working environment, in other organizations it could have the immediate effect that people would leave and justify it by saying that the process was not nice, and it is time to move on. But nobody left"*.

Another event that possibly enhanced the social commitment was the organizational relocation from CDK's old offices located at Nørrebro, to the new ones at Amagerbro. The previous office was physically divided in two areas, whereas the new building has room for all the employees in one area. The move clearly affected employees positively, as explained by one of the Senior Managers; *"That has been beneficial for the organization as a whole (...) I think the change did something*

good for the staff (...) It gives another social dimension to have everybody in one building (...) improving the dialogue, not just between us, the projects and expats all together (...) Lifting CARE in a positive direction". The new building has a more professional look, where employees described the old as *"Shabbier, and more sort of NGO like".* This indicates that the new building fits better with the perception they hold of themselves, as a professional organization.

5.3 Diving into context

As mentioned in the introduction, we understand context to pose as the backdrop for our thesis. The General Secretary stated that CDK has three customers they aim to serve simultaneously; *DANIDA, the public, and the developing countries*. Even though customer needs are different, in order to have a good product, CDK needs to serve them all. These customer groups are considered part of the external stakeholders, and have the ability to influence CDK. Additionally, CDK is subject to internal pressures that take form as interacts and influences. These are capable of affecting decision-making processes and defining critical aspects of organizational change. Thus, we present findings related to the external and internal factors of influence. However, we have limited our analysis to the perspectives held by management and employees.

5.3.1 External influencing stakeholders

Danish International Development Agency

DANIDA is the primary funder of CDK, constituting nearly 40 percent of its resources, and naturally has influence on the organization. Therefore, CDK has to be responsive in order to maintain good relations and collaboration. In 2015, DANIDA reduced the financial funding to NGOs by 25 percent. As a consequence, NGOs faced massive challenges in terms of administrative costs. Due to the framework agreement, CDK' overall rate was only reduced by 20 percent. A manager explained, *"It means that you have a strategic relationship with DANIDA, so you have a four-year planning strategy and a rolling budget. DANIDA does not have to approve every project that you start, so it's much more flexible".* As a result of the financial reductions, CDK had to dismiss three employees before Christmas. In comparison, other NGOs were forced to layoff more

than 20 employees. One Senior Manager elaborated, *"It was a tremendous cost reduction, from DKK 48 to 38 million, so 10 million, of which 1 million for cost recoveries to personnel (...) We had to look at priorities - where to scale down or close down"*.

There are several rules contained in the agreement with the government. A manager stated, *"DANIDA has definitely some requirements (...) As a frame we have to follow, do special programs, and reports (...) For example, we can only spend 7% on communicational costs and 7% on administrational cost. So there are a lot of rules"*. Still, the relationship between CDK and DANIDA seems to be good. According to the same manager, *"It's very professional, and they just made some reports saying that they are quite happy with CARE's work"*.

The employees did not regard the pressure from DANIDA as a severe challenge, beyond reporting and results requirements. One of them described their relationship; *"DANIDA, has a civil society policy that we are supposed to be working under. That aligns extremely closely to what we also think is our mandate. So if you look at CARE Danmarks strategy, there is extremely close alignment"*. It sounded like they almost believe the close alignment in strategy is a fortunate coincidence. Contrarily, the Chairman posed the question of whether or not CDK is just an extended fundraising arm of the government. He reflected on how CDK had to adapt to DANIDA's changing policies, which necessitated a shift in strategy from projects to programs, and to civil society. The employees believe this was the natural direction in which to proceed, and not at all forced. The Chairman questioned the fact that employees adopted the policies, to the extent that they believed it was their own decision. He further implied that there might have been some underlying psychological mechanisms, which contributed to forming their perceptions.

A similar situation occurred when DANIDA posed new requirements regarding the target of public support. An employee explained, *"We made the decision fortunately before it became a requirement (...) It started out at 10%, and its changed to less actually, I think 5% needs to be from private fundraising. You need 20% overall, but 15% can be from the EU or other non-DANIDA donors. We have 25%, so that's really good"*.

CARE International

CDK has to adhere to CARE International and a manager described the relation, *"CARE International has 12 members in total (...) All of the members are set up as individual NGO's. The difference between a confederation and federation is important. A confederation is that we are individuals working together, if it was a federation we would have a joined leadership (...) There is common agreement about what we do together as overall vision and strategy (...) You could say we have a division of labor, we raise the funds in our part of the world, we are the rich ones (...) Obviously, there are some strings attached".* However, the formulations made by CARE International are often vague, and therefore are subject to different interpretations and implementation. One manager stated, *"They (members) close their ears for what they don't want to hear, and do what they want by adapting to the decision".*

The General Secretary told us the story of how CDK came about, *"CARE US decided to create CARE Danmark because they wanted us as a fundraising arm. My policy has been that if we are just a fundraising arm – then forget about it. We need to be able to add value. Actually, the fact that we have a program department today was against what the Board said, because there was no reason for CARE to spend money on staff. Projects can be made by CARE International, by CARE US or UK (...) but for Danish taxpayers to send money to a US-based organization doesn't make sense".*

He explained how CARE International could influence CDK, *"Each member of CARE International is sovereign, and so in principle CARE International cannot decide anything. The board is unique. The Danish Board owns CARE Danmark, that's the bottom line".* At the Board meetings in Geneva, each of the members has one vote. Even though CARE US is the biggest member, it does not have more *power* in meetings based on the mandate, but in reality it has more influence. However, according to the Chairman, there seems to be a goal of reaching consensus around decisions concerning the whole organization.

CARE International imposes guidelines for activities. The General Secretary told us about an episode, where CDK disagreed with CARE International. He explained that, *"Some years ago CARE US wanted us to focus more on women. We didn't want to do it, we said development aid is gender neutral (...) DANIDA would say that if you focus only on women, that's not sustainable.*

That's a waste of money. I had to tell them that we follow the strategy we have agreed on with DANIDA". The same issue was brought up by the Chairman, *"CARE International made gender one of the core issues, and every statement in the joint strategy documents had "empowering women, or women and girl" at the end of every sentence (...) After my opinion, or CARE Danmark's opinion, CARE International went too far in making it a goal in itself".*

Competitors

There is no evidence of any focal conflicts among the NGOs in the Danish environment. Although, there may be some disagreement as to whether they should prioritize development or emergency aid. According to one of the managers the external competition depends on departments, *"In program you're working together (across the NGO environment) (...) but in fundraising in the Danish market we are competitors. "Who has the best idea, and who has the most money to burst it out, and to get more money" so definitely we are competitors".*

In relation to partnerships, the Chairman told us that there are certain frames CDK has to stay within. When fundraising, it is not just about raising as much money as possible by doing all kinds of different projects. If the partners want CDK to do something outside of its profile, they have to decline as it could become a problem if it makes CDK's profile unclear. On the other hand, The General Secretary stated that CDK has to follow the market and change in response to what all of the donors and collaborators want, not just DANIDA.

5.3.2 Internal influencing factors

Organizational structure

We presume that how CDK is structured has implications for the sensemaking process. The structure can facilitate interacts and symbolically inspire or discourage commitment, depending on how it reflects on central narratives, and the identity of the organization.

The employees do not seem to have a common perception about the organizational structure at CDK. Their arguments for saying there is a flat organizational structure typically revolve around the size of the organization, that a smaller organization facilitates closer collaboration and communication between employees. The same arguments are used in claiming that the organization is collectivist, combined with considerations about how decisions are made.

Employees that consider CDK as a hierarchical and bureaucratic organization, generally refer to the General Secretary as overall responsible for all decisions. Additionally, rules and norms guiding their work are highlighted. One employee stated, *"This rather old fashioned departmental structure is really sort of a bureaucracy, the tree structure (...) All decisions need to go up and down, and have a very clear line of command"*. However, it seems the practical structure differs from the formal structure, *"We don't need that because we don't make decisions that way"*.

In practice, it appears the organization is pushing towards a project structure. However, the formal structure with separate departments does not reflect the reality. An interviewee feels that *"We have always been working very closed in our silos (departments), and there's very close communication within it. But we try to open it up, and we have succeeded (...) It's important for us to get this whole management of projects set up, so we can work across the silos"*. Some employees also pointed out that a matrix structure could facilitate more collaboration between departments, and reduce silo-tendencies. The difference in perception of organizational setup is likely explained by varying backgrounds, and pre-existing frames in regards to what constitutes a flat or a hierarchical organization.

Employees seem to agree that the program department is the core of the organization, and is therefore valued higher than the other departments, according to one person, *"If you look overall at the organization, it's a very flat structure. The 'overdogs' are people in the programming-department"*. Another employee elaborated, *"The Senior Manager leading the program department and her team, is the strongest and most important department, because they are the core organization (...) that's what you actually do, other departments are just add-ons"*. These perceptions may indicate that the program department is important beyond the organizational structure. As mentioned earlier, the General Secretary identified that the program department is what makes CDK more than just a fundraising office. As such, the value of the program department

may function as an underlying narrative related to the identity of CDK and its relationship to CARE International.

Decision making

The daily decision-making at CDK revealed some perceptual differences at the three leadership levels. The General Secretary reflected on his role in the organization, *"For me it's important that I don't have to micro-manage everything, that there are some policies, some strategies that we follow. (...) I consider myself to be successful if they don't need me"*. He believes there is consensus about what they do and do not do in the organization, *"I just expect that they deliver with good quality, and that they are able to coordinate and collaborate with the other sections in the secretariat"*. He considers *decision-making power* to be delegated, and explained that all employees to some extent, are manager by having their own area of focus.

The management group appears to have a common understanding, both of the role of the General Secretary and decision-making processes in the organization. Accordingly one Senior Manager emphasized *"I think he (General Secretary) has a strong influence on the decisions we are making, but he is also listening to what we are putting on the table (...) sometimes its direct orders (...) he is a strong leader (...) He is kind of the father of the organization"*. Managers agree on empowering the employees as one of them stated, *"We expect that there is a certain degree of seniority (...) among those who work for us (...) in terms of knowledge (...) Don't involve me in all kinds of details (...) My impression is that what people like about working here, is that they have a wide degree of possibilities of decision-making power"*. However, the Senior Management is ultimately responsible for decision-making.

Employees also perceive the General Secretary to hold the overall decision-making power. They acknowledged his competencies and seem to be satisfied, as one of them explained, *"We are a small organization and I think that it's a top-down tendency when it comes to decision-making. He (the General Secretary) is into many things (...) Everything has to be cleared, and will be cleared, at his desk (..) when it seems like he is overruling or bossing – he normally knows what is going on"*. The employees agree that the organization is hierarchical, but noted that the tendency has diminished over time. They are empowered to make own decisions on a daily basis, and are

encouraged to offer suggestions to their managers. As a result, decisions are often made jointly. One employee stated, *"Of course my boss has the overviews and knows the direction, but we talk a lot about directions"*. However, on special matters the employees' influence is limited. One person affirmed, *"There are things that the management agree upon and the employees just have to work after (...) It's quite an organic structure, in that many decisions are discussed and some are totally not discussed with staff"*.

The Board

The Board makes the most important decisions at CDK. This seems to be understood by the employees as one stated, *"The Board has to approve overall, big immediate decisions (...) everything is the board's decision, if it's serious enough"*. As such, the Board is generally not involved in daily management of operations at the company. Another employee indicated an understanding that, *"The Board plays a role, but it plays a role more in terms of overall monitoring, and when they feel like it they will touch down on an issue and discuss it. They are not really mixed up in the everyday decision-making"*. However, some employees had the impression that the Board at times surpasses the boundaries of their role with one person stating, *"My impression is that the Board is getting too much into the daily running of the organizing, which has caused problems for the General Secretary"*.

The Senior Managers seem to have a shared experience of an intrusive Board. Accordingly, one employee expressed, *"In the last year they have had too many things to say in our daily work and they have interfered with how we should do things. I think it's fine that they stick out guidelines, but it should be up to us to manage (...) Right now, maybe there's too much tension, and maybe the biggest challenge is that they're actually crossing the line into daily leadership (...) we're like 'no, come on, get out of my hair"*.

A statement from the General Secretary explained his view on the role of the Board; *"I normally say that Board Members should decide what kind of restaurant it should be, but never be in the kitchen"*.

5.3.3 An environmental shift

There is an ongoing global change in the NGO industry. This impacts CDK, and is one of the drivers for the change process observed at the Danish office. It is important to address the development, because it leads to an overall question of how CDK should regard and react to change. The employees helped us to understand the impact that the environment can have on commitment to the competing narratives.

The Chairman explained a shift that has been ongoing since the 1980s, when Danish development aid was focused on projects. Eventually the quantity of projects were reduced and replaced by program aid. The shift in emphasis included work extending over longer periods of time, as opposed to projects, which were primarily a one-service delivery. Furthermore, programs were replaced with civil society aid, as DANIDA suggested that real development was not possible without support from the civil society. He elaborated, *"The basic concept of aid is that there are some rich white men, and some poor black men (...) and that the white men give the black men some sort of support"*. Today, we recommend that perceptions change from the *"overdog"* and the *underdog* - the goal for all aid organizations should be global. CARE International wants to become a true INGO (International NGO). This implies that they should have a global perspective, and not *only* be a donor giving support to the poor.

Further, the Chairman questioned whether it is *even* necessary to have organizations like CDK and stated, *"Can't DANIDA find some NGOs in Ghana for example and give the aid directly to them?"* CDK has been working with a civil society strategy for the last 10-15 years, and has assisted in developing locally strong NGOs. If the NGOs succeed and become self-sustaining, DANIDA could give the money directly for them. In comparing CDK to a wholesaler, posing as an unnecessary middleman in the market, he suggested CDK should not continue its work just because it has existed for the last 30-40 years. If there is no need for CDK's function, the operations should not be continued. In which case, becoming consultants to the NGO industry could be an alternative. If all the NGOs have offices in the local areas, they could consult and collaborate with each other. This has been discussed in a meeting between the Board and Senior Management at CDK.

The Chairman addressed the question of whether CDK could become part of a global concern with *all* the other NGOs. He does not seem to believe it is necessary to have all the small NGOs that

exists today, and sees the possibility of merging them *all* together and become one global organization. Even though the NGOs have contradicting stories and cultural backgrounds, these should be set aside. This would strengthen the organization in relation to DANIDA, other governments and the public sector.

When we asked the General Secretary about the future of NGOs, he confirmed that funds earmarked for long-term development will decrease. Additionally he suspects that competition amid NGOs will increase, as the funds for emergency and long-term development aid programs are consolidated and stated, *"I think there will be less NGOs. DANIDA will focus on fewer, maybe some will have to merge, or shut down, due to stricter demands from DANIDA"*. Furthermore he expressed, *"Our point of departure is that we do what we do best. It depends on how good you are at helping the government achieve their politics"*. For CDK, it will lead to conversion and uncertainty. The sector is undergoing political changes, making it difficult to navigate. The Chairman summarized his belief that, *"To survive, the organizations need to be flexible, and adaptive to new demands. Value-dependent (idébestemte) organizations cannot merge, but some are more alike than others. It will be survival of the fittest, and it depends on which possibilities DANIDA offer. If Denmark decides only to support humanitarian aid, we will have to close down. This is not business as usual for us"*.

6. Analysis

As a means of analysis, we have divided the chapter into two parts. These are related to the chosen theories, outlined in chapter 3. The first part revolves around the role of sensemaking processes in multiple and changing narratives. In the second part we examine how context might contribute to explain the sensemaking dynamics at CDK. The aim of the analysis is to lay the foundation for answering our research question. The empirical data will be based on chapter 5, together with additional comments, reflections and events related to the data collection, suitable for what is being analyzed.

In our findings we have revealed that the development of humanitarian and emergency aid is changing the direction of the NGO industry, not just in Denmark, but globally. With emerging dilemmas a competing narrative is uncovered, and sheds light on the limitations, prejudice and socio-political processes, through which stories are constructed (Dawson & Buchanen, 2005). This composes the context for CDK. Hence, there is a need for addressing the forces of change to best meet the ambiguous future.

During the process of collecting data, the Board at CDK approved of widening their current strategy. They have chosen to include elements of emergency relief in their profile. However, there does not appear to be consensus on how to do it in practice, as such a radical change cannot be done overnight. Only one of the employees acknowledged the situation by expressing a belief in long-term development being phased out. Although the management seems to understand the critical situation, the employees appear to have been left a bit in the dark.

6.1 Part 1: "Sensemaking with CDK"

The sensemaking process discussed by Hernes et al. (2015) is useful for our thesis in suggesting that it is important to understand organizational members' sensemaking in times of change. We utilize the sensemaking model in order to understand the competing narratives at CDK, as a way to address commitment to the present and changing narrative.

6.1.1 Narratives at CARE Danmark

Hernes et al. (2015) understand narratives as responding to questions that pertain to the very meaning of acting together. They provide important drivers for sensemaking, which interact recursively with the interacts on which they are based (ibid.). Corresponding to Søderberg (2006), the unfolding of sensemaking processes depends on the activation of narratives, since narratives are seen as drivers of change. The collected data in our research indicates that there are multiple narratives at CDK; the NGO-narrative, the grand narrative, supporting narratives and a main competing narrative.

According to Dawson and Buchanen (2005), multiple narratives of organizational change are generally derived on three distinct levels: *senior organizational actors, other organizational actors and stakeholder groups.* However, as multiple and competing narratives exist, all are not necessarily heard. Those that are, can have powerful influence on decision-making within organizations (ibid.). Contradicting to Hernes et al. (2015), this thesis explores the nature of narratives, without the occurrence of one specific change, as CDK is in the middle of a change that will evolve over time. As the following analysis will suggest, the grand narrative of working with long-term development, is in conflict with the emergency relief narrative, which may result in a misfocused and weakened grand narrative and supporting narratives.

"We are an NGO..."

The overall organizational narrative at CDK is related to being an NGO. It constitutes the backdrop to organizational life as it sets the stage for appropriate values, a general worldview and organizational identity. Accompanying it are some assumptions in regards to characteristics of NGOs. These seem to have been adopted by the staff at the office, exemplified with the level of constituency, independence from government and political affiliation. Whether CDK is an actual NGO, is a question we address in the discussion. The grand narrative, supporting narratives and the conflicting narrative, are intrinsic in the NGO narrative. It can therefore be considered as the *superior* narrative.

It is not individuals who are assumed to be drivers of change, but the degree to which commitment evolves around a certain narrative, serving to hold activities and people together (Hernes et al.,

2015). It is a micro stability that Hernes et al. (2015) understand as being constituted by a narrative, sustained by commitment, created through acts and interacts. When considering the effect of the competing narrative, it is therefore important to look at the commitment created. By addressing the different narratives we attempt to uncover which narrative the employees commit to the most to, and how they affect each other.

The Grand narrative - "...that is what we are good at"

Long-term development is the most powerful narrative at CDK. It has deep roots in history, from when CDK was established, as the Chairman explains, *"We made a decision back then, that we wanted to work only with long term development"*. The narrative constitutes and paves the way for new narratives. Our impression is that the grand narrative of an organization is *"we are what we are, it is what we are good at - let's continue with that"*. In the case of CDK it is *"We are an NGO, we provide long-term development in developing countries - that is what we are good at"*. This narrative can be associated with a motionless picture, which management and employees seem to commit to. In that sense, it can also be considered an expression of the CDK-identity - who they are, and what they do. An important part of the grand narrative is the lack of belief in lack of belief in emergency aid, which was enforced by the fact that almost all employees emphasized that CDK does <u>not</u> do emergency relief.

"The grand supporters"

We have identified two main narratives that support the grand narrative: the PECCN program, and the relationship with DANIDA. They are supportive because they either direct attention to areas that produce pride related to the success within long-term development, or because they direct focus towards the negative sides of doing emergency relief. Either way, they contribute to strengthening the grand narrative, as the natural route for CDK.

Uncertainty around the grand narrative

Most employees knew about the rising discussion surrounding emergency relief, as a consequence of uncertainty around the future direction of CDK. However, many did not support the idea of

changing their strategy, as they believed it would weaken their profile. It is evident that there is consensus around the grand narrative, as the management, employees, and the Chairman agree upon their work. Nonetheless, when taking context into consideration, employees and the Senior Managers perceive the overall long-term development-narrative slightly different. Several of the managers indicated that they recognized the future direction of the industry, and that it would result in CDK having to change accordingly. This is due to exposure to more competition and pressure in receiving funds from the government.

"The grand competitor"

Dawson and Buchanan (2005) introduce the concept of competing narratives, and argue that several often exist in processes of change. These narratives can be further refined, replaced, or developed over time. In the case of CDK one specific competing narrative appears to be present.

The emerging competing narrative of emergency relief, together with the general downward trend in the NGO industry, is in conflict with what CDK claims to be business as usual. It is related to how its industry operates, how stakeholders perceive CDK in the external environment, and what CDK staff perceives to be the plot of its story. Therefore, if CDK fails to acknowledge the emergence of a new story, its possibility to develop in consistency with the market might be reduced. Hernes et al. (2015) argue that *"organizations do not really ever catch up with, even less surpass, their environments",* which is explained by Zeno's paradox of the Achilles. Accordingly, we do not believe that CDK will ever be able to outrun the market forces. In order to secure its survival, it needs to adapt. It is the same as to saying that CDK needs to assure that it is at least moving in the same direction as the environment.

As presented in our findings, the competing narrative has a weakening effect on the grand narrative. Likewise, the grand narrative also affects the competing narrative, where an important aspect is how <u>not</u> doing emergency relief is intrinsic in the grand narrative. Thus, the two seem mutually exclusive. However, as the Chairman stated, emergency relief will only be introduced in areas where CDK already operates. In this regard, there seems to be some internal differences in perception, both in regards to the actual introduction of emergency relief, and the extent of it. An internal difference in perceptions is also evident in the varying stories of how the emergency relief

narrative emerged. Some of the stories are even contradictory, which emphasizes the lack of consensus around the competing narrative. The figure below is a visual presentation of the main narratives at CDK.
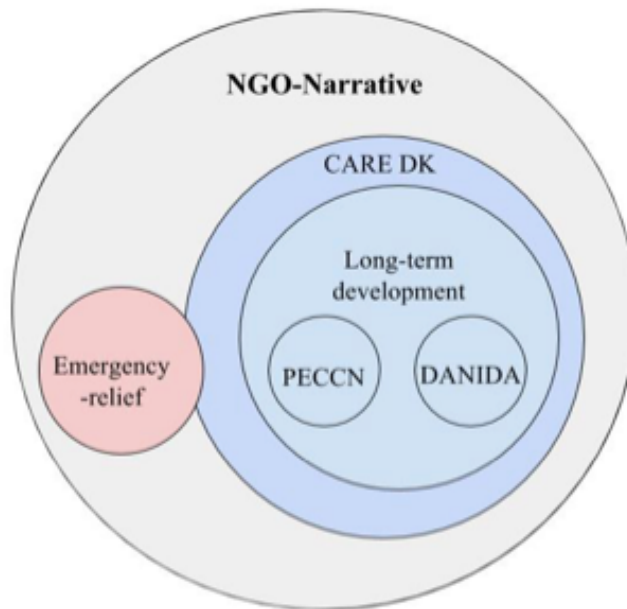
Figure 3: Existing narratives at CDK

6.1.2 Acts and Interacts - "A goodness organization"

The sensemaking process is according to Hernes et al. (2015) action driven. Within CDK there are numerous interacts. However, in order to maintain the focus on the topic of the thesis, the fundamental acts will be related to the different narratives. We seek to elucidate their role in the sensemaking process, particularly relating to commitment. It is important to note that acts pertaining to the grand narrative or the conflicting narrative may effectively reduce commitment to each other. On the other hand, acts pertaining to the NGO narrative may effectively increase commitment to both the grand and conflicting narrative, since they are both considered built-in.

Identifying with the work of an NGO can be considered an act initiated by the General Secretary and Senior Managers, to form an overarching purpose of the organization; a vision and mindset that

applies to the staff at CDK. By ensuring initiation of the NGO characteristics, in combination with sending new employees to visit the developing countries, they get to experience how to appropriately interact with each other, and with the external environment. Thus, CDK creates guidelines on how interacts should be conducted in the form of norms and values. This contributes to create what the employees and management call an NGO environment, posing as a foundation for communication and commitment. Hernes et al. (2015) argue that acts create interacts evolving from single acts. The Secretariat are imposing a cognitive mindset on the employees, by introducing the *good* work of CARE. When employees are hired at the office, and sent to the countries they are operating in, managers enforce a sort of *Halleluja-spirit* of working *with* an NGO. They are attempting to leave the employees in a state of enthusiasm, thus laying the foundation for accepted ways of behavior, which shapes acts and interacts.

The General Secretary repeatedly emphasized the history of long-term development, and focused on their many years of operation. By including employees in the creation of slogans for the organization, such as *"Help to self-help"* and *"The sooner, the better"*, CDK is able to reach agreement on the goal of its work. Hence, CDK enhances commitment to the goal of the organization. It is an act that solely revolves around the long-term development narrative, since the slogans are intended to be a simplification of CDK's mission and work, intended for both internal and external audience. The joint creation of slogans can lead to a reciprocal obligation to confirm commitment to the slogans.

The empowerment of employees may be a result of an underlying intention of keeping in touch with the NGO-spirit, reflected in organizational structure. Generally in the NGO industry, organizations make efforts to become more collectivist than hierarchical bureaucracies where; the level of authority is more tacit, the rules vaguer, social relations more personal, incentives more value-based and the recruitment process may not be so strict, as opposed to bureaucratic organizations (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979). Our findings show tendencies of being a collective organization, and making efforts in becoming more so, *"I think we work collectively and not as individuals, at least this is what we try to do (...) I like to see us as a joint resource to actually be able to jointly do what we are supposed to"*.

The organizational setup at CDK is considered an act shaping interacts, because it provides an overall frame for organizational interacts. On paper the setup at CDK is hierarchical, but the daily activities give another impression. According to Rothschild-Whitt (1979), the task of any collectivist-democratic workplace is to eliminate all bases of individual power and authority. This is not the case at CDK. Although they seek to empower their employees, they still have structured levels of management, and divide the organizational tasks into departments. Hence, the organizational setup indicates that they might not be as collectivist as they aim to be. The structure could further implicate silo tendencies, which is often a challenge for hierarchical organizations. However, the majority of the interviewees did not see this as a problem, due to their informal communication.

Another identified act is when employees at the office communicate how they are different from other NGOs. Inherent is a reaffirmation of the CDK values and how they are related to the grand narrative. It could possibly intensify the perceived correlation between personal and organizational values. Not doing emergency relief is a core assumption in the discussion of how CDK stand out in the NGO-environment.

6.1.3 Patterns of interacts - "Collective efforts"

Hernes et al. (2015) suggest that interacts may develop into recognizable patterns of interacts. From the very first meeting with CDK, the employees' identification with working for an NGO creates actions that can develop into patterns. *"Interacts have implications beyond the isolated communicative situations, because they engender reciprocal obligations between actors, not to one another as such, but to the interactive process between them"* (Hernes et al, 2015, p. 10).

The informal culture was observed in their behavior. Both the management and employees usually have their doors open at all times, and frequently disturb each other. Hereby they signal availability. In addition, they work across departments on specific projects, which opens up the possibility for collaboration, e.g. they ask for help when needed, and work actively to avoid conflicts. The dress code is to some degree suggestive of a pattern, as employees generally adhere to one that is relaxed, but business casual. This could be understood as part of the image they hold as a professional organization working within the industry of NGOs.

When attending meetings for observation or having interviews with groups or individuals, we noted a floating understanding of time, as they were often 5-15 minutes late, or behind schedule. The observed meetings differed to the extent of holding a tight agenda and schedule. One that stood out in particular was the weekly meeting on Friday mornings. Even if the General Secretary was speaking, the employees did not show any greater respect towards his authority, compared to when other Senior Managers or employees were talking. At the same time, some of the managers did not always prepare well for the presentations, and employees were interrupting. These patterns are altogether creating the underlying culture at CDK and can be suggestive of being a collectivist organization.

The Senior Managers want to empower the employees by giving them responsibility. The General Secretary stated that he feels successful in his job when it is not necessary to crosscheck everything at his desk. He explained that all the employees are to some degree their own bosses, with their own responsibilities. This is an act that further creates interacts as it forms the way employees are working together. In trusting employees to make decisions themselves, the management creates a working culture where employees experience independency. It also enforces mutual respect and modesty, which is apparent in that employees ask each other for help. It is an act that creates interacts around the CDK-identity and values, and thus also around the grand narrative.

Patterns of interacts are created as employees become expectant of a certain kinds of behavior, from colleagues and managers. In the firing process, some patterns might have been broken, since the management failed to communicate sufficiently with employees, leading several employees to feel more empowered than they actually were. This process may have consequences for interacts in the future. Since the employees discovered that their ability to affect the process was less than initially thought, they may have been discouraged from engaging in similar processes in the future.

We have not been able to identify any acts or interacts around the competing narrative, leading to observable patterns of interacts. We suspect it is due to how the discussion about emergency relief has come about. It is also a very recent decision, with a lot of uncertainty related to it. The decision was made late in our process of collecting data. As we have suggested, employees may have been *left in the dark* in regards to the future of CDK, where the limited information prevents interacts.

Hence, it is also an act that inhibits transparency, which effectively contradicts efforts to become a more collectivist organization.

6.1.4 "CARE to commit"

Hernes et al. (2015) describes two types of commitment that are analytically distinct, yet closely entangled, namely social and interpretative commitment. There is evidence of high commitment within CDK. There appears to be close correlation between the members' personal values and the organizational values. The majority of the interviewees mentioned the purpose of the organization, *to make a difference,* as one of the main motivational factors at CDK.

"Committing to the idea of caring"

A general tendency among the employees was that they had chosen specifically to apply for work within the NGO industry, when starting at CDK. This implies that the individuals already had some pre-existing commitment to the industry. Several of the employees mentioned that they made conscious choices when they were younger, thus were committed before entering CDK in particular.

It seemed the employees had created a shared identity and commitment to the industry, by differentiating themselves from people working outside the NGO environment. There might also be elements of a lock-in effect to the industry, as it appears that most employees choose to stay within the sector. Having pre-committed employees is an advantage, as the goal of achieving commitment to the underlying purpose of their job has already been reached. The only difference is the way CDK operates, as opposed to other NGOs.

Employees brought up independence as an important factor making them feel committed to their work. Even though they have set working days at 7,5 hours, several mentioned that they were willing to stay longer, and work harder when having a tight deadline. This can be related to the values the organization holds, based on the fact that they are an NGO working to improve the lives of disadvantaged people. The consequence of not meeting a deadline is perceived as a greater cost than the cost of working longer hours. Hence, the extra effort the employees are willing to render is

related to the grand narrative. It is also evident in the results from job satisfaction surveys, where the average score has been very high the last couple of years, according to the General Secretary. CDK has a low employee turnover, and most of the interviewees have stayed with the organization for a longer period of time. These are arguments that strengthening findings of high commitment, and can be related to the grand and supporting narratives. Although, part of the commitment might simply be a result of the justification you make for yourself as to the job and organization you work in.

The walls, pictures and decoration at the office are a constant reminder of their work as an NGO, and the projects CDK has been involved in. The visual artifacts were the first noticeable element of being at an NGO office when we visited CDK. However, these surroundings are probably elements the employees do not even notice anymore, as they become part of their culture and identity.

Being proud of the job they do at CDK in addition to a high level of expertise and knowledge supports the grand narrative. There appears to be general agreement among staff that long-term development is the best alternative to pursue within aid. CDK has existed for almost 30 years and have had the same General Secretary since the beginning. He has been able to convincingly communicate their vision, enforcing a common understanding of who they are, which is evident in the consensus around the grand narrative.

The high ranking CDK received from DANIDA and its level of professionalism, separates CDK from other NGOs. This underlines the fact that CDK does *what works*, and that the strategy of <u>not</u> going after the popular cases, such as short-term aid, is a successful and conscious choice. The majority of the employees stated that they should stick to what they know, thus empowering the grand narrative. Additionally, some employees expressed that short-term emergency aid is a waste of money. Emergency aid contradicts the core values at CDK, namely that it does what is sensible, and that decisions are made deliberately with a thorough assessment of the consequences.

The introduction of emergency relief may effectively reduce commitment to the grand narrative. It ushers a disbelief in long-term development. For employees at CDK this may lead to a breach in their perception of identity. Our understanding is that the management considers the option of doing emergency relief to be introduced by DANIDA, as a consequence of the shifting political

environment. However, there are several stories, not all of which align. The decision to do emergency relief seems to be top-down, the process muddled, and we have yet to gather the practical implications for the organization. If employees share our perception, it might lead to a conflict between management and employees. The consequence of not involving employees in the organizational shifting strategy could severely affect commitment to CDK, and the grand narrative.

"Committing to the family"

Most of the interviewees spoke in terms of a unified organization, using the terms *us* and *we,* when describing CDK. Two employees even used the word *family*. There appears to be a common understanding of a shared and unifying identity at the office. Consensus revolves around central organizational attributes such as cultural sensitivity, open-mindedness, and a humanitarian understanding of what is right and wrong. These, in combination with professionalism, enforce commitment to the grand narrative. The unifying identity stretches outside the boundaries of CDK, as it is included in a broader NGO-identity. It was exemplified with the use of the word *them,* when referring to people not involved in the NGO world. The way they talk about themselves serves to articulate what the CDK community is about, thereby evoking a sense of becoming a social entity (Hernes et al., 2015).

In 2015, CDK was faced with financial challenges imposed by DANIDA, and as a result had to fire three people. The firing process is example of an event creating stronger social commitment. When *losing* colleagues you perceive to be part of your *family,* it is hard to let go and grasp the situation. As the management dragged on the process, and created frustration and confusion among employees, the process might have caused an even greater momentum of stress than necessary. Compared to other Danish NGOs, CDK got away with a minor cut. It could be discussed whether the employees overreacted to some extent, as CDK *only* had to reduce the staff by three people. Although the majority of managers and employees described the process as difficult and badly handled, it appears to have enhanced social commitment, by being a reminder of what they appreciate with the job. An employee described that the process had been challenging, but appreciated still being able to work at CDK, and that no one quit after the sad episode.

When observing at CDK it is significant that there was a positive atmosphere and harmony at the office, despite the recent firing process. The employees seemed to know each other across departments and had social arrangements outside of work. This in combination with annual parties hosted by the management adds to the creation of social commitment, as they do not just consider each other as colleagues but as friends. These are elements that contribute in facilitating social commitment.

There might be occurrences of commitment to the conflicting narrative, based on the staff's understanding of the shifting trends in the political environment, favoring short-term aid closer to Denmark. The fundraising-department and management group seem to recognize it as a possibility and opportunity for CDK, to enter emergency relief. Their arguments were based on the survival of the organization. They believe it is easier to attain funding when offering emergency aid. If emergency relief is presented as a necessity for future survival, it may be hard to argue against. Hence, employees might commit to it solely based on logical reasoning. However, it is doubtful whether it is possible to reach the same level of intensity that the grand narrative seems to hold.

6.1.5 Summary

Up until this point, the analysis has explored elements in the sensemaking process, with emphasis on narratives and commitment. We have discovered that the grand narrative as well as supporting narratives seems misdirected and contradictory to the development in the NGO industry. The grand narrative is based on conscious decisions, a hierarchical pattern of interacts, and commitment based on historical success.

We did not observe any specific acts or interacts around the competing narrative during our time at the CDK office. Therefore, we cannot know how the introduction of emergency relief will affect overall commitment. Although, we suggest a possible commitment to the competing narrative could be grounded in preferences, and an understanding of the new trend to support short-term aid. Based on how the organization has dealt with change in the past, we can make some speculations about what the future will hold. It is important to address how the management believes they are committing other members to the grand narrative, when a competing narrative emerges. The management is facing challenges regarding the information provided to the employees. The lack of

information flow is likely to have inhibited commitment to the competing narrative, as it has prevented interacts around it. There are different perceptions internally in the management group regarding the effect of emergency relief, indicating a lack of consensus around the decision to introduce it. This is a subject we examine more thoroughly in the discussion.

They tend to ignore alternative narratives that focus on commitment to the organization and the future. Despite the fact that management believe employees are committed to the management's static narrative, several of the employees seemed to hold limited knowledge about the future. This could lead to a mistrusted narrative at a later point in time. Our collected data confirms that members commit differently to CDK. Naturally, employees who have been working with CDK for decades show a stronger sense of commitment to the grand narrative, than the newly hired.

We argue that the grand narrative and the competing narrative affect employees' sensemaking oppositely. The grand narrative engenders commitment, with social meetings, slogans and teambuilding exercises. The competing narrative, on the other hand, actively prevent interacts.
Thus, the existence of multiple narratives affects the sensemaking process as they push and pull acts and interacts in opposite directions. It creates patterns of interacts that lead employees' commitment to center around different narratives with varying intensity. The organizational identity seems tightly linked to the grand narrative because of duration, a close link in values and common social identity. Hence, there is a risk of identity-rapture, as a consequence of the introduction of emergency aid.

We have discovered that employees to some extent have been *left in the dark* in the ongoing change-situation. According to Søderberg (2006), organizations that face changes need to communicate with organizational members, and by that allow them to seek stability and re-identify with the organization. Narratives can therefore be used as meaningful frames that stress and elaborate the organizational identity, and the management's perception of employees and their roles (Demers, Giroux & Chreim, 2003). When multiple narratives exist, it allows for multiple interpretations of identity, depending on the social and temporal context (Chreim, 2007).

We argue that CDK is unable to address the full scope of context, as it is situated in an on-going undefined change situation. Henceforth, the next part of the analysis will place emphasis on the

context, and how it may influence and aid the sensemaking process. Following, we suggest a contribution to the current model of the sensemaking process by Hernes et al. (2015) based on our findings at CDK.

6.2 Part 2: "Contextual forces at play"

We seek to explore the context CDK is situated in to complement sensemaking theory in explaining how organizational members make sense of a changing narrative. Since we have revealed multiple stories explaining the introduction of emergency relief, we suggest the competing narrative might have an external origination. The existence of multiple narratives may lead to post-hoc rationalization of changes, to service present objectives, which in essence is a retrospective sensemaking process. By taking a broader perspective on context, we intend to elucidate how internal and external forces are capable of affecting the dynamics of change. Stakeholders are a natural part of the context. We apply Dawson's (2003) framework in the identification of factors shaping the change in narratives at CDK.

If sensemaking is a way to understand context, organizational members make sense of the context in which they find themselves. However, as mentioned in chapter 3, organizational members might not be able to fully comprehend the context, since they are situated in it. Additionally, change is continuous, and cannot be divided into separate and distinct periods of activity. It should be considered as movement rather than immobility posed on the organization. As such, we need to address *"the forces of change already at play, and understand the dynamics by which they interact to sustain an evolving focus in the change process"* (Hernes et al. 2015, p 118).

Sensemaking processes do not have a specific starting- nor an ending point, as it is a retrospective and continuous process of understanding the context (Weick et al., 2005). It directs attention to how the past may affect the present, and thus also the future (Hernes, 2014). However, in times of flux the past may no longer serve as a reliable guide to what is going on, and it can be difficult to outline a proper response in an unpredictable equivocal world (Colville et al., 2011). This underpins the importance of addressing history, as a part of the context, and a consideration of the role of history has for the present at CDK. By looking at Dawson's (2003) three pre-defined dynamic dimensions,

we intend to identify patterns or 'deviant' activities considered to shape the underlying process of change, as well as the outcome.

6.2.1 Politics of change - "Peer pressure"

Internal Politics of Change

Our first impression of CDK was the strong consensus about the grand narrative, and the agreement about the direction of the organization. However, our findings in combinations with the analysis of the sensemaking process at CDK has revealed elements of tension and areas of interest, in regards to conflicting narratives, organizational structure and decision making with its implications.

Repercussions of conflicting narratives can come as a result of organizational split, where some employees experience commitment towards one narrative, and others to another. Possible consequences of such a situation include disagreement between employees of the direction the organization is going in. It can lead to cognitive dissonance among those who perceive the organization to be moving in a direction that contradicts their values. This is especially important due to the discovery of strong correlation between organizational and personal values, as a source of heightened commitment to CDK. However, both the Chairman and the management pointed out that employees would have some primary commitment to the job. They suggest it is a justification of the position the employees are in. We suggest this commitment may decrease if employees experience a reduced correlation between organizational and personal values.

It will also affect the employees' motivation to work at CDK, and their performance. We have seen that a part of the grand narrative was a belief that emergency aid is *"aid that comes too late"*. One employee stated, *"I'm very proud to work for an organization that does things wisely, instead of just doing it the easy way (...) Doing both emergency relief and long-term development (...) could be a short-sighted solution"*. Those who consider emergency relief to be a waste of time and resources may experience resistance, during and after the introduction of emergency relief. Thus, resulting in less motivation to do a good job. However, the effect of reduced motivation might to some degree

be limited. The identified pre-commitment to the NGO-sector withstands regardless of whether the organization works with long-term development, or emergency relief.

Disagreement between employees can spark internal conflict, both about the way things are done, and the future. We have seen that the management has a broader perspective in regards to the future of CDK than the employees. For this reason they might consider a gradual change from long-term development to the inclusion of emergency relief, to be more likely than employees do. This could then lead to higher commitment to the competing narrative among managers. A difference in commitment is curious, as it can significantly influence in reshaping of change (Guth & MacMillan, 1986), particularly in cases where the difference in vested interests between management and employees do not align with strategic objectives (Wilkinson, 1983 in Dawson, 2003).

When studying our collected data, tension regarding decision-making is mainly centered on the firing process. Several employees expressed that they were seemingly involved in the process, without really having a possibility to influence it. The Senior Managers had a contradictory perception of the situation, and believed the employees chose to involve themselves. This could be evidence of a somewhat broken communication-process. It resulted in distrust towards the management, where some employees felt the power-relations were skewed. Distrust in management could impose consequences for the organization, damaging the identity of the *CDK-family*. An important part of the social identity of CDK revolves around being an NGO, and thereby the assumption of having a flatter structure than *big corporates*. Any factor that contradicts this identity poses a threat.

An example that could spark further tension at the office is the power-distance between Senior Managers and employees, as it seems inconsistent. Some of the employees tell us that they collaborate closely with Senior Managers, and to some extent have decision-making power equivalent to their departmental manager. However, in other situations, such as the firing process, the employees did not really have any influence. This contradicts the signal the Senior Managers gave, who focuses on the empowerment of employees. In a long-term perspective, inconsistency in organizational roles can lead to fluid decision-making refinements (Bazerman & Moore, 2012).

When addressing the aspect of influence, a recurring question is how the changing narrative is introduced, as stories are considered powerful vehicles for both the resistance of change, and the preferred outcomes (Dawson, 2003). There are multiple stories related to the competing narrative, and the origins of the need to include emergency relief in CDK's work. The Chairman refers to the competing narrative as emerging bottom-up, as fieldworkers in CDK's operating countries thought it insensible not to provide emergency aid during crisis. The General Secretary however, presented it as a consequence of the changing political environment in Denmark, while a Senior Managers considered fundraising-needs to be the main reason for entering emergency relief. If CDK were to enter emergency relief, the rising question will be of which story makes more sense, and is most beneficial for the organization. It is possible that one of the stories has received extra focus, because it fits better with the interests and values at CDK.

Brown et al. (2005) suggest that since employees' sensemaking occurs in a political context, it is dependent on hegemonic (dominating) influences of stories, carefully edited and spun by those with *panoptic, universalizing and totalizing intent* (p. 19). This proposition inhibits a future-oriented perspective on the sensemaking-process, suggesting that one to some degree can steer the process with clear intention. In the following sections, we will address external politics of change, to elucidate external stakeholder activities, capable of influencing decision-making.

External Politics of Change - "the ones who pays for the orchestra, decides the music"

Through our findings we have established that some of the relationships CDK has with other organizations, may raise questions of power-relations and influence. DANIDA is a pivotal organization to address, as it is considered the implementer of changing political policies. Thus, affecting future possibilities for Danish NGOs, exemplified with the reduction of funds to long-term development.

Notably, DANIDA has also introduced other changes. One of the most extensive for CDK was the change from project, to program, then to civil society strategy. The office understood this as a natural change, and not influenced. However, the Chairman offered another perspective, pointing out that *"the ones who pays for the orchestra, decides the music"*. He explains that the employees believe it was the right direction, but that there might have been some psychological mechanisms

affecting their belief. He also indicated that DANIDA has a bigger reach within the organization than perceived by employees. We suggest the adoption of policies among employees might be a result of the management's successful communication of the requirements from DANIDA, as the employees believe the decision was initially theirs.

Alternatively, CDK actually had a desire to move in the same direction, and the close alignment in strategy is merely a coincidence. Salzer-Morling (1998) suggests fabrication of meaning is a means of reaching a collective understanding, with the intention of controlling and integrating people in organizations. We cannot conclude on the matter, but suggest that there might be interests at play, to which a shared employee understanding might be beneficial. Hence, stakeholders may try to influence CDK to go in a certain direction. The concept of shared meaning is contradicting to Hernes' (2014) understanding, as he believes it to be misleading when taken to signify agreement between people. The notion contradicts a widespread assumption in mainstream organizational literature, of agency as granted when collectivities are assumed to represent sharedness of meaning.

DANIDA's greatest source of influence on CDK has its foundation in the framework agreement. Although it is considered to be an agreement beneficial for both, DANIDA clearly has the upper hand. It is them, and not CDK, who can impose requirements and demands on the other. This was clearly exemplified by the financial cutbacks to CDK, and other NGOs. The additional demands CDK adhere to are reporting and results achievements, shaping the organizational work. However, one can argue that higher control of operations also facilitates better outcomes for CDK, and the developing countries in which they work. DANIDA's strict regulations regarding corruption are undoubtedly positive for both, as it is in CDK's interest to avoid corruption.

Another interesting aspect about the framework is the agreement to refrain from emergency relief. Thus, the choice of offering emergency aid is a *violation*. We do not know what the implications of this will be. However, the fact that none of the interviewees have related the choice of including emergency relief in their portfolio to the agreement with DANIDA is peculiar. It could imply that CDK believe it will not be an issue, or that it chooses to overlook it. Alternatively, CDK might risk that DANIDA pulls back funds.

6.2.2 Context of change

Internal organizational context - "Sticking to what we know"

Most important to CDK's history is their long work within long-term development. It has aspired commitment and identification to, and with the organization, which is profoundly visible in employees. It is who they are, what they do and what they know. Entering emergency relief is thereby a remarkable break with the past. CDK holds no experience within this type of aid, neither practically nor organizationally. There is therefore a substantial risk that the lack of pre-existing frames could lead to failure in understanding the significance of the situation (Langer, 1989 in Colville et al., 2011). We suggest that there is no, as of yet, defined story that go with the competitive narrative, as CDK has never been in this situation before. Colville et al., (2011) suggest that when there is no story that goes with the experience, employees might fail to collectively make sense of it.

Another possible issue at CDK is resource-shortage. It has necessitated the firing of three employees, and is one of the repeated arguments for entering emergency relief. As such, it might have contributed to create a momentum of change, which may have affected the choice to include emergency relief. However, the Chairman points out that it sounds worse than it is, because the turnover at CDK has never been higher. A simultaneous resource-shortage in the administration, and a high turnover is explained by the fact that the funds CDK receive often are earmarked to specific purposes. However, there is still a risk of further financial cutbacks, which creates an environment of uncertainty in the organization, and might function as a constant reminder of CDK's future funding needs.

CDK is known for their climate program PECCN. It is one of the supporting narratives, in that it is a success-story of long-term development aid. PECCN can be considered one of CDK's primary activities, and it attracts donors such as other CARE countries and their governments. There is a lot of pride tied to the program, both because of external acknowledgement and the internal knowledge and expertise. It functions as an example of CDK *doing what they do best,* and *sticking to what they know.* Thus, it is in conflict with the competing narrative, as the success of PECCN indicates that long-term development is what works. It is strongly linked to the CDK-identity and is evidence of

achieved purpose. The introduction of emergency aid is more or less the opposite of this achievement, and it can thus be difficult for CDK to merge the two, in a way that makes sense for the employees.

Some employees fear that CDK's historical profile will be weakened with the introduction of emergency relief. Employees argued that being involved exclusively in long-term development is something donors are attracted by. They therefore pointed to the possibility of losing donors as a consequence of moving into emergency aid. We do not know how many donors this would apply to. However, considering the size of the organization and the vast environment of NGOs, it is definitely important for CDK to address the question of who they are, and how they want to be perceived. Furthermore, it is important to manage their image, because CDK need to keep their constituency within the Danish public, as this is one of the requirements from DANIDA in continuing the framework-agreement.

External organizational context - "isomorphism"

The influence of DANIDA may cause isomorphic NGOs. Furthermore, it could eliminate the small ones or cause competing organizations to merge. The changing political environment is both influenced by, and influences the public. A tendency to regard emergency relief above development aid can lead to reduction in public support to CDK's work. As a consequence, the terms of the agreement with DANIDA might not be fulfilled, leading to abolishment of the agreement, thus causing CDK to lose their primary donor.

6.2.3 Substance of change - "The label"

The scale and scope

CDK has to consider the actual consequences of the conflicting narrative on existing narratives. Given their long history within long-term development, we consider it unlikely that the introduction of a new narrative will replace the current one. However, as we have discussed, it can significantly weaken the grand narrative, both the internal and the external perception of it. Since we have

discovered that many employees commit especially to the aspect of long-term development, and it is a change that possibly transforms CDK's profile externally, we evaluate the change to be of mid- to large-scale.

Defining characteristics

Introducing emergency relief does not appear to be a very deliberate decision. There is no general understanding of what the overall consequences will be, and management has not considered the practical implications. They have some considerations in regards to how it will change the way they are perceived by others. However, they do not appear to have considered the internal effects. How the management chose to label the change affects employees, at an individual and group level, their reaction to the change, and how they make sense of it. With that we suggest that the managers to some degree can influence the sensemaking process, with the legitimization of certain norms or values (Dawson, 2003).

The likely consequences of the competing narrative, such as a reformulation of organizational mission and purpose, or priorities and goals suggest it is a strategic change (Gioia, Thomas, Clark & Chittipeddi, 1994). It is therefore natural to assume it will be accompanied by changes in patterns of resource allocation, and/or alteration in organizational structures and processes, to meet changing environmental demands (Ibid).

Timeframe

We have adopted a temporal view on change as ongoing, and therefore do not consider the timeframe of change to be of high relevance. However, we note that it is a change that has started, both with the discussions of including emergency relief, and the decision to do so in February. With no concrete plans for the change, we consider it to be fluid, with vast unpredictability and outcome. As it is a change that reaches outside the walls of CDK it is impossible to fully control it.

Centrality

Based on our data the change seems crucial for the survival of CDK, both to ensure funding and to adhere to the political environment. How crucial the change is perceived by management will have implications for the set timescale, resource-support and the overall commitment (Dawson, 2003). At the same time it is a change that perhaps demonstrates the first step towards an eradication of NGOs, as we know them.

6.2.4 Summary

It is important to stress that Dawson's (2003) dimensions should not be considered as static entities. They change and overlap over time, which emphasizes that change from a processual view, is complex, ongoing and dynamic. Hence, how central a change is perceived, can be influenced by other factors.

We have attempted to understand which factors or forces are pushing for the changing narrative, and in which direction. Additionally, we believe the organizational members situated in the change are incapable of attaining a complete overview of the forces at play. Thus, the existence of multiple stories or narratives makes it relevant to understand and examine power plays. The implication is that the history can be rewritten to fit political objectives of different vested stakeholders. The momentum of change might render the past irrelevant, if the pre-existing frames fail to provide an explanation of the on-going present. For this reason we scrutinize the context, by taking a step back to get a better view of the full picture, without suggesting that a full picture is ever attainable. A future-oriented perspective can nevertheless be useful to get an idea about the general tendencies of the industry and direction of the organization.

How the present is understood, together with expectations for the future, may influence the interpretation of past events. Thereby shaping the experience of change. A future perspective on context means trying to understand how CDK can avoid an identity crisis as a consequence of multiple narratives, by post-hoc rationalization.

7. Discussion

We offer three observations that are based on our analysis. The observations should not in any way be considered exhaustive, as our observations are based on data gathered over a narrow time span. Thus, we are not able to account for what has passed in the organization after our involvement. Nevertheless, our observations provide suggestions for a theoretical extension with practical implications.

7.1 "Long-term development in emergency"

As our research has shown, the grand long-term development narrative and its supporting narratives are in conflict with the emergency relief narrative. The grand narrative holds high intensity and duration in the organization by being historically based with long-term prospects, and by reaffirming the correlation between personal and organizational values. It appears almost to be a hinder for change and innovation. The emphasis is put on doing things the way they have always been done, because that is what they are good at, while not making significant efforts to renew the organization. The disbelief in emergency aid inherent in the grand narrative increases the gap between the past, and a future where emergency relief might have to be included. Now we know that the Board has actually approved emergency relief, although limited to countries where CDK already operates.

Based on the analysis, we suggest that the competing emergency relief narrative created a momentum of change at CDK. Inherent in the narrative is the belief that CDK needs to enter emergency relief in order to survive, which trumps most arguments against it. In any organization survival is first priority. Although commitment seems highly value-based at CDK, this does not mean employees will not adapt, if the alternative is organizational death. Thus, commitment to the organization might allow for acceptance of new organizational directions, even if these contradict personal beliefs or values. Additionally, any commitment to the competing narrative can consolidate the sensemaking process at CDK, thereby engendering justification of emergency relief (Hernes et al., 2015). However, uncertainties around this narrative might discourage a deeper commitment. We do not know whether the decision to include emergency relief is permanent, or if

it is subject to re-evaluation if the Danish government shifts direction. If the decision is justified primarily with organizational survival, the underlying assumption is that as soon as the organization has passed the troubled waters, the decision is retracted. For this reason, the emergency relief narrative seems less durable than the grand narrative, and might therefore be unable to reach the same level of penetration and intensity in the organization.

Even if the emergency relief narrative seems weak in some aspects, it does not change the fact that emergency relief has been introduced at CDK. Accepting an element that seemingly contradicts current operations and identity sparks curiosity. It leads us to pose the questions of who or what pushes the competing narrative forward, as a manner of examining the processes that create and legitimize the meaning of the change (Dutton & Duncan 1987).

We have uncovered three partly overlapping stories for the emergence of the competing narrative, namely DANIDA, funding needs, and field-workers' experiences. From our analysis of context, we learned that DANIDA is perhaps the most influential stakeholder. They have on previous occasions enforced changes on the organization. The way changes have been narrated may to some degree have shaped employees' opinions. It suggests, in accordance with Brown et al. (2005), that there might be someone with an overview and an intention that influence which stories are introduced, and how. We believe the introduction of civil society strategy is an example of how a story is shaped at CDK, for a preferred outcome. Initially the strategy was introduced because DANIDA demanded it. However, the accompanying story did not stress this, and instead focused on how this was a natural direction for CDK. In this way the story maintained the coherence between personal and organizational values, and both maintained and possibly enhanced commitment among employees, and organizational identity.

The story could be an evidence of what Salzer-Morling (1998) refers to as *management framing*. She presents it as *fabrication of meaning*. Similarly, Humphreys and Brown (2002) argue that manager's exercise hegemonic acts in an effort to control processes of organizational identity formation. However, we will not be as bold, and rather suggest that the way the story was told may have been an instrument to influence meaning creation, intended to nudge employees in the desired

direction. Likewise, the story of why emergency relief was introduced at CDK might have been shaped to influence employees' sensemaking around it.

Even though we suggest *someone* or *something* may be influencing and/or shaping how and which stories are introduced at CDK, we do not disregard the contribution audience brings in co-authoring narratives (Boje, 1991; Søderberg, 2006). We suggest it is an interdependent and continuous process at CDK, where the introduction of a story leads to a response, based on the employees' selection of information. Thus, influence and sensemaking interplay in the employees' effort to find some stability in the upheaval that the change process represents (Gioia et al., 1994). Some elements of the stories told are immediately suppressed, as the organization is not capable of considering the full spectrum of information (Wildavsky, 1983). These elements are likely to pertain values that are conflicting to the current organizational identity. It is an unconscious process, whereby employees seek to avoid cognitive incongruence, which makes it difficult to trace (Bazerman & Moore, 2012). The process of suppressing information might also be fuelled by the psychological need for a belief in freedom of choice (ibid.). In this process uncertainties related to the stories might also be suppressed, before the stories are reflected back to whomever introduced the story (Wildavsky, 1983).

However, as employees might have contributed in co-authoring the competing narrative, managers may have gotten a skewed perception of what the implications of introducing emergency relief will be. We suggest this based on the threat that emergency relief poses to the CDK-identity. The threat is to some extent recognized by employees and Senior Managers, but the level of recognition does not correspond to the severity of it. Consequently, we consider the competing narrative to be pushed forward mainly by top management. They are the ones who articulate the need for, and the intended nature of the ongoing change that is the introduction of emergency relief. This is in accordance with Gioia et al. (1994, p 364) who suggest the articulation is an *"attempt to forge understanding and acceptance of an alternative strategic reality, among organizational stakeholders that influence sensemaking"*. However, employees also push the competing narrative forward, as they suppress or absorb uncertainties related to the emergency relief narrative.

7.2 "The picture before the frame"

Through our analysis of context, we discovered that the introduction of emergency relief is a break with the historical past at CDK, both in terms of patterns of thinking and acting. Emergency relief challenges the organizational logics, and is most likely to have practical implications for the structure of operations. Employees do not have any frames of former experience or understanding to aid them in making sense of the ongoing change process, and might therefore fail to do so (Gioia et al., 1994). Emergency relief as an alternative agenda is fragile, because the lack of a collective past experience makes it difficult to justify future acts (Hernes et al., 2015). The lack of pre-existing frames is according to Wildavsky (1983) explained by biases. That CDK, unable to attend to everything in the environment, has chosen some portions and aspects to attend to, thereby excluding others. By abstraction, prior experience at CDK results in a generalization of reappearing behaviors by means of institutionalized roles (Tsoukas, 2005 in Colville et al, 2011) and routine, constituting the frames of meaning that aid sensemaking, and staying in connection with context (Langer, 1989 in ibid.). We offer two possible solutions to how CDK can deal with the lack of pre-existing frames, based on what we have learned about the organization in combination with theoretical implications.

Firstly, we suggest we need to understand the creation and maintenance of alternative organizational realities, in line with Mumby (1988, in Gioia et al., 1994). We need to gain insight into the symbolic meaning structures of the organization, whether language- or action-based, and especially into the origins and manipulations of these meaning structures. When CDK had to change its strategy from program to civil society, it was rationalized as an obvious direction to go in, and it seemed to be quickly integrated into the grand narrative. Gioia et al. (1994) propose *prospective sensemaking* is a frequent influence on the consensual understandings reached and decisions made. It constitutes the conscious and intentional considerations of probable future impacts of certain actions, and particularly non-actions, on sensemaking. The avoidance of certain actions can prevent counteracts by others, and their influence (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). We suggest the introduction of civil society strategy might be an example of prospective sensemaking, where an influencer have consciously decided to focus on some elements of the story, and intentionally left others out. One non-action might therefore be avoiding to link DANIDA to the introduction of the strategy, as an acknowledgement of DANIDA's influence on the shift in strategy could lead to questioning the independence of CDK in future decision.

These are of course just speculations, but if they should prove to be true, how the introduction of this strategy was handled could be suggestive of how the introduction of emergency relief will be. However, the civil society strategy was far from as crucial a change, as it did not pose the kind of threat emergency relief poses to identity. It may therefore have been easier to merge with existing operations and logics, thus aiding the sensemaking around it. The question is whether downplaying or avoiding addressing the change that emergency relief is to the organization, is a sustainable one, if the goal is to maintain high commitment to the organization. At least it seemed this was the strategy management had chosen during our contact with the organization, although they might have changed the approach to emergency relief after our involvement.

The second possible solution is offered by Colville et al., (2011) who suggest that if the past does not provide the frames needed to understand the current situation, the past might as a result be changed by the present, in order to be able to make sense of it. We suggest it can be compared to when memories or stories are changed through narration, shaped by the narrator, the context and the audience. According to Boje (1991) listeners are co-producers in the process of storytelling, where blanks are filled in with previous experiences in response to cues. However, as we suggest, the momentum of change render the past irrelevant at CDK, as pre-existing frames of experience fail to provide explanation of the on-going present (Colville et al., 2011: Langer 1989).

Demers, Giroux & Chreim (2003) propose that narratives can be used as frames of meaning that accentuate and elaborate the organizational identity, and is a way to seek stability and possible re-identification during change (Boje, Burnes & Hassard, 2012). Constructing a new narrative that offers a re-interpretation of the past, in a way that makes sense for the present, might thus provide stability for employees, and allow them to re-identify with CDK. Our suggestion is supported by Kaplan & Orlikowsky's (2014) notion on strategy making as ensuring that "*effective projections of the future are connected to resonant understandings of the present and past*"(p. 25). Notably, identity changes are both based on the relationship between self-perception, and the perception of the organization among outsiders as it is reflected back to the organization. It leads to a continuous identity reconstruction (Dutton & Dukerich 1991). A constructed narrative at CDK would therefore need to attend to both the identity and the image of the organization.

7.3 "One big, happy family"

In addition to the threat CDK experiences to its identity as a result of the introduction of emergency relief, we have uncovered internal identity inconsistencies, present prior to the introduction. These inconsistencies concern the perception staff at CDK has of themselves, in regards to organizational structure, and consequently decision-making and power distance. Identity is one of Weick's (1995) seven properties for sensemaking, considered to be how actors understand themselves, in relation to the context they are in. Identity inconsistencies and an unclear image of the organization could result in a weakened link between individual cognitions and behaviors, and organizational action (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). We discuss identity inconsistencies because their presence prior to the introduction of emergency relief could imply that there are fundamental weaknesses in the grand narrative.

There was no common perception of the organizational structure at CDK, with arguments both aimed at a flat structure, and a bureaucratic structure. The arguments centered on a flat structure as facilitating for collaboration and communication, and oppositely around the General Secretary as responsible for decisions, and rules and norms guiding work. However, the difference in opinion between employees could be explained by differences in point of reference. Depending on what kind of organizations they compare CDK to in the question of collectivism/bureaucracy, the outcome is likely be different. Through our analysis we discovered that the organizational setup on paper seems suggestive of a hierarchical organization. However, interacts typically indicated a collectivist organization. As the arguments are contradicting, we choose to engage in a deeper discussion.

How employees generally perceived decision-making, communication and collaboration, in combination with our observations of employee interaction, seems supportive of a collectivist organization. In daily operations, the focus on collaboration means that employees are often involved in decision-making. One employee even explained that some days they were put in charge of the daily agenda, and would be responsible for the department, including the senior managers. Collaboration is considered as a means to reach organizational goals, and consensus is recurrently

brought up as the premise for decision-making. Although most employees did not feel like they were volunteers, they recognized that they could have worked in the private sector and gotten a higher pay, which suggests monetary incentive is not a high priority at CDK. The possibility for advancement within the organization is very limited, with only four senior managers, and a tendency to choose externally when hiring. Additionally, social relations are inherent in the *CDK-family* identity, where many employees mentioned that they considered their colleagues to be friends. Thus, it seems CDK fulfill many of the characteristics that Rothschild-Whitt (1979) define for collectivist organizations.

Notably, there are also observations that seem contradicting, which raises the question of how collectivist CDK really is. The story of the firing process is evidence of how transparency was inhibited, and consequently opposed important values at CDK. The story also revealed a power distance between employees and Senior Managers, and from what we gathered, it was bigger than they perceived it. The decision-making process displayed that authority and roles determined influence. Although social commitment might be enhanced because of the process, distrust in management might increase the gap between employees and senior management. In bureaucratic organizations, individual authority and set roles is expected (Rothschild-Whitt 1979). At CDK, it seems they are somewhat in a limbo in this regard. Managers strive for collaboration; the General Secretary explains that he thinks everyone is their own boss, teamwork is essential, and that there is role-rotation. However, when it comes down to the important decisions, its top-down. Based on our findings, none of the employees had been consulted before the decision to implement emergency relief. The inconsistency in management roles could lead to confusion, and a dissilience of the *CDK-family* as a social entity, if the employees do not believe the management regards their opinion in decision-making. Thus, it could also weaken their impression of being a collectivist organization, and consequently the grand narrative.

An important part of the identity included in the grand narrative, is the belief that CDK is an NGO. A lot of the motivation to work at CDK stems from a pre-commitment to the industry. However, based on our findings and analysis, we question whether CDK is an NGO in practice. Employees have argued that they are, because of their constituency. One of the Senior Managers seemed certain in the matter, and another even got agitated, in a way that suggested our question was

ridiculous. However, we have uncovered that DANIDA has a bigger reach within the organization than recognized by employees and management, evident in the introduction of civil society strategy. Additionally, the Chairman pointed at the possibility that NGOs are just an extended arm of the government, used as a means for weakening states in developing countries. The idea threatens core values at CDK, and consequently also its identity and foundation.

Because CDK faces threats to its identity by the introduction of emergency relief, we suggest it is important that they first of all maintain their core identity, before considering what logics or values to draw on to make sense of introducing emergency relief. Identity inconsistencies inherent in the grand narrative might shatter the foundation of organizational commitment, thereby necessitating a total re-definition of organizational values and identity.

7.4 "Sensemaking reloaded"

In our thesis we have described different narratives that have implications for commitment at CDK. Narratives are widely used as vehicles for reporting organizational life (Dawson & Buchanen, 2005), and are therefore a significant source for collective sensemaking (Czaniawska, 1998; Boje, 1991). However, when attempting to relate our findings to theory proposed by Weick (1979, 1995) it is hard to find a sufficient way to describe the dynamics between the narratives at CDK. Hernes et al., (2015) suggest the link between their theoretical understanding of narratives and Weick's (1995) theoretical approach, to pertain to the labels and events Weick (1995) addresses. These are considered to generate momentum for the change process, through interaction that occurs among organizational members. Thus, the unfolding sensemaking process is subject to the commitment centered on certain narratives. As such, our findings do not support the theory presented by Weick (1995), as the evident commitment that the staff hold to the narratives of CDK goes beyond labels and events.

Considering labels and events as drivers of change seems limiting for our study, as our findings and analysis signify more factors are at play. We could consider the isolated event that DANIDA has merged funding for emergency relief and development aid, as an event that drives change, and

technically, that would be true. It has set thoughts and actions in motion, which has led to the introduction of emergency relief at CDK. However, when considering only labels and events, one might fail to recognize the important drivers for change that are included in narratives. It can result in failing to understand the sensemaking process. What differentiate the isolated event of merging the funds, from the emergency relief narrative, are some inherent assumptions about what the change means for the organization. The existence of the emergency relief narrative is dependent on the existence of a grand narrative, defining the organization. CDK is based on strong core values, described by the staff at the office as the drivers of the organization. The fact that the majority of employees disregard emergency relief, as it is contradicting to their profile and historical *success,* makes the event of the combined funds only a smaller part of the competing narrative. The change in governmental funding structure can be considered a relabeling of aid, from a distinction between emergency aid and development aid to the common label "aid". The inclusion of the label emergency relief into an overall label is not singlehandedly strong enough to drive the change forward. The forces of change that are absorbed in the organization, together with justification based on values and a goal of organizational survival, goes beyond the definition of Weick.

Hernes et al's (2015) main contribution to sensemaking theory is that they relate social interacts to commitment, and define the narratives as underlying in the change process. We have adopted the view of commitment as evolving around certain narratives, serving to hold activities and people together, in a certain direction of change. To build on this research, we have tried to uncover how the competing narratives at CDK engender different kinds of commitment.

Hernes et al. (2015) base their framework on Weick's (1995) assumption that sensemaking is action-driven. It implies that both understanding and commitment is driven by actions, and not vice versa. Our findings support the theory of action-driven commitment, which can be exemplified with the social commitment we have discovered to being an NGO. By indicating who was, and who was not part of the group, we believe the members of CDK facilitated a dynamic process of engendering commitment to the group. Thus, it might have turned into what Weick (1993) refer to as a self-fulfilling prophecy, powered by the need for justification of acts. Weick (1995) explain it as a socially objectified reality, aligned with realities in the organizational history, as well as in its external environment. However, we suggest it might just as well be powered by the earlier discussed wish to avoid cognitive incongruence (Bazerman & Moore, 2012).

Introducing considerations about cognitive processes in the discussions about sensemaking and commitment is somewhat contradicting to the belief in an action-driven sensemaking process. However, based on our observations, we suggest sensemaking can be action-driven, while still having some basis in cognition. During our involvement at CDK, we discovered what we chose to label as a pre-commitment to the NGO industry. It was commitment managers and employees at CDK had made (to themselves), while they were young, based on their wish to *make a difference.* We suggest it is similar to Hernes et al's (2015) interpretative commitment, which signifies commitment to the underlying idea of the change process. However, our proposal differs to the extent that it is initially a cognitive commitment. It can thus be linked to Langer's (1989, p 37 in Colville et al., 2011) view on context as a mindset, a premature cognitive commitment, defined by who we consider ourselves to be, who we were yesterday, and from which view we see things. It therefore relates to a personal level of commitment, which in consequence is a break with Hernes et al's (2015) assumption of sensemaking as a purely collective process.

Thus, we disagree to some extent with the rationale of commitment as action-based, expressed through the quote *"How can I know what I think until I see what I say"* (Weick 1979). We suggest it is a question of whether the sensemaking process, to some degree, can be conscious, and whether commitment, to some extent, can be a conscious choice. Although acts and interacts serve to clarify and reinforce commitment to the direction we are going in, we propose pre-commitment serve as a foundation for acts. The clarification acts bring about can result in a justification of acts, leading to a higher level of commitment. Alternatively it reveals incongruence, serving to steer actions away from unwanted directions, while simultaneously reducing commitment. Nevertheless, we suggest pre-commitment, if existent, serve as a springboard to action, which is the same as to say that commitment leads to acts and interacts, not the other way around.

A pre-commitment additionally challenges Weick et al's (2005) view of sensemaking as an ongoing accomplishment, emerging from efforts to create retrospective sense of what actually occurs. It does so because the existence of pre-commitment includes the rationale that what we think today, has consequences for acts and interacts in the future. Hence, it provides a more forward oriented view on sensemaking. Neither Weick et al. (2005), nor Hernes et al. (2015) provide possible explanations of the dynamics we have uncovered at CDK, regarding pre-commitment. For this reason, we

propose an extension of the sensemaking model, to incorporate the phenomenon and its implications for the sensemaking process. The modified model is presented below. Notably, the assumptions and reflections we have made are solely based on our case study at CDK, and pertain only to the NGO industry.
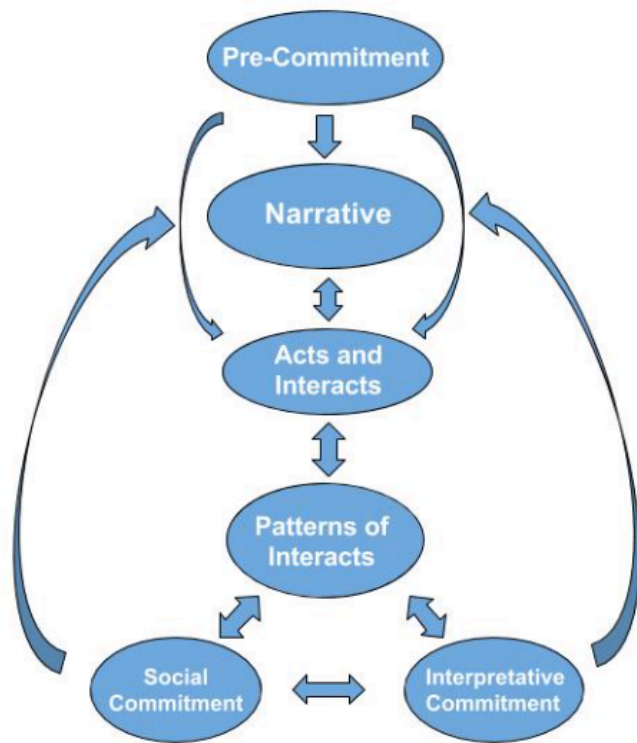

Figure 6:A modified sensemaking model

The model visualizes our suggestion of the sensemaking process specifically for NGOs. It is initiated with some level of pre-commitment, assumed to have two possible functions. Either, the commitment encourages action, where the actions lead to interacts and patterns of interacts. As organizational members share experiences they might establish commitment to the group and/ or the underlying idea of the organization, which feeds back to the narrative. Alternatively, the pre-commitment feeds directly into the narrative. However, since it is a continuous process all the elements are connected, and amenable to change.

9. Conclusion

This analysis of an ongoing change process shows how competing ideologies engender different kinds of commitment. As such, it also demonstrates the usefulness of sensemaking theory when attempting to understand the dynamics of organizational change and commitment. A process view on change proves useful for this study, as it enables us to consider the different factors that comprise the context, considered to influence sensemaking as organizational members attempt to make sense of change. At the same time, the analysis invites further questions about the nature of ideologies, and the practical implications of attempting to manage them.

10. Perspectivation

We have attempted to examine the context at CDK to understand how stakeholders are able to influence the organization in the emergence of competing narratives. We addressed context under the assumption that organizational members at CDK might not be able to fully comprehend it, since they are situated in it themselves. However, although we as researchers might be able to step outside the organizational context when writing our thesis, this does not necessarily mean that what we perceive is in any way a comprehensive perception of what is really going on. This is related to limitations in time and resources. Our involvement in the organization was limited to a very narrow time-span, and the methods we have applied in order to enable ourselves to answer our research question might not have been the best suited for this research. Additionally, a process perspective on change implies that context changes continuously, and our findings might therefore not be representable for organizational tendencies. Thereby we question whether a full overview of context is ever attainable. However, we do believe that if any other person were to conduct the same research with the same background and limitations, they would achieve the same answers we did, which is in line with the social constructionist paradigm.

The weaknesses with our study are amongst others that the chosen area of research could implicate a study that evolves over a longer period of time. Conducting an ethnographic study, instead of a case study, could thus have enabled us to go deeper into culture, and reveal the tacit aspects that are not easily observed. This could have enabled us to better explain the sensemaking dynamics at CDK. Therefore, the data and information we were able to collect might not fully be representable for our concluding remarks. Additionally, the questions we chose to ask could have been more effective in addressing the interests of our research.

We argue that sensemaking theory may be utilized in better meeting an ambiguous future, implying that the process can be future oriented. However, this can raise the question of whether it is possible to make sense for the future. It is originally considered a retrospective process. This means that we cannot know anything before something has happened. Additionally we question whether it is even possible to study a sensemaking process. Sensemaking is how organizations are able to collectively create a shared understanding of reality. This implies there should be differences in people's mindsets, adding an individual dimension to the process. This raises a question of whether it is

possible to address these cognitive beliefs. The same applies for commitment. We suggested that there are several types of commitment connected to an organizational change that constitute the narratives. But is it even possible to bring the future into the present to understand an organizational reality? This is a complex question that we could have written a whole book about. It taps into an interesting area of how it is possible to steer change by bringing in the past to the present, to adapt to the future.

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Appendix 1

Interviews guide and plan

Introductory Script:

First, we would like to thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for our research on meaning-creation within the CARE organization. In this interview we will discuss how the NGO has managed to capture your interest as well as your role in the organization. This research will be incorporated in our Master thesis, which is the ending project of our degree at Copenhagen Business School.

If you wish to, we will keep your responses confidential from others within the organization, and we will alter your identification characteristics instead of using your real name in the written project. If you convey any particular information that you would especially like to keep confidential, please inform us during or after the interview. In order for us to best avoid possibilities of any misunderstandings, may we have the permission to record this interview?

    1) Values
- What is it that drives CARE Danmark?
- Which values drives CARE Danmark?
    - Who is CARE Danmark? (If it was a person, what kind of person would it be?)
    - What is the motivation to work with CARE?
    - Where is CARE in the environment of NGOs?
    - What is CARE's profile in Denmark?
    - How should CARE address the question of going into emergency relief?
    - How do you think going into emergency relief will affect the organization (profile and staff)?

2) Commitment

- Tell us about commitment at CARE

    - How is it across the organization?

-

3) Culture/Identity

- Tell us about the culture at CARE

- Tell us about your role in the organization

- How is the relation between Board of Directors and the daily management and employees?

4) Change

- Can you tell us about changes at CARE?

- We heard there has been some recent restructuring, can you tell us about it?

    - Has there been other changes in the organization during the time you have been here?

    - How are decisions made at CARE DK?

    - Could CARE DK beneficially be organized differently?

- Is there anything you would like to add?

Closing script:

Again, is there anything you would like to keep confidential? Are you comfortable with us referring to your comments in our project using your real person? Thank you for your help with our project. Would you like an emailed copy of the interview after it has been transcribed?