

Mutual value co-creation in practitioner-academia collaboration

**Competencies for doing research
in/with(in), for and in-between organizations**

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SUMMARY:

This paper addresses the research practice of practicable research by drawing a map of methodological in-roads to doing research with a view to bridging the practitioner-research gap and producing what has been termed as 'actionable research' by engaging closely with practitioners in the research process. The map includes three territories and methodological in-roads for doing research in close collaboration with practitioners with a view to mutual value creation and co-construction: Doing research, in/with(in), for and in-between organizations.

The methodological reflections in the map are illustrated and discussed against the backdrop of a concrete instance of academia-practitioner collaboration, the industrial Ph.D. research project of Group Mindset-Development in Solar A/S. The industrial Ph.D. researcher is seen as a front-runner vis-a-vis a political climate of increasing demands from governments to universities with regards to the ability of research groups to demonstrate co-operation with external stakeholder groups and an illustration of the privileges and pitfalls of doing research in close engagement with practice called for by the increasing academic interest for actionable research.

Using empirical data from an on-going practitioner-academia research project, a literature review and inputs from a professional development workshop organized by the author at the British Academy Management's annual meeting 2012¹, a position for doing research in/with(in), for and in-between practice is carved out. Based on the challenges and potential pitfalls inherent in this research position, researcher competencies for successfully handling the research management of the in-between and bridging the academia-practitioner gap in research practice are discussed. Further, competency requirements of both academia and practice as main stakeholders in an industrial Ph.D. project or other projects with the ambition to create value in both camps simultaneously are debated based on the methodological map presented.

Key words: *Academia-practitioner gap, knowledge co-creation, mode 2 knowledge production, insider research, industrial Ph.D. program, research and business collaboration.*

¹ I have benefitted from insightful comments and questions made by my colleagues, co-presenters and workshop participants Kevin Flinn, Christina Berg Johansen, Rickie Moore, Flemming Poulfelt, Nurain Hassan Ibrahim, Daniel Valentine, Frank Bezzina, Michael Cowen, Alessa Witt, Jeong-Yang Park, Jørgen Gulddahl Rasmussen, Mahmoud Alajaty, Olusoyi Richard Ashaye and Damian Fearon.

PROLOGUE

The existence of a research-practice gap is well-established in academic literature (Lynes & Brown, 2011; Pearce, 2012; Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie & O'Brien, 2012; Bartunek & Egri, 2012). Concepts such as mode 2 knowledge production focusing on 'context-driven' research dealing with practical, real world problems (Ernø-Kjølhede, 1999; Gibbons et al., 1994) and the climate of increasing demands from governments to universities with regards to the "*ability of research groups to demonstrate co-operation with, or the expression of interest by, specified user or stakeholder groups.*" (Jacob & Hellström, 2003, p. 48) put pressure on academia to bridge the gap. Pressures for conducting research focusing on mutual value creation in both practice and academia also emanate from within academia itself. Scandinavian interactive research calls for demonstrable research object and practitioner value creation as an essential additional criterion when assessing research quality (Svensson, Ellström & Brulin, 2007). Other examples include suggestions advanced in a recent volume of The Academy of Management Perspectives for new ways of assessing researcher performance and impact factor based on the availability of their knowledge to practitioners as measured by number of non-academic web pages indexed by the Google search engine (Aguinis, Suarez-Gonzales, Lannelongue & Joo, 2012).

In a similar vein, CBS Professor Steen Thomsen in a column in the Danish business newspaper Børsen (October 5, 2012) argued that "*not all topics are relevant for growth and competitiveness regardless of the number of lengthy articles they may give rise to*" (author's translation) and suggested that one way of facilitating the creation of more (business) value for research funds would be to include practical business experience as a recruitment criterion for research positions. Further, the Carnegie2 report inquiring into sustainable management education in the post-Enron and financial crisis business environment, points to the need for actionable knowledge production in universities (Pearce, 2012; Pearce & Huang, 2012a, 2012b; Ireland, 2012; Bartunek & Egri, 2012) which according to Pearce & Huang (2012) is in decline to the detriment of sound use of resources. Martin (2012) estimates that the cost of producing non actionable A-journal articles is in the order of US\$600 million per year and argues for more case-based research generating interesting questions rather than mainly rigorous answers. A final example is drawn from the upcoming idea of phronetic social science where practice and practitioner value creation in the form of phronesis, practical wisdom on how to address and act on social problems in a particular context (Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schramm, 2012), is portrayed as a moral imperative of the researcher. Not addressing local challenges of the researched is likened by the colonialist anthropologist stealing the stories, natural resources etc. while enjoying the hospitality of "the natives," but without reciprocating (Sandercock & Attili, 2012, p. 147-148).

Despite the many voices favoring extensive academic-practitioner collaboration, there is also opposition. Although practitioners more readily embrace the idea of working closely together with academia, practitioners may be unable to muster the required efforts to integrate the researcher/research outcomes leaving the researcher in a Cinderella position in the empirical field household (Møller, forthcoming; Berg Johansen, 2012). Likewise, doing research in and with organizations from an (quasi-)insider position is a highly contested topic in academic circles. The academic stance is a grey zone ranging from "should be avoided at all cost" and "privileged data access is king". While some researchers are inclined to dismiss the possibility of creating valid (qualitative) research in an organization that the researcher is an insider or receive funding from altogether, others take a more balanced stance of a trade-off situation where the ability to capitalize on advantages and minimizes the potential side-effects is key (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009; Gummesson, 2000; Ry Nielsen & Repstad, 1993, 2004, 2006). The perhaps most detrimental academic opposition is manifested by

(American) A-journals reluctant to accept papers dealing with problems that are deemed peripheral to structural research gap as identified by academics and suspicious with regards to validity due to the researcher's insider position.

The research practice of practicable research – methodological inroads

So, there is an abundance of calls for the bridging of the practitioner-academia gap and advancing what in a circumscription of von Hippel's concept could be called 'research user-driven innovation' (Von Hippel, 2005) applied to an academic knowledge production in universities. There is less knowledge about how to address the relevant problématique put forth by opposing voices and/or achieve the paradise-like win-win situation where both society, practitioner and academia gain as suggested by proponents. This paper addresses the research practice of practicable research by drawing a map of methodological in-roads to doing research with a view to bridging the practitioner-research gap and producing what has been termed as 'actionable research' (Bartunek & Egri, 2012; Baldwin, Pierce, Jones & Farouk, 2011; Pearce & Huang, 2012a, 2012b, Ireland, 2012) by engaging closely with practitioners in the research process. The map includes three territories and methodological in-roads for doing research in close collaboration with practitioners with a view to mutual value creation and co-construction: Doing research in-between, in/with(in) and for organizations as illustrated in Figure 1:

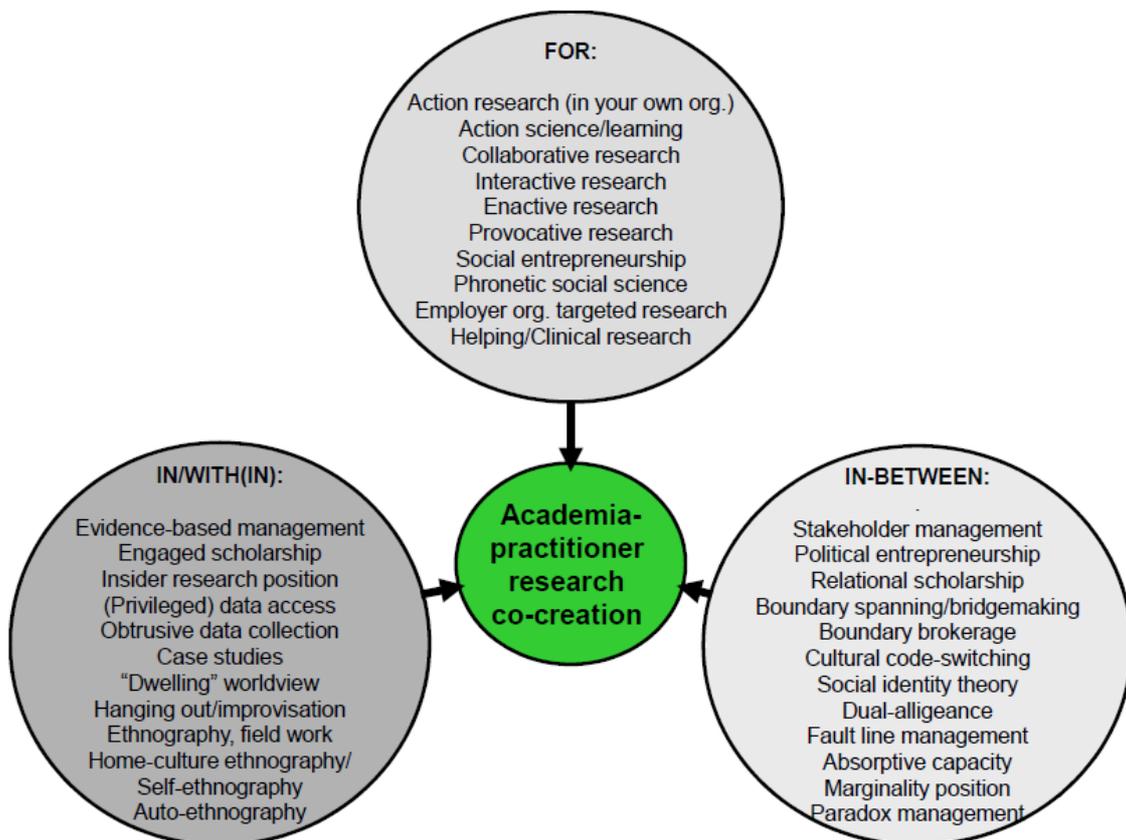


Figure 1: Methodological inroads to co-creating research in academia-practitioner relationships

The three avenues for academia-practitioner collaboration also lend the paper its structure in that a section of the paper is dedicated to each in-road following a presentation of a concrete instance of research-business collaboration, a single case study of an management

development project, the Group Mindset-development project in Solar A/S. Drawing upon this case, a position is carved out for doing research in/with(in) and for practice as well as in-between research and practice. The paper, then, addresses dilemmas and paradoxes inherent and typical of a social sciences industrial Ph.D. research design within management and organization studies, but which are shared with other collaborative, field-work intensive forms of research carried out by researchers and practitioners in concert with the ambition of producing actionable knowledge about management and leadership.

The arguments in this paper is based on empirical data from the practice of an on-going practitioner-academia research project under the auspices of the Danish industrial Ph.D. programme, a literature review supported by Ph.D. course activity as well as field notes of fruitful discussions in colloquia and sessions at the Academy of Management (2011 and 2012). Preliminary reflections have been further refined and reconsidered in a professional development workshop organized by the author at the British Academy Management's annual meeting 2012 entitled "Privileges and pitfalls of doing research IN and WITH organizations - dilemmas and strategies" (September 11, 2012)². The outcomes of the workshop were captured on white boards divided into three groups: methodological challenges, strategies for optimizing advantages and minimizing disadvantages, and useful references/theories/models all of which have informed this paper.

CASE: MUTUAL VALUE CO-CREATION IN AN INDUSTRIAL PH.D. FRAMEWORK – ‘GROUP MINDSET DEVELOPMENT’ IN SOLAR A/S

As a concrete example of doing research aimed at producing value for practitioners as well as academia by co-creating with practitioners, this section presents the concrete research field setting of an industrial Ph.D. set-up highlighting characteristics from the host and case company, Solar A/S, and the working conditions for producing actionable knowledge in a research gap. An industrial Ph.D. is bound by both formal and psychological contract (Schein, 1980; Rousseau, 1995) to do research *for* and *in/within* and organization. In addition, the industrial Ph.D. can be considered as doing research *in-between* organizations, as the researcher can be seen as a project manager that will have to deal with a number of stakeholders with different expectations and quality standards.

The industrial Ph.D. must balance academic requirements with practical business concerns of the project host company. This leads to a diversity of stakeholders whose expectations must be managed. The main stakeholders from academia and practice of the case research project are illustrated below:

² I am deeply grateful for insightful comments and questions made by my colleagues, co-presenters and workshop participants Kevin Flinn, Christina Berg Johansen, Rickie Moore, Flemming Poulfelt, Nurain Hassan Ibrahim, Daniel Valentine, Frank Bezzina, Michael Cowen, Alessa Witt, Jeong-Yang Park, Jørgen Gulddahl Rasmussen, Mahmoud Alajaty, Olusoyi Richard Ashaye and Damian Fearon.

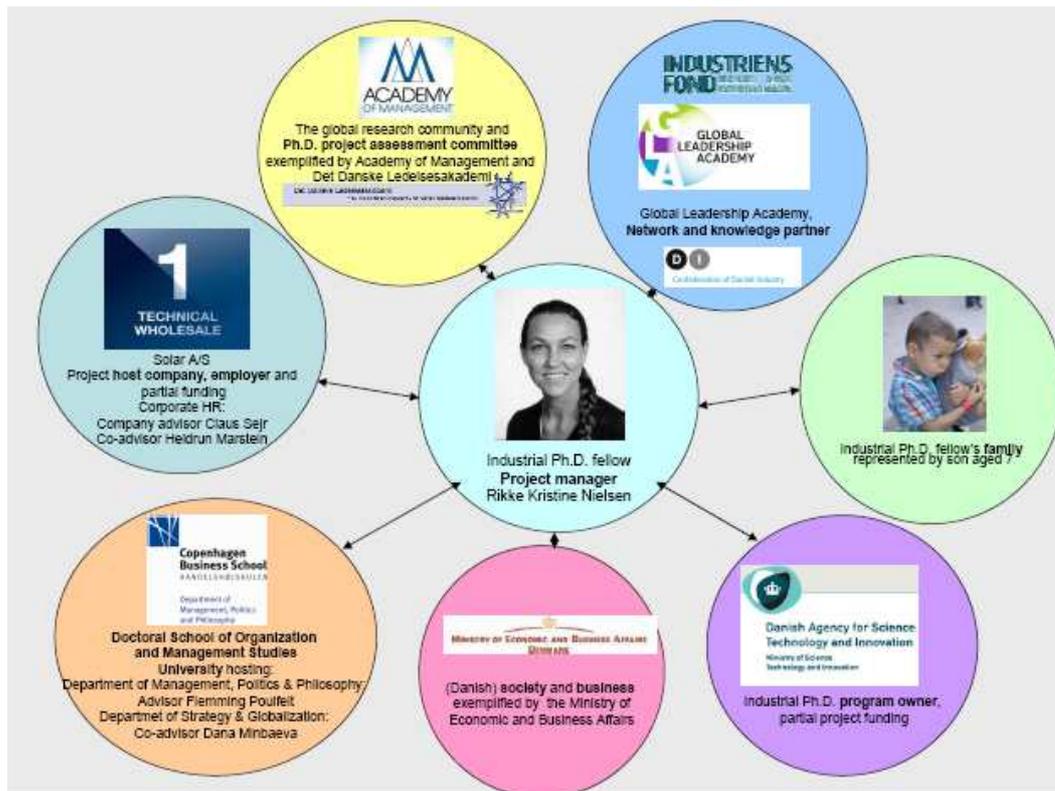


Figure 2: Main stakeholders of the ‘Group Mindset Development’ industrial Ph.D. research project

Each (group of) stakeholder(s) represents different resources, expectations and types of stakes in the industrial Ph.D.-project all of which should be mediated successfully throughout the project process to co-create value. In this paper, competencies for meeting expectations from academia represented by the university setting, Copenhagen Business School, and practice represented by the research project host company, Solar A/S, are at the center of attention in that it will be discussed what competencies the researcher as project manager and mediator should possess to successfully handle both-and, instead of either-or.

The formal research setting: The industrial Ph.D. program

An Industrial Ph.D. project such as the “Group Mindset Development”-project central to this paper is an industrially focused Ph.D. education. An industrial Ph.D. research project is conducted in cooperation between a private company, an Industrial PhD fellow, and a university³. The Danish industrial Ph.D.-program supports collaborative research projects jointly undertaken by a host company and a university. The Industrial Ph.D. fellow is employed by a private or public organisation which applies for subsidy from the Danish Agency for Science, Technology and Innovation. The fellow is employed by the company and paid a salary during the entire Industrial PhD education dividing her work between the university and the company over the three-year course of the project. As a consequence of being a formal employee on a salaried terms three year fixed-term contract, the researcher could hypothetically be fired with a month’s notice. This set-up may give rise to concerns about researcher independence. A decision to terminate the contract, however, must be

³ For further information on the Danish Industrial Ph.D. program, please consult: <http://en.fi.dk/funding/funding-opportunities/industrial-phd-programme/what-is-an-industrial-phd> (accessed November 16th, 2012).

based on violation of legislation – not in producing results that may be uncomfortable for the employer. Also of interest in connection with the employment relationship in the case of Solar, is the fact that the author has been reported as an insider to the Danish stock exchange and signed "Internal Rules concerning Solar A/S laid down in Stock Exchange legislation"⁴ In effect, the author cannot reveal information that might affect stock prices without notifying the Danish stock exchange. The researcher is not, however, a shareholder although part of the general bonus scheme in which all Solar employees may receive a yearly bonus contingent upon the overall performance of the Solar Group. To accommodate the researcher's obligation to publish and disseminate knowledge, the company accepts the position of the researcher when signing the research application and would be in violation of the legal framework if denying the researcher access to publishing results. That said, trust building a mutual consideration is a far stronger bulwark against researcher suppression than any legal contract.

The Industrial PhD Programme is authorised by the *Act on Technology and Innovation*, but the *Executive order on PhD education* guiding traditional Ph.D. education is also part of the legislative framework. Apart from the fact the industrial Ph.D. is employed in the project host company while merely enrolled in a university, the main difference between industrial Ph.D.'s and traditional Ph.D.'s is that industrial Ph.D.'s have no teaching obligation and instead have a knowledge dissemination obligation in the host company as well and to the wider business community. Research quality assessment criteria are the same as for traditional Ph.D.'s, leading to an interesting chain of command: The final project outcome evaluators are academic (assessment committee), while business interests provide the primary source of funding and (within limits) decide about the employment relationship. The structure and values guiding the Danish industrial Ph.D. program, places the industrial Ph.D. researcher at the intersection where "publish or perish" meets with the discourse of "research to invoice" and practical profit concerns. The industrial Ph.D. is born to span the academia-practitioner divide, being an outsider and newcomer that come to enjoy full membership and gradual socialization in to field as an insider, but not enjoying complete membership. Although these working conditions are particular to (qualitative) social science industrial Ph.D.s, they are shared with other collaborative, field-work intensive forms of research carried out by researchers and practitioners in concert with the ambition of producing actionable knowledge about management and leadership.

The case of "Group Mindset Development" in Solar A/S

The practitioner engagement research project in focus in this paper is a study of the international strategy execution challenges faced by management in the Solar Group A/S. This industrial Ph.D. research project is conceived of as a single case study, the project host company, and so the design operates within the notion on intrinsic casework (Stake, 1998, p. 446). The exploration of the research question was framed in a research design relying on qualitative data as primary empirical source, but the study also draws on (existing) quantitative data sources in the host company as well. As such, a mixed methods approach is intended combining qualitative data gathered through participant observation, tape recorded (focus group) interviews, photographs/photo elicitation, video recorded workshops with key informants, and archival material with quantitative data gathered through a survey of 400 managers as well as archival survey data from the company. The diversity of data types

⁴ Cf. the Danish Securities Trading Act as well as rules laid down by the NASDAQ OMX Copenhagen A/S in "Rules for issuers of shares"; http://www.nasdaqomx.com/digitalAssets/76/76090_regler_for_udstedere_af_aktier_gldende_fra_1_oktober_2011.pdf (accessed November 16th, 2012).

mirrors the researcher's privileged position as an insider and opens up the possibility of a certain degree of data triangulation (Jick, 1979) and data comparison over time.

Solar A/S (previously Aktieselskabet Nordisk Solar Compagni) was established in 1919 and listed on the Copenhagen Stock Exchange in 1953. Although widely unknown to the general public, Solar is Denmark's thirty sixth largest corporation measured on revenue⁵. The company is one of Northern Europe's leading technical wholesalers within electrical, heating, plumbing, security, energy and ventilation products. Operating in a business-to-business market, the typical customer is small and medium sized businesses within plumbing or electrical installation, but larger industrial clients also represent a significant source of revenue. The group, which is based in Kolding in southwestern Denmark some 230 km from the Danish capital of Copenhagen, has subsidiaries operating under the Solar brand in Denmark incl. the Faroe Islands, Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands ('key markets'); Germany, Austria, Belgium and Poland ('challenger markets'). Furthermore, Solar's Aurora Group, working in consumer electronics, operates in Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland. It employs a total of approximately 4,000 people; Denmark is the enterprise in which Solar has the most employees (29%), while the Netherlands is the largest foreign subsidiary (24%).

In the autumn of 2010 in collaboration with corporate HR, the Solar Management Team consisting of top management heads of corporate staff departments and subsidiary directors identified a need for a new type of leadership in the company, looking to improve the executional agility of the organization with regards to its business strategy. The "#1 in Technical Wholesale"-strategy for the current strategy period running from 2010-2015 is operationalized in company programs, and the initiative at the center of attention with regards to mindset development efforts is concerned with *"defining new ways of working across countries and functions"* and *"the introduction of Solar Business Academy [a corporate academy, ed.]"*. An accentuation of the corporate punch line "Stronger together", the term *group mindset* was coined by top management in Solar to characterize the desired new ways of working in general and a style of management and leadership in Solar in particular: *"Group mindset is our way of thinking about what is best for Solar in everything we do and ensure that our initiatives and decisions help our colleagues across Solar."* (cf. Solar Management workshop, Sept. 2010). How group mindset was to be made concrete and realized remained a black box at the time, and it was left to corporate HR to make suggestions. As no internal resources were available at the time and because no external consultants seemed to offer service of the kind of services in demand, the idea of cooperating with academia in the form of an in-house researcher emerged.

The collaborative partners of the research project were brought together by a joint Danish Confederation of Industry and Copenhagen Business School (CBS) initiative, Global Leadership Academy, looking to establish industrial Ph.D. projects in academy member companies such as Solar to enhance academy knowledge creation and membership value (cf. Figure 2 above: Main stakeholders of the 'Group Mindset Development' industrial Ph.D. research project). Based on his degree of familiarity with both the Solar HR challenges and career wishes of a relevant research candidate, Professor Flemming Poulfelt of the Department of Management, Politics & Philosophy (CBS), academic partner of the Global Leadership Academy, set up a meeting between the author and Corporate Strategic HR Manager Claus Sejr in October 2010. The initial meeting hosted by professor Poulfelt was a project ground zero in that the meeting can be likened to a blind date where the parties had no prior knowledge of each other. A successful first meeting led to several other meetings between the prospective industrial Ph.D. student and HR representatives from the host

⁵ "Guld 1000"-survey of Denmark's 1000 biggest companies, Berlingske Nyhedsmagasinet, October 12th, 2011.

company about a concretization of the challenges experienced by HR and top management with the development of “group mindset.” This process also included debates between student and university advisors of Global Leadership Academy on the academic framing of these challenges within existing bodies of theoretical knowledge and academic conversations (Huff, 1999, 2009).

Problem discovery and joint problem formulation

In the course of the dialogue with HR representatives, it emerged that Solar’s most urgent global leadership challenges was to build up an organization that moves from being primarily local with an international perspective to being an organization working globally and with a group mindset in order to harvest the maximum value for the Solar Group: *“As Solar is becoming even more international and global we see the need for capturing a leadership style where the strategic understanding, the leadership capabilities and the execution methods are grounded in a group mindset”* (Internal Solar correspondence with Corporate Strategic HR Manager Claus Sejr, December 2010). Approaching the strategy process and formulation of strategic programs for the last half of the current strategy period, 2013-2015, corporate HR sought answers to a number of questions regarding the development of group mindset to support business strategy execution:

- What does a group mindset actually consist of in Solar?
- What drives group mindset amongst Solar leaders and in the organization?
- Is the current group mindset coherent with global development?
- What are the most important obstacles for developing a group mindset?
- How are specified “drivers” transformed into group leadership behavior?
- How can the development of a group mindset be monitored in daily behavior?

Joint problem and research interest formulation did not, however, preclude more traditional techniques for generating interesting research that conquers new territory and generate theory, such as for instance imagery as a trick of the trade to cover blind spots and new angles (Becker, 1998) and question-answer dialectic as a means of generating interesting questions (Gadamer, 2004)⁶. In fact, it can be argued that when the formulation of the research question has been done in collaboration with practitioners, the use of such techniques are particularly important with regards to producing research that not only solves a practical problem for which practitioners do not have relevant methodology at hand, but also makes an academic contribution. Working with the ideas of Gadamer and Becker just mentioned in combination with the knowledge interests of the host company, what could be construed of as a joint ‘research-practitioner AIDA-model’ (Strong, 1925) specifying “Attention, Interest, Desire, Action” of each group of stakeholders was put together to get an overview of common grounds, i.e. where practitioner concerns could be placed in a research gap, to inform the research question.

The joint practitioner-researcher problem formulation and project design phase lasted approximately six months by which time a formal research application was produced incorporating both practitioner wishes as well as review comments from academic partners. By the end of March 2011, the research project application was approved by the Danish Agency for Science Technology and Innovation and the Doctoral School of Organization & Management Studies, Copenhagen Business School, based on the following research question: *“How does collective global mindset development mediate international business*

⁶ At later stages of analysis, strategies for securing theoretical contribution in addition to locally actionable knowledge could include use of disciplined imagination as a method of theory generation (Weick, 2002), metaphors as scaffolds of disciplined imagination (Cornelissen, 2006), or classical grounded theory approaches (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

strategy and strategy execution? And how can companies promote the actual enactment of strategy execution through leadership mindset development?” The outcome of the application process was the initiation of a “Group Mindset Development”-research project aimed at creating knowledge to support the development of an organizational mindset supporting international strategy implementation through leadership development activities “The expectations for the project are to have a dynamic process, where we in a controlled and scientific way get some concrete answers and suggestions the above questions. It is also important for Solarians to create a value adding integration of the project into the leadership development program at Solar Business Academy known as Group Leadership Program (GLP), so we along the way can adjust and test the findings of the project and the actual curriculum of the training program” (Internal correspondence, Claus Sejr, December 2010)⁷. Framed within Van de Ven’s (2007) overview of research positions in research carried out in engagement with practitioners, the Group Mindset Development can be positioned between quadrants 2 and 4 in the matrix below as marked with the red double arrow, in that tools for action and intervention is part of the desired research outcome, but no direct intervention cycles are foreseen in the course of the research project:

		Research Question/Purpose	
		To Describe/Explain	To Design/Intervene
Research Perspective	Detached Outside	Basic Science With Stakeholder Advice 1	Policy/Design Science Evaluation Research For Professional Practice 3
	Attached Inside	Co-Produce Knowledge With Collaborators 2	Action/Intervention Research For a Client 4

↔

Figure 3: Research purposes matrix (Van de Ven, 2007)

Global mindset as a dynamic capability applied to strategy execution

Theoretically, the project explores the idea that organizational global mindset (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Paul, 2000; Javidan & Teagarden, 2011) in the international corporation may be seen as a dynamic managerial capability, i.e. an organizational meta-competence that allows the organization to re-group organizational core capabilities in a way that facilitates international efficiency (Teece, 2011; Dosi, Nelson & Winter, 2000; Helfat, Finkelstein, Mitchell, Peteraf, Singh, Teece & Winter, 2007). This is explored looking at a particular instance of resource orchestration and recombination, namely that of execution of strategic change (Kaplan & Norton, 2005, 2009; Johnson, 2004). A central argument in this

⁷ Concrete examples of integration so far includes incorporation of group mindset into the recently formulated “Solar Learning Principles Framework” spelling out the Solar view on internal employer branding and competence development as well as the formulation of the Solar employer brand.

respect is how organizational global mindset is much broader and multi-faceted than traditional cross-cultural understanding (Chatterjee, 2005; Erwee, 2007; Levy, Beechler, Taylor & Boyacigiller, 2007; Lane, Maznevski, DiStefano & Dietz, 2009), notably in terms of handling complexity and paradox inherent in international strategy execution. To ease the practical implementation of project outcomes, the development of global mindset as an organizational competence that transcends the individual manager is linked to individual managers' competencies and the potential for targeting global mindset leadership development efforts to different groups of managers depending on the complexity they face (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2001, 2002, 2008; Ghemawat, 2011).

The focus in this paper, however, is not on the theoretical intricacies of dynamic capabilities, global mindset or strategy execution as such. The industrial Ph.D. project is used as a case example of a social science research project primarily using qualitative data carried out in close collaboration with practitioners with the aim of creating value for both academia and practice. In the following, a map of the research co-creation territory is drawn (cf. Figure 1 above, "Methodological inroads to co-creating research in academia-practitioner relationships") characterizing research done in close engagement with practice and a view to mutual value creation as doing research in/with(in), for, and in-between organizations.

DOING RESEARCH *IN AND WITH(IN)* ORGANIZATIONS

Doing research in and from within organizations covers a broad range of research designs whose common denominator is data collection from inside the field and mainly through obtrusive techniques. As such, most qualitative studies could be said to fall in this category. Of particular concern here, though, is how an insider position can be defended an optimized when the researcher is not only visiting for data collection purposes, but is part of the organizational field such as is the case in an industrial Ph.D. project. The concerns discussed in this section are made against the backdrop of the industrial Ph.D. project in Solar A/S, but could be considered of interest to all researchers doing research from within organisations. A common challenge of doing research in and from within is to frame research projects in such a way that being an insider is not necessarily an insurmountable problem (Parry, 1992; Alvesson, 2003; Coghlan & Brannick, 2009), but rather a complex position to be made the most of. In the following, pitfalls and privileges of insider research and some possible counter-strategies are presented followed by a discussion of the nature of the insider role of an industrial Ph.D.

Where's the fire? Pitfalls of insider research and some remedies

One of the most advocated dangers of doing insider research is the fact that an immersed and integrated insider may be inhibited in being critical towards the field. Lack of capacity to critically evaluate the investigated field may stem from a (too) strong identification with the field and the researcher's "going native" and developing organizational "snow blindness." Also, the researcher may engage in self-censorship, consciously or unconsciously withholding critical information out of misunderstood consideration for the persons affiliated with the activities deemed critical or due to fear that the cooperative atmosphere between field and researcher may suffer subsequently (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009; Coghlan, 2007; Ry Nielsen & Repstad 1993, 2004, 2006).

All of these biases are to some extent associated with qualitative research methodologies that by their very nature are used out with the active participation of or other types of assistance from field setting members. Insiders - as all other (qualitative) researchers of the

social world - have to deal effectively with the fact that human memory and sense-making are biased and contextual. Miles & Huberman observe with regards to qualitative data analysis that *"Explanations offered in daily life has many flaws – and so do researchers' explanations"* (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 144). To underscore this point, Miles & Huberman site various research results that testify to the fallibility of sense-making processes. Social psychology and social cognition theory offer one group of explanations for this phenomenon, demonstrating how the functioning of the human brain may exclude humans (including researchers) from experiencing the world 1:1 in that our sense-making process is influenced by cognition (e.g. mindset, schemas), motivation (e.g. goals, desires) and affect (e.g. emotions) (Kunda, 1999). In effect, when we observe the social world, we do not merely watch an objective world unfold before our eyes; rather we take part in shaping our own reality. While this holds true for all sense-making processes it is especially pertinent with regards to the social world where many behaviors and interpersonal situations can be ambiguous. So, researchers' attention, perceptions and not least memories of events in the field (and elsewhere) are subject to biases, simplifications and ongoing reinterpretations. With regards to doing research from an insider perspective it also highlights that this is a condition shared by all qualitative researchers studying the social world regardless of vantage point – the insider researchers is not *more* or *less* likely, but rather as likely subject to these influences as other qualitative researchers.

Perceiving and making sense of the social world from the outside or inside of the social world under study is a complicated cognition process influenced, biased and colored by a number of internal and external factors. Social cognition theory advocates that our knowledge of the multifaceted nature of influences on the human sense-making process should *"leave us a little more humble about the veracity of our interpretations and memories, a little more open to dissenting opinions, and a little more cautious in our judgments and decisions"* (Kunda, 1999, p. 6). However, even if producing knowledge about our social surroundings is challenging, observational studies and other types of qualitative research have an irreplaceable function as the study of human relationships in progress that is studied in real-time as they unfold. "Physics envy" (Clegg, 2002) seems an unproductive point of departure for studying the social world qualitatively; a productive vantage point would include proceeding with caution and openness, trying to create the highest possible degree of transparency in research design and presentation in order to be able to benefit from a second (and third, fourth...) opinion from detached outsiders. One avenue of cautious engagement is to pursue what in social cognition theory is known as "accuracy goals" leading to cognitive processes characterized by fact checking and quality assurance and dedication to reach an *accurate* goal, not a *particular* goal. Avenues for achieving this end in as insider research setting in discussed next.

Reflexive knowledge production

However, accuracy goals only *"serve the purpose of keeping researcher biases in check if paired with relevant and superior reasoning strategies"* (Kunda, 1999, p. 237). So, methodological choices will have to meet this requirement by creating transparency and involvement of different opinions. Following this line of reasoning, fact probing and sharing of ideas through written knowledge production are types of "relevant and superior" self-check strategies allowing the researcher as well as other internal and external audiences to inspect the thoughts of the researcher. David Sims emphasizes that *"good intellectual work in the study of people in organizations engages in knowledge-production and self-production simultaneously, and this is what reflexive knowledge production means"* (Sims in Löwsted & Stjernberg, 2006, p. 39). Sims asserts that an important part of academic writing process is to engage in research conversations (Huff, 1999, 2009) and dialogue with oneself and relevant others in that writing allows us to inspect our own thought processes as well as

allows others to do so which in turn improve the quality of our thinking. In this project, writing and making presentations for internal and external audiences, both practical and academic is been part of the knowledge dissemination obligation of the industrial Ph.D.⁸.

Examples of knowledge dissemination fora used in the case of the 'Group Mindset Development'-project for fact probing and member checks include communities such as Solar Management Team (CEO, CFO, corporate and subsidiary managers), HR departments in Solar, the Solar corporate academy's leadership development scheme, Group Leadership Program, Corporate Communications (offline and online), Global Leadership Academy (the whole group of member companies as well as the global pharmaceutical company Lundbeck in particular), articles in mass circulation newspapers (e.g. columns for Jyllands-Posten⁹), the Danish Academy of Management annual meeting 2011, Professional Development Workshop (PDW) at the British Academy of Management 2012 conference and the industrial Ph.D. programme committee¹⁰. Fact probing and sharing of ideas through written knowledge production can be seen and an internal member check and self-check strategy allowing the researcher as well as other internal (practitioner) audiences to inspect the thoughts of the researcher while at the same time opening up to reactions from (academic) external others. While access to member check fora is part and parcel of the case study research setting (the industrial Ph.D. has a dissemination obligation), negotiating access to and active use of such fora can be considered central to safeguarding validity of other research projects carried out from a field immersion position.

In addition to bringing in the opinions of external communities such as the Global Leadership Academy and academic colleagues, this study also works with internal member checks carried out on an on-going basis as can be gathered from the different Solar knowledge dissemination fora listed in the paragraph above. The general purpose of member checks is to keep the researcher's blind spots in check by checking facts and interpretations of data with members and informants as has been done in this study by creating a number of organizational probing fora and feedback loops in the organization. While these internal member checks can be helpful in safe guarding the validity of the data from researcher bias, they may also be helpful in uncovering impression management behaviour (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989) in data gathered in different parts of the organization. In order for internal membership checks to work for the pinpointing of impression management, the membership check must be done with both the particular group under study (has the researcher understood the informant correctly?), but also from internal others that may be more attuned to internal politics and power struggles to offer a different view (how are the data coloured by local marketing efforts?). Strategies for minimizing impression management behaviour in the first place include maximization of public data gathering; i.e. seek to avoid impression management behaviour of managers when interviewed one-on-one by gathering data in settings where the informants are busy doing others thing (and impressing other people than the researcher) or getting informants off-site¹¹.

Complete outsiders in external communities of practice (Wenger, 1998)¹² as well as internal complete members of the field are participating in quality assurance throughout the entire

⁸ Industrial Ph.Ds. do not have a teaching obligation, instead they have a knowledge dissemination obligation that requires them to communicate knowledge and results to the industrial Ph.D. host organization and the wider business community and public.

⁹ Jyllands-Posten is one of the three main Danish morning newspapers. Columns have appeared in the business section 4-5 times a year.

¹⁰ The Industrial PhD Programme Committee (EFU) is appointed by the Danish Council for Technology and Innovation (RTI) and currently numbers 25 members. It is the job of the Committee to evaluate Industrial PhD applications and recommend the assessment (approval/conditional approval/rejection) to the Danish Council for Technology and Innovation.

¹¹ Advice given in Professional Development Workshop at Academy of Management annual meeting San Antonio 2012 by Van Maanen.

¹² The concept of communities of practice stresses that learning is a social phenomenon and learning occurs through social participation. Wenger explains that "*Participation here refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with*

research process. As such, the Group Mindset Development-project operates with research conditions similar to insider-outsider research design. A well-conducted insider/outside research design may result in the uniquely insightful vantage of the third person (Björkman & Sundgren, 2005; Coghlan & Brannick, 2009) and as such carve out a path for securing external “reality checks”. Combining an insider role with an outsider position may be approached in different manners. Gioia, Price, Hamilton & Thomas (2010) operate with an insider-outsider research design where insider researchers team up with outsider researchers to gain a detached second opinion in their data analysis, while Bartunek and Louis (1996) have described insider/outside team research as joint relationships between outsider researchers and setting members. The case study of the Group Mindset Development-project does not operate with permanently designated outsider researchers, and the research conditions resemble the Bartunek & Louis-approach using internal and external checks and balances as an integral part of the research methodology. Since taping and transcribing interviews, photos, and video recordings are types of data gathering techniques whose results more easily lend themselves to a “second opinion” from an outsider, this data types have been given special focus in the data collection process. In summary, the researcher position vis-à-vis the field of study closely resembles that of Björkman and Sundgren (2005), remarking that “*the main researchers are insiders, partially adapting to the outsider role, as each researcher is participating in an external community of inquiry (Argyris et al., 1985), the research community, and is constantly using “complete outsiders” from this society to challenge insider assumptions*” (p. 401).

Finally, the privileged access position of the insider researcher may also mean that secondary data of a quantitative nature are available enabling the researcher to work with mixed methods, data triangulation and documentation from quantitative sources of existing data. In the Group Mindset Development-project, existing longitudinal data from internal performance surveys are activated to add perspective to qualitative findings.

Privileged access

On the positive side of insider research, privileged data access is often cited as an obvious advantage (Ry Nielsen & Repstad, 1993, 2004, 2006; Coghlan & Brannick, 2009; Coghlan, 2007). On a continuum of data gathering methods ranging from obtrusive to non-obtrusive¹³, the qualitative insider researcher is placed in the obtrusive end, but as an insider researcher she has privileged – if not uninhibited - access to both types of data. The insider researcher may be in a privileged position with regards to access to creating her own data through obtrusive channels (observations, interviews etc.), but as Sääntti observes commenting on his own experience as an insider researcher: “*Naturally the organizational position of an inside researcher influences the amount of research materials available. On the other hand an organization’s openness to ‘neutral’ external interviewers may sometimes be broader*” (Sääntti, 2011, p. 1). In addition to data collection designed for a specific purpose, the insider researcher has access to a variety of unobtrusive, secondary data sources in that she has passwords for databases and intranet, as well as access to archival data such as minutes, corporate surveys etc. Activation of such material is time consuming but can give the researcher information that she herself would have never thought of asking for. This is much in the same what that “hanging out” (Dingwall, 1997), gives the researcher access to experiencing the social world that she did not think of as data collection opportunities.

certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the practices of social communities and constructing identities in relation to these communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 4).

¹³Unobtrusive methods do not include the direct elicitation of data from the research subjects and so the researcher observes without the awareness of the participants (Montgomery & Duck, 1993); the researcher refrains from interacting with subjects and try to find indirect ways to obtain the necessary data. Unobtrusive data sources include a diverse group of sources such as garbage, graffiti, surveillance camera footage or web traffic as well as more conventional sources such as published statistics.

Hanging out (also sometimes referred to as “hanging around”) can be described as an umbrella term for being physically (or virtually) present with no particular data collection agenda in the organization as one of three archetypical ways of doing social research: *”I once heard a distinguished anthropologist say something that I have shamelessly plagiarized ever since. ‘There are’, he declared, ‘only two basic methods of social research. One is called ‘asking questions,’ and the other is called ‘hanging out’”. Since anthropologist traditionally study non-literate societies, sociologists might want to add a third methods: ‘reading the papers’. All human beings have used pretty much the same methods to find out about the social world around them ever since our species came down from the trees”* (Dingwall, 1997, p.52-53). The advantage of hanging around from a data collection perspective is nicely summarized by Lofland observing on the role of “hanging around” in her studies of urban life: *“Since I’m “passing” as someone who is simply hanging about in public, I get engaged by others in interaction, though I have rarely initiated it myself. . . .A lot of my data have come from situations in which I was out in public for non-research purposes. That is, I watch myself acting in public and note what I do and what others do vis-a-vis me, just as if I were someone else. So, I guess you could say that I move from being the largely uninvolved observer to the fully involved participant observer... Obviously, I don’t take myself as a stand-in for “everywoman,” but neither do I think my reactions are likely to be that peculiar”* (quoted in Adler & Adler, 1994, p. 379).

Although Lofland’s field of study is public spaces (Lofland, 2006), a similar argument can be made about hanging around “corporate spaces” such as Solar: The researcher meets with organizational members in the canteen, as participants in seminars and presentations and establish contact for no particular reason thus getting access to different information than the one, she purposefully seek to discover. The chance and emergent nature of such encounters mirrors another aspect of “hanging out”. Barrett (1998) highlights “hanging out” as one of seven characteristics of organizational improvisation. In this sense, spending time in the field without a preconceived plan is a way of pursuing your luck as a researcher, participating in the creation of situations that may prove indeed instructive and educational as an organization or a researcher. It is noteworthy, however, that Barrett stresses the mutual presence of commitment to “hanging out” and six other factors¹⁴ in order for this strategy to be beneficial with regards to creativity and learning - mere presence will not do the trick.

Limitations and partial access

So, conventional wisdom has it that the insider researcher is privileged in terms of access to the field and to rich data and hence in an advanced position for contributing with cases that raise interesting questions, not merely rigorous answers (Martin, 2012). Access to not only rich, but also different types of data than mainstream research (e.g. MBA-student e-surveys, publicly accessible statistics databases, etc.), was also highlighted as one of the main advantages of insider research by participants and the British Academy of Management workshop (Cardiff, September 2012). At the same time, the insider is likely to experience data overload if the relationship between research and field is a trusting one and must take precautions to avoid what could be termed ‘DBD’ (death-by-data) due to the massive

¹⁴ In total, Barrett (1998) sites the following seven factors:

1. Provocative competence: deliberate efforts to interrupt habit patterns;
2. Embracing errors as a source of learning;
3. Shared orientation toward minimal structures that allow maximum flexibility;
4. Distributed task: continual negotiation and dialogue toward dynamic synchronization;
5. Reliance on retrospective sense-making;
6. “Hanging out”: membership in a community of practice
7. Taking turns soloing and supporting

amounts of data coming the researcher's way. Furthermore, organizational members may contact the in-house researcher with data that they find promising and relevant for the research project – a situation common to the case of the industrial Ph.D. research project is Solar A/S. Such 'unsolicited data' have to be handled or rejected with care in order not to violate the trust and commitment (and power struggles) that they represent. A mutually agreed upon research question is a necessary tool for dismissing – or getting access – to data in a way that does not step unnecessarily on organizational members' toes.

Compared to traditional outsider research, an insider is in a beneficial position to obtaining data, but an insider position does not equal uninhibited total access, however. The insider may inherit the entry points of her host unit which may not grant full access (Ry Nielsen & Repstad, 1993, 2004, 2006; Coghlan & Brannick, 2009; Coghlan, 2007). Although insiders may be in pole position with regards to data access this is only one side of the coin in that smooth primary access is not necessarily accompanied by unhindered secondary access. Insider action researchers Björkman & Sundgren observe that: "*Primary access is defined as the ability to get into the organization and be allowed to undertake research. In addition, secondary access refers to the opportunities to have access to specific parts of the organization that are relevant for one's research. This can be a problem even for the insider researcher.*" (Björkman & Sundgren, 2005, p. 401). Also, being close to data may give the researcher the impression that one already knows "all the answers".

Furthermore, the host organization is not a harmonious entity, but includes a variety of agendas and ways of thinking about what is interesting; especially with regards to being interested in generating knowledge that challenges established notions of what is appropriate action and enrich the conversations in the organization. When, for instance, the HR-function is the entry-point for the researcher, a specific mindset and interest is 'inherited' affecting the way the researcher can approach the organization, compared e.g. to anchoring it in more operational functions in the organization (Bevort, 2012). The researcher's intra-organizational point of departure affects the researcher's access to other parts of the organization or color inquiries made with the host department's values in the eyes of beholders elsewhere in the organization. Being affiliated with a corporate staff function the researcher may be perceived of as a representative of a "dominating logic" (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986) emanating from the Danish HQ (being a Dane is also not helpful in this respect as assumed cultural affinity may emphasize the 'corporateness' of the researcher and as one organizational field member emphasized on our first meeting: "*HQ needs to remember that best practice does not equal corporate practice,*" (Field notes, Solar Group Leadership Development Program, May 2011).

Another aspect to be reckoned with is "similarity bias", the propensity to rather share knowledge with persons of the same national cultural affiliation or functional background, observed in the knowledge management literature (Mäkelä, Andersson & Seppälä, 2012). As an illustration, the researcher's departure from corporate HR in Solar inhabited by Scandinavians and being a native Dane, the researcher is likely to share more knowledge with persons from HR functions as well as other Danes/Norwegians than for instance Solar representatives from Poland or the sales function. An active effort to build interpersonal-level relationships across unit-level boundaries is advanced as one way of overcoming the liability of foreignness between different units in MNCs (such as Solar) and will be used in the current research setting as a strategy for getting access to different voices internally in the host company.

The industrial Ph.D. researcher – in or out?

Continuing from this point of departure, the industrial Ph.D. can be described as doing research in and from within (organizational boundaries) and in a position to look out for many of the same lurking dangers as other researchers doing research from a field immersion position. It is debatable, however, if and in what way the industrial Ph.D. or other field immersion researchers can be considered an insiders. At first glance it may seem obvious that for instance the present industrial Ph.D. project framework can be characterized as a research setting where the researcher is doing research in her own organization. Owing to the fact that an industrial Ph.D. is employed by the field under study and in the case of the “Group Mindset”-project is legally defined as insider vis-à-vis stock market regulations, research certainly is conducted from a membership perspective.

The question is, however, if being inside in an employment relationship actually qualifies an organization to be considered the researcher’s own? According to the primary authority on doing collaborative research in the researcher’s own organization, Coghlan & Brannick (2009), research can be characterised as being done in your own organization when the researcher is a “complete member.” Complete membership refers to “*being a full member of your organization and wanting to remain a member within the desired career path when the research is completed*” (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009, p. 101). Seen from this vantage point, the researcher position in the “Group Mindset Development”-project cannot be characterised as complete membership: Although employed in the company, the fixed term nature of the employment contract does not include an open-ended commitment and career path. The prospect that “*you might want to become a Solarian [the preferred internal mode of referring to Solar employees, ed.] yourself one fine day...*” has been hinted at, but no concrete commitments has been made. Furthermore, the advantages and disadvantages of crossing over from “normal” employee to “internal researcher” common to researchers inquiring from a complete membership position (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009) has not been part of the research experience. The researcher position and experience can be characterised more as that of organizational entry as organizational newcomer subject to socialization processes (Morrison, 1993)¹⁵. Looking back at the first year and a half of the project at the time of writing, much time has been spent “hanging out” (Dingwall, 1997), being set up in computer systems and other practical formalities of being introduced as a new employee, stakeholder management and trust building. Of course, over time the researcher is socialized more to the company culture and habitus and change status from newcomer to one of the “in-group” and so the researcher can benefit from actively disengaging at times from the field and network with non-field members to hold on to the newcomer experience.

As no commitment to remain a member within the desired career path when the research is completed has been made, the research project host company will have to reckon with the fact that long-term implementation of the research project outcomes will be taken care of internally. But the researcher is not only a likely organizational outsider *after* the completion of the research project. The research project framework in the “Group Mindset Development”-project also distinguishes itself from “complete membership” in that research projects undertaken within the boundaries of an employment relationship often take their point of departure in an employment relationship prior to project start which is not the case in this project. Having virtually never heard of the company before, the researcher in the case company started from scratch. This means that the researcher had not been socialized into

¹⁵ “Organizational socialization is generally defined as the process whereby newcomers learn the behaviours and attitudes necessary for assuming roles in an organization (Fisher, 1986; Van Maanen, 1976; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).” Morrison, E. W. (1993): Newcomer Information Seeking: Exploring Types, Sources, and Outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal*, 1993, Vol. 36. No- 3, 557-589, p. 557.

the Solar culture prior to project start and did not have to free herself from existing job role expectations dating back from before project start. The industrial Ph.D. set-up in this project, then, has no “before and after”-complete membership and can be characterised as full membership only for the duration of the project.

In a similar vein, the researcher does not qualify as “förtroenhetsforskare” defined as a person with “*handlingsbaserad och/eller långvarig intellektuell och reflekterad erfarenhet från en specifik domän, och som avser studera en specifik företeelse inom, eller i nära anslutning till, denna domän...*” (Johannisson, Gunnarsson & Stjernberg, 2008, p. 313). As a consequence, anchoring the results of the research project in the organization must be a priority during the research project if the outcome of the research project is not to be forgotten upon the completion of the research project as no internal resource is present to implement further and realize the full value. In this respect the idea of “political entrepreneurship” can be seen a lever for enabling value realization and enabling change: “*On a generic level, we define political entrepreneurship as the exploitation of opportunities in order to allocate scarce resources to outcomes and preferences*” (Björkman & Sundgren, 2005, p. 403). In order to create sustainable insider research-driven change, Björkman and Sundgren suggest that the political entrepreneur is necessary “create and focus attention, resources, and interest” (Björkman & Sundgren, 2005, p. 403) in the organization. Their findings indicate that a political entrepreneurship repertoire consisting of capabilities to find red-hot issues, i.e. researching on pressing matters of the host organization, for one's research, to use the inside of the organization in the research efforts, to use and diffuse the research results, and, finally, to work on the positioning of one's relational platform is beneficial for sustainability. Reporting and member checking with internal groups in the field setting is one possible avenue of anchoring ideas and knowledge in the organization as the research project comes along instead of waiting to present a grand narrative at the end which is likely to become a dead narrative...

Do organizations have insides and outsides?

Thus far it has been assumed that the industrial Ph.D. is an insider in the host company organization and as such should make the most of privileged access while trying to minimize “closeness bias”. But is it meaningful and helpful to portray organizations as entities with insides and outsides? The distinction between insider and outsider research presupposes that organizations have insides and outsides – a distinction which may not hold true for boundaryless organizations in global, hypercompetitive markets. A view of organization as an “open system” is to view the organization as an integrated behavioural system imbedded in, but constantly influencing and being influenced, by the environment (Argyris, 1966). This traditional notion of the open organization has been complemented by the more recent idea of the boundaryless organization: “*A boundaryless company is less like a fortress and more like a living organism. Its borders, along vertical, horizontal, external, and geographic dimensions, are like membranes--strong enough to provide shape and definition but permeable enough to permit an easy flow of information and ideas to all parts of the firm. Its form is not fixed and static. Over time, the vertical boundaries may change so that there fewer levels of managers. The horizontal boundaries may shift so that functions are defined or departments brought together in new ways. The external boundaries may evolve as different kinds of partnerships are formed with suppliers and customers*” (Ashkenas, 1999, p. 6). The idea of the limitless firm questions the division between research done from the inside or outside of organization. The notion of an insider presupposes that there is an inside and an outside to organisations. The distinctions between insiders and outsiders, then, persist only for as long as we maintain that there are clear boundaries around the

organizational field of study. If no boundaries exist or the organization is boundaryless, distinguishing insiders from outsiders becomes problematic.

Furthermore, departing from a realist notion of the open, boundaryless organization to a more constructivist view of the firm, the distinction between inside and outside is even more blurred or done away with altogether, if we construe of organizations and firms as *“problematic, not already constructed, their nature being the result of what human beings put into them as they construct them”* (Spender, 2012, p.3). In this case, any individual participating in the social construction of the firm – part-time researchers, full-time employees, business partners etc. is an insider. That said, I still believe that the notion of boundaries, if not physical, legal or geographical boundaries are relevant with regards to studying organizations from a socio-cultural perspective. Following Akkerman and Bakker *“a boundary can be seen as a sociocultural difference leading to discontinuity in action or interaction. Boundaries simultaneously suggest a sameness and continuity in the sense that within discontinuity two or more sites are relevant to one another in a particular way.”* (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 133). Even if a researcher in contact with a firm or other organization may inevitably impact the field and thus take part in constructing the field, then social constructors may differ in the degree of centrality and impact. A researcher not being a complete member of the social organization will be less centrally and powerfully placed to understand and participate in the construction process. In this sense, the part-time researcher such as an industrial Ph.D. still crosses a boundary when engaging with the field of study with regards to the value creation and impact potential.

In sum, the insider researcher has an advantage due to privileged data access which places the researcher in position to produce new, exciting knowledge uncovering interesting problems and questions that are central to ‘real world’ actors. At the same time, the researcher’s field embeddedness also entails the danger of data overload, and solid research question as well as a meticulous research protocol guided by accuracy goals is necessary for weeding out irrelevant material. Further, the field immersion position of the researcher gives rise to concern about data validity due to problems of ‘going native’ and data bias due to partial access. Field member checks and data gathering techniques that easily lend themselves to assessment by both internal and external fora – negotiating access to and obtaining commitment from such fora is essential to research validity.

DOING RESEARCH FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Doing research for organizations may cover a continuum ranging from traditional action research set-ups via hybrid-forms such industrial Ph.D. research projects to field engagement in an organizations from where the researcher receive funding, take on consultancy tasks or otherwise inhabit for a longer period of time as a participating observer. The distinguishing feature, however, is that the researcher is not researching *on* the empirical field, but rather *for* them in the sense that the research question is colored by or co-formulated with the empirical field with a view to producing practically applicable knowledge.

The industrial Ph.D. is in a unique position to avoid one of the challenges of “traditional” research with regards to the lack of perceived relevance from practitioners. The existence and recognition of this problem can be exemplified by the following quote from an invitation from the Lund University School of Business and Economics to a workshop (held on October 21, 2011) entitled “Not so Boring, not so Irrelevant Organisation Studies?”: *“This seminar tries to address the topic of Organization Studies being perceived of as boring and irrelevant.*

Is this an appropriate critique? If so, is it unavoidable or can something be done about it? (How) can we produce research that is both academically rigorous, and has something engaging to say at least to a broader audience of academics and students and perhaps to the educated public/practitioners? In other words how can we make our work more socially relevant?" In my capacity of industrial Ph.D. within the field of organization studies, I find it thought provoking that the academic sender of this message is open to the potential acceptance of the inevitability of being perceived of as irrelevant and boring by lay persons. Also, it stands out that the above-average knowledgeable practitioner only *perhaps* should be considered an audience for research within this field at all... For the industrial Ph.D. and others producing research with a view to value creation for practice, being perceived of as boring and irrelevant by practitioners (also the not so educated ones...), is just not an option.

One avenue of satisfying a personal motivation for creating relevant knowledge and capitalizing on the field immersion position of the industrial Ph.D. is to explore the various streams of research/schools of thought advocating practitioner engagement and relevance as a virtue of quality criteria of research. Generally speaking, doing research *for* organizations can be seen in opposition to doing research *on*, and so approaching from this angle research objects are turned into research subjects – the nature of the ambition of field member involvement differs markedly in the different approaches, though. Just as doing research from within has been described as a continuum of field immersion in the previous section, doing practitioner-oriented research with organizations can be described as a continuum ranging from forms of obtrusive data collection involving field members such as ethnography incl. auto-ethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and self-ethnography (Alvesson, 2005) as well as field work at one (Van Maanen, 1988) end to full-scale action research projects aimed at social, democratic change with the full engagement of both researcher and researched the other (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

Continuing on the continuum, one finds at the end closer to forms of obtrusive data gathering research approaches such as evidence-based management helping practitioners to perform better when informed by research (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006; Briner, Denyer & Rousseau, 2009); engaged scholarship (Van den Ven, 2007) looking to proactively seek feedback and advice from practitioners in the research process; relational scholarship (Bartunek, 2007), seeking to establish academia-practitioner bridges (Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie & O'Brien, 2012); collaborative research (Schensul & Schensul, 1992) and employer organization targeted research (Säntti, 2011). All these forms of doing research in close engagement with practice have no ambition of turning field members into active co-researchers in the process. This is unlike the approaches to research at the other end of our continuum which are characterised by participation and agency on behalf of the researched. Research approaches looking to engage field members directly in the process covers research approaches such as action science of action learning projects (Raelin, 1997), cooperative/collaborative inquiry (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Heron, 1996), interactive research, enactive (and provocative!) research (Johannisson, Presentation "Enactive Research – Making the Most of Insight and Involvement", LUSEM, 27th April 2012; Johannisson et al, forthcoming), and action research - done by external professional action researcher or by an insider enjoying a complete membership position (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Coghlan & Brannick, 2009; Coghlan, 2007).

In the following the general industrial Ph.D. set-up and particular characteristics of the "Group Mindset Development"-project in Solar be analysed against the backdrop of the two extremes on the continuum, ethnography and action research, placing the industrial Ph.D. project with close links to interactive research and a consulting strand of action research.

Ethnographic approaches: Being there - and/or being them...

One avenue of characterizing the working conditions of the industrial Ph.D. researcher in terms of ethnography vs. action research is to look at degree of engagement with the field in terms of the methods of data gathering. The degree and nature of the researcher's engagement with the field can be characterized as a continuum of data gathering methods ranging from obtrusive to non-obtrusive. In general, doing research with organizations rely heavily on obtrusive, qualitative methods such as field work, participant observation (Spradley, 1980), interviews and questionnaires where the researcher participates in the everyday lives and social world of the field of study. Falling short of extremely obtrusive methods such as participation in lab experiments or medical testing (e.g. biopsies, brain scan, genetic testing), the qualitative methods of the collaborative researcher can be characterised as obtrusive. In this respect, it is interesting that the collaborative researcher has a different agenda with her obtrusiveness than ethnographer colleagues also depending heavily on obtrusive methods: "*The ethnographic observer attempts to be an unobtrusive observer of the inner life*" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009, p. 104) although using what is defined as obtrusive methods; the collaborative researcher's raison d'être is to impact on the field in terms of guiding future action through knowledge sharing and direct participation and thus use the obtrusive measures to make an impact. That said, ethnographic field work without an action agenda may be part of the total collaborative research design, e.g. in the case of the study of Solar a shorter period of ethnographic field immersion in the Brøndby (DK) subsidiary to take place in the spring of 2013 which has no intension of being obtrusive beyond the mere presence of the researcher in the field.

A partial insider position as an industrial Ph.D. doing research in an organization by which he is employer shares many traits with the ethnographer, not least due to the use of field work as a primary source of data collection: "*Fieldwork is one answer – some say the best – to the question of how the understanding of others, close or distant, is achieved. Fieldwork usually means living with and living like those who are studied. In its broadest, most conventional sense, fieldwork demands the full-time involvement of a researcher over a lengthy period of time (usually unspecified) and consists mostly of on-going interaction with the human targets of study on their home ground*" (John Van Maanen, 1988, p. 2). Van Maanen emphasizes that fieldwork may vary a great deal with regards to the degree of immersion in field all sharing a common working condition of struggles of distance and closeness in that: "*The challenge is to see the world as others see it – without naturalizing it.*" (Dialogue with John van Maanen, PDW "Being There/Being Them: Producing Ethnographies", Academy of Management Annual Meeting, 2011). So, ethnographic field immersion operates from the inside, but with the intention of "being there, without being them". The ethnographer (and even auto-ethnographer cf. Ellis & Bochner, 2000) is not a complete member (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009) or "förtrogenhetsforskare" (Johannisson, Gunnarsson & Stjernberg, 2008) and has no ambition of actively impacting the field which diverges from the purpose of collaborative forms of research. In sum, in industrial Ph.D. research set-up, the researcher position shares many traits with the working condition of the ethnographer, but differs in that the collaborative researcher has an ambition to actively impact on the field.

A different brand of ethnography, Alvesson's (2005) notion of self-ethnography (also referred to as home-culture-ethnography or insider-ethnography) uses ethnographic methodology to see the field of study, but from a "being there *and* being them" in that "them" is the researcher's own organization. The concept of self-ethnography refers to "a study and a text in which the researcher-author describes a cultural setting to which s/he has a "natural access", is an active participant, more or less on equal terms with other participants. The researcher, then, works and / or lives in the setting and then uses the experiences, knowledge and access to empirical material for research purposes" (Alvesson, 2003, p. 175). Although this method is deemed particularly well-suited for research in universities since this

is where researchers tend to be employed, other sites in which the researcher is engaged may also be targeted (Alvesson, 2003). In the case of an industrial Ph.D., this would include the employer organization under study. Unlike a part-time in-house researcher such as an industrial Ph.D., however, doing research is not a major pre-occupation of the self-ethnographer who merely utilizes the position one is in also for other, secondary purposes, i.e. doing research on the setting of which one is a part (Alvesson, 2003, p. 176). Furthermore, the self-ethnographer is described as a “run-away-researcher” struggling to create sufficient distance in order to get perspective on lived reality – as opposed to the professional stranger acting as a “burglar researcher” seeking to overcome obstacles in order to get in contact with a target of interest: “*While the conventional researcher (with an anthropological orientation) may ask “What in hell do they think they are up to?” the self-ethnographer must ask “What in hell do we think we are up to?”*” (Alvesson, 2005, p.177).

Action research – from participant observation to ‘participating observer’

Moving to the other extreme the continuum of doing research with organizations, we find the diverse concept of action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Coghlan, 2007). It is often the case that those who apply this approach are practitioners who wish to improve understanding of their practice, social change activists trying to mount an action campaign, or, as in the case of the industrial Ph.D., academics who have been invited into an organization by decision-makers aware of a problem requiring action research, but lacking the requisite methodological knowledge to deal with it, in this case corporate HR and top management (Löwsted & Stjernberg, 2006). The concept of action research “*is both an approach to knowledge production, as well as a set of values emphasizing the responsibility to the system rather than to individual stakeholders*” (Löwsted & Stjernberg, 2006, p. 5) and “*...an approach to doing research, rather than an academic discipline*” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 7).

The notion of action research covers a broad spectrum of interventionist forms of research, and the following observations will be made against the backdrop of the concept of “pragmatic action research” as advocated by Greenwood and Levin (2007, p. 10) who define action research as follows: “*Action research is social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of an organization, community, or network (“stakeholders”) who are seeking to improve the participant’s situation*” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 3). According to Greenwood & Levin, “*Action research refers to the conjunction of three elements: action, research, and participation. Unless all three elements are present, the process may be useful, but it is not AR [action research, ed.]*” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 5). Following this line of reasoning, the industrial Ph.D. project on “Group Mindset Development” cannot be considered action research. Although the research design is inspired by the participatory values of action research due to its intensive cooperation with the host company and the ambition of creating actionable knowledge, it cannot be characterized as an action research project due to the lack of planned cycles of action intervention characteristic of an action research project (Brannick & Coghlan, 2010). In addition, direct change agency on behalf of the researcher is not a part of the set-up, so even if the industrial Ph.D.-researcher is both doing “participant observation” and acting as “participating observer”, the researcher is not leading a project or driving a particular change in the host organization.

Impact as desired, not unintended side-effect

Collaborative forms of research such as action research work from an ideal of research democratization in that the field members are not objects in the grand scheme of an ivory tower scientist, but rather subjects and research co-producers. As such, decision-making

power on the course of the research project and the outcome is democratized to the extent that the division between researcher objects and subjects become blurred. One of the traits of action research shared by this study is the intention of helping: "*Inom aktionsforskningen gör forskaren en medveten intervention i praktiken, d v s en aktionsforskningsinsats, eller uttryckt på ett annat sätt, 'hjälp praktiker' (Lewin, 1948)*" (Johannisson, Gunnarsson & Stjernberg, 2008, p. 312). It falls on the behavior of the researcher to facilitate a relationship that does not perpetuate an air of academic elevatedness and refrain from cultivating an expert image. Renouncing the expert status is particularly important as the host organization may be inclined to cast the researcher as an expert, and the researcher may pursue the expert role in that it is only too human to fall prey to sharing your expertise and thus feeling useful and worthwhile. Apart from the not so flattering tendency to enjoy a position of on-upmanship the researcher may also feel inclined to show some results and give the host organization value for money considering that the advice seekers are, after all paying you.

The "Group Mindset Development"-project does, then, adhere to the idea that impacting the field is not an unfortunate side effect, but rather a sought after outcome. Inspired by values of action research the study accepts and embraces the role of the researcher as a person who impacts the field. This is hardly a ground breaking insight – after all, it has been known ever since the Hawthorne studies that the behaviour and state of mind of research objects (plant employees) were affected by the mere presence of researchers (French, 1950, 1953). Collaborative researchers, however, see the inevitability of impact as a resource to be made the most of rather than "field pollution" or obtrusion/intrusion as would the classical ethnographic stance on field work. Since impact is an end in itself the researcher must be particularly interested in being methodologically meticulous. Even if the researcher has the best intentions, being close means being in a position to do well, but simultaneously to do harm. Commenting on the proximity of the action researcher to the field, Greenwood and Levin asserts that "*action researchers, precisely because the results will affect the lives of the stakeholders, have a profound interest in the validity of the generated knowledge*" (2007, p. 4). This is in keeping with Schein's idea of the closeness of so-called hired helpers such as an industrial Ph.D. being subject bound by contract to act ethically and responsibly with sensitive information: "*Formally hired helpers are in a position to exploit and take advantage of the client and must, therefore, be limited by formal rules*" (Schein, 2009, p. 27). Although the Group Mindset-project in Solar is not a fully-fledged action research project, the researcher is close enough to a field in action to require extreme caution. Although positive impact is intended, the potential consequences of negative impact imply that the researcher must be particularly preoccupied with validity.

This line of reasoning is in keeping with the ideas of process consultation (Schein, 1969, 1999) and clinical research (Schein, 1995), and insider research designs such as the industrial Ph.D. project in Solar can be inspired by the notion of helping (Schein, 2009) or a consulting strand of action research (Huzzard, presentation on Action Research Ph.D. course, LUSEM, April 2012). A partial insider researcher being preoccupied with the practical usability and relevance of research results, are likely to benefit from seeing closeness to the field as an advanced position for actually helping (Schein, 2009). An advanced position for helping includes the advancement of criticism which is more likely to fall on fertile ground when made from a position of shared responsibility and mutual trust between researcher and field and hence acted upon afterwards. In this respect, action researchers represent a quite refreshingly balanced stance on the merits of "going native" compared to other forms of research: "*...you tend to go native and more so, the more you interact. This is a problem – noted especially by researchers in the ethnographic tradition – and is perhaps even a precondition for action research, in the sense that action requires some degree of shared interests and values with those predominant in the system you are studying*" (Löwsted & Stjernberg in Löwsted & Stjernberg, 2006, p. 14). A similar point is made by Schein asserting

that "...willingness to be influenced – to listen to what the client is really saying and give up preconceptions of what the problem might be – is one of the most effective ways of equilibrating the [helping, ed.] relationship" (Schein, 2009, p. 44). And indeed, it is difficult to help field members that you dislike or profoundly disagree with as they are likely to resist change initiatives emanating from a person they cannot trust or feel misunderstood by (Coch & French, 1948), even if examples of rigorous action research emanating from an opposition position (Johannesson, 2012) do exist.

Embracing the notion of helping (Schein, 2009) also entails taking a moral stance as a researcher and take into consideration the criticism advanced of ethnographic research asserting that "hanging around doesn't mean sitting on the fence" (Ramage, 1995). Not to recognize the moral imperative of the researcher to intervene, criticize and help would according to Ramage (1995) be to deny the researcher's value and existence as an individual: "*by regarding the researcher as an uninterested observer, we deny their identity as full human beings, and treat them as if they were interchangeable.*" As such, Ramage is welcoming Yvonne Johannessen's belief that researchers should activate their entire knowledge base, including theoretical knowledge in collaborating with practitioners as advancement of such knowledge is not to be considered inappropriate interference, but rather bringing all available resources to a mutual inquiry (Johannesson, presentation on Action Research Ph.D. course, LUSEM, April 2012). In a similar vein, Löwsted & Stjernberg observes that: "*Honesty to yourself and to your subjects, i.e. your partners, in the research setting you are studying requires a mutual and shared sense of a true search for knowledge*" (Löwsted & Stjernberg, 2006, p. 15). Seen in this perspective, a consulting and helping relationship with field members acting as active research participants shares traits with the idea of societal entrepreneurship (Berglund, Johannisson & Schwartz, forthcoming) although limited to one organization instead of larger communities such as municipalities, cancer patients, or native Canadians just to mention a few typical examples of this stream of research.

Creating a space for making a difference: Political entrepreneurship

Political entrepreneurship (Björkman & Sundgren, 2005), however, seems to be a precondition for setting in motion changes that may meet with resistance, and the researcher may not only have to reckon with resistance to change, but also change fatigue (Stensaker, Meyer, Falkenberg, & Haueng, 2002). Using the example of Solar, a questionnaire on group mindset was handed out to the Solar Management Team (SMT) handed at the outset of the project in which the SMT unanimously assessing that the general organizational willingness to change as medium to high. There were also some concerns, though, in that some (newcomers) thought there was an abundance of corporate projects in motions already. Similar concerns could be found in the wider management group: Upon entry into the Solar organization and meeting with managers of various levels for the first time in connection with the Solar Group Leadership Program in spring and summer of 2011, one of the most common comments to my presentation of the mindset-project would go along the lines of: "*They are not going to turn this into yet another company program, are they?*". Change fatigue along the lines of the theoretical concept of "excessive change (Stensaker, 2002)¹⁶ must be reckoned with when integrating mindset-project outcomes – or any other research project.

¹⁶ Excessive change has been defined (Stensaker et al., 2002, p. 302) as: 1) "*The organization pursues several, seemingly unrelated and sometimes conflicting changes simultaneously.* 2) *The organization introduces new changes before previous change has been contemplated and evaluated, without allowing time for a period of 'business as usual' or for reaping the benefits of the previous change*".

Reactions such as these highlight that practitioners are not necessarily thirsty for knowledge or have to time to digest food for thought provided for them by in-house researcher. Unless a platform is established, the researcher may end up in a Cinderella position trying to help a group of people that do not want help or do not perceive of the researcher as very helpful. So, mutual value creation in research projects undertaken in close collaboration between academia and practice is highly sensitive and susceptible to the amount of resources available in the research project host organization. Active stakeholder management and “campaigning” for change is likely to be a task to be carried out by the researcher in order to secure commitment to the process. A particular concern when the researcher is not a complete member (i.e. one that was employed by the organization before the research project and will be so after the completion of the research project), is how the project outcomes are to be sustained. In the Solar project, integration of research results into existing practices, activities and not least management information and evaluation system has been chosen as an avenue for securing the viability of results after the departure of the researcher.

Interactive research

Compared to action research, the industrial Ph.D. working conditions in the “Group Mindset Development” project in Solar A/S, more closely resembles that of interactive research (Svensson, Ellström & Brulin, 2007). Interactive research is characterized as a development of the action research tradition, focusing on joint learning between the researcher and the participants, but with a main focus on the outcome of the research in terms of new theories and concepts (Svensson, Ellström & Brulin, 2007, p. 233). Further, interactive researchers engage with the field with the aim of “*conducting theoretically-related analysis that can contribute to long-term theoretical development, but is also practically relevant to the participants*” (Svensson, Ellström & Brulin, 2007, p. 238). The main differences between action research and interactive research is captured in a reverse line of helping: Where action research engagement with practice foresee the researchers contributing to practical development, interactive research focus on participants contributing to theoretical work to a larger extend although still for the mutual benefit of all parties involved. Interactive research is certainly conducive to the industrial Ph.D.’s stakeholder management concerns, where the active assistance to practitioners may be to the detriment of making a theoretical contribution.

However, interactive research operates with a different set of quality criteria which potentially converts the ailments of insider research described in the paper’s section on doing research in/within organization to virtues: “...we think that close interaction can increase the validity of the research” (Svensson, Ellström & Brulin, 2007, p. 239). This claim is followed by a call for a different kind of peer reviewed quality assessment central to traditional academic work: “*It is no longer the case that the validity is tested within the walls of academia alone, but in dialogue with the participants and society at large*” (Svensson, Ellström & Brulin, 2007, p. 239). Following this line of reasoning, fora such as editorial boards of journals as well as the industrial Ph.D. assessment committee ought to include representatives both academia and practice. Unfortunately, the current legislative framework does not open up for such as assessment committee member selection, but a second-best option might include recruiting an experienced researcher within the fields of doing research for, with and in organizations for the assessment committee to ensure appreciation of the fact that contributions can be made in various ways...

Phronesis and practice research

Industrial Ph.D. fellows and other researcher doing research in close collaboration may also find inspiration in the upcoming idea of “phronetic social science” – a stream of research

characterized as an “*alternative social science...dedicated to enhancing socially relevant forms of knowledge, that is, ‘phronesis’ (practical wisdom on how to address and act on social problems in a particular context)*” (Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schram, 2012, p. 1). Phronetic social science is an approach to the study of social – including political and economic – phenomena based on a contemporary interpretation of the Aristotelian concept phronesis, variously translated as practical judgment, common sense, or prudence. Phronesis is the intellectual virtue used to deliberate about which social actions are good or bad for humans and can be seen in opposition to the two other intellectual virtues of Aristotle, ‘episteme’ and ‘techne’ (Johannisson, 2008; Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schram, 2012). Just as is the case with action research, phronetic social science is not put emphasis on particular research methods or types of data, but is a research ambition to enhance understanding and create phronesis for the mutual benefits of all involved.

And involvement is key in phronetic social science, both on behalf of the researcher and the researched as is deliberation and action with regards to “substantive issues in social science and policy” (Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schram, 2012, p. 2). This is much in line with the action researcher call for ‘socially responsible innovation’ in a capitalist society in crisis through research involvement of multiple actors and pluralist processes characterised by “doing, using and interaction” instead of “science, technology, innovation” (Gustavsen, 2011, p. 2). Another illustrative example of the ways in which phronetic social science can supplement action research approaches are Johannisson’s notions of enactive and even provocative research where the researcher provokes a field to spur activity, engagement and change or enact the changes himself¹⁷ (Johannisson, Presentation “Enactive Research – Making the Most of Insight and Involvement”, LUSEM, 27th April 2012; Berglund, Johannisson & Schwartz, forthcoming).

Judging from the currently only collection of cases of phronetic science (Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schram, 2012), the substantive issues of interest to the phronetic social scientist is usually concerned with larger societal struggles and policy making such as regional development or minority inclusion. In this context, it is debatable if an industrial Ph.D. project focusing on leadership development challenges in the wake of increased internationalization (or other typical management and organization studies) qualifies as a “substantive issue” - even if the Global Leadership Academy with which the project is affiliated is co-hosted by a interest organization, The Danish Confederation of Industry, with the aim at creating (national) competitive advantage for MNCs doing global business from a Danish point of departure. Seen in this perspective, single case studies of corporate life is not mainstream phronetic science (if such as thing exist yet), but the idea that the researcher can impact on favorable organizational outcomes is certainly in accordance with the industrial Ph.D. set-up and the concrete challenges of the host organization.

The concept of phronetic social science is also closely related to the mushrooming of academic fields interested in practices and processes with a situational focus. Johannisson advances the idea of phronetic social science within entrepreneurship (Johannisson, 2011), and of special interest with regards to an industrial Ph.D. project inquiring into strategy implementation is the phronetic methodological in-road to the exploration of strategy as practice. This position holds that there is “*no presupposed prior distinction between individual and society, no dualism between thought and action: these are deemed to be secondary distinctions generated through social practices themselves*” (Chia & Rasche, 2009). From

¹⁷ Johannisson observes with regard to his notions of both enactive and provocative research that: “*The social research community is not yet ready for such approaches. In order to gain insight and legitimacy young researchers should first practice conventional methodologies*” (Bengt Johannisson, Presentation “Enactive Research – Making the Most of Insight and Involvement”, LUSEM, 27th April 2012).

this it also follows that there is no prior distinction between the researcher and the researched as both parties are co-constituents of the process under consideration.

Following this line of reasoning the study of a practice such as strategizing, Chia and Rasche advocates the abandonment of exploration from a “building worldview” in favour of a “dwelling worldview.” Chia and Rasche describes as a dwelling worldview as one in which *“the identities and characteristics of persons are not deemed to pre-exist social interactions and social practices. Rather, the individual person is viewed as a product of the ‘condensations of histories of growth and maturation within fields of social relations [...] every person emerges as a locus of development within such a field’ (Ingold, 2000, p. 3). Hence, neither the individual nor society is to be construed as self-contained entities interacting externally with each other (Elias 1991, p. 456). Instead, both the individual and society are viewed as mutually constitutive and co-defining impulses relying on ‘complex responsive processes’ (Stacey 2007, p. 247) to become who and what they are”* (Chia & Rasche, 2009, p. 197). The activation of a dwelling worldview requires the researcher to subscribe to a relational ontology and to use extensive “hanging out” (Dingwall, 1997) as a means of studying strategizing as a process. As such, the notion of dwelling as a means of recognizing the researcher’s participation and co-constitutive role is inspirational when working actively with field members.

The “Group Mindset Development”-project is in several ways inspired by the values behind action research, but it is important to note that this project departs from the emancipatory discourse on researching for the creation of a better world or society (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Although it is the researcher’s intention that the study benefits Solar, the greater (Danish) business community as the well as the global research community through the exploration of a research gap, the study does not have an explicit political agenda on themes such as human rights or sustainability. This case industrial Ph.D. project rather builds on the values guiding interactive research as laid out in Svensson, Ellström and Brulin (2007) highlighting that the interactive researcher cannot help everyone and everybody (presentation by Lennart Svensson, LUSEM, April 13, 2012). The researcher chooses to help a certain group of people – which is not necessarily the whole organization or those at the bottom of hierarchy far from central decision-making processes. In the case of this study, the case company host department, corporate HR, as well as top management are the main recipients of support (and emancipation if only to the extent that “knowledge shall set you free”). It follows, then, that what may be helpful and emancipatory for the intended main beneficiaries may not be perceived of as liberating or helpful to other groups or individuals in the organization. Also, one might question if seeking to emancipate others is actually a counterproductive endeavour. The potential to emancipate others presumed in emancipatory agency is itself an act of dominance along the line of the bittersweet comment to the workplace empowerment movement “I empower you to do as I say”...

In sum, there are a variety of research positions aimed at producing research for the field, i.e. conducting research with a view to producing actionable knowledge for the participants of the research process, while at the same time producing rigorous academic knowledge. These inroads to conducting research in close engagement with practice alert our attention to the fact that validity in this respect is closely connected to the degree to which field member engagement can be obtained. Further, these positions differentiate themselves from traditional research design where impact and researcher interference is to be avoided – to the contrary, field impact is a top priority.

DOING RESEARCH *IN-BETWEEN* ORGANIZATIONS

An industrial Ph.D. research set-up places the researcher at the intersection where “publish or perish” meets with the discourse and practice of “research to invoice” and practical profit concerns. A collaborative researcher, then, is a Janus-faced partial insider of both academia and practice who has to make the most of the researcher’s affiliation with both worlds, stressing that this minority position demands much of the participants in terms of absorptive capacity, relationship building and boundary spanning competencies. These working conditions can serve as an illustration of the framework that any researcher working in close engagement with practice with the ambition of creating value for both communities will have to successfully tackle. As such, the industrial Ph.D. setting is a telling case of the challenges that have to be met if academia is to produce more actionable research and demonstrate value to society at large. In the following, competencies of the researcher to create value in a mutual value co-creation research design are discussed. Following Boxal and Purcell’s Ability-Motivation-Opportunity-model of individual performance (2011), successful (researcher) performance hinges, however, not only on the ability and motivation of the researcher, but also on the opportunity for committed competency application in the field of research. In this respect, the supportive competencies and characteristics of main stakeholders, the organization hosting a research project and the academic base environment, are discussed.

In-between research conditions and competencies

Methodologies addressing doing research in/within and for organizations discussed in the previous sections give advice as to the different researcher positions and different data gathering and quality assurance techniques based on the degree of practitioner involvement foreseen and the nature of research quality subscribed to. In general, the researcher’s competencies for engaging in this sort of research are simply assumed.

But the competences and personality of the researcher is central to choices about research design. Collaborative research champion Professor Bengt Johannisson for instance argues that *‘not every person can handle or is competent to handle every method’* (Presentation on Enactive Research, Lund University, April 27th, 2012), and the competencies in question go beyond methodological savvy, profound theoretical knowledge and analytical skill as could be considered standard requirements of a researcher competency profile. Expert on doing research in the researcher’s ‘own’ organization, David Coghlan remarks: *“The competences of the action researcher? Well, stated in the simplest possible terms my personal theory is that first and foremost they have to be nice people. Otherwise they won’t get very far in their organizations”* (Doctoral consortium, Academy of Management annual Meeting, Boston, 2012). Yet other researchers seem to think that lack of researcher competencies are one of the main reasons for the endurance of the academia-practitioner divide due to the fact that *“Few people have the skills to mediate between research and practice, what Kieser and Leiner (2009, p. 528) called ‘bilingual’ or ‘bicompetent’ facilitators and (Gulati, 2007, p. 780) called ‘bilingual interpreter”* (Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie & O’Brien, 2012, p. 87). Researcher competences were also a central theme of the British Academy of Management professional development workshop (2012) of doing insider researcher in close engagement with practice: Courage, independence and self-management were stressed as success criteria for successful collaborative research. So, doing research in the in-between of academia and practice adds additional demands to the researcher competency profile. In the following, the conditions giving rise to these additional demands and the competencies necessary for navigating the in-between is discussed.

Bridging the researcher-practitioner gap

The existence of a researcher-practitioner divide has been amply documented in literature (Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie & O'Brien, J., 2012) identifying fault lines of different conceptions of objectives, epistemology and quality within the communities of research and business. Potential for conflicts and controversy originating in the research practitioner divide is embedded in the industrial Ph.D. research designs. The challenge then becomes to turn conflict into constructive controversy that is a situation where *“one person’s ideas, information, conclusions, and opinions are incompatible with those of another and the two seek to reach an agreement”* (Tjosvold, 2008). At the same time, it is important to realize, that not all differences can or should be overcome or done away with. Identifying middle ground and compromise may not be possible or attractive as this may erode the innovation potential inherent in bringing different competencies and knowledge pools together. This is one of the main observations of the innovation and intra- and entrepreneurship research looking at ways in which companies can gain competitive edge through built up of collaborative capital and hence so-called collaborative advantage (e.g. Lank, 2006; Hansen & Nohria, 2004).

That compromise and agreement may be counter-productive is also one of the messages from the literature on team diversity observing that tackling volatile environments (Nielsen, 2010) as well as creating radical innovation and out of the box-solutions is best supported by team diversity whereas tasks where methods and desired outcome is known in advance are more effectively solved in low-diversity teams (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; McLeod, Lobel & Cox, 1996)¹⁸. A similar argument is made by Amabile (1998) pointing out diverse workgroup composition as an important factor for creativity in the workplace. So, running the risk of being lost on translation, the marginal researcher tries to maintain a nomadic minority position at the edge of each community due to the potential for knowledge transfer, cross-fertilization and innovation. In effect, being neither a “run-away researcher” trying to break the bonds familiarity or a “burglar researcher” sneaking away with data (Alvesson, 2005), but rather a trusted friend of the family – close enough to be part of the family and the household duties, but still a guest enjoying hospitality. One avenue of inspiration for maintaining a both-and position instead of either or, is found in the stream of research on paradox management (e.g. Fletcher & Olwyler, 1997) aimed at letting go of polarity and dichotomies to the benefit of living the flux and give up waiting for a stable state that may never materialize (and if it does, the dynamics is lost).

The academic odd man out?

As mentioned at the outset on this section on conditions and competencies, a central theme emerging from the British Academy of Management professional development workshop (2012) of doing insider researcher in close engagement with practice was the researcher’s courage and willingness to risk being the odd man out in the academic environment.

This resonates well with the author’s experience in the “Group Mindset Development”-project. Some three months after taking up a career as an industrial Ph.D. after ten years of practical business experience in HR and knowledge management, I participated at the Academy of Management Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, in the summer of 2011. I was thrilled to find myself in a “management mall” of anything you could possibly desire within organization and management studies – and not so thrilled to find that the very foundation of my industrial Ph.D.-project including doing insider research in my employer organization was called into questions in ways I had not anticipated. *“So, you are not a real researcher, then?”* was an often posed question in response my introducing myself as an

¹⁸ This assertion of course rests on the assumption that diversity is well-managed as diversity as diversity is not only a source of creativity and innovation but also of conflict to the potential detriment of performance if not tackled effectively (Adler, 1997).

industrial Ph.D., and asking a seasoned ethnographer in a workshop about tips for working with qualitative data from an insider perspective, I was advised “*not to do so if I had the possibility not to*”...

Since then I have been greatly relieved to find that there is a diversity of research methodologies that supports my initial taken for granted assumption that academic and practical knowledge about management can and should co-exist and cross-fertilize (not least in the Scandinavian countries): “*There is no reason to see one as superior to the other; instead, knowledge production may be strengthened by using the different sources and methods of knowledge production in cooperation*” (Löwsted & Stjernberg, 2006, p. 5). That said, collaborative forms of research aimed at creating actionable knowledge, especially when conducted from an insider position, remains an elephant in the room. A fellow newcomer researcher at one point even suggested that I should just present my study as a single case study and not mention the fact that I am part-time employed by the organization under study since this was the inevitable path to desk reject and less than appreciative comments like the ones mentioned above... And certainly, qualitative studies in general (also the not insider ones) are deemed to be less controllable, more emergent and hence more demanding, less publishable and risky for a first-time researcher (Barley, 2005). So, although being close and collaborative can facilitate production novel and interesting empirical material and at the same time make a solid theoretical contribution of general interest to academics (Barley, 2005; Davis, 1971) and practitioners alike, it is a riskier strategy with regards to publication – the main performance criteria of researchers. Following social identity theory (Turner & Oakes, 1986), the social identity concept for social conducting collaborative research may be at odds with the desire to belong to a community of successful academics with the consequences of isolation, diminished motivation and performance. Withstanding the mimetic pressure to conduct “mainstream research” in keeping with the surrounding academic environment demands courage and a supportive framework if negative consequences along the lines of the adverse impact on publication rejection are to be avoided (Day, 2011).

The author of this paper has come to learn that doing (qualitative) research in your employer organization in a highly contested research position when engaged with non-action research communities; i.e. most of the established journal-publishing academic community. Due to this fact the industrial Ph.D. researcher must develop rhetorical, theoretical and emotional strategies to address the demand for explaining and “selling” the industrial Ph.D. concept. The industrial Ph.D. researcher must in effect work with a double AIDA-model of creating interest and capitalize on the fact that positioning of the industrial Ph.D. research as an outlier also offers the opportunity of exploiting this “exotic” position as a place with room to maneuver due to the fact that the researcher is outside the in-group and hence is allowed the benefit of the doubt with regards to what may come across as eccentric behavior. That is, if the researcher has the stomach for it as a majority of academic colleagues may look with suspicion on the careers prospects of your endeavor...

A counter-strategy to such suspicion is to look closely for role models getting through with employer organization based research through established channels. As an example, the authors of this paper was very inspired by Flyvbjerg’s account (2005) of his challenges in coming to terms with the (adverse) reaction of his immediate professional surroundings to case study research designs. Fortunately, there are examples of research done from within an employment relationship published in high-ranking journals representing what could be considered the mainstream take on insider research. One such encouraging example is Professor Majken Schultz’ account of data collection in LEGO while being employed as a consultant described in an article published by *Organization Science*. The data collection situation of this study bears resemblance to the inside-out research condition of the “Group

Mindset Development"-project as well as to the nature of collaboration: *"The first author worked for the company part-time for three years as an affiliated researcher (2000-2003) and had extensive access to data during this time. She served as a discussion partner for middle managers, a source of knowledge and a co-organizer of numerous workshops, but did not play the role of an interventionist as described in action research (Adler et al. 2004, Van de Ven 2007). Building on Van de Ven's notion of 'engaged scholarship,' the relationship was closer in nature to collaborative research (Van de Ven 2007, p. 272; see also Mohrman et al. 2001) in that it was clear to informants that the data obtained would be used for research purposes. The presence of the first author likely contributed to a higher degree of documentation of the activities conducted during identity reconstruction [the topic of the paper, ed.] in the first occasion and a more explicit argumentation for the articulation of the identity claims for the future. But the first author did not direct the process, which was executed by experienced middle managers, just as all final decisions concerning the articulation of identity claims were made by top management ... Thus, it is not likely that the presence of the first author influenced the findings of this study in any significant way"* (Schultz & Hernes, 2012, p. 13). And so, echoing Flyvbjerg's (2005, p. 223) personal conclusion about case studies that *"if it's good enough for Harvard, it's good enough for me"*, I am inclined to come to the conclusion that if Majken Schultz's account (Schultz & Hernes, 2012) of data gathering while being employed as a part time consultant in LEGO its good enough for *Organization Science*, then basing my research on data gathered in an organization the researcher is employed by, is good enough for me...

That said, courage is preferably paired with extraordinary preoccupation with validity activating the validating fora in the network surrounding the research project and access to exceptional data and storytelling – otherwise courageous research may turn out to be kamikaze research. Participants of the British Academy of Management professional development workshop advanced making a solid theoretical contribution as the best bulwark against criticism and suspicion in the academic community.

Research in-between: Boundary spanning and stakeholder management

The project manager role of the industrial Ph.D. (or other researcher with multiple constituents) closely resembles the role known in organization theory as a bridge maker (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1977) or boundary spanner (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). This role is the role of the (cultural) brokers transcending inter- and intra-organizational boundaries and borders through networking, social capital build-up (Lin, 2001), knowledge transfer and empathy towards points of view of internal and external "others." Thus, the boundary spanner's function is that of a messenger and go-between of different logics and rationales, and the sought-after results of boundary spanning are enhanced knowledge sharing and absorptive capacity by active liaison and stakeholder management, forging common ground and discovering new frontiers in the organization. This seems to be a fair description of the industrial Ph.D.'s position as the industrial Ph.D. serves a number of different masters simultaneously, crisscrossing fault lines (Bezrukova, Thatcher & Jehn, 2007; Bezrukova, Jehn, Zanutto & Thatcher, 2009; Bezrukova, Thatcher & Jehn, 2007) of divergent interests and different outcome success criteria in different groups of stakeholders. Successfully mastering the in-between and both-and of academia and business requires the researcher to act as a "boundary broker" (Wenger, 1995) bridging different communities of practice.

The researcher's position in the "Group Mindset Development"-project could be described as a partial insider doing research in her employer organization (Säntti, 2011). Although a member and employee of the organization under study for the duration of the research project, the researcher has not been a member of the organization prior to the study and is not automatically a member of the organization after the completion of the study. A hybrid

researcher position positioning the researcher as a boundary subject (Huzzard, Ahlberg & Ekman, 2010; Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) is assumed which can be particularly useful due to the marginality of the researcher. Taking his departure in his own upbringing as a US-immigrant of Norwegian descent and later applying it to the upward social mobility of Jewish and Quaker families, Thorstein Veblen observed, that cultural marginality is frequently a stimulus for intellectual creativity (Pritzker & Runco, 1999, p. 180). Veblen captured the potential advantages of a (wo)man in the middle as follows: “*Marginality – the quality of being neither altogether inside nor altogether outside the system – informs the intelligence and gives the marginal man [sic] the third eye that penetrates the culture as no insider could*” (Bennis, 1991 quoted in Björkman & Sundgren, 2005).

A similar observation with regards to the opportunity of a minority position (i.e. the Jewish community) was made by Theodore Herzl (Herzl, 1896). He argued that continuous reflection upon yourself and your philosophy of life is the curse and blessing of any minority: A curse due to the fact that the ways of life of a minority is relentlessly being called into question by the majority, but at the same time a blessing because this forces you to develop self-awareness and (self-)reflective capacity – in other words become a reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983). Without stretching the comparison too far, the position of the industrial Ph.D. as partially in, partially of placed at the outskirts of both academia and practice is a marginal, minority position. Positioning of the industrial Ph.D. as an outlier offers also offers the opportunity of exploiting this “exotic” position as a place with room to maneuver due to the fact that you are outside the “in-group” and hence are allowed the benefit of the doubt with regards to what may come across as eccentric behaviour. This may, depending on the personality of the researcher, be conducive to creativity (Kim, Vincent & Goncalo, 2012).

Collaborative research competencies of main stakeholders

The researcher occupying the in-between territory of academia and practice is advised to possess additional competences compared with a traditional research project to be able to embrace and make the most of the role as a go-between, boundary broker and bridge-maker with a Janus-face pursuing a diversity of interest simultaneously. In this last section, the competency requirements with regards to ability and motivation of the researcher are discussed against the backdrop of the case research project. Further, the opportunity for enacting the required competencies and commitment in the research environment is discussed. In the stakeholder diagram introduced earlier (Figure 2), all stakeholders are illustrated as separate, but equal. In reality, some overlap and some are more important and powerful than others in that they have direct “show stopper”-powers over the project. In this respect, the host company, the host university, and the Ph.D.-student are key players¹⁹. Each (group of) stakeholder(s) in the diagram represents different resources, expectations and types of stakes in the industrial Ph.D.-project all of which must be mediated successfully throughout the project process. In the following an overall assessment of collaborative research capabilities for mastering the in-between of the main stakeholders are identified.

Collaborative competences: The researcher

Turning to the first main stakeholder, the researcher, the competences and personality of the researcher is central to the research design. General scientific text book wisdom holds that the choice of paradigm and methodology depends on the phenomenon under study – not the personal preferences of the researcher. That said the activation of a particular

¹⁹ As the Danish Agency for Science Technology and Innovation rely on information from host company and university for evaluation of project progress or lack thereof, the agency is not regarded as a “show stopper” in itself. Also, Ph.D. student family is not included as show stoppers, although it is safe to assume that they are very powerful with regards to the Ph.D. student’s commitment towards the project process.

methodological toolkit is also connected to the researcher's personality and values. According to collaborative research champion Bengt Johannisson, not every person can handle or is competent to handle every method (Presentation on Enactive Research, Lund University, April 27th, 2012). Even if it holds true for every type of methodological choice that the researcher's personality comes into play in the decision-making process, it may be especially pertinent for collaborative researchers in that the researcher on top of sound academic theoretical and methodological knowledge, must have the ability to function as a bridge maker (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1977) or boundary spanner (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). Engaging in collaborative research may be particularly demanding of the researcher in terms of scope and scale of competencies needed with regards to bridging the infamous research-practitioner gap so central to collaborative forms of research: *"Few people have the skills to mediate between research and practice, what Kieser and Leiner (2009, p. 528) called 'bilingual' or 'bicompetent' facilitators and (Gulati, 2007, p. 780) called 'bilingual interpreter'"* (Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie & O'Brien, 2012, p. 87).

The successful Ph.D. must act as a spanner in the web bridging and transcending different institutional logics (Ocasio, 1997; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005) possessing the ability to master and seamlessly alternative between logics and frames of reference, an ability captured in the concept of code-switching²⁰ (Molinsky, 2007). The dual allegiance (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992) nature of the Ph.D. employment relationship requires the industrial Ph.Ds. to pay tribute to potentially conflicting demands through fault line management (Barner-Rasmussen & Michailova, 2011) – primarily represented by the academic quality standards in the university setting on the one hand and practical profit concerns in the host company. Putting together the competence requirements sought after in the performance review talks and reports at Copenhagen Business School and the host company Solar as an indication of the competence profile of an industrial Ph.D., the competence catalogue of an industrial Ph.D. student ideally contains: Abilities within the fields of distance management and virtual work arrangements, self-management (especially with regards to discipline, creativity, and loneliness), project management skills, networking and stakeholder management skills, excellent communication skills with regards to a variety of audiences both orally and written, excellent command of English (as well as preferably other languages conducive to gathering data in an international organization), analytical excellence, creativity, business savvy, process consultation, facilitation and teaching skills, boundary spanning skills as well as an open and global mindset.

In addition, the industrial Ph.D. student must also be able to blend and mix personal academic interests with those of the company, meaning that the Ph.D. must be willing to compromise and dare venture into academic areas peripheral to the student's academic core competences in pursuit of a project solution that adequately addresses the needs of the host company. Securing relevance over the course of the project may also entail that the researcher will have to follow suite when strategic priorities change. So, researcher flexibility and willingness to take risk could be added to the competence profile. These are working conditions that are not conducive to trying to control theoretical contributions aimed at a particular community of just any researcher community, which - judging from a variety of assessment committee comments to industrial Ph.D. dissertations (cf. doctoral school of economics director Dana Minbaeva, Copenhagen Business School, June 2012) – is a real danger as lack of solid theoretical contribution is the single most cited area of criticism. Researching in close engagement with practice – in an industrial Ph.D. set-up or other types

²⁰ Molinsky (2007, p. 623) borrows the term "code-switching" from sociolinguistics (Heller, 1988), where linguistic code switching entails bilingual speakers alternating between languages in interaction with other bilinguals. Both linguistic and cross-cultural code-switching share the notion of changing from one form of behaviour (or word choice) to another for the purpose of creating a desired social impression (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

of collaborative research designs – requires the researcher to pay special attention to ‘research project drift’ vis-a-vis requirements of the academic community in that ambitions of “making a difference in practice” may not be tantamount to making a difference in research.

From this description one might get the impression that a person capable of being “visiting scholar” in the world of business is nothing short of a super(wo)man – and that persons going ahead anyhow are suicidal or suffer from delusions of grandeur. And some researchers are indeed inclined to believe that meeting the requirements of doing research in close collaboration with practitioners may be more than can be realistically expected from a single researcher. In fact, Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie & O’Brien suggest that an intermediary agency is beneficial in order to help practitioners and researchers successfully bridging the gap: “*We argue that the reason why the research-practice gap endures is that bridging it is beyond the capabilities and scope of most individuals and we call for the creation of intermediary organisation like the Network for Business Sustainability*” [a Canadian initiative founded in 2005 to facilitate knowledge exchange among a community of researchers and practitioners in the area of business sustainability, ed.]” (Bansal, Bertels, Ewart, MacConnachie & O’Brien, 2012, p. 73). And certainly, researcher ability and motivation is not enough. A supportive environment is also a precondition for successful mutual value co-creation in the in-between of research and practice. In the following, collaborative competencies of the closest, most powerful stakeholders of the empirical field of the host organization and the academic host are discussed.

Collaborative competences: The host company

Moving on to the host company of a collaborative research project such as an industrial Ph.D., successful knowledge and value creation in research-practice collaborations places high demands of the absorptive capacity of the company that is its “*ability to recognize the value of new information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends*” (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Although product and service development of course takes place in the case host company, Solar, it is dispersed throughout the organization and can be characterized more as development than research. Solar, then, has no existing research organization or traditional R&D budget and the Group Mindset-project is the first project in Solar ever to be undertaken with external researchers and as a wholesaler. Following the logic of Cohen & Levinthal where R&D spending is central to the development of absorptive capacity, one might expect absorptive capacity to be rather low in Solar. Even companies with a high R&D spending may be low in absorptive capacity when dealing with social science Ph.Ds. in that engineering and natural science Ph.D. projects typically place lesser demands on the direct involvement of larger parts of the daily operations and has smaller scope of change of daily routines (cf. Business Course, Agency for Science, Technology & Innovation, September 2011). And so, although R&D spending is low, absorptive capacity may be enhanced by the fact that a central part of the Solar standard operating procedure since current CEO Flemming Tomdrup took over in 2006, is securing time to market with regards to development projects by buying competences from the external market. Consequently, development projects are often carried out in collaboration with external consultants²¹. It follows that the organization is geared towards acquiring knowledge from outside the organization and implementing it into the organization. One might question whether externally obtained knowledge is necessarily adopted by the organization or co-exist in loosely couples systems with no interconnection (cf. the need for political entrepreneurship). In the case of Solar, the company’s business and business model renders the company experienced in working with many partners, suppliers, distributors, and customers in its own

²¹ Examples from 2011-2012 is SAP project carried out in collaboration with Accenture, the Group Leadership Program designed and run with assistance of People & Performance, and a project management training effort with Implement.

value chain. Cooperating with an industrial Ph.D. could be said to fit in nicely with other types of procurement of external (knowledge) resources in connection with other developmental efforts.

In the case of Solar, the host unit of the research project, corporate HR, is relatively new established (2006) and so this part of the organization is characterized by a high degree of start-up entrepreneurial spirit implementing organizational processes for the first time. Although this position makes the department very receptive and easy to collaborate with as a researcher, the department may also be characterized by a higher degree of change willingness than the rest of the organization that has more legacy and established practice to give up when new systems are introduced. (For a case of more established HR department's receptiveness to insider research, see Møller, forthcoming.) Furthermore, the CEO as well as a significant part of top management and the HR department are new comers to Solar (compared with almost a 100 years of legacy) and these groups may be more eager to change and demonstrate impact and agency than the surrounding organization. Also, organizations and part of organizations may vary in their degree of openness to the outside world. Degnegaard's longitudinal study of the Danish police is one instructional example of an organization where even researchers working from the inside may have to work hard at getting access to information due to a legacy of secrecy (Degnegaard, 2010). In Solar, the communication style has traditionally been one of "flying below radar", while the present CEO's engagement in communication has initiated a more open style. This approach may be more grounded in corporate top management (of which the HR-director is part) than the rest of the organization which may be more concerned with publication of research results and other types of public utterances. Echoing this concern, host company advisors (who themselves have academic backgrounds) have stressed on several occasions that the typical Solarian (manager) is an outcome oriented person with a need of practical, hands-on communication and application of results and not in the habit of being exposed in external fora.

The industrial Ph.D. set-up includes a certain degree of safe-guarding measures for securing host company commitment in that the company has signed a contract highlighting the resources to be delivered – financial, but more importantly in terms of meetings, knowledge sharing and organizational access. Although, demonstrating value and building social capital is to be preferred as means of securing commitment to the research process, a formal contract is an advisable baseline which other research-practitioner projects can benefit from.

Collaborative competences: The host university

Finally, the last main stakeholder, the research project host university, plays an important role for creating the necessary space for academia-practitioner collaboration. With regards to the immediate academic environment of the case research project, the European and local Copenhagen Business School stance on academia-practitioner cooperation is generally a friendly one. Kleinmann & Vallas (2001) observe that "*Academia and industry shows signs of convergence, because of an 'industrialization' of academy and a simultaneous 'collegialization' of industry*" (Kleinmann & Vallas, 2001, quoted in Sousa & Hendriks, 2008, p. 822). Even if local communities of researchers may stress the autonomy and independence of research vis-à-vis societal or business interest, the general image of Copenhagen Business School promoted from top management is that of a business university with the punch line "CBS – where university means business." Also, the recently updated strategy of Copenhagen Business School is entitled "Business in Society" resonating mode 2 knowledge production (Ernø-Kjølhede, 1999; Gibbons et al., 1994) and the (European) climate of increasing demands from governments to universities with regards to the "*ability of research groups to demonstrate co-operation with, or the expression of interest by, specified user or stakeholder groups*" (Jacob & Hellström, 2003, p. 48).

Seen in this context, CBS is a practitioner-friendly academic environment, although the stressing of responding to societal stakeholders may be more central in external communication directed at attracting students and funding than in internal communication and praxis. CBS' involvement in the implementation of the suggestions of the Carnegie2 Report on business education, testifies to the fact that production of actionable knowledge is a theme in vogue. Furthermore, it is a strategic priority of the Department of Management, Politics and Philosophy hosting the industrial Ph.D. project to work closely together with practitioners, and cross-departmental focus on concepts such as "co-creation" and "in-betweenness" testifies to the academic preference for exploring folds and gaps such the academia-practitioner divide. Finally, the department has close ties to the Agency for Science, Technology & Innovation fostering knowledge and acceptance about the industrial Ph.D. research set-up.

Rhetoric and marketing is one thing, reality may be another in terms of performance appraisal criteria. Personnel development talk templates and internal competency and recruitment profiles speak a somewhat different language. Following this, the author finds herself caught between a rock and a hard place in that the contractual requirements of the industrial Ph.D. is partially at odds with the standard university department performance requirements and emphasizing competencies that are very different from the criteria used for employee performance appraisal in the host company. So, even if the European and particularly Scandinavian academic environment is generally a friendly one, engaging in collaborative research is a more risky strategy for the researcher who wishes to place herself at center stage of the research community and traditional perceptions of research quality. Again, ability to publish in attractive research journal may be the best way to demonstrate value, but also perhaps more difficult – not least because there is not necessarily mutual value in A-journal publications for practitioners (Pearce, 2012; Pearce & Huang, 2012a, 2012b; Ireland, 2012; Bartunek & Egri, 2012). It seems that academia still has some way to go with regards to 'walking the talk' of actionable knowledge creation and research in close engagement with practitioners.

CONCLUSION

The industrial Ph.D. is born to span the academia-practitioner divide, being an outsider and newcomer that come to enjoy full membership and gradual socialization in to field as an insider, but not enjoying complete membership. The industrial Ph.D. set-up is turn-key privileged access and practitioner participation and as such is a telling tale of challenges to be encountered in non-Ph.D. research projects engaging other (tenured) researchers in practice-anchored research projects. This paper characterized the Industrial Ph.D. setting as a field of doing research *in/with(in)*, *for* and *in-between* organizations cooperating closely with the field as co-researchers and knowledge co-creators with a view to producing both research and practice relevance and value. Doing research in, with and for organizations in order to produce actionable research and management knowledge with value for both practitioners and academia places particular demands on the methodological framework of the research project. This concerns mainly how to secure actual impact in the field through reflexive knowledge production and political entrepreneurship as well as through choosing transparent data collection techniques that easily lend themselves to outsider evaluation. Furthermore, a research set-up with the ambition of co-creating mutual value in practice and academia, places additional demands on the competency requirements of the researcher and the immediate environment of the research project.

Doing research in-between places the researcher at the intersection where “publish or perish” meets with the discourse of “research to invoice” and practical profit concerns. In effect, the researcher has a dual allegiance position where boundary spanning, stakeholder management and boundary brokerage is deemed necessary to realise the potential for innovation and value creation of the in-between. Producing research at this intersection demands much of the absorptive capacity of practitioners, the openness to collaboration with practice from academia and excellent bridge building skills on behalf of the researcher. Against this backdrop, walking the talk of actionable research requires an overhaul of the performance requirements of researchers and quality assessment of research. The traditional researcher recruitment criteria do not place a premium on such skills, and the time spent in the field to secure impact and mutual co-creation is difficult to defend vis-à-vis current academic performance criteria.

The industrial Ph.D. set-up is an example of a concrete framework for doing research in close collaboration with practice with a third intermediary body which - through control of funding - requires the researcher to bridge the research-practitioner gap. If actionable research aimed at co-creating value in both academia and practice is to be facilitated further in the future, creation and expansion of institutional frameworks for supporting research of this nature in the academic environment or other bodies funding research seems highly timely. After all, bridging the research-practitioner gap is a challenge which has continued to puzzle researchers for decades, and bridging the gap all alone in a one-man army is certainly possible, but up-hill. A supportive framework will increase the likelihood of success, securing that mutual value co-creation is not the exception that proves the rules against all odds, but rather the likely outcome of institutionalized creative co-creation between researcher, practitioner host organization and academia.

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