The Spectrum of Responses to Complex Societal Issues: Reflections on Seven Years of Empirical Inquiry

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Abstract: This article offers conclusions and reflections based on nine empirical studies carried out over the last seven years on how increased capacity to manage complex social issues can be scaffolded. Our focus has been on the role of meaning-making structures and transformations in individual and collective efforts to skillfully manage complex issues. We have studied capacities for managing complex issues both in terms of scaffolding group efforts through structured methods and facilitation and in terms of individual skills. Our action research gave us insights into the variability in scaffolding needs: groups are different in terms of the participants' meaning-making patterns, which means that methods and facilitation techniques should be adapted to the particular conditions in each case. We discuss variables describing group differences and offer a preliminary typology of functions that may need to be scaffolded. In a second major part of the article, we report on our learning about individual societal change agency. We offer a typology of four types of societal entrepreneurship and discuss in more detail the properties of dialectical meaning-making in societal change agency.

Keywords: Change agents, complexity awareness, complex issues, dialectical meaning-making, diffusion of social innovations, facilitation, perspective awareness, scaffolding, societal entrepreneurship, wicked issues.

Introduction

Capacities to Manage Complex Societal Issues: A Meaningful Field of Inquiry

How can we – the society – become more skillful in managing complex societal issues, such as gang-related crime, deteriorating residential areas, environmental problems, long-term youth unemployment, racist violence, etc.? This question opens a broad and complex field of inquiry that we have been exploring in various ways over a couple of decades. During the last seven years, we have carried out a number of empirical investigations of initiatives that aim at developing a stronger capacity for designing and implementing effective strategies for managing complex societal issues. In this article we will make a review of the most important observations, insights and results from nine different empirical studies. Our orientation has been inductive rather than hypothetico-deductive, i.e. we have been looking for significant patterns in the data in order to develop hypotheses rather than testing assumptions in a stringent way. Rather than reporting findings with empirical details, we will present general conclusions and reflections. Some of these are to be regarded as work in progress requiring further and more dedicated

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investigations. However, we think we have some substantial contributions to offer, for example a discussion of how groups working on complex issues may need different types of scaffolding; an outline of a framework describing functions scaffolding methods can have for group processes; and a typology of four types of societal entrepreneurship.

The general purpose of this article is to contribute to the development of knowledge about and insight into the intricacies of strenghtening individual and collective capacities for managing complex societal issues. An additional objective is to tell the story of our own learning process. We were initially in some respects rather naïve when formulating questions and hypotheses, because we had not yet become aware of some of the complexities of the phenomena we wanted to explore. For example, we assumed, in a not particularly reflected way, that people with a strong complexity awareness would be more effective societal change agents than people with a weak complexity awareness. This assumption turned out to be far too simple. We believe it may be instructive for others to read about the insights we gradually developed, sometimes just by starting to reflect about the issues involved.

The Nature of Complex Societal Issues

Consider the contrast between two very different ways of responding to a particular societal intractable issue, crime and street violence in suburbs of large cities. The first statement comes from a discussion on the Internet forum Flashback in 2009 about a series of car burnings and ensuing stone-throwing attacks on police and rescue service vehicles in suburbs of Gothenburg, Sweden:

> The only reason this kind of thing happens is because we live in such a f-g wimp country. Everything and everyone is pampered. If the cops would run in and knock down these individuals with batons and rubber bullets between the eyes, I believe there would be law and order. That's what they do in their native countries, but with real bullets so they naturally laugh at the Swedish cops who shake them a bit and drive them home to their parents who don't care anyway. That violence breeds violence isn't always correct. Meet these brats with violence and they will stop, guaranteed. Difficult to fight with broken joints. [*Translated from Swedish by the present author*]

The second statement summarizes main components of a strategy to engage the problem of gang-related crime at the community level:

> The program utilizes the OJJDP Comprehensive Gang Model, or the Spergel model, as it is often called, to engage communities in a systematic gang assessment, consensus building, and program development process. The model involves delivering the following five core strategies through an integrated and team-oriented problem-solving approach:
>
> – *Community mobilization,* including citizens, youth, community groups, and agencies.
> – *Provision of academic, economic, and social opportunities.* Special school training and job programs are especially critical for older gang members who are not in school but may be ready to leave the gang or decrease participation in criminal gang activity for many reasons, including maturation and the need to provide for family.

– *Social intervention*, using street outreach workers to engage gang-involved youth.
– *Gang suppression*, including formal and informal social control procedures of the juvenile and criminal justice systems and community agencies and groups. Community-based agencies and local groups must collaborate with juvenile and criminal justice agencies in the surveillance and sharing of information under conditions that protect the community and the civil liberties of youth.
– *Organizational change and development*, that is, the appropriate organization and integration of the above strategies and potential reallocation of resources among involved agencies. [From the website of the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, www.ncjrs.gov]

Both statements offer suggestions about how to deal with the problem of young men who engage in criminal activities that affect public safety in residential areas. However, they are radically different both in tone and in substance and can be thought of as positioned very far apart from each other on a scale ranging from simple to complex.[2] Our experience is that the spectrum of responses to complex and intractable societal issues is indeed very wide. When looking at the actual practice of authorities and other stakeholders in relation to complex societal issues of this kind, we find that there is often a large potential for improvement. We – the society – are not as skillful in managing serious and complex societal issues as we could be.

Our research is based on the premise that some of the societal issues we face are difficult to manage successfully precisely because they are complex in nature. Such issues have been called "wicked problems" or "wicked issues," because they prove resistant to efforts to resolve them (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Chapman et al., 2009). The nature of "wicked issues" has been described somewhat differently in the literature. Here is a compilation of some salient properties that are often mentioned:

- *Complex causality.* Social, economic, technical, environmental, psychological, cultural, legal and other factors are involved. Conditions interact in complex ways.
- *Require systemic adaptation:* Because societal structures and processes are contributing to the emergence of the issues, isolated measures and quick fixes are ineffectual. Changes in the ways societal systems operate are needed.
- *Many stakeholders* are involved (e.g. authorities, public service organizations, businesses, citizen groups, lobbying organizations, politicians, researchers). Stakeholders have different levels of knowledge, different communication styles, different ways of making decisions, etc.
- Because of the complexity, the *issues cannot be delegated* to one actor. Conventional principles for public management are ineffectual. Cooperation among numerous stakeholders is necessary for achieving significant results.
- There are large, sometimes radical, differences in narratives and interpretive perspectives regarding the issues. There are often *deep-rooted disagreements* on (a) how to describe the issue and (b) what ought to be done, which often leads to difficulties in the decision-making processes.

[2] Of course, the relationships between tone and levels of complexity in reasoning are far from straightforward. The examples used here are both extreme.

- *Chronic:* The issues cannot be solved once and for all; they will continue to exist to some extent whatever we do. Therefore there are difficulties in agreeing on how many resources should be devoted to the issues and what standards to apply when assessing outcomes (e.g., is a reduction in the rate of increase of environmental pollution a successful outcome or a failure?).

When societal issues have these characteristics, a considerable capacity for managing complexity seems crucial. In fields where the capacity to manage the serious societal issues is weak, a key concern is how to develop a stronger capacity. This topic has been our core focus for a long time.

Two Routes to Increased Capacity

We have in various ways explored two different routes to the development of such capacities (see figure 1). The first route relies on *individuals*: people who have competences to notice, understand and manage complex conditions and processes. Such individuals act in our society in different roles, for example as *strategic change leaders* (Brown, 2011; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Joiner & Josephs, 2007; Vurdelja, 2011), *societal change agents* (Jordan, 2011; Perrini, 2006) or *societal entrepreneurs* (Gawell et al., 2009; Lundqvist & Williams Middleton, 2010; Jordan, 2011; Ross, 2009; Tillmar, 2009).[3] If we focus this route, we will be interested in learning more about the particulars of individual skills to deal with complexity. What skills or other properties of individuals are necessary and useful? What strategies are characteristic of successful change agents and societal entrepreneurs? How do we find people who have those skills? Is it possible to train individuals in the skills needed to manage complex societal issues? What conditions allow skillful change agents to put their skills to effective use? These are some of the questions that are relevant in order to develop more knowledge about how individual capacities to manage complex societal issues can be strengthened.

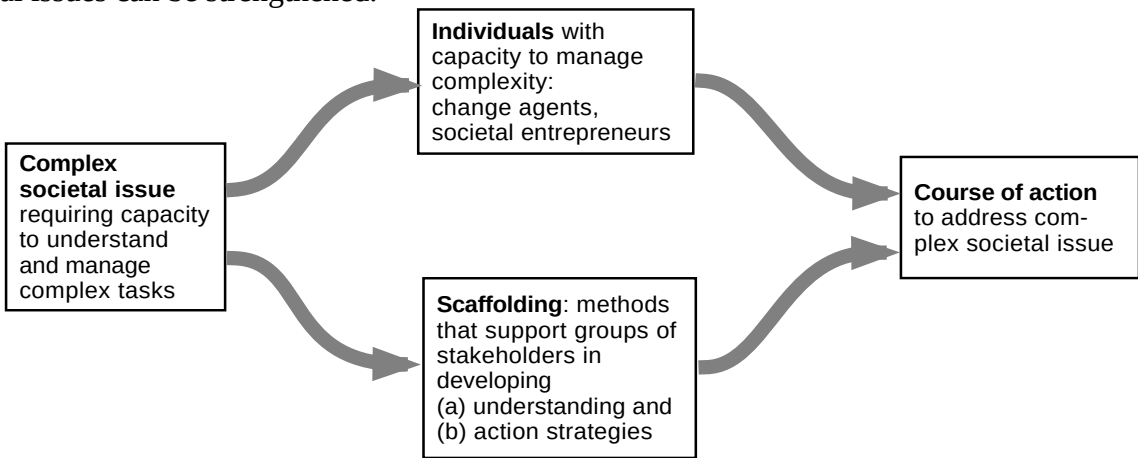


Figure 1: Two routes to more effective strategies for managing complex societal issues

[3] Societal entrepreneurs have been defined by Jordan (2011:49) as "people who (a) are committed to initiate innovative activities aiming at serving the good of the society (on some scale level: local communities, regions, countries, global society); (b) do it by organizing activities in new ways (rather than operating with existing organizations); and (c) seek changes that involve influencing how other actors and/or institutions operate (rather than just, like many *social* entrepreneurs, starting up a non-profit organization offering needed social services).

The second route does not assume that the capacity to manage complexity is necessarily a property of individuals. It instead presumes that most people can become effective managers of complex societal issues, given appropriate support. This is the idea that capacity can be created and strengthened through various forms of scaffolding (further explained below). One particular form of scaffolding highly relevant to our concerns is the many different methods available for structuring group processes with the purpose of supporting the participants to deliberate on how to manage complex issues, such as *The Integral Process for Complex Issues* (Ross, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Andersson, 2008; Inglis, 2011), *Soft System Methodology* (Checkland & Poulter, 2006), *The Strategic Choice Approach* (Friend & Hickling, 2007), *Open Space Technology* (Owen, 2008) or *Future Search* (Weisbord & Janoff, 2010).[4] In order to follow this route to increased capacity, we need knowledge about what different groups and individuals need support *for*. For example, it is important to understand what meaning-making patterns may stand in the way of entering an effective strategy-development process, as well as what shifts in participants' meaning-making are helpful.[5] We need to understand which properties of methods are effective in supporting groups. We need to know what skills facilitators need in order to assist groups with different characteristics. If effective methods indeed exist, we also need to understand what it takes for such methods to actually become adopted and used among practitioners. It is our impression that few stakeholders realize that there may be a considerable potential for increasing the quality of how groups manage complex tasks through appropriate scaffolding. There appears to be an unreflected assumption that how groups ordinarily deal with such issues is as good as one can expect.

Figure 2 offers a more specified overview of themes we have explored. Some of these have been subject to more systematic and detailed research, while others are topics we have encountered and reflected upon while pursuing our different case studies. In the following, we will in turn comment upon most of these themes.[6] But first we will briefly describe the nine studies that make up the empirical basis for our reflections.

Overview of Our Empirical Studies

In the early 2000s we started to engage in empirical research on the relationship between meaning-making patterns and action strategies among people engaged in societal change agency (Jordan, 2003, 2006a). Since this work began we have carried out two research projects involving 24 interviews with individual change agents (Jordan, 2006a and ongoing research), one (ongoing) research project on methodology for facilitating strategy development in complex societal issues (a pilot study is reported as Andersson, 2008), and six in-depth case studies of successful societal change agents (Jordan, 2006b; Andersson & Jordan, 2007; Sander & Jordan, 2009; 2011; Emanuelsson, 2011; Tiger, 2012). We will briefly describe these studies, as they form the empirical basis for the reflections in this article.

[4] Holman et al., 2007, Bunker & Alban, 2006 and Turunen, 2012, offer overviews.

[5] We use the term "meaning-making patterns" to denote the structures of cognitive processing (see Jordan, 2011).

[6] However, an analysis of the important topic of the shifts and transformations in meaning-making that occur among participants in the course of scaffolded strategy-development processes will be left for Pia Andersson's coming doctoral dissertation. Patterns of meaning-making among people who complain, but don't act, have been analysed in a separate forthcoming article by Thomas Jordan.

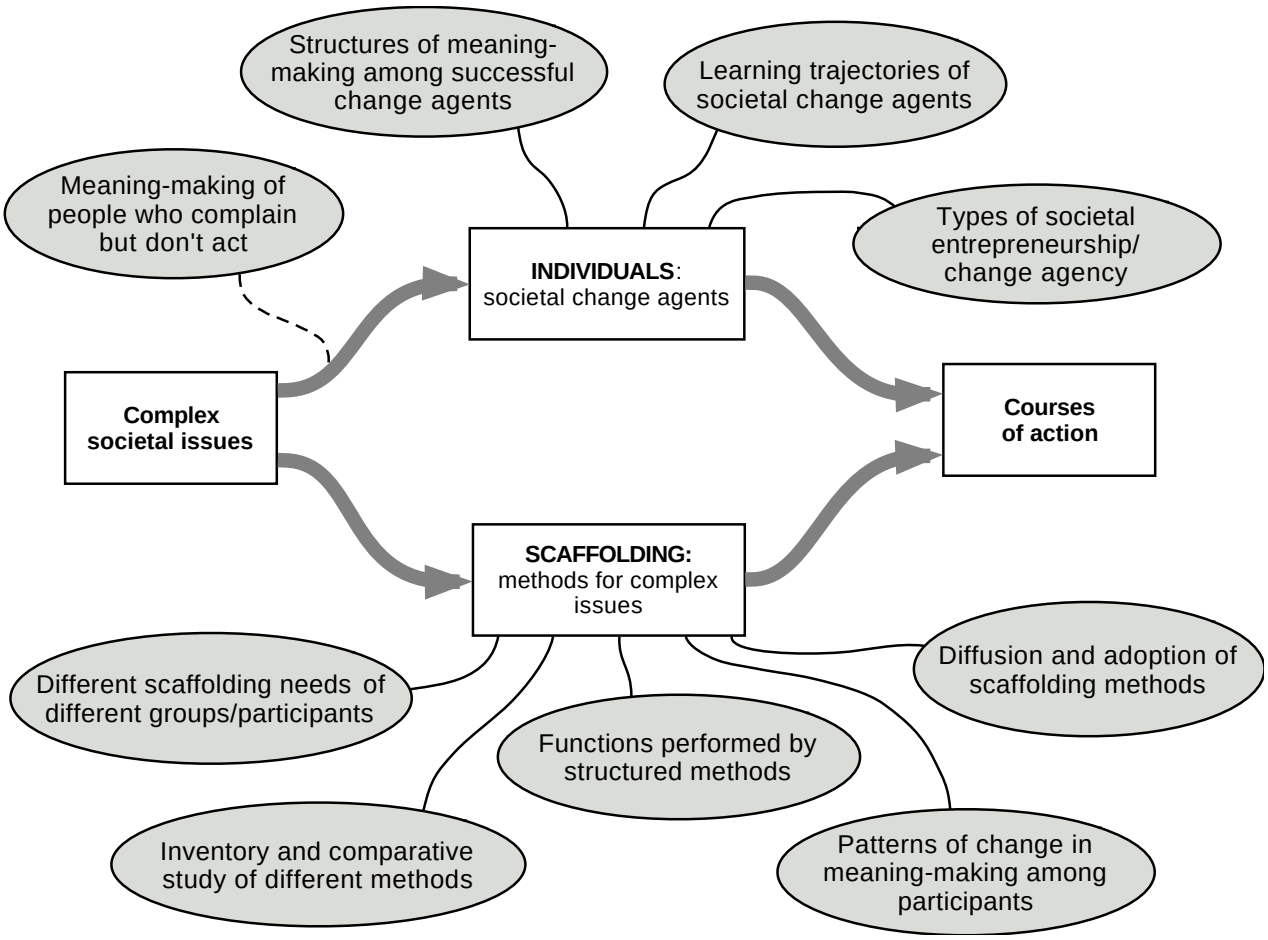


Figure 2: Themes we have worked on

1. In one research project (Jordan, 2006a), one of us studied how individuals with post-conventional meaning-making patterns approached organizational and societal change processes, in particular what kind of strategies they used for dealing with inertia and resistance. Extensive interviews were made with 19 individuals, most of whom worked within larger organizations, such as governmental agencies and ministries, NGOs and regional administrations.[7]

2. In one sub-study in the ongoing research project *From frustrated citizens to effective societal entrepreneurs*, Pia Andersson and Ylva Mühlenbock interviewed 5 carefully chosen persons involved in successful societal entrepreneurship. The purpose of this study was to learn more about the relationships between various types of complexity awareness, strategies used in the initiatives and the outcomes.

3. In the study *Tryggare och mänskligare Göteborg – An innovative approach to urban crime prevention and safety promotion* (Jordan, 2006b), Jordan made an analysis of the meaning-

[7] See also the interview with Thomas Jordan made by Russ Volckmann in Integral Review no 1, 2005 (http://integral-review.org/).

making structures and the strategies employed in the office of the Gothenburg council for crime prevention and safety promotion.

4. Andersson and Jordan (2007) made a comprehensive case study of the methodology developed by the youth workers in a youth center in one of Gothenburg's economically disadvantaged suburbs. The approach developed in this center is multidimensional and integral, addressing the developmental needs of individual teenagers, as well as group culture, collaboration between societal actors and neighbourhood fieldwork.

5. In our ongoing research project *From frustrated citizens to effective societal entrepreneurs* Andersson carries out action research using TIP, The Integral Process for Complex Issues, in order to study how the process of developing more effective action strategies can be scaffolded in groups with participants with varying backgrounds. A pilot study was reported as Andersson, 2008.

6. In another comprehensive study Sander and Jordan (2009) analysed a complex project in the city of Gothenburg, aiming at developing an integrative strategy for managing one of the more conflict-ridden issues in the city, graffiti.

7. Sander and Jordan (2011) also made a detailed analysis of the learning trajectory of the key individuals in Fanzingo, a societal entrepreneurial organization with the aim of enabling suburban youth in the Stockholm region to tell their own stories in radio and TV and thereby opening up public service media, traditionally dominated by middle-class, middle-aged ethnic Swedes.

8. Emanuelsson (2011) traced the relationship between meaning-making patterns and action strategies in the work of one woman who has had a considerable impact working with the difficult issue of honour-related threats and violence in a region in Sweden.[8]

9. Tiger (2011) made a detailed case study of the work carried out over more than a decade by a project leader employed by the Swedish tenant organization, who took on the task of developing new strategies for mobilizing residents in a suburb of Gothenburg with a large concentration of war refugees from Somalia, former Yugoslavia and other parts of the world.

Common to these nine studies is an interest in the relationship between (1) patterns of meaning-making, including cognitive obstacles to skillful means and patterns of transformation through increased complexity awareness; (2) scaffolding of learning and strategy development; and (3) action strategies and outcomes.

[8] Honour-related threats and violence are mostly directed towards young women by family members who believe that the woman has brought dishonour upon the family or community by her life style.

Some Theoretical Points of Departure

Theoretical Concepts and Discourse

Our research focus is to gain a deeper understanding of the role differences in and transformations of meaning-making structures plays in developing capacity to manage complex societal issues skillfully. In a previously published article, there is a comprehensive outline of the theoretical framework we have been using (Jordan, 2011). For the purposes of the reflections on lessons learned in this article, we will just make some brief comments on concepts that are necessary for understanding our approach. Our theoretical framework draws heavily on models of adult development, developed by researchers and researcher-practitioners like Loevinger (1976), Fischer, (1980), Kegan (1982, 1994), Basseches (1984), Commons et al. (e.g. 1984, 1998), King & Kitchener (1994, 2004), Torbert et al. (2004) and Joiner & Josephs (2007). We have found two key concepts to be particularly useful in understanding meaning-making regarding complex societal issues: *complexity awareness* and *perspective awareness*.[9]

Complexity awareness refers to a person's propensity to notice and expect that phenomena are compounded and variable, depend on varying conditions, are results of causal processes that may be linear, multivariate and systemic, and are embedded in processes that may lead to consequences in several steps. We believe that the strength of a person's complexity awareness conditions the ability to successfully manage complex tasks. Several theoretical models exist for analysing levels of complexity in, for example, reasoning (Fischer, 1980; Commons et al., 1984, 1998; Jaques & Cason, 1994; Dawson & Wilson, 2004). One of the most used models is MHC, the Model of Hierarchical Complexity (Commons, 2008), which defines 14 levels of increasing hierarchical complexity. Five of these levels are highly relevant for analysing meaning-making. At the *Concrete* level, meaning-making is confined to talk about concrete things, people, events, acts and places. At the *Abstract* level, categories are formed and enable people to refer to things in general, rather than exclusively to specific, concrete things. At the *Formal* level, abstractions are coordinated through mental conceptions of how they are related to each other in terms, for example, of linear (unidirectional) causation. At the *Systematic* level, formal relationships are coordinated to form systems of relationships, allowing for reasoning about mutually conditioning relationships and systemic causation. At the *Metasystematic* level, two or more systematic relationships are related to each other, allowing for reflection on properties of whole systems and how systems interact. One of the most significant and useful aspects of the concept complexity awareness concerns the role of an *absence* of complexity awareness in the meaning-making of a person or a collective. If a person does not notice the complexity in which an issue is embedded, he or she will fail to consider many conditions, causes and consequences that may be significant for managing the issue (Kuhn, 1991).

Perspective awareness refers to the propensity to notice and operate with properties of one's own and others' perspectives, i.e. whole systems of meaning-making. People with a strong perspective awareness notice that perspectives have properties that strongly influence how events and issues are perceived, interpreted and managed by oneself as well as by others. People with weak or non-existent perspective awareness do not notice that meaning is constructed all the time

[9] These concepts are discussed in a far more elaborated way in Jordan, 2011.

through the filters of perspectives. They consequently act as if they perceive reality "as it really is."

Assuming that weak complexity and perspective awareness is a common reason for poorly con¬ceived strategies to deal with complex societal issues, the concept of scaffolding is strategically important. In simple words, the concept scaffolding points to everything that can be done to support individuals or groups to accomplish tasks that would be beyond their reach without external support. The most common use of scaffolding is to refer to support children, adolescents or adults need while they are in the process of acquiring new skills. The scaffolding is then needed only temporary: when the skills have been mastered, the scaffolding can be removed. However, the term is approriate to use also in cases where individuals or groups need external support in some form in order to accomplish a difficult task, without implying that they will later be able to master the task without scaffolding. Scaffolding may consequently have two different functions. The first is to provide support during a period of skill acquisition, the second is to enable an individual or a group to accomplish a particular task, such as developing a strategy for managing a very complex issue. We are interested in both functions, but here we focus on the latter.[10]

A weak complexity awareness is not only the absence of something, but may also be associated with quite resilient ontological assumptions, i.e. a worldview that seems fully adequate to the actor but which is blind to significant conditions. This means that meaning-making structures may need to be de-stabilized or even disrupted before new insights can become possible.

The volume of previous constructive-developmental research on meaning-making in societal issues is relatively small. Deanna Kuhn (1991) and Shawn Rosenberg and colleagues (1988, 2002; Rosenberg et al. 1988) have made comprehensive analyses of how people with different levels of complexity awareness reason about complex societal issues. Barrett Brown (2011) has studied the meaning-making of societal change agents with late post-conventional worldviews. Little research has been made on methods for scaffolding increases in complexity awareness in groups working together in order to develop more effective strategies (Ross, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Inglis, 2011; Chapman, 2010). Research on change methods has been relatively limited, with the exception of research on methods developed in the field of operational research, such as Soft System Methodology.[11] In her recent dissertation, van der Zouwen (2011) develops a framework for evaluating methods for participative organisational change, with a focus on "large scale interventions." The framework points to a large number of factors that are relevant for successful scaffolding of group efforts in complex issues. However, van der Zouwen's study does not consider scaffolding of complexity awareness or other developmental aspects of scaffolding.

[10] For further discussions on scaffolding, see e.g. Hlemo et al., 1976; Stone, 1993; and Wood et al., 1976.
[11] See for example the two special issues of *The Journal of the Operational Research Society* on "problem structuring methods" in 2006 and 2007, in particular the overview article of Rosenhead (2006).

Scaffolding Group Processes

General Remarks

Over the last couple of decades, a large number of methods/approaches have been developed for assisting groups of stakeholders in developing solutions to complex issues. In our own case, we have used one particular method, The Integral Process for Complex Issues (TIP), in our action research (Ross, 2006c; Andersson, 2008). The principal reason for this choice is that TIP was designed (by Sara Ross) to serve as a scaffolding of a progressive development of awareness of and knowledge about the complexity of a significant issue, thus enabling a group to choose a strategically important element of the problem complex to work with. TIP starts by making an inventory of the participants' concerns. When working with people not trained in analysis, the participants' views may be primarily at MHCs concrete stage of complexity, which means that they have rather unorganized narratives of concrete incidents and problems. In TIP, these narratives are organized into categories (MHC: abstract stage), and then the participants are invited to look for causal relations between different issues, problems and conditions (MHC: formal stage). In the further process, participants are supported in exploring systemic conditions (MHC: systematic stage), and even (at least in some cases) in using the contrast effect of different perspectives that may be applied to understanding and deliberating about action on the issue (MHC: metasystematic stage).

Different Types of Groups, Different Needs for Scaffolding

We have made direct observations of the dynamics in groups of people working on action strategies in complex issues in a number of different groups. In seven cases, the observations were made as action research where the researcher was a process leader for groups working in a structured process in multiple meetings. In a further ten cases we have worked with different types of groups in less comprehensive settings, sometimes in the role as consultant process leader, sometimes as a part of method-demonstrating workshops.[12] Reviewing the cases in terms of the background of the participants making up the groups, we can discern seven categories:[13]

- *Concerned citizens* (e.g. in a particular neighbourhood) who are reasonably familiar with how organizations and authorities function.
- *Immigrants/refugees,* who are not familiar with practices in a Western democratic state.
- *Officials* for whom the issue belongs to the responsibilities within their job description: civil servants and representatives for different organizations/authorities/administrative units.
- *Employees in service organizations,* such as educational institutions, social services, health care, police.

[12] These ten cases were not part of systematical studies, but contributed to our pool of experiences of different dynamics.

[13] Commentators of a draft of the article have cautioned us about the risk of lumping people together into categories in this way, because of the risk of stereotyping in an unwarranted way. We hope the reader recognizes that we don't mean to imply that all immigrants, all young people, or all officials are alike . . .

- *Activists*, with an established commitment to engage a certain issue from a certain standpoint.
- *Youth*, with an interest in an issue, but often ephemeral commitment.
- High-ranking *managers* and *politicians* in elected offices.

Working with this variety, we have encountered different types of dynamics both regarding individual participants and groups. These experiences point to a need to adapt the scaffolding as well as the actual facilitation style to the specific needs of specific groups. In order to be able to do this, it is probably useful to have a clear understanding of what functions the scaffolding can serve in a group process, and how groups vary in their needs for support.

In the following, we will first discuss some variables we have found to be relevant in describing how individual participants and groups are different from one another. In the second step we will outline our preliminary formulation about what functions various change methods are supposed to fulfill.

Participants and groups can differ in very many ways, of course. When looking for variations, we are particularly interested in gaining a clearer understanding of differences in participants' meaning-making structures and how such differences might lead to a need for adapting the scaffolding.

An overview of the variables we have identified as relevant so far is given in Table 1. These variables are particularly significant when they present obstacles or challenges for an effective group process. Some methods developed in order to scaffold strategy-development processes are probably more sensitive to some of these variables than others. This is a topic we have not explored deeper yet.

We will not here discuss each of the variables in Table 1, as some of them are rather self-explanatory. However, in our work with some of the groups, we encountered challenges that led to new insights into the craft of scaffolding processes, and we will here focus on these.

Table 1: Variables describing different scaffolding needs in groups

Variable	**The variable is particularly relevant when ...**	**Examples of participants for whom the variable may be particularly relevant**	**Scaffolding needs**
Motivation to engage personally	... participants' personal motivation to engage is weak	Frustrated citizens; Officials	Mobilize motivation and issue ownership
Perseverance	... motivation is momentary strong, but capacity for perseverance is weak	Youth	Capture volatile interest, focus on actions that lead to rapid outcomes

Variable	The variable is particularly relevant when ...	Examples of participants for whom the variable may be particularly relevant	Scaffolding needs
Cultural competence	... participants have very limited knowledge about and skills in interacting with organizations and societal functions	Immigrants from countries with a very different type of society; Participants without experience in organizational practices	Build bridges between very different life-worlds. Needs-initiated learning about how the society functions and about effective behaviours in different situation.
Complexity awareness	... participants believe that the problem is easily resolved (e.g. if other actors do what they ought to do)	(Relevant for many groups)	Support inquiry into relevant conditions, causes and consequences
Perspective awareness	... participants are aware that the issue is complex and requires systemic adaptation, but have closed views about effective strategies	Activists; Politicians	Open up interpretive perspectives; Focus on a manageable but strategic part of the problem complex
Maturity of problem formulation	... (a) it is unclear which part of the issue complex the groups should focus on; ... (b) participants want to work with issues that are too abstract or broad in relation to the group's capacities or authority	(Relevant for many groups)	Support the process of mapping the issue complex in a systematic way, so that a strategic and manageable issue can be chosen for focussed action
Experience of powerlessness and self-confidence	... participants see themselves as outsiders and/or have low confidence in their own possibility to influence the issue ... participants expect that others will fulfill their interests	Immigrants; Citizens with limited experience of self-organization	Support insight into realistic possibilities to exert influence; create experiences of success in influencing issues

Variable	The variable is particularly relevant when ...	Examples of participants for whom the variable may be particularly relevant	Scaffolding needs
Collective identities	... participants have a strong identification with a particular collective and are concerned with advocating the interests and identity of their own group	Managers at high levels; Employees and specialists with strong professional identities; Politicians; Individuals who identify themselves as members of ethnic groups.	Recognizing the legitimacy of identities while expanding focus to a holistic perspective on the system

The groups we have worked with differed greatly in the extent to which the participants had developed more complex interpretations of the causes and conditions relevant to the issue and its systemic properties. In one of the groups we found that the scaffolding we used seemed to work against the group's own sense of where they wanted to go with their topics of concern. Although the end result to some degree was satisfactory to the group participants, the experience caused us to reflect on how groups' needs for scaffolding differ and how we can understand and explain those differences.

In the particular group mentioned above, three characteristics stand out. First, the participants' understanding of their area of interest (local economies) was well developed. Many of them had spent a lot of time gathering knowledge and building a systemic understanding of this field. Secondly, many of the participants also had elaborated views on what ought to be done, namely fundamental changes in the way the society operates (e.g., local sourcing of consumer goods; introduction of a local currency). These views were often rather "congealed," i.e. these participants felt that they had valid reasons for their positions and they were not inclined to inquire into and reassess their own assumptions and convictions. Thirdly, when approaching the matter of choosing a common focus for action, there were substantial differences regarding participants' priorities.

At first sight, one might have expected such a group to be rather well suited for working with TIP. The participants already had an awareness of systemic properties that could be built on, and there was an explicit intention to converge around a manageable part of the whole problem complex. In practice, however, the process did not turn out to be so smooth.

As noted above, TIP proceeds in a structured fashion, intending to build participants' awareness of the complexity of the chosen issue in focus. Creating an inventory of participants' concerns and then looking for causal relations between the different concerns listed is a process well suited for scaffolding the emergence of complexity awareness, particularly when the concerns listed initially are of a more concrete nature. This group, on the other hand, primarily brought up concerns of a systemic nature (for example the role of growth in modern industrial economies, the development of the relation between housing costs and wages over time) in the initial inventory, and were already well aware of the many links of mutual causation between these concerns.

Early in the process we could thus say there was a mismatch between the scaffolding's level of complexity and the group's experienced need for help to work on their issue of concern, with the group's meaning-making actually being more complex than the structure of the first scaffolding step. This affected the process in several ways and the first session with the group did not yield the type of insights other groups had had in the mapping phase. In all other groups that we had worked with so far the outcome of this initial step had resulted in increased clarity about the interrelated topics of concern, new insights and a more defined directions forward with enhanced motivation to continue together. In this case however, some participants felt that we as facilitators were superimposing a structure that pushed them to abandon their systemic understanding. For some of them, their insight into the problem's embeddedness in complex systemic societal properties led them to think that they necessarily had to find ways of transforming those systemic properties. The TIP procedure of creating a map of the territory of their concerns in order to choose a manageable strategic part of the problem complex seemed counterintuitive, and more like a matter of enforced simplification than one of strategic choice. This did not facilitate a re-examination of the group's assumptions about problem causes and solutions – if anything it made participants' views more congealed.

The lack of fit between the scaffolding and the group's meaning-making made the participants struggle to understand the method itself, rather than focus on their own process of making actionable decisions, integrating their different views on what ought to be done. Reflecting back on the experience, we can see that in this sense the process we used in fact prevented the participants from working constructively on their significant differences and conflicts regarding the topic of interest that had initially brought them together. Had we had more focus on this work, the exploration of different perspectives present in the group may in itself have had a decongealing effect.

Our suggestion is that scaffolding needs to be adapted in relation to the complexity level of the group's meaning-making, even if the method used is designed to handle different levels of complexity. In a group that has developed the capacity to see systemic issue-properties, but may also have a fairly congealed view on solutions, we suggest that a focus on exploring different perspectives on the issues' solutions as well as causes would yield more learning and create a platform for choosing a strategic part of the problem complex that seems manageable in terms of the group's resources.

Our experience has also shown us that some groups, like the one above, have a deep need to understand the process steps and their functions before starting, whereas other groups would rather just get into the work and find out where it leads. In both cases, it is important to pay keen attention to the group's intentions and experienced needs so that the process can evolve organically. A simple table might be helpful in sorting out some different scaffolding needs (Table 2).

Table 2: Varying scaffolding needs depending on meaning-making structures

View	Weak complexity awareness + weak perspective awareness	Strong complexity awareness + weak perspective awareness	Strong complexity awareness + strong perspective awareness
Uncongealed view	Scaffolding can focus on a stepwise and not too hurried exploration of complexity. It might be too demanding to scaffold perspective awareness.	Scaffolding can proceed rapidly in mapping complexity and may focus on supporting development of perspective awareness.	Only light scaffolding is needed.
Congealed view	Participants may believe the problem is simple, and may have fixed opinions about solutions. Facilitators may need to be very explicit about explaining and getting agreement about the process steps.	Participants may have strong convictions about causes and solutions. What needs to be scaffolded is a reexamination of assumptions about causes and solutions and an insight into the usefulness of exploring different perspectives on the issue.	*Not a likely combination*

The matrix in Table 2 suggests that it is easier to scaffold a strategy-development process when participants do not have congealed views about the issues, causes and solutions. If participants have congealed views, it might be necessary to devote a lot of attention to "decongeal" perspectives, so that an exploration of a broader spectrum of causal relations and possible measures becomes possible. The design of the scaffolding is also dependent on the levels of awareness among the participants. Of course this becomes a complex matter when the participants' structures of meaning-making are very different, i.e. when some participants have very weak complexity and perspective awareness, while others have strong levels of awareness. In the groups we have worked with, there certainly were such differences among the participants; no group was completely homogeneous. Participants with stronger complexity awareness may become impatient with the tendency of participants with weaker complexity awareness to go on talking about one concrete example of an issue after another. The latter feel that they add new material to the conversation, whereas the former feel that they keep repeating essentially the same thing. Participants with stronger complexity awareness may want to proceed to talk about the problematic on a higher level of complexity: the general category of the problematic, its causes and consequences, or even problematic properties of the system sustaining the existence of the problematic. The facilitator may here assist participants talking at concrete and abstract levels in their storytelling in order to arrive at a more general formulation of the essential patterns of the issues they are concerned about. A participant with stronger complexity awareness may be offered tasks in the process that makes productive use of their capacities, so as to make the process more interesting to him or her. Such a task may, for example, be to write up summary descriptions of the group's work for review and for communication with other stakeholders.

Functions of Scaffolding Methods

Reviewing the literature on change methodologies, which is small in volume, we conclude that the field is poorly conceptualized in terms of an analytical framework for comparing and analysing what the methodologies really do and how.[14]

In her doctoral dissertation, van der Zouwen (2011) analysed the conditions for successful use of change methodologies, including discussing the design properties of the methods themselves. However, the general impression is that much remains to be done in order to gain insight into what functions scaffolding methodologies actually fulfill and in particular what elements of the methodologies are helpful in assisting groups to work effectively together on complex issues.

We have started to explore this issue by compiling an inventory of the functions different methods are supposed to fulfill. Sources for the items in this inventory are our reading of manuals, articles and books, as well as our own observations and inferences in action research and in conversations with experienced facilitators. The list presented in Table 3 should be regarded as work in progress: we expect to investigate these functions more systematically in the near future.

We have organized the functions in six categories. The first is called *Attentional support,* and comprises the functions that cater to the needs of individual participants and the group as a collective to focus, structure and strengthen attention so that effective work on significant issues become possible. The second category is *Relationships,* relating to the need to support the establishment of contact and trust between participants, thus paving the way for openness in communication. The third category is *Attitudes/Feelings,* involves supporting, if necessary, a shift in the attitudes and feelings among the participants toward a sense of ownership, motivation and hope regarding the issues at hand. The fourth category, *Understanding,* is of course a major one,

Table 3: Functions of change methodologies

Function	Objectives of Methods
I. Attentional support	• Focus the attention of the participants on the same issue/topic in order to enable a group to work together. • Structure the attention of the participants on one task at a time, e.g.: make inventory of relevant issues, formulate goals, analyse issues, develop of action plan, coordinate implementation, plan assessment. • Making unreflected assumptions and interpretations visible and opening up (even disrupt) the participants' mental frames in order to open space for new approaches and ideas.

[14] Some discussion of the characteristics of change methods are, however, offered in Holman et al. (2007).

Function	Objectives of Methods
II. Relationships	• Create safe space: a sense of being welcome and establishment of basic trust that lowers the threshold to engage in conversation and collaboration. • Create propitious conditions for establishing rapport and personal relationships between people who did not know each other personally before. • Release energy locked in conflictual relationships in order to enable a sense of community to emerge and to enable creative and productive use of differences in perspectives and interests.
III: Attitudes/Feelings	• Mobilize commitment, energy, hope that common efforts might lead to meaningful outcomes. • Shift focus from obstacles, frustration and blaming towards possibilities. • Strengthen the participants' feeling of accountability for actions and outcomes.
IV. Understanding	• Clarify and formulate the participants' interests and needs so that these can be communicated and understood by decision-makers and/or other stakeholders. • Share relevant information so that participants can see and understand the conditions, causal principles and possibilities of the larger system the issues are embedded in. • Arrive at a shared narrative of the situation and a common strategy. • Increase awareness of the properties of diverse perspectives, enabling the participants to make creative use of the tensions between different perspectives on causality, values and desirable measures.
V. Empowerment	• Create propitious conditions for mobilization and activation of the participants' knowledge, skills, creativity and other resources. • Neutralize asymmetrical power relations that obstruct effective collaboration.
VI. Coordination of action	• Coordinate implementation of a strategy through planning, management and evaluation.

because participants need to educate themselves about the different conditions, possibilities, potential consequences, etc., involved in managing complex societal issues. The fifth category, *Empowerment* is about supporting the development of the participants' self-image and feelings so that they feel they have the potential to significantly influence the complex issue they are concerned about. The sixth and last category, *Coordination of action,* involves supporting the process of planning the implementation of the ideas the group has developed in their strategy-finding process.

Our experiences through six years of investigating and putting TIP into practice - as well as coming into contact with other change methodologies through our research and networks - have shown us that most of the above functions are somehow central to most methodologies. Yet when speaking to practitioners of different methods, we have found that different functions have been emphasized, depending on both the context the method is designed for, and the underlying values and theories that were central to the development of the methodology itself. Also, the way in which they seek to scaffold the functions may differ significantly. For example, as regards *Attentional support*, one method may emphasize the importance of following participants'

evolving interest and reasoning, continually setting and resetting the focus for discussions, and use only minimal facilitation to structure the exchange. Others may be much stricter, with facilitators making sure all attend to the specified topics in a given order. As regards supporting a group's growing *Understanding*, some methods' designs show a bias towards facilitating the emergence of innate creativity of the participants, and assume that understanding emerges organically from this process. Again, other methods are firmly structured and facilitated so as to make the issue-complexity visible in order for the participants to understand the deep levels of cause and effect, before creative solutions are at all considered. As regards how to establish and work with conflict in the field of *Relationships,* some methodologies may actively focus on and intervene in existing conflicts between (groups of) participants, whereas others may actively marginalize symptoms of conflict by focussing on a common task. More research is needed to further elucidate such differences. We believe that a clearer understanding of what functions various forms of scaffolding actually perform for groups engaged in strategy development can lead to more skillful design of methods, as well as more skillful in-process facilitation on the part of facilitators.

Facilitation Dilemmas

A challenge for the study of the functions of methodologies is that while a method itself may be structurally designed to support certain functions, through its step-wise design, rules and/or specific techniques, other functions may be scaffolded more implicitly, through the facilitator's skills. These functions are not static. In real time, "situational polarities" emerge through the process, leaving it up to the facilitator to make moment-to-moment choices. "*How long shall I let this one person that keeps repeating the same point continue? Shall I openly acknowledge the conflicting camps in the room, when they themselves do not mention these? Can we take the next step now so we do not run out of time towards the end?"* In our experience, even with a very structured method such as TIP, there are still times when hard, in-the-moment choices surface during the process itself; demanding skills of timing, how to tailor the method-steps to fit the specific actors, as well as in-process conflict management; skills that depend on the meaning-making of the facilitator in the moment, of how she or he understands the context, the function of each part of the method and what emerges in the group processes. It must also be noted that while some facilitator techniques may be well in line with the explicitly stated goals and principles of the methodology, others may be of a more sensitive nature and not explicitly acknowledged. An example would be when a facilitator actively seeks to marginalize a talkative participant who is perceived to be obstructing the process, without this being openly discussed. When it comes to the sensitive issues of voice and power, there are many such questions of an in-process nature left to explore.

A Note on the Issue of Power

It is important at this juncture to raise the issue of power since methods and philosophies for structuring group work on complex issues, especially in the fields of deliberative democracy and conflict management, are sometimes criticized for being ignorant of or blind to power issues.[15] A

[15] See e.g. the discussion in Kadlec & Friedman, 2007. Some of these critical comments seem to address the critics' poorly informed assumptions about how these methods function rather than the how the methods are actually practiced. This is, however, a too complex topic for this article.

closer look at the contents of the critical comments reveal that there are several different concerns involved, which may lead to confusion if the perspectives generating the comments are not articulated clearly. Two examples of conversations we have had may be instructive. On one occasion, in a method demonstration seminar, we worked on the issue of how to deal with unrest in classrooms. One seminar participant was quite upset that we as facilitators did not take the initiative to raise the gender dimension of the problematic. The participant felt that a failure on the part of the facilitators to actively address that boys and girls may play very different parts and be affected in different ways by classroom disorder would make the facilitators part of the structures that maintain a gender blindness in our society. Her position was that the facilitator has a moral obligation to advocate a power perspective, even if the members of the group in question would not voice such concerns. On another occasion, a participant in a seminar criticized the absence of a power perspective in our presentation. On further inquiry, it turned out that this person was concerned about the problem of group members who feel powerless and have low self-confidence and therefore don't speak up or engage actively when the group talks about issues they are concerned about.

There are many possible perspectives on power. In table 4 we outline four approaches relevant to scaffolding in work on complex issues, drawing on Ken Wilber's quadrant model for classifying perspectives (Wilber, 1995; 2006). The first column comprises perspectives that stress the subjectively experienced meaning of identities, relationships and other relevant constructs. The second column represents perspectives that look at phenomena from the outside and stress patterns that can be objectively described and evaluated.

Table 4: Four perspectives on power relevant to scaffolding of group processes

	Interior focus	**Exterior focus**
Individual focus	*Construction of power:* The subjectively experienced sense of being able to exert influence in significant issues; the sense of external or internal locus of control. *Adherents' prescription:* Focus on empowering individuals through strategies that assist transformation of self-image and internalizing locus of control.	*Construction of power:* Interpersonal behaviours that create unequal or equal relationships; e.g. behaviours that aim at dominating/subordinating others. *Adherents' prescription:* Focus on neutralizing domination behaviours by exposing them and by using countertactics. Support use of behaviours that lead to fair interactions.
Collective focus	*Construction of power:* Socially constructed attributions and identities that create power differentials between people due to their ascribed identity. *Adherents' prescription:* Focus on exposing and transforming social constructions and attitudes that attribute high/low rank/status to certain categories of people (men/women, white/black, people with lower or higher education, etc.).	*Construction of power:* Structural power differentials determined by positions in unequal social systems, unevenly distributed power resources, etc. which create unfair conditions. *Adherents' prescription:* Focus on exposing structural inequalities and power differentials in order to stop or prevent abuse of power and to contribute to structural changes towards more equality.

All four power perspectives raise tricky ideological, moral and/or ethical questions regarding the roles of facilitators. A power-sensitive approach means that the facilitator has to ask hard questions about whose best interests he or she serves, and how these interests are constructed. Should the facilitator only offer the services that the group asks for, irrespective of the facilitator's own value system? What if the facilitator notices behaviours and conditions that he or she feels are unfair, but none of the group members seems to be aware of what is going on? Does the facilitator have a moral obligation to point out, expose and counteract domination behaviours, social constructions that create an unequal power distribution or structurally determined injustices? These are, of course, questions that cannot be answered in the abstract, but must be responded to in a contextualized way.

When the existence of injustice and inequality due to an uneven distribution of power in societies, in organizations and in interpersonal relationships is the main preoccupation, it is quite natural to be highly sceptical towards the whole business of methods and approaches that aim at involving stakeholders in a common, collaborative process on how to manage controversial societal issues. One is then more inclined to either take on the role of advocating certain views or, particularly if one happens to be an academic researcher, to be careful to keep an outsider position in order to stand free from the establishment and critically analyse societal conditions and processes. These critical observers of course play a very important role by pointing out problematic phenomena.

A Note on the Issue of Problem Ownership and Implementation

Methods for scaffolding deliberative processes may be very powerful in creating favourable conditions for the development of well-designed strategies. However, these methods cannot in themselves guarantee that the measures proposed would actually be implemented, if crucial decisions have to be made by decision-makers who did not participate in the process. Our experience, which is echoed by several practitioners, is that the participation in deliberative processes often leads to deep insights into the needs of a problematic as well as to a commitment to take certain actions. The participants really own their issue and the strategies they have developed. However, this understanding of the issue and the commitment to act is not easily transferable to decision-makers and other stakeholders who did not participate in the deliberative process themselves. Using a deliberative process for issues where crucial resources are controlled by non-participants is a risky venture, because hopes may be raised through the process that are later squashed by disinterest, lack of understanding or obstruction on the part of decision-makers. Not only is there a considerable risk that good plans will be disregarded, but also that the lack of implementation will leave participants feeling more disillusioned and powerless than if they had not engaged in the process at all.

Diffusion of Social Innovations

It seems evident that the society indeed faces a number of complex societal issues where the need to develop more effective strategies for managing serious problems is very strong. It also seems evident that there *are* forms of scaffolding that might contribute to a better capability to manage complexity. However, the existence of methods that fit needs does not automatically mean that those who have the needs actually make use of the methods' approaches. If we think of

new forms of scaffolding, such as TIP and similar methods, as social innovations, the diffusion of such innovations becomes a key topic for study. In a much-cited article, Akrich, Callon and Latour (2002), outlined a non-linear approach to the study of innovation and innovation diffusion. They contrasted their own perspective with a more traditional, linear, explanatory framework as follows:

> […] the success of an innovation may be explained in two different ways, one emphasising the innovation's intrinsic qualities, the other on its capacity to create adhesion between numerous allies (users, intermediaries, etc.). In the first case, we use the term "diffusion model" (the innovation becomes widespread due to its intrinsic properties); in the second case, we use the term "model of interessement" (the fate of the innovation depends on the active participation of all those who have decided to develop it). (Akrich et al., 2002: 208) [16]

Akrich et al. view successful innovation processes (including the widespread adoption of the innovation) as results of an alignment of the interests of many stakeholders around the innovation, often by means of adapting the original form of the innovation to fit the different interests stakeholders have. Only when an innovator succeeds in attracting interest in the innovation among many different actors, playing different roles in relation to the innovation, can the innovation become adopted among potential users.

When a social innovation has been made, it is still uncertain if it is useful in other settings than the original one. It has to be tried out, adapted to local conditions and evaluated. Obviously, a process of diffusion of a social innovation involves many steps and is dependent on different types of conditions. Information about the innovation must reach potential users, they must understand the potential of the innovation, they must become convinced about the desirability in trying out the innovation and they must allocate the necessary resources (time, work, money) in order to start making practical experiments with the innovation. Our efforts to find suitable research-based analytical frameworks for studying diffusion processes of social innovations have not been very fruitful, the field seems to be under-researched.[17]

Our experiences suggest that social innovations, because they are embedded in social systems and deal with social interactions, face considerable resistance to diffusion and adoption. It may be easier to evaluate the potential benefits of technical product and process innovations, while the effectiveness of social innovations are more difficult to assess. However, we believe that the resistance to diffusion and adoption may be strongly reduced along certain paths, namely in networks of preexistent trustful relationships between people. It seems that the propensity of potential users of social innovations to devote attention to learning more about social innovations and start experimenting with them is far higher when the champions of the innovations are already known and trusted through previous contacts unrelated to the present innovation.

[16] The French concept "interessement" has been left untranslated by authors writing in English, because of difficulties in finding an appropriate translation.

[17] Everett Roger's (1962) classical book *Diffusion of innovations* discussed such an analytical framework, but subsequent work seems to be focussed on case studies rather than theory-building.

The story of how TIP, a method that can be regarded as a social innovation, was introduced in Sweden may be instructive in this regard. TIP was developed in the USA by Sara Ross, in the context of her research with deliberative democracy processes at the Kettering Foundation and then independently. One of us, Thomas Jordan (based in Sweden), got acquainted with Sara in 2000 through an Internet forum for people interested in the work of Ken Wilber, integral philosopher. We corresponded through e-mail on the basis of shared interests in applying adult development and integral theory to political/societal issues. The main reason TIP caught Thomas Jordan's interest at the time, was the ingenuous way in which the method scaffolds the participants' awareness of and possibilities of utilizing different perspectives on complex societal issues. Thomas read up on the method descriptions Sara sent over, and started on a tentative scale to experiment with the method, mainly the part that assists groups in looking at an issue and developing an action strategy through formulating a number of fundamentally different perspectives that could be applied to the issue. At first, these experiments were made with participants in workshops and students at the university of Gothenburg, and not in "live" settings with participants who really were engaged in developing strategies to deal with an issue they were concerned about. The experiments were encouraging: the method seemed to have a considerable effect on participants' views on the issue, as well as on their attitudes towards perspectives quite dissimilar from their own. Four former students who shared Thomas interest in conflict management and adult development gradually developed interest in learning how to facilitate TIP. At this point in time, about 2006, TIP had a feeble foothold in Sweden, in the form of a small group of people who believed in the potential of the method, had started to develop necessary facilitation skills and were in the process of becoming ambassadors for the model.

We then started to think about how to draw attention to the potential of TIP among actors who really need support in developing action plans regarding difficult societal issues: officials in public administration, politicians, NGOs and residents in communities with different kinds of problems. We wrote introductory texts about TIP in Swedish, trying to find a language that would make sense to prospective stakeholders. However, we did not have any readily available channels for reaching decision-makers or other actors who might be in a position to want to try out working with TIP.

The first real opportunity came up when one of us made a presentation of a commissioned report for the board of Gothenburg's crime prevention council. The discussion happened to present an opportunity to mention some aspects of the TIP method. The mayor and some other board members got interested, and asked us to make a demonstration of the methodology at a full-day board meeting already scheduled a few weeks further on. This demonstration convinced the board members that this was a methodology worth more experimentation, and we were asked to do a pilot project in one or two Gothenburg suburbs. This pilot project eventually resulted in Pia Andersson's comprehensive study *Perspektivvandringar (Perspective walks*, Andersson, 2008). Apart from reporting on the pilot groups, the study was written in the form of a manual on how to facilitate TIP and thus the intended readership was mostly potential facilitators. So at this time a well-written and comprehensive Swedish text on TIP was available.

TIP was developed as an approach to deliberative democracy. It was designed to support citizens in developing strategies to address issues they were concerned about in their communities. TIP has been shown to be effective in mobilizing stakeholders' engagement and in facilitating a process that leads to more integrative, more effective strategies for addressing

complex issues (Ross, 2007; Andersson, 2008; Inglis, 2011). When we started to plan a research project, we got in touch with an organization that seemed to need exactly what TIP had set out to provide. The Swedish Union of Tenants (hereafter SUT) had a national project called "Uppdrag M," which aimed at developing strategies for involving tenants in the renewal processes in the large metropolitan suburbs in Sweden, comprising high-rise apartment buildings constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. Over time, these suburbs have deteriorated in both physical appearance and in social status. In many of these suburbs a large proportion of the residents are immigrants from troubled parts of the world, for example former Yugoslavia, Kurdistan, the Middle East, Somalia and other parts of Africa. SUT saw a need to develop methods for mobilizing tenants, many of whom lack previous experience in Western-style non-governmental organizations, to advocate their own interests in relation to large property managers and authorities.

At a workshop connected to Pia Andersson's pilot study in a Gothenburg suburb, we met representatives of SUT who were interested in exploring the possibilities of using TIP in their work. We had further conversations with a couple of officials at the regional branch of SUT who proved to be sufficiently interested in our approach to be willing to enter a partnership with us in the form of a joint research grant application. There was at the time (in 2008) an opening for applying for research grants at the Swedish Knowledge Foundation in a special programme supporting research about "societal entrepreneurship." Our application was successful and the project was formally started in the beginning of 2009.

However, even though the fit seemed extremely good between our ambition to use TIP and SUT's need for more effective ways of mobilizing residents in suburbs with a high proportion of immigrants, TIP did not take root in SUT. There were several reasons for this. One was that it turned out that only a minority of the officials of SUT were in favour of working actively with mobilization of suburban residents through presence in the neighbourhoods. The majority favoured a more focussed role for SUT as advocating tenants' interests in relation to landlords. Another reason was that several of the managers and key persons in SUT who supported the endeavour got long-term sick, transferred to other positions or left SUT to work elsewhere. A third reason was that some local representatives of SUT were involved in their own approach to working with residents, and (so is our interpretation) regarded TIP as a competing approach, "not invented here." Looking back it seems we didn't succeed in alleviating these concerns or sufficiently aligning with the work already being done. We spent a considerable time in meetings with stakeholders and the local project leaders in "Uppdrag M," but our approach didn't seem to appeal sufficiently. Thus, we did not succeed in arranging for the action research groups through SUT on the scale originally planned and SUT did not engage in experimentation with TIP as we had expected they would be keen to do. However, through two officials in SUT, not involved in "Uppdrag M," who were involved with projects in other suburbs, we eventually got the opportunity to work with two groups using TIP. These officials could easily tailor the TIP process to suit theirs and our purposes, while focusing on some very concrete topics of concern that had already been voiced in these neighborhoods and which they were looking to engage.

While working hard and spending many hours in meetings with SUT officials with little concrete results in terms of interest in using TIP, another actor turned out to be a more receptive channel for the TIP approach. A group of organizational consultants at a large Swedish organization managing insurance capital on behalf of employers and trade unions, AFA, was in 2009 in the process of starting a three-year project on methods for preventing threats and violence

in workplaces. One of the consultants knew Thomas Jordan through participation in a series of training workshops on conflict management and through collaboration in a two-year project on strategies for developing robust collaboration cultures in workplaces. She was somewhat familiar with TIP through participation in a workshop some years earlier and was interested in exploring the potential of the methodology after having read Pia Andersson's report *Perspektivvandringar*. She felt that TIP might be a suitable method for the new project. A series of meetings and workshops eventually lead to AFA adopting TIP as a method in the project, which involved training several of AFA's consultants in facilitation skills. The project had significant good results that have been documented (in Swedish) and are now disseminated through AFA's contact network (which is very large in Sweden). What will come of this we cannot know, of course, the innovation diffusion process is still in an incipient phase.

The story of how TIP was introduced in Sweden fits well into the *interessement* perspective of Akrich et al. Even though there seems to be a good fit between what the innovation has to offer and the needs certain actors have, the adoption process is dependent on the alignment of the interests of many individuals and organizational entities, who are always embedded in their own particular lifeworlds, concerns and trajectories. One conclusion from this story is that it is probably not a successful strategy to look for the best fit between need and innovation and then proceed to try to convince the most "needy" stakeholders that the innovation is what they need. It is more likely that a social innovation will be adopted if champions of innovations use already established contact networks where there is a preexisting trust in competence and motives, even if the fit between the need and innovation is not the strongest possible. We think it is a useful metaphor to think of networks of relationships characterized by a high level of trust as a system of wires with a low level of resistance. Ideas can flow easily back and forth along the wires. Where no previous trustful relationships exist, there are no wires, and hence there is a considerable resistance to be overcome before a flow can start. This means that reaching outside preexisting networks places particular demands on those who set out to spread a social innovation, in terms of acting skillfully to make possible an alignment of different stakeholders' interests. When there are a few keen actors in an organization with many internal dilemmas and conflicts, it is important to carefully gauge the likeliness of a broader interest in the innovation in that context. In our case, we found it was easier to initiate a TIP-process within SUT when there were concrete issues that needed to be resolved and they were actively looking for ways to work on these. It seems important to listen with a keen ear for such issues, which may serve as entry points for the innovation, provided that its sponsors are responsive enough to the needs expressed by the stakeholders. In practice, looking at the example of innovations in the field of scaffolding, this might mean that sponsors/process leaders would arrange a meeting where all relevant stakeholders are present, and instead of presenting the method as such, ask the stakeholders what their dilemmas and goals are, and have an open discussion about which kind of scaffolding might serve those ends. Had we approached SUT in such a way (i.e. used what we below describe as "dialectical meaning-making"), we may have either been more successful in spreading the innovation, or much earlier looked elsewhere for a good fit.

Change Agents Working with Complex Societal Issues

Studying Individual Change Agents/Societal Entrepreneurs

One of the ideas we had when we started our research project on societal entrepreneurship was to search out and interview a limited number of successful societal entrepreneurs in order to analyse their meaning-making structures. This was a minor part of the research project, intended to offer some comparative material. The main study aimed at analysing the transformations of meaning-making among people who were quite inexperienced in developing action strategies for complex societal issues. The interviews with successful societal entrepreneurs could, we thought, provide us with some insight into characteristics of meaning-making that contribute to desired outcomes. We spent quite lot of time to discuss various criteria for the target group. We wanted to find societal entrepreneurs with documented successful outcomes regarding complex societal issues. We came up with the following criteria:

- Successful. The societal entrepreneurships should be successful in a convincing way, i.e. having resulted in sustainable operations or other substantial outcomes.
- Constructive collaboration. The initiatives should be of the kind where it is necessary to establish a constructive collaboration or at least secure support from stakeholders with dissimilar perspectives and/or interests.
- Key persons. There should be a limited number of key individuals who have played decisive roles in the achievements of the initiative.
- Access. The operation or project should be open to the public in the sense that a target group can benefit from the initiative irrespectively of religious affiliation, ideology or resources.
- Innovative. The initiative should have significant innovative elements rather than replicate already existing operations.

When we started to look for initiatives that fitted our criteria, we discovered that individuals that could clearly be seen as successful societal entrepreneurs were actually quite hard to find. This is in itself an interesting result. It seemed there were few individuals, at least in Sweden, who had been successful in achieving significant positive outcomes in complex societal issues.

Reviewing the cases we studied through our series of interviews, as well as our other case studies, we learned that the relationships among meaning-making structures, goal construction, action strategies and outcomes in societal change agency are more complex than we were initially aware of. We realized that it is mostly not possible or meaningful to try to compare how successful are the change agents or societal entrepreneurs with different levels of complexity awareness. A major reason for this is that a person with rather weak complexity awareness will engage in different types of initiatives than a person with a strong complexity awareness. They will find different types of goals and projects compelling, which means that a comparison of their respective strategies and rate of success becomes inappropriate. Someone with weak complexity awareness may be very successful in an initiative that does not require advanced capacities for managing complexity. On the other hand, people with weak complexity awareness will mostly not formulate goals and tasks around influencing complex societal systems or initiating transformative processes among major institutional actors. Similarly, a person with strong complexity awareness is not necessarily more likely to be more successful than a person with

weak complexity awareness with an initiative that does not really require an advanced capacity to manage complexity.

We can probably expect that people who on a voluntary basis seek out the role of being a societal change agent will construct their goals and initiatives in a way that is congruent with the level of complexity of their meaning-making structure. However, not all individuals who find themselves in a role where they have responsibility for dealing with a complex societal issue have sought out the role themselves. They may be officials in a public administration or organization, for example, where they have been appointed to be in charge of a task that involves responsibility for managing a complex issue. In such cases, we would expect that individuals with weak complexity awareness will be less successful in achieving significant outcomes than individuals with strong complexity awareness.

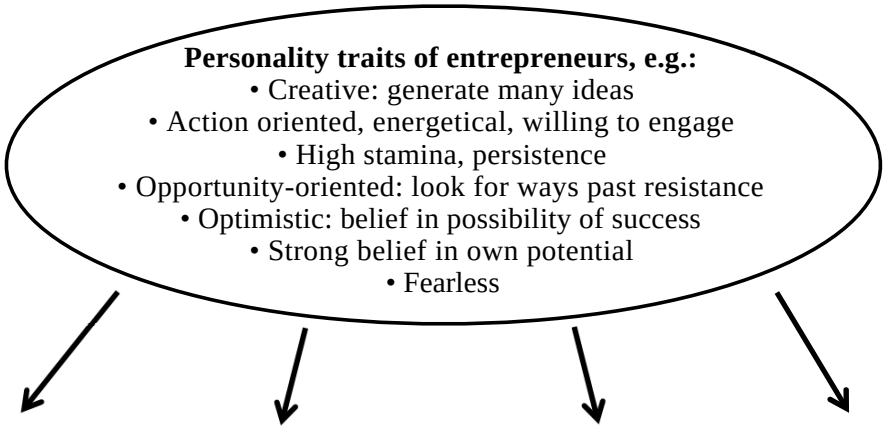
Four Types of Societal Entrepreneurship

During the course of analysing the case studies, three distinctions emerged as potentially significant for classifying types of societal entrepreneurship. The first distinction that seemed relevant to make was between entrepreneurship that aimed at establishing a new operation or carrying out a particular project that serves perceived societal needs on the one hand, and entrepreneurship that aimed at influencing how *other* institutions or established networks operate to serve societal needs. In the first case, the entrepreneurs have a large amount of control over the organization, operation or project they are establishing. They are usually dependent on external stakeholders in issues like funding or permissions, but otherwise they can design and develop their own system. Examples of this kind of entrepreneurship could be starting up a cooperative for reintegrating former drug abusers in the labour market, or carrying out a project for restoring a natural habitat for endangered animals. In the second case, the entrepreneurs' aims can only be attained if they succeed in influencing established systems to change in significant ways, e.g. to get the police to develop better routines for working with honour-related crime, or influencing businesses to develop more environmental awareness in their purchasing strategies.

The second distinction was between entrepreneurs who develop visions about what they want to happen and then proceed to realize those visions on the one hand, and entrepreneurs who are genuinely process-oriented in the sense of focussing on creating favourable conditions for involving diverse stakeholders in co-creation of strategies that inquire into and exploit the room to maneuver that the actual situation offers. This distinction seemed important in order to pinpoint typical patterns of some societal entrepreneurs' approach to their work, and not least to explain the shifts over time that we could see in some of our case studies (Sander & Jordan, 2009, 2011; Emanuelsson, 2011).

The third distinction emerged rather as an afterthought that seemed necessary in order to cover the "lower" end of the spectrum. This distinction is between entrepreneurs whose activities are confined to separate, sometimes spectacular, events on the one hand, and entrepreneurs aiming at developing operations or attaining systemic changes in a more long-run perspective on the other hand.

These three distinctions lead us to define four types of societal entrepreneurship: *event-focused, operations-centered,*[18] *systemic* and *dialectical* (Figure 3). Note that societal entrepreneurs may share the same personality traits, i.e., a typical entrepreneurial personality, but nevertheless practice quite different types of societal entrepreneurship because they operate from different structures of meaning-making (mainly different levels of complexity awareness and perspective awareness, according to this model).



Event-focused societal entrepreneurship	**Operations-centric** societal entrepreneurship	**Systemic** societal entrepreneurship	**Dialectical** societal entrepreneurship
• Isolated concrete ideas • Sometimes impulsive character • Short time horizon, limited perseverance • Somtimes motivated by desire for personal place in the limelight • Hoped-for outcome: successfully realized event that gained widespread attention	• Aims at serving a public need or solve a societal problem • Focus on establishing an operation or carry out a project • Time horizon often about 1-3 years, even if the goal is to establish a permanent operation • Hoped-for outcome: an operation that serves its aims well or a project that attained its goals	• Aims at attaining changes in the way parts of the societal system operates (e.g. educational institutions, labour market, social services, decision-making processes in public admininstration) • Long-term orientation due to ambition to change structures with a considerable inertia • Develops strategies involving persuasion, demonstrating viability of ideas, development of plans and policies • Hoped-for outcome: systemic change	• Aims at contributing to the realization of the potential for positive societal change that is present in a particular context. • Strong process orientation, creates forums for genuine dialogue among diverse stakeholders • Working with stakeholders' perspectives in a transformative way is a prominent element • Inquires continually into the need for reevaluating own perspective • Hoped-for outcome: transformative processes

Figure 3: Four types of societal entrepreneurship

[18] Operations-centered societal entrepreneurship as a concept overlaps almost completely with the more commonly used term "social entrepreneurship," even if the aspiration is to contribute to societal betterment by building a particular operation. It is a bit awkward to coin a new concept here, but we think the juxtaposition of the four subtypes of entrepreneurship aspiring to contribute to the social/societal good is clarifying.

Event-focused societal entrepreneurship is characterized by the focus on staging single events. One type of event-focused societal entrepreneurship involves spectacular events, where the motivation driving the entrepreneur is to have fun, do something personally satisfying and possibly place him- or herself in the limelight. A person has an exciting idea about something that could be done, and proceeds immediately to try to realize the idea. The idea usually involves something quite concrete that can be staged in a near future with resources that happen to be available or can be mobilized quickly. The societal utility of the idea is in this case more a necessity for earning acclaim from the public, rather than the actual driving motive of the initiative. Another, more common type of event-focused societal entrepreneurship is when individuals or groups arrange single events, like a fund-raising concert for charity. Event-focused societal entrepreneurship has a short time horizon and does not involve complex work building an organization or planning a long-term project with different phases. The strategies used often involve arousing enthusiasm among others for a stimulating idea, cajoling decision-makers to make resources available and using trial-and-error experimentation to develop a way to realize the vision. Event-focused entrepreneurship is often fragmentary, focused on realizing single events that are not part of a long-term plan, and the results are seldom lasting.

Operations-centered societal entrepreneurship (= social entrepreneurship) involves people who have perceived a problem or need in the society that ought to be solved/served or have developed a vision about an operation or a project that would enrich the society in some way. Focus is on realizing the idea by establishing and managing one or several operations that serve the needs of a particular group or by carrying out a project that results in certain events, plans or artefacts. In order to attain the goals, the societal entrepreneur needs to mobilize resources, get necessary permits and establish an operation or project organization. However, operations-centered societal entrepreneurship involves developing a new operation or a project, relatively independent of already existing institutions and structures, which means that there is a large measure of autonomy in designing and managing the operation. These types of initiatives often have a certain linear character: an idea is formed, plans are developed, resources are mobilized, an operation or a project is established, which result in more or less successful outcomes. The time horizon is often one to a couple of years. Some operations-centered societal entrepreneurship initiatives are pure projects: when the plans have been realized, the project is completed and the entrepreneur starts to develop a new project. In other cases the initiative is intended to create a long-lived operation, such as a cooperative.

Systemic societal entrepreneurship is distinguished by its ambition to influence how *other* actors and systems operate, e.g. administrations, authorities, businesses and networks of different entities. The societal entrepreneur has identified some type of unsatisfactory state of affairs or a lack of something that ought to exist, or has a vision about how the society could be better if established societal institutions or systems change in terms of priorities, methods of working or structures. The systemic societal entrepreneur usually has a rather elaborated narrative about what is wrong or wanting in society and what needs to happen and how. The strategies used involve formulating visions, persuading decision-makers about the desirability of one's own ideas, and trying to prove, e.g. by pilot projects, the viability and desirability on doing things differently and better.

Dialectical societal entrepreneurship is characterized by a strong process orientation, involving not only strategies and actions, but also goal formulating. The foundation is a

commitment to a certain problematic or to certain values, but the dialectical societal entrepreneur is careful in not going too far in specifying goals, visions and strategies. Focus is on establishing good working relationships with relevant stakeholders, and invite them to participate in genuine dialogues with a large measure of openness to the ideas, learning, needs and possible synergies that are discovered and developed when different points of view and interests meet and interact in a creative process. The worldview of dialectical societal entrepreneurs is based on a keen awareness of the complexity of the context one operates in, which has its own structures, conditions and ongoing processes that present both restrictions and opportunities that need to be discovered in order to find a navigable course. Strategies used involve reviewing and revising one's own perspective, visions and conceptions about desirable goals, as well as creating forums for creative and integrative meetings between different perspectives.[19]

Dialectical societal entrepreneurship is different from the other three types in one significant way: it has a genuinely dialogical orientation, whereas the other three can be described as *monological.* "Monological" here means that the actors are embedded in *one* perspective, their own. This perspective is perceived as the most correct, most relevant perspective. The environment is perceived and evaluated from within one's perspective. Issues and events are given meaning in terms of one particular narrative, one set of values and beliefs. Goals and strategies are formulated in the terms and conceptions of this point of view, and therefore get a monological rather than dialogical character. A monological worldview leads to a dualistic approach: my/our perspective is pitted against other perspectives, which are viewed as opposing or at least as obstacles to the implementation of already formed and elaborated goals, measures and strategies. A monological mindset is monological because of a weak awareness of perspectives as variables. One does not perceive one's own perspective as variable, as a system that is likely to change through the insight gained when comparing and possibly integrating different perspectives. A dialogical approach is a natural outcome of strong perspective awareness, where there is an awareness of the properties of different perspectives and of how these properties have consequences for perception, interpretation and evaluation of different issues. If one has a monological mindset, one often has a tendency to try to convince others of the correctness of one's own views, prove to them that they have to change their mind, or put pressure on them to accept one's own ideas. With a dialogical mindset, the natural approach is to have an inquiring and openended attitude, curious about what will emerge when all parties have gained a deeper understanding of each others' conditions, views and interests. The dialectical characteristic shows up in the routine expectation of the necessity for multiple parties to articulate, reflect on and then to coordinate their multiple perspectives into some kind of synthesis appropriate for the matter at hand.

It might be in place to point out that there is no straightforward relationship between types of societal entrepreneurship and the likelihood of successful outcomes. Societal entrepreneurs in all four types can be very successful, but the *character* of the initiatives they engage in tend to be quite different. It is consequently unlikely that an event-focused societal entrepreneur would even engage in initiatives that aim at achieving significant systemic changes or contributing to transformations of the perspectives of stakeholders in different organizations.

[19] See the next section for a more comprehensive discussion of dialectical meaning-making.

Dialectical Meaning-making and its Consequences for Entrepreneurial Action

In this section we will take a closer look at the characteristics of dialectical societal entrepreneurship. First we need to give a little background by relating how our present conception evolved. The case studies we made presented a number of examples of a certain pattern of meaning-making and action that took different forms in different cases, but seemed to share a common underlying logic. One of the more obvious pointers to such a pattern was that a number of the change agents Jordan interviewed in one of the earlier research projects (Jordan, 2006a) used quite similar words for describing their own role in the change processes: *catalyst, enzyme, match-maker, midwife.* These words/metaphors seem to have in common that they point to a worldview where the self is seen as an active agent in a complex environment which has already a lot of structure and processes going on that one maybe can influence, but not unilaterally control or program. We sought descriptors that fit the pattern we intuited was there. We found that Michael Basseches's framework (1984) for describing dialectical thinking is very helpful for pinpointing and explaining the observable patterns in the case studies.[20] Basseches identified a large number of dialectical "schemata," or "thought forms" in interview transcripts. He organized them into three categories: motion (or process), form (or context) and relationships.[21] Drawing on both theoretical frameworks (see Jordan, 2011) and our case material, we have adapted Basseches's framework somewhat in order to point out salient features of the worldview that generates dialectical societal entrepreneurship. According to this conceptualization, five types of awareness characterize dialectical meaning-making.

A person with strong ...

... *complexity awareness* expects (has a pre-understanding) that phenomena usually are caused by complex conditions and causal relationships (linear, mutually conditioning factors and systemic) and that it is often very useful to inquire into and gain knowledge about causal relations and possible consequences. People with strong complexity awareness therefore actively engage in seeking out knowledge and insight about issues relevant to their aspirations. This propensity to expect that there are significant things to be learned and to start looking for a deeper understanding of underlying causal relations is, according to our experience, often absent among people with a weak complexity awareness.

... *process awareness* notices and seeks understanding of the character of ongoing change processes. Everything is seen as embedded in processes that change conditions over time. There is also a strong process orientation, in the sense of expecting that the process of dialoguing and acting will lead to new insights, ideas, assessments and intentions. There is an openness and even positive expectations regarding testing and transforming own assumptions and views. People with strong process awareness often find it important to create spaces where inquiry, discovery and generative dialogues become possible.

[20] Later Barrett Brown's (2011) doctoral dissertation confirmed many of these patterns, even though Brown used a different investigation strategy and a somewhat different conceptual framework for analysing societal change agents.

[21] A fourth category, transformation, comprised those schemata that combined several schemata from the other three categories.

... *relationship awareness* notices properties and processes in relationships, in relations between people as well as relations among phenomena of other kinds. Someone with strong relationship awareness actively engages in establishing relationships and influencing their qualities in order to make constructive interaction possible. This includes taking care to act with an attitude that invites contact, trust and respect.

... *context awareness* reflects on how particular issues are embedded in a larger context that has its own properties and processes. No phenomenon exists separately, but is in sometimes insidious ways conditioned by the properties of the context in which it is embedded. Systemic qualities, such as organizational structures and their consequences, culturally constructed norms and behaviour patterns, economic mechanisms and power structures are noticed and considered. People with a strong context awareness often develop strategies that either exploit the room to manoeuver present in an otherwise constraining context, or aim at influencing and changing how that context is structured and operates.

... *perspective awareness* notices and seeks insight into the properties of the perspectives different actors use in order to make sense of themselves and their environment. The meaning of events and issues is dependent on the properties of the perspectives used to perceive and interpret them. Perspectives are seen as a variable that can potentially be influenced and transformed, which goes both for oneself and others. A person with a strong perspective awareness therefore often seek ways to make the properties of perspectives conscious and to create favourable conditions for developing perspectives, not least by *using* the tension between different perspectives for new insight and integrative strategizing.

We found that this framework captures many significant qualities among several of the societal entrepreneurs we studied. In some cases where we could trace development over a longer time, we could discern a movement towards a more dialectical way of meaning-making and acting (Sander & Jordan, 2009; 2011; Emanuelsson, 2011). However, it also became apparent that a person might make use of a dialectical approach in one or a couple of domains, while not applying the same sophisticated approach in other domains. We have begun, tentatively, to identify different domains that are relevant to societal entrepreneurship. Doing this, it is apparent that very different time frames are involved. Some people have a strong dialectical orientation in their way of engaging in conversations, for example with clients, stakeholders or in meetings. Here the time frame is from seconds to hours. Other domains, with a longer time frame, can be problem-solving processes (minutes/hours/days), team leadership and project management (weeks/years), establishing an operation or organization (years), or managing a systemic change initiative (months/years). Another type of domain is the relationship with oneself, where the time frame varies from seconds to decades.

In Table 5, we have outlined the consequences dialectical meaning-making can have in three different domains: conversations, systemic change initiatives and oneself. We believe this is a promising field for inquiry through future case studies.

Table 5: Dialectical meaning-making in three domains

	In conversations	**In systemic change initiatives**	**In relation to oneself**
Complexity awareness	Expects that there are conditions and causal relations that one has no insight into yet. Uses conversations to elicit information and develop knowledge.	Knows that organizations and change processes are so complex that it is unrealistic to expect that one can make detailed plans and then proceed to implement a fixed solution. Engages change initiatives with an inquirying approach, where development of knowledge and insights is a key ingredient.	Regards oneself as a complex being with many unknown or vaguely known aspects. Uses experiences actively to develop more self-knowledge.
Context awareness	Keenly aware that the person one has the conversation with is part of a larger context with its own structures, norms, rules, narratives, culture and larger ongoing processes.	Aware that the context has its own structures and processes that both present constraints and creates opportunities. Standard solutions not adapted to the specific state of the actual context are not regarded as particularly helpful.	Seeks understanding of how one's own reactions and actions are conditioned by the properties of the context one is embedded in: organizational structures, cultural patterns, position in a complex system.
Process awareness	Regards the conversation as a genuinely openended process. No fixed conceptions of what is to be the outcome, but has an open attitude to what might come out of a dialogue. Wants to toss around thoughts and ideas and see what emerges.	Expects change processes to be genuinely openended processes that cannot be program-med in a detailed way in advance. Has a long-term perspective and seeks understanding of the nature of various long-term change processes and their possible consequences.	Thinks of oneself in the present moment as embedded in ongoing processes of change: where do I come from, in what direction am I heading. Identifies oneself *as* a process rather than in terms of a number of fixed properties or a fixed personality.
Relationship awareness	Keenly aware that the conversation is embedded in a relationship that is created and changed through the conversation itself. Acts consciously to create an appropriate relationship, e.g. by working on establishing trust.	Reflects on how different elements of complex systems and processes are mutually dependent and shaped by the character of the relationships they have with each other. Searches for stakeholders with whom it is possible to establish productive relationships. Acts consciously to influence tha properties of relationships, among people as well as among different parts of systems.	Experiences the own self and own reactions as embedded in and conditioned by the properties of the relationship one has with others. Takes responsibility for own role in the development of relationships with others.

	In conversations	In systemic change initiatives	In relation to oneself
Perspective awareness	Seeks understanding of the perspective, reasoning patterns and narratives of the other. Uses the conversation to test the relevance and properties of one's own perspective and narrative. Makes efforts to create a conversation that opens up the potential for mutual transformation of perspectives.	Strongly aware that different perspectives generate different views on goals, strategies, priorities, etc. Seeks to create forums and processes where different perspectives can be constructively articulated and their differences can be mobilized for greater insight and creativity. Seeks to create processes that facilitate insight into and transformation of perspectives.	Uses experiences actively in order to become more aware of, test and transform one's own perspective. Develops strategies to develop one's own perspective. Seeks out challenging feedback in the interest of becoming aware of blind spots and alternative points of view.

Trajectories of Development of Awareness

In three of our case studies, we have been able to follow or retrospectively reconstruct the change agents' processes of learning and development of awareness over 5-10 years. While we have just a few cases to rely on, the analysis points to some patterns that are suggestive and certainly worth further inquiry.

One of the thoughts we had when we started exploring the relationship between meaning-making, patterns of action and outcomes among societal change agents was that a strong complexity awareness would *lead* to a process orientation, to interest in inquiry and learning and to an interest in working towards systemic change, whereas a weak complexity awareness would lead to a more limited conception of aims and strategies and a propensity to develop own ideas and visions and then try to implement them, rather than co-develop ideas and strategies in interaction with a broad set of stakeholders. However, we have had to revise this assumption in the light of the case studies we have made. It seems that our own complexity awareness regarding the relationship between complexity awareness and an inquiring orientation was rather weak. The relationship is certainly not linear and unidirectional, but more complex. In some cases it seems that a basic inquiring orientation came first, and the complexity awareness increased as a result of reflecting on experiences, which in turn strengthened the commitment to a process orientation, and so on.

In one particular case study (Emanuelsson, 2011), it is apparent that the societal change agent we interviewed started out with a strong sense of urgency regarding a particular issue: violence and abuse among school children and youth. The engagement with this issue later evolved into a focus on developing better strategies for preventing and managing honour-related violence towards immigrant youth and adults. Our interviewee describes her own propensity to even think about underlying causal mechanisms as very weak in the beginning. She and her colleagues didn't reflect very much about the complex causes and conditions behind youth violence, but rather started to initiate meetings and initiatives without having a very clear understanding of the problem complex. However, she could describe three key experiences where she was exposed to

systemic explanatory frameworks relating to different types of violence as well as to the resistance among stakeholders to engage the issue. These experiences had a profound impact on her meaning-making, in the sense that she felt that new levels of understanding of the underlying logic behind the problematic phenomena opened up for her. The new insights lead to experimenting with other kinds of action strategies as well as redefining goals in accordance with what she now felt was more important to strive for. In this particular case, it seems reasonable to see the change agent's basic openness to learn from experience and her receptiveness to explanatory frameworks as the key factor in developing a more comprehensive and sophisticated strategy for societal change agency.

In the beginning of our project, the project leader had a more static perspective on the role of meaning-making structures for variations in societal change agency, focussing on the relationship between the level of complexity awareness on the one hand, and the type of action strategies on the other hand. But it seems that complexity awareness may rather be the consequence of an openness to learning, than an independent variable explaining variations in goal construction and action strategies.

Conclusion

Reviewing our learning over the last seven years, we feel that we have only begun to explore a number of arguably very important issues. The potential for further and more systematic research in this field seems very large indeed. We believe we could benefit from a better understanding of how people participating in efforts to address complex issues differ from one another in their needs for scaffolding, as well as how facilitators can be effective when working with groups where participants have very different scaffolding needs. A better understanding of what functions various change methods actually serve might give us more clarity about the differences and similarities among methods, techniques and more general approaches and thus allow us to choose and adapt scaffolding elements more skillfully. In the course of our explorations, we have come to respect the difficulties involved in facilitating group processes. Not much empirical research seems to have been done on actual moment-to-moment facilitation of groups working on complex issues (one example is Papamichail et al., 2007). We do hope to see more of such research in the future.

Regarding individual change agency, there is a lot to explore about the roles complexity awareness and perspective awareness play when engaging complex issues and visions. We have little to say so far about the question of to what extent individual skills necessary for change agency in complex processes can be acquired by anyone interested in the task, and what kind of scaffolding is effective in supporting such skill development. The typology of four types of societal entrepreneurship presented here should be regarded as tentative, and further empirical studies will show whether the distinctions are fruitful for understanding the diversity and learning trajectories of societal change agents.

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