



universität
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DISSERTATION

Titel der Dissertation

„A Master Frame of Co-Intelligence and Appreciation?

Framing political change and social movement activity“

Verfasserin

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angestrebter akademischer Grad
Doktorin der Philosophie (Dr. Phil.)

Wien, 2012

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:
Dissertationsgebiet lt. Studienblatt:
Betreuerin:

A 092 300
Politikwissenschaft
Univ.-Prof. Dr. Birgit Sauer



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Framing political change and social movement activity“

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Personal Preface

Between two worlds

The research question for this thesis developed during my political work with NGOs and social movements. Or perhaps it developed during my evenings in spiritual and therapeutic groups. Or perhaps right in between these two.

I began to notice that the values and worldviews which were relevant in mediation groups on Wednesday evenings did not seem to apply in office work on Thursday mornings. Non-duality and loving kindness did not seem to feature as categories in most political work I have had a chance to witness and participate in; not as a practice, but also not as an ideal, not even as a matter of debate over possible ideals, in most cases. Inner change did not come up as a relevant category either, and keeping oneself as a person as separate as possible from one's work was often assumed to be desirable, especially in an academic or semi-academic environment.

At the same time, while I found many of these values in spiritual and therapeutic groups, these seemed to focus almost exclusively on inner change and on the individual. Little attention was given to the existence of outer and of collective structures, the impact they have on us, and most importantly perhaps, our ability to change such structures.

They seemed like two different spheres, two different windows onto the world, with little overlap between them. Yet I was looking out of both of them, and I was not the only one. Many of the people I met in spiritual, creative or self-development contexts were also engaged in political work of one kind or the other, or were at least politically interested. Likewise, many of my office colleagues were taking Yoga classes in the evenings, or were part of therapeutic and spiritual groups where love, mindfulness and awareness of inner processes played a major role. There was considerable overlap between these two communities in terms of the people present; though not terms of the discourse practised.

Raising the question

I began to long for a place where the two could come together. Wouldn't it be possible to see what political work looks like when based on loving kindness? Can't we be mindful while looking at collective structures?

Couldn't we start investigating paths of contributing to a life-affirming world that would allow us to embody, to experience and to radiate all those qualities that we desire for a future society, and that ultimately are the reasons behind our political commitment? That would be a coming together of ends and means, means and message. It could bring integrity and authenticity.

If I am aiming for co-operation as the basic feature within a future society: can I be co-operative in my dealings today, including my political work? If I would like to contribute to the emergence of societies where predominant inner modes are not fear or anger, but joy, friendliness and inner peace, or perhaps also enthusiasm, laughter and curiosity – can these be the predominant modes I experience and radiate while I am politically active now? My hypothesis was that such inner modes are not only in line with my political aim, but also much more pleasant immediately, and prone to bringing forth different types of agency. Wouldn't it be possible to find or create forms of political agency along those lines?

No, not possible – that was the first reaction I got when proposing the question to my friends in academia and political groups. The world is in fact full of oppression, they said, and therefore critique and resistance are required. Anger and grief are the natural reaction to the state of the world; they are also necessary for people to become active for change. A description of instances of oppression and suffering usually followed, bringing the conversation to an end.

Nevertheless the question did stay with me, and also the belief, or the hope, that it might be possible. Wouldn't it at least be worth inquiring in that direction? I began research into literature, websites, groups and organisations, looking for aspects that might be related to what I was looking for, or for people who – even if they had no answers either – were at least interested in the question.

So the first step in my research was to establish the legitimacy, and the possibility, of the question. The second step was to look for literature, people, nooks and corners where there was interest, or even knowledge and experience. The third phase was the impression that there is a whole subculture moving in that direction. I found related thoughts and initiatives cropping up wherever I looked. It seemed quite surprising then that a few years earlier, I had not noticed them.

However, while in the meantime I have found a wealth of literature and initiatives, I have not found anything that would prompt me to say: "Yes! This is it!". I have not found a perfect example, an embodiment of such new forms of political agency. I have been in close contact with some of the people and groups I mention, and have seen and experienced both phases of elation and phases of disappointment and disillusionment, sometimes fraught with pain. Most strands of thought that held attraction for me also included substantial portions that I could not relate to at all. Most practices that I found inspiring also had moments when they faltered. So it was splinters I found, little bits and pieces here and there, glimpses into what might be possible. Perhaps it is more a work of piecing together a mosaic from stones collected in different corners of the world than the discovery of a ready-made painting.

Some propositions that constituted essential starting points for me at the beginning turned out to much less important as my work carried on. One of them was constructionism. For me, constructionism was crucial in giving me the idea and the courage to turn away from a problem-focused approach. It was the essential counter-argument to the claim that problems "are indeed there" and therefore have to be responded to. A constructionist worldview gave me the underlying assumption that it is always possible to see and present a situation in several different ways, and that much of what we perceive as "given" or "natural" has indeed been constructed and could be constructed differently. So constructionism has opened up a lot of mental and even emotional space for me. That made me assume that it would be likewise for

others, and that I am well advised to direct my search at approaches that also use a constructionist foundation. However, while a lot of very helpful material has emerged from my search in constructionist settings, it turned out that a lot of strands I found useful and inspiring did in fact not start out with a constructionist foundation, at least not strongly or not explicitly. So, while a constructionist understanding of social reality is still very important and very helpful for me personally, I have come to see that a number of paths may be leading to similar conclusions, and that apparently other people have found other routes that take them to the kind of place I aspire to.

Academic writing

Another aspect that seemed important to me in the beginning was the style of writing I would use in this thesis. Perhaps also as an outcome of my constructionist leanings, I felt that the style in which I would write would contribute to the meaning as much as the actual, explicit content of my sentences. I wanted to use a language that is personal, explicitly subjective, not making claims to universal truth. A language that is inclusive, open to a large number of people, and close to everyday usage. Language that is authentic and close to the heart, language I use when talking to myself about things that go deep, such as changes in beliefs or identity. That type of language would have been similar to the language I am using here in this preface.

However, it turned out that while theoretical arguments e.g. for writing subjectively have been made repeatedly in academic literature, the actual practice in scholarly texts was still overwhelmingly one of a more distanced, impersonal tone. It became apparent that with the way I approached my thesis, I was trying to do too many unconventional things at once, and would no longer have fitted within the realm of what is understandable and acceptable in the academic context I was writing for. So I discarded the first version of my thesis and produced a second one, much more in line with academic traditions. One implication of this is that throughout the remaining text of this thesis, I will hardly be visible as an author, but largely disappear behind the text.

That being said, I hope that many of the original concerns have survived the various transformations of this project and are still to be found in the text that has finally emerged. I am indebted to numerous people and groups that have encouraged me in my search, inspired me through their sharings, and supported me with their friendship. I am grateful for the rich heritage of human history from which my own thinking emerges, and for the context of cosmos and nature of which I am a part and which keeps me alive. I wish to thank millions of people who have grown potatoes, generated electricity, mended rooftops and generally created the conditions necessary for this thesis to be produced, including my university supervisor, Birgit Sauer.

1. Introduction

This thesis raises questions about possible alternative forms of master frames for social movements, and perhaps even for thinking about "the political" as such. In particular, it will question whether frames for social movements (and for "the political") inevitably have to be based on assumptions of antagonism. If not, what are the alternatives? What could be the key notions, the core elements, of alternative master frames? And can aspects or traces of such alternative master frames be observed in existing social movements?

The relevance of this type of question became visible to me in the course of my own work, in academic environments but especially within social movements. For myself, and for social movement members like me, the wish may arise to have means and ends come closer together in the way a social movement operates. For those who, like myself, espouse political values that envision people in a desirable future society to be generally co-operative and friendly, relaxed and open, the question arises whether it may be possible to embody, experience and radiate these states already in the present, in the very moment of working for a society based on those values. Bringing ends and means together becomes all the more imperative if one believes change to be a permanent condition of society, rather than brief interlude between long phases of stability. Likewise, if one believes that is impossible to know beforehand what the outcome of one's action, the effect of social movement activity will be, there is another incentive not to counteract one's own goals in the present, just for possible, but uncertain effects in the future. So there probably are a large number of good reasons for social movements to try to bring ends and means together. For those movements or movement members that do not cherish competitiveness and mutual struggle as ideals or aims, that may mean looking for alternatives to antagonistic master frames on the level of means. In addition, the search for such alternative master frames might bring some interesting impulses to the field of social movement studies and indeed to conceptualizations of democracy of the political as such.

Therefore, the thesis will explore current assumptions of antagonism, and then proceed to ask whether these represent the only avenue open to social movements, or whether other, alternative or complementary, master frames could be envisaged. Treatment of this question at a general conceptual level shall be complemented by asking whether some existing social movements already exhibit traits that might fit well with such potential alternative master frames.

Academic approach and theoretical background

In order to develop these questions, the thesis will begin by placing itself within the context of Western academic study of social movements. This shall serve the purpose of providing a background in a body of literature familiar to the environment in which the thesis itself is being produced. Social movement studies shall also be used to describe and situate the academic approach chosen for this thesis.

The thesis places itself within strands of transdisciplinary research¹ that aim to make issues raised in society (i.e. questions arising outside a purely academic realm) the starting point for academic research. Relevance to society is considered the ultimate aim of research. Within social movement studies, this orientation may be found in a call for the building of movement-relevant theory.² Furthermore, within this type of academic approach, actors outside academia are seen as peers and partners in research.³ In the case of this thesis, this means that theory generated by movement members and theory generated inside academia are both included and brought into dialogue at eye level.

So, characteristics of the academic approach chosen for this thesis are its transdisciplinary nature, its orientation towards relevance for agents in society, in this case, in social movements, and a relation of partnership with these agents in research.

1 Reitinger (2012), Pohl/Hirsch Hadorn (2006), p. 68ff.

2 Bevington/Dixon (2005)

3 Reitinger (2012), Pohl/Hirsch Hadorn (2006), p. 68ff., Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 195.ff

A further central feature of the academic approach of the thesis is its constructionist foundation. Social reality is understood as constructed, and as constructed collectively through interaction, language, discourse. Therefore, within social movement studies, the thesis pays particular attention to the framing approach as popularized by Snow and Benford,⁴ framing representing a prime conceptual tool with which to apply constructionist foundations to the analysis of particular social movements.

Furthermore, it clarified that this thesis understands "the political" and the sphere in which social movements operate in broad terms: not only as proceedings in state institutions and political parties, but also comprising cultural terms, everyday practises and significations, contributions to and changes of discourse. In that sense, the thesis is related to the concepts used in the study of "new social movements", and to conceptualizations of political change as outlined by authors such as Ulrich Beck.⁵

Antagonism

After this introduction of the theoretical background and academic approach within which the thesis is placed, attention is given to the notion of antagonism, and to assumptions made about its prevalence. Literature on social movements, especially on the framing approach used in this thesis, is screened with a view to implicit or explicit assumptions about antagonism as a central (and natural?) feature of social movements. Likewise, theoretical writings on democracy making a strong argument for the antagonistic nature of the political, in particular by Chantal Mouffe,⁶ shall be introduced.

The thesis then proceeds to its core question: Could there possibly be master frames for social movements (and "the political") that do not have antagonism as a core assumption? If so, what could such frames look like? What would be their core terms and concepts, and how might they operate in practice?

4 Snow et al.(1986), Snow/Benford (1988), Snow/Benford (1992), Benford/Snow (2000)

5 Beck (1994), p.17ff.

6 Mouffe (2005), p. 9.

In exploring these questions, the thesis introduces two notions – appreciation and co-intelligence – with the aim of asking whether these terms could feature as key concepts in such potential alternative master frames.

Appreciation and co-intelligence

Appreciation will be introduced as used in the approach of appreciative inquiry.⁷ Appreciative inquiry, rooted in the field of organization development, contributes both a body of academic literature and a wealth of practical examples of trying to steer change in social collectives (mostly organizations, in the case of appreciative inquiry). It makes the interesting suggestion that the starting point for a social change process need not necessarily be a problem. Instead, appreciative inquiry suggests to define the starting point (and anchor) of a change process in the form of an unconditional positive question. Inquiry is understood as a change process – understanding a change process as an inquiry (rather than as a campaign to convince) may be one interesting suggestion for the framing of social movements.

The main element, however, appreciative inquiry is meant to introduce and illustrate at this point is the focus on the positive, on that which is deemed desirable by the people involved. Starting with a positive question, with naming that which is deemed desirable, appreciative inquiry moves on to encourage discovery of aspects and traces of that desired state in past and present, assuming these already exist, and just need to be fanned and encouraged. These positive experiences also form ingredients for dreaming, for envisioning what could be.

This general approach of appreciative inquiry, as well as the concrete tools it suggests for steering change processes in organizations and communities, will be introduced in this part of the thesis, along with some doubtful questions as to whether appreciation is appropriate in all circumstances, and questions about who is to benefit from particular change processes.

After appreciation, co-intelligence will be the second notion the thesis introduces in order to be able to ask, later on, whether these might be key concepts in a

7 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000)

potential alternative master frame for social movements. The thesis focuses on the approach to co-intelligence introduced by Tom Atlee, a long-standing member of various social movements. While Atlee⁸ points out a number of aspects of co-intelligence, a central notion is that of collective intelligence, of finding ways to allow individual intelligences to interact productively to bring forth something far more intelligent than any individual person or system part could possibly have produced. Atlee's reasoning links neatly into propositions by authors such as David Bohm,⁹ and into strands prevalent in Asian philosophy, especially Buddhist teachings on the interconnectedness of everything.¹⁰

Aspects of a new master frame in existing movements

The discussion on appreciative inquiry and co-intelligence in this thesis is tied back to the question it raised at the beginning: Can there be master frames for social movements, or for the political sphere more generally, that are not based on a central assumption of antagonism? If so, what alternative core notions might be used in such potential non-antagonistic master frames?

In a first step, the thesis has introduced the notions of appreciation and co-intelligence, with a view to asking whether these might be possible candidates on a conceptual level. In a second step, the thesis will look into some existing social movements, and some of the tools and methods they use, in order to see whether it is possible to observe in actual practice some aspects of potential master frames of co-intelligence and appreciation.

The first example of an existing social movement the thesis introduces for that purpose is the Transition Town movement: a movement focused strongly on the vision of vibrant communities, permaculture and localized production, offering a high quality of life and a smooth transition into the post-carbon era. While there is some mention of problems (peak oil), the thrust of the Transition Town movement is on that vision, and on emotional states such as excitement and elation, and in that sense fairly close to the approach appreciative inquiry would suggest. Rob

8 Atlee (2003)

9 Bohm (1996)

10 see e.g. Thich Nhat Hanh (1988)

Hopkins, author of the Transition Handbook¹¹, makes a conscious decision not act in antagonistic modes, for instance with respect to local politicians, but to seek to be co-operative and inclusive. For instance, Hopkins suggests that there is no need to be surprised at the rather frequent occurrence of politicians being reactive rather than proactive; instead, he suggests that the population go ahead and take the lead. In that vein, reasons to complain about politicians diminish, and the stance taken by movement members is less that of an opposition, and more that of a power holder: one who starts implementation – rather than one calling for implementation to be started.

Implementation thus often takes the form of a niche, of a prototype, of a minuscule version of a new system, hopefully ready for upscaling when the moment comes where the old system stops functioning. Transition aims to create these structures, and tangible examples such as community gardens and cobweb houses.¹²

While the creation of small scale examples of a different practice fits well with the self-empowered image of movement members (as those holding the power to begin a new system), there may also be instances where that role quickly tips into one of opposition; for instance, when the old system takes measures to destroy the niche. The thesis will introduce this argument with the example of the free culture movement.¹³ From free software to Wikipedia, a huge number of high-quality projects have demonstrated a new way of operating, creating a large and vibrant niche which may show signs of becoming the new system – and found themselves threatened by legal, technical and economic measures introduced by the big players of the old system. Promptly, fairly traditional forms of oppositional social movement activity, such as demonstrations against the ACTA agreement, could be observed. The thesis argues therefore that non-antagonistic frames for social movements might best not be seen as exclusive, as replacing all existing forms of activism, but as a complementary form of framing, perhaps offering additional, so far underexplored avenues for social movements.

11 Hopkins (2008)

12 This also raises the interesting question for social movements whether consciousness raising has to come first, or whether action can come first, in the form of a new practice, engaged in by movement members for various reasons and with different states of consciousness.

13 Bollier (2008)

After pointing to some more movements (Cultural Creatives,¹⁴ the hospice movement¹⁵) which might possibly be displaying aspects of an alternative master frame, the thesis goes on to discuss some of the tools and methods employed by these social movements.

Open Space conferences in particular are chosen for further elaboration of possible implications of master frames of co-intelligence. Open Space,¹⁶ as a method for organizing conferences, allows moving many of the important decision to be made (who is to speak, when, on what subject) to the collective intelligence of all conference participants. This implies less work for the organising committee, but also less control, and a perhaps frightening redefinition of the organizers' role. The thesis describes Open Space as a conference tool, but also raises the question of what the principles behind Open Space might mean, by analogy, for the framing and the self-image of social movements more generally. Would social movements be ready to trust the collective intelligence of a larger group, such as society as a whole? Should it, then, be the role of social movements not to try and push their own view, but to voice their view and then listen closely to others, hoping for their own views to be changed and complemented? Tom Atlee can be understood to be arguing along those lines when he proposes to push for co-intelligent processes rather than for one particular outcome. Otherwise, movements might end up with "simply another way in which we are attempting to impose our views, however noble, on others"¹⁷ – which, interestingly, Atlee suggests should perhaps not be the aim of a social movement.

Atlee describes his own understanding of his role as a social movement member as going from "social change activism" to "facilitator of cultural transformation" to "social process activism".¹⁸ He therefore describes a shift from demands on individual social change issues towards more general underlying cultural assumptions, and from there towards process innovation. The thesis thus also raises the question whether the role of social movement members, in a master

14 Ray/Anderson (2000)

15 IFF - Palliative Care und Organisationsethik (2007)

16 Harrison (1997)

17 Atlee (2003), p. 47.

18 Atlee p. 45f.

frame of appreciation and co-intelligence, might shift, at least partially, towards that of a facilitator rather than that of an advocate, providing process rather than content, creating a space where all voices can be heard rather than trying to have his or her own voice heard by everybody.

Such a shift would also fit well with suggestions David Bohm¹⁹ makes for dialogue, and with methods such as councils or talking stick circles. David Bohm argues that problems of torn societies are exacerbated by people trying to help, but unable even to listen to each other – and suggests the formation of groups that practice deep listening and suspension of one's own emotions and assumptions, letting each group member see the assumptions and emotions present in every member, and for a new quality of insight to emerge from that state. Since such circles of sharing and deep listening are tools suggested and used by a number of the movements mentioned in this thesis, they shall be considered another example of aspects of a potential master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence that can be observed.

Implications for movements and for academic study

So, the thesis has first introduced the notion of co-intelligence, and that of appreciation as proposed by appreciative inquiry. It has then introduced a few social movements, the Transition Town movement in particular, and some tools and methods used by these movements, such as listening circles and Open Space conferences. It has discussed whether some aspects of a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence might be observed in these movements and their methods, and has found at least some potential candidates.

In the final section, the thesis will consider some of the findings of that preceding discussion, and raise some more general questions related to such potential master frames. It will also look into possible implications for the field of social movement studies and, perhaps, for theories of democracy and the political sphere. In doing that, it will first link back to the core framing tasks of social

19 Bohm (1996)

movements as identified by Snow and Benford,²⁰ and ask what form these might take under an alternative master frame.

It will then return to the question of antagonism, and introduce in a bit more detail the critique Chantal Mouffe²¹ has offered with respect to deliberative approaches to democracy. Even though her criticisms do not refer directly to the authors cited in this thesis, they nevertheless may have some relevance, at least by analogy, since the issues she addresses are closely related to some of the propositions made in this thesis.

One crucial point Mouffe raises is the danger of making the expression of resentment or disagreement seem illegitimate through an exaggerated focus on harmony and consensus. Voices that are denied legitimate forms of expression in the form of agonistic struggle, Mouffe argues,²² are prone to cropping up elsewhere in a much more violent form, as antagonistic struggle, as a struggle of annihilation between enemies not recognizing each other's right to differ.

This type of danger is certainly not to be disregarded for potential master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence as discussed in this thesis. Especially a focus on "the positive", as suggested by appreciative inquiry, will probably need to be carefully balanced and complemented by other aspects in order to avoid the pitfall of simply repressing the unpleasant.

Other criticisms Mouffe raises, especially in relation to the search for one rational, objectively best and universal model, seem to have less relevance for the examples discussed in this thesis. The movements cited in this thesis seem little inclined to idealize rationality at the expense of emotion, and instead welcome emotion and passion as essential, helpful, necessary. Likewise, they do tend to give room to doubt and to openness: these seem to be almost essential features of co-intelligent approaches, since these assume the perspective of an individual, and even of a group, to always be incomplete and in need of being complemented by others.

20 Snow/Benford (1988), p.199ff.

21 Mouffe (2005)

22 Mouffe (2005), p. 5.

That also raises interesting questions with respect to the creation of niches, and the role that these are eventually supposed to play: are they to "take over" the system and become hegemonic? Or are they to remain but one part of a pluralistic mosaic? Or to be mingled and merged, and changed almost beyond recognition by their interaction with other ideas? A master frame of co-intelligence might lean much more towards mingling and merging, and towards a pluralistic mosaic; which might be interesting compared to some other master frames currently used by social movements.

Related to that is the issue of "mobilization", a notion quite central to the field of social movement studies. In a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence, will movements aim to get people to "join the cause", to take on the views presented by the movement? Or will they aim to get people to join a particular kind of process, as Tom Atlee²³ suggests in the name of co-intelligence? Will they see themselves more in the role of facilitators, and the movement more in the form of an inquiry?

In the concluding section of the thesis, the initial question will be picked up again: Could there be master frames for social movements, and for understanding "the political" more generally, that are not centred on assumptions of antagonism? What concepts might such alternative frames be based upon, what would their main features be, and can any of these, at least in aspects or traces, be observed in existing movements?

Potential key terms introduced in this thesis were appreciation as in appreciative inquiry, and co-intelligence as understood by Tom Atlee. Some existing social movements, and tools they use, were then presented in order to see whether it is possible to observe aspects or examples of such potential master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence. A number of examples, or at least interesting analogies, could be found, and an at least equal number of new questions have arisen, questions both for social movements and for academic study.

23 Atlee (2003), p.45ff.

One set of questions revolves around vision and "positive" emotions. For instance, can social movements be centred on a notion of that which they deem desirable? Can vision and appreciation of the past and the present be a starting point for a social movement? What role can emotional states such as excitement and elation play, and is it interesting to examine whether the most prevalent emotions in a movement are joy and hope, or fear and anger? What space will still be necessary for the expression of disagreement and resentment, and what form can it take? How can a focus on the positive avoid the creation of blind spots?

The role advocacy and facilitation play in framing a movement's tasks and identity provide a further area of potential study. Are social movements necessarily advocates of one particular vision, or could they (also) be facilitators, their role being to provide a co-intelligent process in which a vision and decision can be created together? Does "mobilization" mean to get people to accept a particular view, or to join a co-intelligent process?

Likewise, what role can the creation of niches play? Might social movements invest their energy more into the creation of (small scale examples of) an alternative rather than into fighting the old system? How often, or to what extent, can it be assumed that the old system will falter anyway, either due to external circumstances such as peak oil, or due to the arrival of a better alternative? How do self-empowered moves towards the creation of new prototypes interlink with forms of opposition and protest? Is it possible for social movements to frame themselves in the role of (self-)government rather than opposition?

And, finally, what might any of this mean for the relation between means and ends? Could master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence offer ways for social movements to help bring ends and means together? Would it help them to embody, to experience and to radiate in the present what they deem desirable for the future? The list of open questions runs on and on. Many of the issues raised here will need further research, both theoretical and empirical, to help elaborate possible answers. What this thesis shall attempt do here is but a first sketch of what the questions might be, a first skimming of the surface, and, hopefully, a first arousal of curiosity.

2. Academic Context and Approach

This thesis is situated in the context of social movement studies, bringing in both scholarly and movement-generated theory, additionally drawing on insights from other fields, such as organization development and theories on democracy and the nature of the political.

This chapter will therefore first introduce the field of social movement studies as it developed in Western academia. It will then go on to specify the academic approach and theoretical background of this thesis. For that purpose, reference will be made to strands of transdisciplinary research and to movement-relevant theory, as well as to constructionism and to the framing approach within social movement studies. A brief section will aim to clarify that for the purposes of this thesis, "the political", and of the sphere within which social movements operate and try to have an effect, will be understood in broad terms, including cultural and discursive realms as much as formal state institutions. Finally, the use of assumptions of antagonism in parts of social movement studies and political theory shall be examined in order to provide the basis for the opening question of the thesis: Do assumptions of antagonism have to be central to the framing of social movements (or of "the political" more generally)? Or could alternative master frames also exist?

2.1. Social movement studies

The scholarly field of social movement studies in its present form has been established as a major area in Western academia since the 1970s.²⁴ The preceding scholarly tradition had a significantly different orientation. As David West

24 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p.1. As other fields and disciplines, too, Western social movement studies seems to suffer from a relative poverty in terms of intellectual connections to other parts of the globe. The authors referred to in here come almost exclusively from Europe and North America, and they in turn also refer to European and North American authors exclusively, with a clear Anglo-Saxon predominance.

puts it: "Social movement activity had previously been studied mainly as 'collective behaviour'. Continuing a long tradition of suspicion towards unruly 'rabbles', 'mobs' and 'masses', classic studies from this perspective examined instances of collective irrationality from the riots, rumours and panics of the French Revolution to the mass hysteria of National Socialism and the Stalinist cult of personality.²⁵ That trend continued well into the middle of the 20th century, writes West: "Mainstream sociology and political science after World War II, particularly in the USA, retained this emphasis, typically regarding collective behaviour as a threat to the rational, ordered, organized collective action enabled by liberal democratic institutions."²⁶

In a similar vein, Flacks writes that collective protest used to be described "as a form of deviance or pathology. Social movements were often seen in terms of 'mob psychology' or as an expression of social breakdown and anomie; protest leaders often understood as acting out unconscious psychological drives; movement participants seen as driven by irrational ideology." However, the 60s brought a change in perspective, Flacks suggests: "The movement upsurge of the 1960s was often described in mass media in these classic terms, but social scientists who came of age as participants in or sympathizers with these could not accept such characterizations. The new look on post-1960s social movement studies involved emphasis on movements as 'politics by other means,' seeing movements as collective efforts to pursue interests with intelligible strategies and rational goals."²⁷ This brought a change in perspective, Flacks points out. "Understanding movements required, not a psychoanalysis of participants, but an account of the ways in which the emergence and evolution of a movement related to the opportunities, threats, and resources available for achieving movement goals. Movement participants turned out to be better explained by examining the ways in which participants were embedded in communities and networks than by supposing that they were uprooted or socially alienated."²⁸ "The new paradigm", writes Flacks, "emphasizing 'resource mobilization,' 'political opportunity,' and 'framing,' focused on movement strategy as a primary topic."²⁹

25 West (2004), p. 267.

26 West (2004), p. 267.

27 Flacks (2004), p. 135.

28 Flacks (2004), p. 135.

29 Flacks (2004), p. 136.

In Europe, academic studies of social movement had seen a relative prominence of scholarship inspired by Marxist theory, assuming that social movements are largely based on class struggle, or else on nationalism.³⁰ However, these theories proved largely inadequate to explain – much less foresee – the rise of peace, environmental, feminist and queer movements witnessed in Europe from the 60s onwards. Hence scholars termed these movements "new social movements", to distinguish them from the movements based on class or nation they considered traditional.

An interesting issue becomes apparent at the example of "new social movements": the differentiation between social movements and social movement studies. Is a particular topic new to the world, or only to the academic discourse? Does increased prevalence of a particular perspective in social movement studies reflect academic fashions, or actual changes in social movements, or both? The difference may not always be easy to tell.

In the case of "new social movements", Della Porta and Diani tend to paint a picture of change occurring in the nature of social movements, to which social movement studies only responded: "Traditionally, social movements had focused mainly on issues of labour and nations: since the 1960s, 'new social movements' have emerged instead centred on concerns such as women's liberation, environmental protection, etc."³¹ These had, Della Porta and Diani say "a strong (new) middle class basis and a clear differentiation from the models of working-class or nationalist collective action that had historically preceded them"³² This presents the issue as one of actual historical change, a change objectively occurring in the nature of movements.

In contrast, David West says that "the newness of new social movements is best understood in the context of an unfolding set of theoretical debates rather than simply as a reflection of a particular stage of Western society."³³ Richard Flacks

30 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 6.

31 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 6.

32 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. vii.

33 West (2004), p. 265.

points out that the characterisation of this type of movement as new "flew in the face of at least 150 years of U.S. history, which had featured abolitionists, suffragists, prohibitionists, conservationists, and a wide variety of other formations that were both cultural and political in their aims. Europeans were struck with the flourishing of movements that were not anticipated nor controllable by established mass parties of the left and that seemed to be inexplicable by orthodox Marxian theory. For them what was 'new' was precisely the emergence of autonomous movements that lacked a clear class location. But such movements had always been the rule rather than the exception in the case of American 'exceptionalism.'"³⁴

In fact, Europe, too, had seen abolitionists and suffragettes long before the 1960s, and a large number of other movements aiming at cultural and institutional change.³⁵ For instance, there was a thriving scene of reformist movements around 1900, on themes including land communes, back-to-nature approaches, vegetarian lifestyles, nudism, anthroposophy, organic food, alternative health care in the line of Kneipp, educational reform, occultism, psychology, art nouveau, free love, and breaking out of physical and metaphorical corsets.³⁶ And again, a hundred years before that, Europe was at a visible high point of Enlightenment, a fundamental change in worldview, identity and social institutions that had spread through society not least by means of group gatherings, pamphlets, satirical newspapers, scientific societies, and other forms of networking, organising and communicating that could easily be considered constituent of a social movement. Before that, Protestantism had arisen and shaken the belief system and institutional setting in Europe, again involving large numbers of people in formal, informal or secret networks and organisations.

So, if one chooses to pick that particular perspective, one could probably also say that European history has always been a history of social movements. Or one can depict social movements as relatively novel, arising in parallel with the advent of social movement studies.

34 Flacks (2004), p. 137.

35 David West (2004) lists a number of them at p. 267.

36 see e.g. Schwab (2003).

Again, Della Porta and Diani seem to choose that form of portrayal when they say that (only) now, a few decades after the 1960s, it "is no longer possible to describe protest politics, grassroots participation, and symbolic challenges as 'unconventional.' Instead, references to a 'movement society' seem increasingly plausible."³⁷

Was it social movements which became more prominent in the West since the 1960s, or was it only social movement studies? Were cultural and identity-focused movements "new" to the West, or were they only "new" to Western movement scholars? Differentiating the situation in social movement studies from the situation in social movements, and "newness" in one from "newness" in the other, is a delicate point that is likely to arise in other contexts, too, not least in relation to central points proposed in this thesis. Would the existence of social movements that are vision-based, appreciative, co-operative and co-intelligent (rather than problem-focused and antagonistic) be a novelty to Western social movements, or only to Western social movement studies? While it will not be possible to provide definite answers on this point within the scope of this thesis, it is certainly worth keeping that question in mind.

Even if "newness" is located within social movement studies rather than social movements as such, there still may be a lot of value and interest to be found in the strand of research that has evolved under the heading of "new social movements". Flacks suggests that rather than speaking of research on "new social movements", it might be more helpful to think of this research as bringing culture and identity into focus. "The 'culturalist' perspective suffered a bit from being labelled 'new social movement theory'",³⁸ Flacks writes, pointing out that the "newness" seems questionable. However, that does in no way present an argument against the usefulness of a culturalist perspective. To the contrary: the value of integrating culture and identity into the study of social movements was increasingly felt by North American scholars, too, writes Flacks.³⁹

37 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 1-2.

38 Flacks (2004), p. 137.

39 Flacks (2004), p. 136.

"The political contention paradigm, insofar as it defines movements as vehicles for making political claims and acting in relation to the state, fails to examine the ways in which movements reshape beliefs, moral codes, identities, and other cultural elements",⁴⁰ states Flacks, and says that "many who were focused on 'strategic' perspectives (mostly American sociologists) were ready to admit that their own work needed to bring culture back in and to recognize the importance of collective identity, 'framing,' and other cultural dimensions to the process of mobilization."⁴¹

Robert Benford, one of the authors who contributed significantly to the development and popularisation of a framing approach in social movement studies, describes the preceding turn in North American social movement scholarship as follows: "It has become fashionable in the past few years to include interpretive and ideational issues in social movement theory and research. It was not always that way. For nearly two decades prior to the mid-1980s, movement scholars working in the interpretive or constructionist vein found it difficult to get their work published in mainstream outlets. Meanwhile, structuralist and other materialist concerns enjoyed unprecedented popularity in the movements field. Scholars operating within the resource mobilization and rational choice perspectives ruled hegemonically. However, in the 1980s a spate of reviews critical of structural determinism and crass utilitarianism began to appear, thereby providing an opening in the field's opportunity structure for those interested in movement reality construction and communication processes."⁴²

For Benford, the key words in this turn in academic hegemony include not only culture, but perhaps even more prominently ideation, signification, and constructionism.⁴³ "One of the most popular approaches to have emerged in this new wave of interest in movement ideational and interpretive issues was the framing perspective", Benford writes.⁴⁴

40 Flacks (2004), p. 136.

41 Flacks (2004), p. 137.

42 Benford (1997), p. 409.

43 Benford (1997), p. 410.

44 Benford (1997), p. 410.

He points out that the framing perspective has made significant contributions to the social movements field: "It has infused new enthusiasm for the analysis of ideational, interpretive, constructivist, and cultural dimensions of collective action. It has moved the field beyond the structural determinism of resource mobilization and political opportunity models and away from the dubious psychology of rational choice approaches."⁴⁵ Framing is the approach within social movement studies that will be examined more closely here, and that will provide a main point of reference throughout this thesis.

2.2. The framing approach in social movement studies

The framing approach has been popularized in American social movement studies in large part through a number of foundational articles by Robert Benford and David Snow. However, as Benford and Snow themselves point out⁴⁶, framing as a concept has been around in social sciences well before. It has been applied in a number of different contexts and disciplines, ranging from cognitive psychology to linguistics and political science, and has found its way to social movement studies not least through the influence of Goffman's book⁴⁷ on the subject.

2.2.1. Frames

Building on Goffman's approach, Snow and Benford suggest that frames can be understood as "schemata of interpretation" that help to organize the complexity of the world and of an individual's experiences into meaningful patterns. They allow the attribution of relevance, relative location, interconnections, and labels and thereby facilitate orientation and judgement. They also have a decisive influence on the basis upon which action is taken. When talking about "collective action frames", Benford and Snow stress that these are to be understood not merely as the sum of individuals' schemata, but that there is a process of collective construction under way where interaction plays a crucial role.⁴⁸

45 Benford (1997), p. 410-11.

46 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 611.

47 Goffman (1974).

48 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 614.

Social constructionism provides the theoretical bedrock for the framing approach. As Robert Bedford put it: "Whatever else social movement actors do, they seek to affect interpretations of reality among various audiences. They engage in this framing work because they assume, rightly or wrongly, that meaning is prefatory to action. Symbolic interactionists have long operated under similar assumptions."⁴⁹ Referring to Herbert Blumer, he recalls that human beings can be assumed to base their behaviour towards certain things on the meaning these things have for them. Meanings, Bedford continues to say, "are derived (and transformed) via social interaction and are subject to differential interpretations. Hence meaning is problematic; it does not spring from the object of attention into the actor's head, because objects have no intrinsic meaning. Rather meaning is negotiated, contested, modified, articulated, and rearticulated. In short, meaning is socially constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed."⁵⁰

Within the general approach of framing, Snow and Benford have identified a number of more particular aspects and functions they think helpful in further understanding the role framing can play in social movements. These shall be briefly presented in the following sections.

Core framing tasks

Building on Wilson's⁵¹ view on the functions of ideology, Benford and Snow identify three core framing tasks for social movements: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing.⁵² In their perspective, diagnostic framing involves the naming of the problem which is at the core of the social movement, and also identifying a locus of responsibility or blame. Prognostic framing involves the formulation of the desired alternative outcome, and of measures to be taken. Motivational framing, finally, includes putting forward a rationale for active participation in the movement.

A little confusion may arise at their terminology as "prognostic" in common usage tends to refer to a prognosis, a prediction of what is likely to happen. However, with Snow and Benford "prognostic" does not refer to what will (probably) happen, but

49 Benford (1997), p. 410.

50 Benford (1997), p. 410.

51 Wilson (1973).

52 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 199ff.

to what should happen: it is the movement's statement of wish, intention and goals. It is the agenda to be aspired to, not a bet on likely outcomes. So the particular usage Snow and Benford have reserved for the term "prognostic" in the context of framing tasks will have to be kept in mind.

Snow and Benford relate the three framing tasks they have identified to Klandermans⁵³ distinction between "consensus mobilization" and "action mobilization". Consensus mobilization, in Klanderman's terminology, refers to the attempt of spreading a certain view or interpretation, of fostering consensus as to "what is going on", "what should be going on" and "what is to be done about it". Snow and Benford see diagnostic and prognostic framing as falling into that category.⁵⁴ Action mobilization, in Klanderman's terminology, refers to the process of getting people who are part of the consensus to actually become active; this would include motivational framing in the terminology of Benford and Snow.

Flexibility, scope and master frames

Collective action frames of various movements obviously vary in terms of the problem they identify, and also in their attribution of responsibility. Other variable characteristics Benford and Snow list include flexibility/rigidity, inclusivity/exclusivity, and the interpretative scope. Frames, they say, can be relatively open, elastic and inclusive, or rigid, exclusive and restricted in terms of their focus or the number of issues and ideas they allow to be included. Open, flexible, inclusive frames are seen to be more likely to grow into functioning as "master frames". Benford and Snow see master frames as frames performing the typical functions of collective action frames (such as punctuation, attribution, accentuation), but instead of being relevant to one social movement only, master frames perform this function for several movements at once, colouring, restricting or facilitating the arising of various movement-specific frames.⁵⁵ Examples of master frames identified by various authors include rights frames, choice frames, or injustice frames.⁵⁶

53 Klandermans (1984).

54 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 199.

55 Snow/Benford (1992), p. 138.

56 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 619.

2.3. Academic approach

Since this thesis places itself within the context of an academic research community, a few words on the kind of orientation chosen within the academic field may be in order, especially given the wide variety to be found in academia with respect to methods, ontologies, aims and points of reference. Constructionism, for one, has opened up a whole field of possible ways of asking questions and of understanding the context, nature and purpose of research and writing. Several strands have arisen that probe into the relationship between research and society, between knowing, change and reality, and the distribution of roles between "researchers" and other actors involved in or affected by the research process.

Elisabeth Reitinger⁵⁷ places herself within an emergent strand of transdisciplinary research, and refers to Pohl and Hirsch Hadorn⁵⁸ to outline the following core elements as characteristic of that approach:

- Origins and orientation of research questions on societal problems and needs.
- People who are concerned by these questions are partners within the research process.
- Interdisciplinary co-operation on the part of the researchers and crossing boundaries to practitioners in working on issues relevant for all participants. The aim is knowledge creation in dialogue with those who are involved.
- Participative organisation – communication and decision structures and processes – of the research project that enables multidirectional learning and empowerment.⁵⁹

Reitinger points out that in the wake of Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons writings on *Re-Thinking Science*⁶⁰, the term 'mode 2' for this kind of knowledge production has gained increasing popularity.

57 Reitinger (2012).

58 Pohl/Hirsch Hadorn (2006), p. 68ff.

59 Reitinger (2012).

60 Nowotny et al. (2002)

"Compared to traditional scientific research ('mode1')", she writes, "this new way of doing research is characterised by an antihierarchical organisation of research projects, collaboration between different social systems and heterogeneous epistemologies. It aims for 'social robustness' and results that are of high relevance for society."⁶¹

Very similar themes, serving as a point of orientation for this thesis, have been picked up within the research focused on social movements.

Movement relevant theory

Douglas Bevington and Chris Dixon made the question of relevance the focus of their 2005 paper calling for "movement-relevant theory" in social movement studies. "The dominant American social movement scholarship has become detached from the concerns of actual social movements"⁶², they state, and postulate that a central problem especially with the theory this scholarship produces is that it is not being read by the very movements it seeks to illuminate.⁶³

Richard Flacks, in a paper entitled "Knowledge for What?" makes a similar kind of argument, saying that some decades ago "it was possible to imagine, if you were engaged in social movement studies, that your teaching, consulting, and direct participation, as well as your research efforts themselves, might have some relevance to the practices and understandings of political activists. Somewhere along the way, however, the promise of such relevance receded".⁶⁴ Rather than aiming at relevance for movement agents, scholarship currently seems to focus increasingly on "establishing, critiquing, or refining 'paradigms' ", writes Flacks.⁶⁵ After reviewing some recent developments in social movement scholarship, Flacks finds: "The questions nags, however: What is all this analysis for? In what way does the validation, elaboration, and refinement of concepts provide usable knowledge for those seeking social change?"⁶⁶

61 Reitinger (2012).

62 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 185.

63 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 185.

64 Flacks (2004), p. 136.

65 Flacks (2004), p. 136.

66 Flacks (2004), p. 138.

Flacks makes it explicit that it would be desirable to "renew the political and social relevance of academic analysis of movements, particularly for the primary potential nonacademic audience of it: the activists themselves."⁶⁷ The conclusion to his paper contains an elaboration of the criterion of relevance against which social movement literature could be measured. Flacks sees at least two main types of audience that social movement studies ought to be relevant to: students, and movement activists. For the students, Flacks suggests, studying social movements ought to be a moral enterprise: "This is a field rich with stories about human possibility, about moments of transcendence, about the times when ordinary people have changed the world. The stories also include tales of profound betrayal and moral blindness, about the dilemmas of organization, of leadership, of commitment. It's the study of hidden history and of what has shaped our culture and our collective memory. How much of the current theoretical and research literature in the field can be used for such teaching?"⁶⁸

As for the movement activists, Flacks demands that they not only be an audience for, but also partners in research. "To the extent that they are not," Flacks goes on to say, "the intellectual, as well as the moral, value of our work is in question."⁶⁹

This opens up a question that other movement scholars have also expanded on: how to produce movement-relevant literature. What does it take to make social movement theory relevant to movement agents?

Generation of movement relevant theory

Bevington and Dixon, referring to the US context, point out that the lack of movement relevance seems to be a problem besetting theory in particular; historical case studies, for instance, do not seem to suffer the same difficulties. Movement activists, Bevington and Dixon found, do read them and find them useful. Autobiographies of social movement organizers have been found helpful, they report, not least because they include inner dimensions and experiences such

67 Flacks (2004), p. 147.

68 Flacks (2004), p. 152.

69 Flacks (2004), p. 152.

as burnout, emotional conflict, motivation and commitment – all dimensions of movements that conventional academic theory has barely touched, say Bevington and Dixon.⁷⁰

So while the writing of movement histories, of case studies and autobiographies seems to fulfil a valuable function, Bevington and Dixon still hold that there would still be an additional function for academic scholarship, namely "to draw out useful information from a variety of contexts and translate it into a form that is more readily applicable by movements to new situations – i.e. theory."⁷¹

Bevington and Dixon elaborate on the criteria and conditions they see as necessary for the emergence of movement-relevant theory, on characteristics that ought to be found in the process and methods for the generation of such theory.

1) Engagement with movement activists – at eye level

Engagement with the movements and with movement agents is a first condition Bevington and Dixon cite as necessary for the generation of movement-relevant theory: Cultivating a practice of partnership, of mutual respect and recognition of expertise.

It may appear that much current Western academic social movement theory is not only not read by movement agents – it is also not informed by them. Flacks notes: "Surprisingly little attention is paid to examining, in a given movement situation, what activists themselves believe their strategic options to be and how these get evaluated and debated within the movement. Instead, analysts seem to think that their own assessments of opportunity, after the fact and distanced, are somehow more valid than those made at the time"⁷² – and by those directly involved, one might add.

70 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 194. This list of issues may illustrate what partnership with and guidance from movement members could contribute to academic research. Some of these have also been noted by social movement scholars. For instance, Benford (1997), on p. 419 of his "Insider's Critique" points out, how emotions have been neglected and should be incorporated in scholar's considerations.

71 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 189.

72 Flacks (2004), p. 147.

A lot of theoretical thinking and debate is actually taking place within movements, as Bevington and Dixon point out.⁷³ They find it desirable for academic theory to take this into account, incorporating and building on movement-generated theory: "Activists are thus fully capable of developing and elaborating sophisticated theory relevant to the movements in which they are engaged. And though it is mostly overlooked by social movement studies, this kind of theory has much to offer, and not only concerning the creative capacities of those involved in collective action. Indeed, social movement scholars should take guidance from it. The breadth and vibrancy of such theory suggests that relevance in the study of social movements can be found through critically engaging with the dialogues and questions that concern movements themselves."⁷⁴

In order to be able to take that guidance and to engage in the production of movement-relevant theory, a particular kind of relationship needs to be established between the researchers and the movement, Bevington and Dixon point out, calling for "a distinct process that involves dynamic engagement with movements in the formulation, production, refinement, and application of the research."⁷⁵ Sympathy for or identification with a movement on the part of the researcher, they say, is in no way a sufficient condition for the emergence of movement-relevant theory. On the other hand, detachment of the part of the researcher is not required, either. Rather, Bevington and Dixon assert, "the researcher's connection to the movement provides important incentives to produce more accurate information, regardless of whether the researcher is studying a favored movement or its opponents."⁷⁶ In this respect they also refer to Charles Perrow, who says that it "is surprising how much discipline is imposed upon theory by requiring that it 'make a difference' and provide guidance or useful illumination".⁷⁷ Reflecting one's own positionality and its influences (which, after all, always exist, whether or not the author is member of a social movement) will be an art to be cultivated in that context.

73 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 195.

74 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 197.

75 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 190.

76 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 190.

77 Charles Perrow, quoted by Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 185.

2) Complementarity rather than purity of paradigms

While "putting the thoughts and concerns of movement participants at the center of the research agenda"⁷⁸ is one of the suggestions Bevington and Dixon have, another one is not to overfocus on purity of paradigm, and not to engage in battles pitting various schools of thought against each other. Rather, they suggest, it may be best to look for the valuable aspects in each of them, letting one complement the other. They note that "the successful rise of a new school of thought frequently depended on a devaluation (and often mischaracterization) of the previous school"⁷⁹, with the unfortunate effect that instead of a complex and balanced picture, there was a consecutive sequence of one-sided snapshots, with valuable existing insights pushed aside rather than integrated.

This is mirrored by an observation Benford makes in his "Insider's Critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective": "In our enthusiasm to dislodge the movements field from the structural determinists, interpretive scholars have tended to repeat the errors of their structuralist predecessors by throwing out the metaphorical baby with the bathwater. Some would have us reject the numerous contributions of resource mobilization scholars."⁸⁰

So in addition to the suggestion of considering and building on theory generated by social movements, there is another proposition, aiming at an open and eclectic approach, at accepting insights from various academic perspectives, letting them come together to complement each other in whatever ways seem helpful in a particular given situation.

The call for movement-relevant studies made by Bevington and Dixon in 2005 has, it seems, been heeded, at least to some extent. 2009 has seen the publication of the first issue of "Interface: A Journal for and About Social Movements", a journal aiming to work "in line with the paradigm of 'movement-centred theory'" proposed by Bevington and Dixon in their article.⁸¹

78 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 200.

79 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 201.

80 Benford (1997), p. 422.

81 <http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/who-we-want-to-reach/> [1 Dec 2011]

The journal's website also states that "*Interface* aims to reach a public composed of social movement scholars, scholar-activists combining academic and activist work and "organic intellectuals" working within social movements".⁸²

The journal's mission statement stipulates that "It will seek to develop analysis and knowledge by both movement participants and academics who are developing movement-relevant theory and research. The journal seeks to include material that can be used in concrete ways by movements. The material may do this through its content, but also through its language, purpose and form", and will go through a process "where activist and academic peers will review each other's work".⁸³ The journal aims to remain "online, free, and multilingual", which seems sensible given the explicit aim of being accessible and relevant to movement members.

2.4. The nature of the political and of social change

Since "the political" and "social change" are notions that will repeatedly be of relevance in this thesis, and of course are notions central to the study of social movements, a few remarks on these terms may be in order. What is considered "political" or "social change" currently varies a lot, perhaps as much between different social movements as between different strands of social movement studies. The nature and range of what is understood to be political, and what might constitute social change that movements are aiming for, has also undergone substantial expansions.

Starting with well-known slogans such as "the personal is political", traditional limitations of the concept of the political have been challenged. In social movement studies, the strand concerned with "new social movements" in particular has looked beyond movements making claims against the state towards cultural components, towards changes in values, perceptions and identities, in belief systems and everyday practice.

82 <http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/who-we-want-to-reach/> [1 Dec 2011]

83 <http://www.interfacejournal.net/who-we-are/mission-statement/> [1 Dec 2011]

A broader understanding of what is political and what might be relevant categories of change has been used not only by New Social Movements and feminist scholars, but also by authors coming from a quite different perspective, such as Ulrich Beck, introducing the notion of sub-politics.⁸⁴

Beck asserts that fundamental change is happening in Western societies, but that this change is "bypassing political debates and decisions in parliaments and governments."⁸⁵ Beck suggests that what is happening is "exactly what is considered out of the question (by Marxists and functionalists alike), namely that there will not be a revolution but there will be a new society. The idea that the transition from one social epoch to another could take place unintended and unpolitically, bypassing all the forums for political decisions, the lines of conflict and the partisan controversies, contradicts the democratic self-understanding of this society just as much as it does the fundamental convictions of its sociology. In the conventional view, it is above all collapses and bitter experiences which signal social upheavals. That need not be the case, however. The new society is not always born in pain."⁸⁶

Beck cites changes in wage labour as having all kinds of side-effects on gender roles, boundaries between work and non-work, identities, and generally the political and private order of things.

However, he says, precisely "*because* such small measures with large cumulative effects do not arrive with fanfares, controversial votes in parliament, programmatic political antagonisms or under the flag of revolutionary change, the reflexive modernization of industrial society occurs on cats' paws, as it were, unnoticed by sociologists, who unquestioningly continue gathering data in the old categories."⁸⁷

Beck puts forth these ideas in conjunction with an analysis of what he understands to be the current state and development in Western societies, which he terms reflexive modernization. However, the general understanding of the political, and of change occurring on that level and in that manner, is probably one that can be

84 as for instance Chantal Mouffe has pointed out: Mouffe (2005), p. 53.

85 Beck (1994), p. 2.

86 Beck (1994), p. 3.

87 Beck (1994), p. 3.

chosen as a general perspective, whether or not one agrees with Beck's particular analysis of contemporary European society. Sub-politics could thus be understood as a concept, a certain view on or kind of change occurring within societies. It can be seen as a suggestion not to equate politics with the state, or politics with the official political system.

"People expect to find politics in the arenas prescribed for it," writes Beck, "and performed by duly authorized agents: parliament, political parties, trade unions and so on. If the clocks of politics stop here, the political as a whole has stopped ticking, in that view."⁸⁸ However, Beck says, that view would lead us "look for the political in the wrong place, on the wrong floors and on the wrong pages of the newspapers".⁸⁹ The official political system may be surprisingly unpolitical, with no great issues or passions rooted in it; but what was considered the unpolitical part of life and society really is to be seen as highly political. Most significant changes emanate from there, writes Beck.

"Beneath and behind the façade of the old industrial order, which are sometimes still brilliantly polished, radical changes and new departures are taking place, not completely unconsciously, but not fully consciously and in a focused way either. They rather resemble a collective blind person without a cane or dog but with a nose for what is personally right and important and, if scaled up to the level of generality, cannot be totally false. This centipede-like non-revolution is under way."⁹⁰

Beck is by no means the only scholar who has suggested looking for the political in arenas beyond party politics and the state. Anthony Giddens' concept of life politics may be understood in a very similar way, and James Scott's notion of infra-politics might also point in a similar direction. Unlike Beck, Scott stresses the existence of unequal power relations, oppression and conflict in the elaboration of his understanding of subliminal politics. Scott argues that there are numerous forms of resistance that are not very visible, but nevertheless potentially very powerful. He includes cultural and symbolic forms such as parody, carnival, jokes and songs, as

88 Beck (1994), p. 17.

89 Beck (1994), p. 18.

90 Beck (1994), p. 21.

well as practical actions, such as foot-dragging, pilfering, poaching or desertion. The more visible, "classical" forms of political action such as rebellions, in Scott's view, are often based upon such a foundation. They are practised: practised in the sense of rehearsed, but also in the sense of being put into practice, on the scale possible at a particular point in time. Poaching, in that sense, can be seen as a symbolic act as much as an ad-hoc exercise of the right to hunt. Scott asserts that "the aggregation of thousands upon thousands of such 'petty' acts of resistance have dramatic economic and political effects. In production, whether on the factory floor or the plantation, it can result in performances that are not bad enough to provoke punishment but not good enough to allow the enterprise to succeed."⁹¹ Scott goes on to suggest that "poaching and squatting on a large scale can restructure the control of property. Peasant tax evasion on a larger scale has brought about crises of appropriation that threaten the state. Massive desertion by serf or peasant conscripts has helped to bring down more than one *ancien régime*. Under the appropriate conditions, the accumulation of petty acts can, rather like snowflakes on a steep mountainside, set off an avalanche."⁹²

One may or may not choose to compare such actions to the massive emigration of citizens of the German Democratic Republic via Hungary in 1989, which preceded the fall of the Berlin Wall, or to the current widespread practice of ignoring official copyright titles through sharing via the internet, which may sometimes be rooted in a political vision, sometimes in a simple desire for immediate personal advantages – and may nevertheless lead to massive political changes on a structural level.

What shall be retained from this discussion for the further development of this thesis is not so much one particular interpretation of current developments in Western or other societies, but the general understanding of the political, and of social change, as a very broad category, including formal external structures as much as cultural aspects, identities and everyday practices of members of these societies.

91 Scott (1997), p. 317-318.

92 Scott (1997), p. 317-318.

2.5. Politics, movements and antagonism

Another aspect that is going to be of considerable importance for the questions pursued in this thesis is the role that antagonism is thought to play in politics and in social movements.

Some authors seem to work with the assumption that politics is characterized in an essential way by confrontation, or they indeed define the political through antagonism. Chantal Mouffe, for example, writes that "by 'the political' I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies."⁹³ Mouffe argues that it would be inappropriate, unhelpful and indeed dangerous to negate the antagonistic nature of the political.⁹⁴

Likewise, a number of authors in the field of social movement studies either include antagonism in their definition of social movements, or assume that antagonism is a basic characteristic of the set-up and conduct of these movements. Since the framing approach will be used as a point of reference in this thesis, the writings of David Snow and Robert Benford shall also be chosen here among the numerous possible examples to illustrate this explicit or implicit assumption that movements are inherently antagonistic.

As already mentioned, Snow and Benford identify three sets of "core framing tasks" in an 1988 article,⁹⁵ and continue the use of that terminology in later texts, for instance in their review article of 2000⁹⁶. They define these core framing tasks as diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational:

- "(1) a diagnosis of some event or aspect of social life as problematic and in need of alteration
- (2) a proposed solution to the diagnosed problem that specifies what needs to be done
- (3) a call to arms or rationale for engaging in ameliorative or corrective action"⁹⁷

93 Mouffe p. 9.

94 Mouffe (2005). Many of her arguments will be discussed in this thesis in the section on a potential new master frame.

95 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 199.

96 Snow/Benford (2000), p. 615.

97 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 199.

The first of these three asserted framing tasks suggests that problems are to be seen as the (natural?) starting point of any social movement. Perhaps, also, change is only thought of as a response to a problem, not, for instance, a response to a vision or an achievement that could be built on.

Snow and Benford elaborate further on this first framing task: "*Diagnostic framing* involves identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or causality."⁹⁸ Now that moves the argument directly from a focus on problems on to the act of blaming. The sequence "problem – blame" is spelled out repeatedly in the classical texts on framing by Snow and Benford. In their overview article of 2000 they say about core framing tasks: "Collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change."⁹⁹ Or, later in the same article: "Since social movements seek to remedy or alter some problematic situation or issue, it follows that directed action is contingent on identification of the source(s) of causality, blame, and/or culpable agents. This attributional component of diagnostic framing attends to this function by focusing blame or responsibility."¹⁰⁰

The conflictual, confrontational, antagonistic or hostile undertone is also to be found in the choice of language used in other parts of the articles. For instance in the terms Snow and Benford use to describe the tasks following definition of problem and blame: "plan of attack"¹⁰¹ (as a part of prognostic framing) and "call to arms" (motivational framing).¹⁰² The language they use in these instances could even be considered militaristic.

Similar expressions can still be found in more recent works by the same authors. A 2004 article by Benford and Hunt still talks about "opponents' counterframing

98 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 200.

99 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 615.

100 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 616.

101 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 616.

102 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 617.

tactics" and "antagonists' attacks"¹⁰³ In a 2011 article, Benford writes: "I begin with a brief summary of the social movement framing perspective, a social constructionist approach to analyzing and understanding how social movement actors construct and communicate grievances, attribute blame and/or causality, develop alternative visions, stimulate people to make sacrifices for the cause, assert agency, and act collectively."¹⁰⁴ So grievances as a starting point and blame as a subsequent aspect are reiterated in this later version; even sacrifice is listed as a usual or natural component of social movement engagement.

Snow and Benford are not alone in the implicit or explicit assumption that social movements are about problems and about conflict. Already the full title of the pertinent academic journal "Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest" points in that direction: social movements seem to be assumed to be about protest. While there are some scholars who use a definition of social movements that is not automatically problem-focused and antagonistic,¹⁰⁵ a number of others include precisely these aspects explicitly. For instance, Mario Diani, in his definition of social movements, makes it a defining characteristic that they be "involved in conflictual relations with clearly defined opponents".¹⁰⁶ The need for blame, and for blame being directed at an opponent, and for the opponent to be clearly defined, is elaborated on (and hence stressed) in the section following Diani's definition. This is in an introductory reader to social movements studies, and hence might be assumed to aim at a portrayal of mainstream views (rather than exceptional minority positions) within Western social movement studies.

Snow and Benford cite additional social movement scholars who they see as conceptualizing "related attributional processes that seek to delineate the boundaries between 'good' and 'evil' and construct movement protagonists and antagonists."¹⁰⁷ The language used is getting more and more drastic here, moving

103 Benford/Hunt (2004), p. 448.

104 Benford (2011), p. 70.

105 For instance, David West (2004), p. 265, gives a preliminary definition as "Social movements, then, are less organized, partially extra-or anti-institutional forms of collective activity aiming, over an extended period, to bring about (an sometimes prevent) social change. Social movements interact with, influence and sometimes succeed in transforming the institutionalized political structures of a society."

106 Della Porta/ Diani (2006), p. 20.

107 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 616.

from problems to blame, and then to identifying adversaries and even to drawing boundaries between "good" and "evil". That the movement will have antagonists, or behave in antagonistic ways, or antagonize people seems to be taken as given.

While that assumption may be frequent, exceptions are also sometimes mentioned. Snow and Benford note that there may be some movements that do not follow these lines. In a discussion of Gamson's assertion of the general prevalence of injustice frames in social movements, they say that "In the case of many religious, self-help, and identity movements, for example, it is questionable whether a well-elaborated collective action frame need include an injustice component."¹⁰⁸

So Snow and Benson do point out the existence of self-help movements, religious movements and identity movements, and note that these might in some pivotal aspects follow different kinds of logic. However, this seems to be treated more like a side remark, with the main thrust of the argument still based on the centrality of problems and of antagonism, just as they conclude on the question of injustice frames: "Nevertheless, injustice frames appear to be fairly ubiquitous across movements advocating some form of political and/or economic change."¹⁰⁹

What is considered a political change, and what a non-political change, could of course be an interesting question in that context. A similar theme surfaces when Della Porta and Diani discuss the possibility of consensual collective action¹¹⁰. They point to the not uncommon occurrence of coalitions between a number of charities and voluntary organizations around specific solidarity causes as examples of sustained collective action that does not take a conflictual element. "Collective goods are often produced through cooperative efforts that neither imply nor require the identification of specific adversaries (...) Prospected solutions do not imply redistribution of power nor alterations in social structure, but focus instead on service delivery, self-help, personal and community empowerment. Likewise, the practice and promotion of alternative lifestyles does not require the

108 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 615.

109 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 615-616.

110 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 22.

presence of opponents defined in social and political terms."¹¹¹ They seem to assume that "personal and community empowerment" does "not imply a redistribution of power", an assumption that might warrant closer examination.

One might also feel prompted to rethink the definition of analytical categories. Rather than contrasting "social movements" with "consensus movements", as Della Porta and Diani appear to be doing¹¹², it might seem useful to keep "social movements" as the umbrella category, examining "cooperative" and "antagonistic" variants thereof, or the occurrence of both within the same social movement.

Della Porta and Diani may have reached a similar conclusion at least as far as the possible realm of research is concerned. They propose that social movement researchers need not shy away "from the investigation of those instances of collective action where a conflict is difficult to identify, such as those oriented to personal change (e.g. the so-called 'human potential movement,' or many countercultural, alternative lifestyle networks) and those focusing on the delivery of some kind of help or assistance to an aggrieved collectivity".¹¹³ Della Porta and Diani suggest, instead, "that analysts recognize the presence of several social mechanisms or dynamics within each instance of collective action, and focus their efforts on exploring how such mechanisms operate and interact with each other."¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, they have not yet adapted their definition of social movements. Making presence of conflict and identification of opponents a defining characteristic of social movements apparently does not completely oust cooperative movements from the sight of researchers, but it does seem to relegate these movements to the margins, giving them the rank of a side-remark and a footnote rather than that of a major research area.

Can a focus on problems as a starting point also be found in other fields and disciplines dealing with social change in collectives? How does organization development deal with these issues?

111 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 23.

112 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 22-23.

113 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 23.

114 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 23.

Surely, a number of approaches within organization development also take problems to be a more or less natural starting point for processes of change. Some, such as David Cooperrider and other authors associated with appreciative inquiry, would even argue that a problem focus has gained far too much importance, in organization development and perhaps even in society at large.

"It is not so much the problem solving methodologies per se that are of central concern", David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney argue, "but the growing sense that we all, throughout our culture, have taken the tools a step further. It is not so much that organizations have problems, they are problems. Somewhere a shift of this kind has taken place. Once accepted as fundamental truth about organizations, virtually everything in change-management becomes infused with a deficit consciousness."¹¹⁵ Cooperrider and Whitney go on to cite a number of authors and classical texts in the field of organization development taking problems as a starting point. Even outside the field of organization development, book titles such as Popper's "All Life is Problem Solving"¹¹⁶ might illustrate the point Cooperrider and Whitney were making about problem-focus having insinuated itself so deeply into society that it has almost become unquestionable, a way of life.

Against this background, a number of academic approaches have formulated calls for another kind of practice. Indeed, they are already beginning to develop that alternative practice, often as one strand within an existing discipline. Salutogenesis has been coined as an expression within medical sciences to suggest that instead of studying the cause of illness under the heading of pathogenesis, scholars might focus on what makes and keeps people healthy. Likewise, Positive Psychology sets out to study what makes people well emotionally and mentally. The emergence of strong and balanced personalities is a possible subject of study, or the ability to maintain fulfilling social relationships. Research on happiness has emerged as a particular focus area, as has research on resilience.

115 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 23-24.

116 Popper (1999).

In the field of organization development, appreciative inquiry (AI) is one of the major strands following this line of thinking. Moving away from problem focus and deficit discourse, and establishing other possible forms of engagement with a subject matter, and with actual people in existing organizations, is one of the prime contributions AI wishes to make.

"We are some time truly going to see our life as positive, not negative, as made up of continuous willing, not of constraints and prohibition"¹¹⁷ – that quote by Mary Parker Follett is included in Cooperrider's article on "Positive Image, Positive Action", where Cooperrider makes a detailed argument for leaving the problem focus behind. Pointing to the vast horizon of possibilities opened up by a constructionist understanding of the world, where so much that was taken as "given" turns out to be changeable, he makes an enthusiastic argument for the powers of affirmation and positive vision. Attention to what works, what has already been achieved and what is going well is a major cornerstone in appreciative inquiry. Discovering what is good already is suggested as a first step, right after the crafting of a positive and appreciative question as subject heading. The following steps move through envisioning what might be and choosing what should be, all the time keeping the focus on what is desired, what people wish to move towards, rather than what they wish to move away from.

The point of entry, according to AI, determines much about the roads that follow. That is why crafting an unconditionally positive, appreciative question as a point of entry is seen to be such a vital decision. Asking for what works leads on to questions such as: "why? what exactly is going right? how did we do this so well?". Starting with visions may lead on to follow-up questions like "who has knowledge and abilities needed for this?". It is unlikely that the follow-up question to "what works well?" is "who is to blame?", or "whose fault is it?". A problem focus, if chosen as a starting point, is much more likely to yield such results. Starting with a problem may easily lead to a follow-up in blame and, finally, antagonism plus mutual obstruction rather than cooperation. Cooperrider and Whitney observe that "in human terms problem approaches are notorious for creating defensiveness".¹¹⁸

117 Cooperrider (2000), p. 46.

118 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 21.

So appreciative inquiry suggests not only suggests aiming for a change process that is not antagonistic, but even going back one step further and looking for alternatives to defining problems as the starting point and anchor for a change process.

The following chapter will be dedicated to a more detailed introduction to the approach of appreciative inquiry.

3. Appreciative Inquiry

A central question this thesis raises revolves around the centrality or inevitability of the notion of antagonism in framing social movements or, indeed, "the political" as such. A number of voices implicitly or explicitly asserting the central role of antagonism have been cited in the previous chapter. Now, the question shall be raised whether it might also be possible to explore alternative options. Could there be master frames for social movements, or indeed for the political as such, that are not based on assumptions of antagonism? If so, what might such alternative master frames look like? What notions and concepts could take a central role in them?

In the following chapters, this thesis will introduce two general concepts, appreciation and co-intelligence, in order to be able to ask whether these could possibly feature as key notions in alternative master frames. Appreciation, for this purpose, shall be understood in the sense it has in the context of appreciative inquiry. So, first, appreciative inquiry shall be introduced as an approach that has already been developed with a view to initiating and steering change processes in social collectives. Later, this foundation shall be used for an exploration into whether appreciative inquiry might have anything to contribute to potential alternative master frames for social movements, or for framing "the political" more generally.

3.1. Characteristics of appreciative inquiry

Origins and definition

Appreciative inquiry (AI) as an approach has been developed in the early 1980s at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. David Cooperrider, under the supervision of Sureh Srivastva, conducted the academic research project for his PhD under the title "Appreciative inquiry: Toward a methodology for understanding and enhancing organizational innovation", focusing on Cleveland Clinic as a case

study.¹¹⁹ Since then, the approach has evoked increasing interest among scholars and practitioners alike. Currently, the appreciative inquiry website¹²⁰, hosted by Case University, lists close to 100 PhD theses drawing on AI, and countless monographs, articles and case studies on the approach.

What is to be understood by the term "appreciative inquiry"? In their classic article "A Positive Revolution in Change: Appreciative Inquiry", David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney say: "It is difficult to sum up the whole of AI – as a philosophy of knowing, a normative stance, a methodology for managing change, and as an approach to leadership and human development."¹²¹ This list already opens up quite a field: a methodology for managing change; an approach to leadership and human development. These aspects are closely related to the area AI has become best known for: organisational development. They are also relevant for social change agents working in larger structural contexts.

One could also look at appreciative inquiry primarily as a philosophy of knowing, or as a research methodology, as Jan Reed does in her work.¹²² This thesis, however, will focus on appreciative inquiry as a methodology for managing change. It does not attempt to discuss or use AI as an approach to academic research.

What, then, are the central features of appreciative inquiry? In "A Positive Revolution in Change", David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney start out by giving a dictionary-style definition of the constituent parts of the term:

"Ap-pre'ci-ate, v., 1. valuing; the act of recognizing the best in people or the world around us; affirming past and present strengths, successes, and potentials; to perceive those things that give life (health, vitality, excellence) to living systems. 2. to increase in value, e.g. the economy has appreciated in value. Synonyms: VALUING, PRIZING, ESTEEMING, and HONORING.

119 Watkins/Mohr (2001), p. 15.

120 <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/research/default.cfm> [5 March 2011]

121 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 5.

122 Reed (2007).

In-quire' (kwir), v., 1. the act of exploration and discovery. 2. To ask questions; to be open to seeing new potentials and possibilities. Synonyms: DISCOVERY, SEARCH, and SYSTEMATIC EXPLORATION, STUDY.¹²³

They then go on to suggest a working definition: "Appreciative Inquiry is about the co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms."¹²⁴ The definition continues with an elaboration of the role and the process of appreciative inquiry. "AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the 'unconditional positive question', often involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In AI, the arduous task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism, and spiralling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design."¹²⁵

Principles and premises of the appreciative inquiry framework

Cooperrider and Whitney list five principles they see as constituent for appreciative inquiry: the constructionist principle, the principle of simultaneity, the poetic principle, the anticipatory principle, and the positive principle.¹²⁶

The first principle, which builds a foundation for the whole approach, is constructionism.¹²⁷ Social reality, in particular all forms of human organization, are understood to be socially constructed, rather than "given" or "naturally so" in any of their aspects. This includes a notion of changeability, and also attention to the power of thoughts, words, mental images and their expressions in various forms. Cooperrider and Whitney, referring to Gergen, also stress the social, the collective dimension of the creation of meaning and of reality: "Constructionism is an

123 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 5.

124 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 5.

125 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 5.

126 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 17-20.

127 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 17.

approach to human science and practice which replaces the individual with the relationship as the locus of knowledge, and thus is built around a keen appreciation of the power of language and discourse of all types (from words to metaphors to narrative forms, etc.) to create our sense of reality – our sense of the true, the good, the possible.¹²⁸

Gervase Bushe, based in Vancouver at Simon Fraser University, states that the dominant theoretical rational for AI is post modernist European philosophy.¹²⁹ "From this point of view there is nothing inherently real or true about any social form. All social organization is an arbitrary, social construction. Our ability to create new and better organizations is limited only by our imagination and collective will."¹³⁰ Bushe also draws attention to the central role words and language play in this perspective, forming central building blocks of social reality. "Rather than seeing language as a passive purveyor of meaning between people, post modernists see language as an active agent in the creation of meaning. As we talk to each other, we are constructing the world we see and think about, and as we change how we talk we are changing that world. From this perspective, theory, especially theory that is encoded in popular words or images, is a powerful force in shaping social organization because we 'see what we believe'.¹³¹ Bushe goes on to say: "Creating new and better theories/ideas/images is, therefore, a powerful way of changing organizations. Appreciative inquiry seeks these new images in and among people's best intentions and noblest aspirations, attempting a collective envisioning of what the group could be at its very best."¹³²

Appreciative inquiry is looking at constructionism with a view to the possibilities for agency that might arise from such an understanding of social reality. That orientation towards constructionism's implications for agency becomes apparent in some of the other principles Cooperrider and Whitney list as being essential features of AI. Speaking about "the poetic principle" of AI, Cooperrider and Whitney

128 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 17.

129 Bushe refers to Barrett/Thomas/Hocevar (1995) for an outline of this understanding of constructionism.

130 Bushe (2000), p. 100.

131 Bushe (2000), p. 100.

132 Bushe (2000), p. 101.

say that "What constructionism does is remind us that it is not the 'world out there' dictating or driving our topics of inquiry but again the topics are themselves social artifacts, products of social processes (cultural habits, typifying discourses, rhetoric, professional ways, power relations). It is in this vein that AI says: Let us make sure we are not just reproducing the same worlds over and over again because of the simple and boring repetition of our questions."¹³³

The amount of questions that could possibly be asked, and the amount of "facts" that could be discovered in response to the respective questions, is enormous, Cooperrider and Whitney say, still in elaboration on the poetic principle: "A metaphor here is that human organizations are a lot more like an open book than, say, a machine. An organization's story is constantly being co-authored."¹³⁴ The important implication, Cooperrider and Whitney say, "is that we can study virtually any topic related to human experience in any human system or organisation. We can inquire into the nature of alienation or joy, enthusiasm or low morale, efficiency or excess, in any human organization."¹³⁵

Constructionism may also be seen as leading to the next principle Cooperrider and Whitney list as being essential to AI: simultaneity. Inquiry is seen as inseparable from change, or from the construction of reality. Through the principle of simultaneity, Cooperrider and Whitney say, "it is recognized that inquiry and change are not truly separate moments, but are simultaneous. Inquiry is intervention."¹³⁶ They even suggest that "one of the most impactful things a change agent or practitioner does is to articulate questions":¹³⁷ "The questions we ask set the stage for what we 'find', and what we 'discover' (the data) becomes the linguistic material, the stories, out of which the future is conceived, conversed about, and constructed."¹³⁸ This is not seen as applying only to cases where inquiry is intended to bring about change, nor as limited to particular areas of research, particular settings or topics. "One great myth that continues to dampen the potential here is the understanding that first we do the analysis, and then we

133 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 19.

134 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 18.

135 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 18.

136 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 18.

137 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 18.

138 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 18.

decide on change. Not so, says the constructionist view. Even the most innocent question evokes change¹³⁹ If one understands inquiry as change, and asking questions as an act in the creation of social reality, then the way questions are being looked at, and the criteria by which they are judged, are likely to change. As Cooperrider and Whitney say: "When we consider the possibilities in these terms, that inquiry and change are a simultaneous moment, we begin reflecting anew. It is not so much 'Is my question leading to right or wrong answers?' but rather 'What impact is my question having on our lives together ... is it helping to generate conversations about the good, the better, the possible ... is it strengthening our relationships?'"¹⁴⁰

Appreciative inquiry is explicit about its intention to bring about change, and to contribute to the (co-)creation of social reality. This may be thought of in the light of the debate as to whether inquiry and research ought to be aimed at changing reality, or ought to strive for description and analysis without intervention in the researched field. However, if it is postulated that research inevitably constitutes change, then the question whether it should constitute change perhaps loses its relevance. What remains, however, are questions about the position researchers take towards their role as change agents and participants in the co-creation of social reality. Appreciative inquiry clearly embraces the role of change agent. Cooperrider and Whitney suggest that "The purpose of inquiry, which is talked about as totally inseparable and intertwined with action, is the creation of 'generative theory,' not so much mappings or explanations of yesterday's world, but anticipatory articulations of tomorrow's possibilities."¹⁴¹ In a text entitled "From Deficit Discourse to Vocabularies of Hope" (one of 16 articles classified as "classic" on the AI Commons website) James Ludema proposes "that in today's world of high uncertainty and broad cultural and epistemological variety the purpose of social and organizational inquiry ought to be to create textured vocabularies of hope – stories, theories, evidence, and illustrations – that provide organizations and communities with new guiding images of relational possibility."¹⁴²

139 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 18.

140 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 18.

141 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 18.

142 Ludema (2000), p. 265.

That orientation towards the future is also reflected in what Cooperrider and Whitney call the "Anticipatory Principle" of appreciative inquiry. Under that heading, they suggest that "human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation (in their talk in the hallways, in the metaphors and language they use) that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent. To inquire in ways that serve to refashion anticipatory reality – especially the creation of positive images on a collective basis – may be the most prolific thing any inquiry can do."¹⁴³

So the proposition here is that positive images people hold about the future are conducive to positive action, and likely to help make that desired future come to pass. That process may be partly conscious on the part of the people involved, partly unconscious. Cooperrider, in another classic article¹⁴⁴, expands on the role of positive imagery and anticipation. Perhaps the most well-known examples of positive self-fulfilling prophecies he cites are the placebo effect in medicine, and the Pygmalion effect in education. "The placebo response is a fascinating and complex process in which projected images, as reflected in positive belief in the efficacy of a remedy, ignite a healing response that can be every bit as powerful as conventional therapy"¹⁴⁵, writes Cooperrider, and goes on to refer to studies¹⁴⁶ that, he argues, show "that anywhere from one-third to two-thirds of all patients will show marked physiological and emotional improvement in symptoms simply by believing they are given an effective treatment, even when that treatment is just a sugar pill or some other inert substance."¹⁴⁷

Anticipatory reality, in these instances, means the conviction of the patients that they have been healed and will soon be well – which is found to have a certain propensity to indeed make them well. The placebo effect is an example where positive images about the future contribute to that future, albeit not through "action" in the usual sense, and mostly through unconscious rather than conscious responses of the person in question. Generally, the effect can be thought of as

143 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 19.

144 Cooperrider (2000): Positive Image, Positive Action: The Affirmative Basis of Organizing

145 Cooperrider (2000), p. 33.

146 Beecher (1955); White/Tursky/Schwartz (1985).

147 Cooperrider (2000), p. 34.

taking place inside the person's body, the immune system, the endocrine system and so on. Although this is essentially an individual response, Cooperrider points to research that shows that also the placebo effect seems to be strongest when belief in the efficacy of the treatment is shared by a group of people.¹⁴⁸

This leads him on to a discussion of the Pygmalion effect, which is primarily about the effect positive expectations can have on other people. "As a special case of the self-fulfilling prophesy, Pygmalion reminds us that from the moment of birth we exist within a complex and dynamic field of images and expectations,"¹⁴⁹ writes Cooperrider. "In the classic Pygmalion study, teachers are led to believe on the basis of 'credible' information that some of their students possess exceptionally high potential while others do not." While in fact students have been randomly classified, after a while real differences between them begin to emerge, corresponding to the teacher's expectations and the positive images (PI) or negative images (NI) teachers hold of students. "Over time, subtle changes among students evolve into clear differences as the high-PI students begin to significantly overshadow all others in actual achievement. Over the last twenty years there have been literally hundreds of empirical studies conducted on this phenomenon, attesting both to its continuing theoretical and to its practical importance."¹⁵⁰

Cooperrider uses several other examples besides the placebo and Pygmalion effects to argue that the anticipation of a positive future might contribute to the actual manifestation of this anticipated future. He then moves on to asking what the implications of such a correlation or causal relationship would be. If positive anticipation is a determining factor in bringing about desired changes in a social system: is it an option for change agents to consciously engage in the creation of positive expectations? Much of AI literature is devoted to possibilities of realistically making use of this potential in social contexts. Confidence in this avenue of action seems high among appreciative inquiry authors. David Cooperrider writes: "The infinite human resource we have for generating constructive organizational change is our collective imagination and discourse about the future."¹⁵¹

148 Cooperrider (2000), p. 35.

149 Cooperrider (2000), p. 35.

150 Cooperrider (2000), p. 35. Cooperrider cites as references: Jussim (1986); and Rosenthal/ Rubin (1978) "for an analysis of over 300 studies."

151 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 19.

Here, as in most pieces of AI literature, the application of what Cooperrider and Whitney call "the positive principle" becomes apparent. In their explanation of that principle, Cooperrider and Whitney say that "it has been our experience that building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding – things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together. What we have found is that the more positive the question we ask in our work the more long-lasting and successful the change effort. It does not help, we have found, to begin our inquiries from the standpoint of the world as a problem to be solved. We are more effective the longer we can retain the spirit of inquiry of the everlasting beginner. The major thing we do that makes a difference is to craft and seed, in better and more catalytic ways, the unconditional positive question."¹⁵²

Cooperrider adds a set of questions that are particularly pertinent with respect to an application of and appreciative inquiry approach to social movements: "Is it possible to create our own future-determining imagery? Is it possible to develop our metacognitive capacity and thereby choose between positive and negative ways of constructing the world? If so, with what result? Is the quest for affirmative competence – the capacity to project and affirm an ideal image as if it is already so – a realistic aim or merely a romantic distraction? More important, is it possible to develop the affirmative competence of a large collective, that is, of groups, organizations, or whole societies affirming a positive future together?"¹⁵³

If social reality is largely understood as a construction, then the question arises whether, how or to what extent it is possible to engage in such construction consciously and deliberately. Also, what forms would such an attempt take in collective contexts?

As perhaps one indication of how appreciative inquiry authors think about these possibilities, the following section will introduce the steps AI suggests going through when trying to initiate and guide a social change process:
topic choice – discovery – dream – design – destiny.

152 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 20.

153 Cooperrider (2000), p. 45.

Components and phases of an appreciative inquiry process

Appreciative inquiry suggests a series of phases for change agents to follow. Usually this is referred to as a 4D-cycle: discovery – dream – design – destiny. There is, however, a highly significant phase that precedes "discovery": topic choice. The power inherent in the choice of the question, the focus of inquiry, has already been referred to above. Cooperrider and Whitney go on to stress the importance of topic choice, and of making the chosen topic an affirmative one: in the content, the focus, the wording.

"At the core of the cycle, is Affirmative Topic Choice. It is the most important part of any AI. If, in fact, knowledge and organizational destiny are as intricately interwoven as we think, then isn't it possible that the seeds of change are implicit in the very first questions we ask? AI theory says yes and takes the idea quite seriously: It says that the way we know people, groups, and organizations is fateful."¹⁵⁴

Cooperrider and Whitney also assert that "Human systems grow in the direction of their deepest and most frequent inquiries."¹⁵⁵ Choosing what to inquiry into, what to ask questions about, thus is presented as the fundamental decision preceding – and perhaps even overriding – all other phases of inquiry. Furthermore, a central suggestion is that the topic choice ought to be affirmative. Gervase Bushe gives a couple of brief examples: "If we are interested in team development, we collect stories of people's best team experiences. If we are interested in the development of an organization we ask about their peak experience in that organization. If enhanced leadership is our goal, we collect stories of leadership at its best. These stories are collectively discussed in order to create new, generative ideas of images that aid in developmental change of the collectivity discussing them."¹⁵⁶ Later in the same article, Bushe asserts that "Appreciative process theorizes that you can create change by paying attention to what you want more of rather than

154 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 7.

155 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 9.

156 Bushe (2000), p. 99.

paying attention to problems."¹⁵⁷ This relates to a quote frequently referred to in AI literature, attributed to Tom White, who at the time (in 1996) was President of GTE Telephone Operations, site of one of the AI "success stories"¹⁵⁸: "We can't ignore problems – we just need to approach them from the other side."¹⁵⁹

Cooperrider and Whitney give an example to illustrate what they understand to be the "affirmative" nature of a chosen topic. The example is taken from a corporation aiming to reduce the incidence of sexual harassment within the company, an issue that had been identified as a major problem for years, and had been addressed by various measures, but with little success. The problem even appeared to increase rather than decrease, as indicators and evaluations showed.¹⁶⁰ Attendance at workshops on sexual harassment, too, was declining, and those people who did attend were reported "to leave with doubts: our post-workshop interviews show people feel less able to communicate with those of the opposite gender, they report feeling more distance and less trust, and the glass ceiling remains."¹⁶¹

Asked how they would envision an appreciative inquiry approach in such a situation, Cooperrider and Whitney suggest that first the topic be rephrased. Rather than naming the problem one wishes to reduce (sexual harassment), they suggest to name the state one wishes to see emerge. In the example they give, their counterpart rephrased the aim from "cutting the incidence of sexual harassment" to the development of "a model of high-quality cross-gender relationships in the workplace."¹⁶² Issues of power or the glass ceiling, which had also been identified as problems, could be integrated well into that new wording of the topic. Their suggestion then was to "put an invitation in the company newsletter, asking people to step forward in pairs to nominate themselves as candidates to study and share their stories of what it means to create and sustain high quality cross-gender relationships in the workplace".¹⁶³ To their own surprise,

157 Bushe (2000), p. 107.

158 e.g., the project received the Best Organization Change Project Award from the American Society of Training and Development in 1997; see Cooperrider/Sorensen/Whitney/Yaeger (2000), p. viii.

159 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 9.

160 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 6.

161 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 6.

162 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 8.

163 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 8.

hundreds, not dozens, of pairs nominated themselves in response.¹⁶⁴ The process of asking people to share stories of positive experiences constitutes a move into the next phase suggested by appreciative inquiry: discovery.

Discovery, in AI terminology, is a phase of looking for examples of the desired state or quality. Gervase Bushe writes: "As a change technique, appreciative process involves tracking and fanning. Tracking is a state of mind where one is constantly looking for what one wants more of. It begins with the assumption that whatever one wants more of already exists, even if in small amounts. Fanning is any action that amplifies, encourages, and helps you to get more of whatever you are looking for."¹⁶⁵ In the example given above by Cooperrider and Whitney, the assumption was that high quality cross-gender relationships already exist in the workplace in question – even if in small amounts.

Discovery in AI often takes the form of appreciative interviews and collection of personal stories of positive examples and peak experiences. In the example above, people were first nominating themselves in pairs to share the positive experience they had. In a next phase, a hundred people received training in the conduction of appreciative interviews, and conducted over 300 interviews in various parts of the organization within the next few weeks. "At the end of each interview, the interviewer asked the person interviewed if they too could help do some interviewing. A waterfall was experienced. Stories poured in – stories of achievement, trust building, authentic joint leadership, practices of effective conflict management, ways of dealing with sex stereotypes, stages of development and methods of career advancement."¹⁶⁶ Cooperrider and Whitney write: "Perhaps it is obvious, but the process of doing the interviews is as important as the data collected. When managers ask us how many people should be interviewed or, who should do the interviews, we increasingly find ourselves saying 'everyone'."¹⁶⁷

This reiterates the point that from an AI perspective, inquiry and social change are not separate moments. Conducting an inquiry is a change process. So expanding the inquiry to involve more people, and to involve them more intensely, can be

164 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 8.

165 Bushe (2000), p. 107.

166 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 8.

167 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 10.

seen as one means for social change agents to move the process forward. Cooperrider and Whitney also stress the implication this mode of operation has for the distribution of roles, in this case, between the employees of an organization, and the external consultants: "People themselves, not consultants, generate the system-wide organisation analysis"¹⁶⁸

The discovery phase, with its focus on what is meant to be strengthened, is meant to provide stories that serve as a foundation and as raw material for the next AI phase: dream. Dreaming is the vision phase of AI. Cooperrider and Whitney refer to this using a metaphor: "When an artist sits in front of a landscape the imagination is kindled not by searching for 'what is wrong with this landscape,' but by a special ability to be inspired by those things worth valuing."¹⁶⁹

Cooperrider and Whitney give an example from another corporation, Nutrimental in Brazil, to illustrate what these phases of change management could look like. The first phase, discovery, had involved the collection of success stories, of examples people could give of that which they would like to see more of. On the next day, a group of people moved into the second phase, dreaming. The stories gathered the day before were available as a background information from which individual bits could be chosen for inspiration, or as raw material, like the colours an artist assembles before painting a picture. People were then asked to "dream", following certain lead questions, such as "What is the world calling us to become? What are those things about us that no matter how much we change, we want to continue into our new and different future? Let's assume that tonight while we were all asleep a miracle occurred where Nutrimental became exactly as we would like it to be – all of its best qualities are magnified, extended, multiplied the way we would like to see... in fact we wake up and it is now 2000 ... as you come into Nutrimental today what do you see that is different, and how do you know?"¹⁷⁰

After such a phase of creating a general vision for the development of the organization, appreciative inquiry moves on to the next phase, design, where the aim is to identify structures that would support such a vision. Cooperrider and

168 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 10.

169 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 11.

170 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 12.

Whitney write, under the heading "design": "Once the strategic focus or dream is articulated (usually consisting of three things in our model – a vision of a better world, a powerful purpose, and a compelling statement of strategic intent) attention turns to the creation of the ideal organization, the social architecture of actual design of the system in relation to the world of which it is a part."¹⁷¹

The example they give to illustrate this point further is this time taken from an NGO: Save the Children in Zimbabwe. Cooperrider and Whitney stress how the restructuring of the organization was made much easier due to the agreement that had been reached on the common vision.¹⁷² "The articulation of the image of the future was simple: 'Every person in Zimbabwe shall have access to clean water within five years.' The critical design shift, demanded by the large dream, was to a new form of organization based on a network of alliances or partnerships, not bureaucracy's self-sufficient hierarchies."¹⁷³

Cooperrider and Whitney draw attention to a notable difference they see between the AI process of arriving at a dream or vision, and that of other planning or organization development processes – many of which, after all, also involve a process of envisioning of some kind. The aspect they stress is the preceding stage – discovery of what is deemed desirable as already existent. The creation of images of the future is thus based on "grounded examples from an organization's positive past."¹⁷⁴

After "design" the classical AI process moves on to the next stage in the 4-D cycle. Originally, the forth "D" had stood for "Delivery". However, over time, Cooperrider and other AI authors became disenchanted with that terminology. "Delivery" seemed too superficial, perhaps too limited and too technical, to convey the deeper meaning of what the authors had in mind. "It did not convey the sense of liberation we were seeking"¹⁷⁵, Cooperrider and Whitney write, pointing out that "AI engenders a repatterning of our relationships, not only with each other, but also

171 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 12.

172 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 12.

173 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 13.

174 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 13.

175 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 14.

our relationship to reality itself",¹⁷⁶ and that "AI's gift is at the paradigmatic level. AI is not so much about new knowledge but new knowing."¹⁷⁷

This change in perspective is related to the observations the authors have made about AI processes in various organizations. "What we discovered, quite honestly, was that momentum for change and long-term sustainability increased the more we abandoned 'delivery' ideas of action planning, monitoring progress, and building implementation strategies. What was done instead, in several of the most exiting cases, was to focus only on giving AI away to everyone, and then stepping back. The GTE story, still unfolding but already attracting national recognition, is suggestive. It is a story that says organizational change needs to look a lot more like an inspired movement than a neatly packaged or engineered product."¹⁷⁸ In view of these observations, and the general considerations regarding the nature of this last step in the 4-D cycle, the concluding phase has been renamed and is currently referred to as "Delivery".

In conclusion, Cooperrider and Whitney write that "we believe we are infants when it comes to our understanding of appreciative processes of knowing and social construction. Yet we are increasingly clear the world is ready to leap beyond methodologies of deficit based changes and enter a domain that is life-centric. Organizations, says AI theory, are centers of human relatedness, first and foremost. And relationships thrive where there is an appreciative eye – when people see the best in one another, when they share their dreams and ultimate concerns in affirming ways, and when they are connected in full voice to create not just new worlds, but better worlds."¹⁷⁹

A number of questions suggest themselves when it comes to appreciative processes. For instance, does a focus on "the positive" imply that "the negative" can no longer be talked about at all? Do problems become unmentionable, and criticisms impossible? Also, what about situations that are fraught with suffering and oppression – is it possible or appropriate to look at those "with an appreciative eye"?

176 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 14.

177 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 14.

178 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 14.

179 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 24.

Some of these questions, and comments AI authors have made on them, will be explored in the following section.

3.2. Is appreciation always possible and appropriate?

Terrible circumstances and real problems

Appreciative inquiry, coming from a constructionist perspective and from the belief that a huge number of topics could potentially be studied in any context suggests to deliberately focus on those aspects which are deemed desirable; to appreciate the best of what is, and of what can be. However, what about situations that are fraught with distress and oppression? Is appreciation appropriate or even possible in such a context? Cooperrider and Whitney pose that question in the words of a participant at a Chicago conference for inner city change agents. He is quoted as saying: "This is naïve ... Have you ever worked in the depths of the inner city, like the Cabrini Green public housing projects? You're asking me to go in and 'appreciate' it ... Just yesterday I'm there and the impoverished children are playing soccer, not with a ball, no money for that, but with a dead rat. Tell me about appreciative inquiry in the housing projects!"¹⁸⁰

Cooperrider and Whitney pause before answering that question, then try out different routes, and finally come to one argument that seems most significant to them in that context: the power of language and of labelling. "As we explored the subject of the cultural consequences of deficit discourse we began seeing a disconcerting relationship between the society-wide escalation of deficit-based change methods and the erosion of people power", they say.¹⁸¹ To illustrate that line of arguing, they refer to Gergen's analysis of deficit discourse in the field of psychology.¹⁸² A terminology of mental illness is created by the professionals of the

180 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 21.

181 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 21.

182 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 21, referring to Gergen (1994).

field, he argues, and then spreads to general usage in the population, with people diagnosing each other, and also identifying themselves with these new labels. The registered occurrences of mental illness in the population thus rise sharply, leading to an expansion of the profession, and the creation of more deficit vocabulary. This way a spiralling increase is triggered: professionals create labels, the labels are used by the public, public use leads to more incidents being labelled, the rise in incidents leads to a call for more professionals, who in turn create more labels, and so on. The creation of labels is rewarded within the profession, and "to explore a new disorder within the mental health sciences is not unlike discovering a new star in astronomy"¹⁸³ Gergen is quoted as saying.¹⁸⁴ Since these labels are all created to name people's deficits, the result is a spiralling dynamic of enfeeblement and self-depreciation in the population. Cooperrider and Whitney point out that "deficit based change approaches have an unfortunate propensity to reinforce hierarchy, wherein 'less than ideal' individuals, who learn to accept what sometimes becomes a lifelong label, are encouraged to enter 'treatment programs' under expert supervision"¹⁸⁵ Deficit based change approaches, they say, tend to "instill a sense of self-enfeeblement, wherein deficit terms essentialize the person and like a birthmark or fingerprint, the deficit is expected to inevitably manifest itself into many aspects of their lives (it is a 'thing')".¹⁸⁶

The line of argument may sound familiar from discussions in post-development or post-colonial studies,¹⁸⁷ in gender studies, social work, anthropology or a number of other fields. The "helpers" are seen to first bring in negative, deficit-based labels with which they identify those "in need of help" – who may in turn adopt these labels, seeing themselves as deficient, needy, helpless or embarrassed where before they were not.

In their article, Cooperrider and Whitney come back to the conference participant and the inner city housing project cited earlier on. According to their account, going through these considerations of deficit discourse changed the perception of the

183 Gergen (1994), p.159.

184 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 22.

185 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 22.

186 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 22.

187 e.g. from authors such as Arturo Escobar, Gustavo Esteva, Majid Rahnema, Vandana Shiva, Ivan Illich, Marianne Gronemeyer.

situation considerably. The conference participant is reported to have sat down stunned, saying that people in the inner city project indeed are "surrounded by endless descriptions of their negative 'needs' their 'problem lives'. Even in my methods, the same. (...) Yes, they have voice in the housing project assessments. But it is a certain kind of voice ... it is visionless voice. They get to confirm the deficit analysis"¹⁸⁸

The argument made by Cooperrider and Whitney about the power of deficit discourse, labelling (and perhaps even self-fulfilling prophecies) may not constitute an actual answer to the question of whether appreciation is possible and appropriate in all situations. However, it probably does point to one important danger connected to problem-focus – and in that sense, to a comparative advantage, a relatively lower risk appreciation carries with respect to that particular aspect.

There probably are other potential answers to the challenge of "tell me about appreciative inquiry in the housing project!". One may be in the experiences that have been made in the meantime by people applying appreciative inquiry: with youth, with housing projects, in inner city settings, or with communities under stress. For instance in Chicago: "Imagine Chicago"¹⁸⁹ is an initiative working along very similar lines that used appreciative inquiry in its founding stage.¹⁹⁰

Room for anger and resentment

However, the question about the limits of appreciation remains. Will an explicitly appreciative setting still allow for the expression of dissatisfaction? Or will that no longer be necessary, since the appreciative approach resolves all the causes for dissatisfaction by "approaching them from the other side"?

Gervase Bushe gives some consideration to this issue, writing on theories of change embedded in appreciative inquiry: "In this paper I want to appreciate

188 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 23.

189 www.imaginechicago.org [2 Aug 2011].

190 Browne (1999), Browne/Jain (2002).

appreciative inquiry as, itself, a generative metaphor that has led me to new ideas and images of how to change social systems. I do this also to caution against the indiscriminant application of appreciative inquiry, calling for a disciplined and reasoned approach to its use.¹⁹¹ Bushe asserts that he does see appreciative inquiry as an approach that can be effective and valuable – in the right time and the right place. However, there may be circumstances where using appreciative inquiry may simply not work, or even backfire. Bushe writes: "From a purely practical standpoint I believe researchers and practitioners will find that systems full of deeply held and unexpressed resentments will not tolerate an appreciative inquiry until there has been some expression and forgiving of those resentments. From a theoretical perspective there is the question of what happens to negative images and affect if they are 'repressed' from collective discussion by a zealous focus on the 'positive'. Experience from psychoanalysis, sociology and medicine suggest repression usually results in some nasty side effects."¹⁹²

There is strikingly little appreciative inquiry literature that deals with expression of resentment; what forms it could take, how spaces can be created where it is possible, how it can become the compost bed for appreciation rather than just a quagmire of complaint. One might argue that psychotherapy has developed a rich repertoire of methods on these issues, and it is therefore not necessary to go into it in more detail. However, expression of resentment in an organization may still raise other questions than therapy focused on an individual, or in a setting where the other people directly concerned are not present. Besides, appreciative inquiry literature, apart from rare exceptions such as the one quoted above, does not mention the need for expression of resentment, nor does it plan for it. Expression of resentment, anger, frustration and the like is not part of the appreciative inquiry cycle; it is not one of the steps, and not referred to as a step that has to be taken care of elsewhere, either. Instead, AI mostly concentrates of devising methods for "coming at it from the other side", such as generative metaphor intervention.¹⁹³

This may be an understandable attempt to counterbalance what may have been perceived as a sometimes almost exclusive focus on problems and deficits.

191 Bushe (2000), p. 100.

192 Bushe (2000), p. 100.

193 Barrett/Cooperrider (2001).

However, within each AI intervention, the risk of course remains that in spite of all good intentions, what happens is not that resentment is resolved by coming at it from the other side, but just negated and kept under the carpet. This is all the more likely if there is a surrounding culture of keeping things under the carpet: be it hierarchy, politeness and obedience, or a business setting prescribing the perpetually high spirits of success, or a willed spiritual peacefulness, or the trustworthy, competent government, or the unconditionally happy family – there are many (sub-)cultural settings which may unwittingly be activated to distort actual appreciation into a simple non-expression, or repression, of unwelcome thoughts and feelings.

3.2.2. Legitimation of beneficiaries

Coming back to the issue of movement-relevant theory discussed above, and to the explicitly practical orientation of much appreciative inquiry literature, a few questions may arise about who exactly research and inquiry are meant to be relevant for, and why.

Legitimation of beneficiaries in social movement studies

Proposing that social movement scholarship ought to be relevant to social movements assumes that – in the eyes of the researcher – these social movements are worthy endeavours and deserve to be strengthened. It assumes that the success of the movement is desirable.

Indeed, many scholars do research on movements they are in sympathy with. However, that may not always be the case. Social movements, if defined by nature and not by content, can go in all kinds of political directions. Richard Flacks says: "I am not denying the obvious fact that liberation movements can include varieties of very ugly kinds of separatism, ethnocentrism, and other exclusivist ideologies and practices."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ Flacks (2004), p. 151.

Snow and Benford also include all kinds of movements in the examples they refer to: from pro-choice to pro-life on the abortion issue, from the peace movement to the Klu Klux Klan, from Hare Krishna to a neighbourhood initiative opposing a shelter for the homeless¹⁹⁵ – all sorts of positions are included as examples, and there is no reason to assume that the authors, or the readers, wish each and every one of them the best of success.

So, which movements are meant to be strengthened, who is research intended to be relevant and helpful for? As the criterion of relevance becomes elaborated in social movement studies, this question will surely prove worthy of attention and discussion.

Another aspect to be considered in the context of relevance is that literature might turn out to be relevant and effective in ways that were not at all intended. Bevington and Dixon point out that it is possible to research on movements with the intention of weakening or counter-acting that movement, and give the example of Sara Diamond's research on the Christian Right.¹⁹⁶ They also point to texts that are read and found relevant by social movement activists, but were in fact meant to help managers of corporations to deal with activists confronting them.¹⁹⁷ Who are texts written for, who actually reads them, and who gets strengthened by them? If Diamond's study of the Christian Right is helpful to its opponents, will a sympathetic study of the peace movement also prove helpful to the opponents of the peace movement?

An elaboration of the criterion of relevance in social movement studies is likely to bring up a number of sub-questions and additional aspects to be considered.

195 Snow et al. (1986), p. 469 (homeless), p. 473 (Hare Krishna), p. 475 (peace) Benford/Snow (2000), p. 620 (abortion), p. 627 (KKK).

196 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 192. This raises questions about the relationship of trust and partnership that Bevington and Dixon also wish to see established between researcher and movement participants.

197 Bevington/Dixon (2005), footnote 7, p. 204.

Legitimation of beneficiaries in appreciative inquiry

In the field of organization development, and also in appreciative inquiry, the question of relevance poses itself somewhat differently. Direct beneficiaries are usually identified quite clearly. Researchers often work as consultants with individual organizations or are writing from the perspective of consultants. The consultants are meant to benefit from research for improving their working methods; the organizations are meant to benefit in that they are better able to meet their objectives, and the members of the organization are meant to benefit from better working environments (and from the continued existence of the organization).

What is usually not questioned is the objective of the respective organization or enterprise. The objectives will be better met thanks to the research intervention – but are the objectives worth meeting? Are the improved forms of communication and cooperation within the enterprise also contributing to the well-being of society at large? Tom Atlee, social movement member and author on issues of co-intelligence, raises a similar question. He first argues how incredibly helpful it is to further the potential of collective intelligence, and how much relevant research in this direction has taken place in the private sector. However, he goes on to say, "all too many corporations are still playing a destructive role within our larger system, and are using their enhanced collective intelligence to consolidate power and consume resources faster."¹⁹⁸

A similar kind of reflection seems to be rare in appreciative inquiry. From the terminology frequently used in AI articles (such as participation, full and equal voice, including input from all stakeholders, empowerment ...) one may draw conclusions about the direction of change the authors deem desirable. These, as well as business success as an aim, are sometimes made explicit, too.

For instance, in an article on AI summits (a large group intervention method), Cooperrider and Whitney say: "As an element of strategic planning Summit participants are often invited to assess both the market value (What is the potential for positive financial gain?) and the affinity value (Why do you like this idea? Does

198 Atlee (2003), p. 57.

it excite you and call you to action? Will it inspire pride in you, the organization and among stakeholders?) of a proposed strategy."¹⁹⁹ They continue to say: "We challenge participants to transcend the boundaries of the organization, to think beyond we/they, and to discover bold, innovative and profitable ways to positively contribute to the wellbeing of our global village."²⁰⁰

However, in practice participants will often have to discover the „ways to positively contribute to the well-being of our global village" within the boundaries of the organization or enterprise. The question whether perhaps the organization should be shut down completely is practically non-existent – as is perhaps to be expected in a context of consultancies and organization development.

At this point, it may also be useful to bear in mind the tendency organizations have to define the world in a way that fits the organization's capacity: if the organization is a hammer, the world is full of nails. Therefore, it inevitably turns out that the organization is needed and indeed very well placed to play an important and growing role. If ever the question is raised whether the organization is making a positive contribution, and whether the organization should be there, the answer is most likely to be yes – even if people have to bend (themselves or the world) over backwards to make it so.

James Ferguson has illustrated this very aptly in his analysis of reports written by development agencies on Lesotho. The reports rather boldly reframed Lesotho's reality, sparing no pains to portray it as a suitable candidate for the kind of development intervention the agencies were able to deliver, and carefully avoiding everything that would need, for instance, a political intervention regarding the South African Apartheid regime (which was what the agencies couldn't have delivered – at least not by their own self-definition).²⁰¹ So it seems that the question "are we doing good in the world?" or "is this organization and its activity what is needed?" is confronted with a heavy bias if posed inside an organization. Careful consideration would be needed to find possible ways of balancing this out.

199 Whitney/Cooperrider (2000), p. 22.

200 Whitney/Cooperrider (2000), p. 23.

201 Ferguson, James (1997).

However, it appears that in a number of AI case studies, the questions aimed at this larger context are not even asked. Quite often, business success and employee satisfaction are referred to as indicators of success; questions about the general nature of the enterprise are omitted. Appreciative inquiry has been used with all kinds of enterprises, including many which social movement activists might feel very uncomfortable with. For instance, Fitzgerald, Murrell and Miller describe the "success story" of how appreciative inquiry has been used to facilitate a merger between Monsanto and a leading producer of hybrid seed in India. Enterprise-internal goals are the only indicators of success referred to in the article, and government approval of a hybrid cotton seed in India seen as a "major milestone".²⁰² Voices that would see this kind of development as a major threat for society rather than a "success" are not referred to in the article.

A much more drastic example may be found in appreciative inquiry projects set within organizations that regard killing people as a legitimate means, or an acceptable and calculated part of its standard mode of operation. For instance, there is an ongoing appreciative inquiry project with the US Navy (referred to not as "the Navy", but as "our Navy" in project documents posted on the Appreciative Commons website).²⁰³ The title of the AI summit which started the project in 2001 was: "Bold and Enlightened Naval Leaders at Every Level: Forging an Empowered Culture of Excellence".²⁰⁴ "The Leadership Summit was aimed at leadership improvement and our Navy's system of leadership development, utilizing an LGI with Appreciative Inquiry to quickly get to decision points with input from all stakeholders", the report states.²⁰⁵ So the vocabulary of empowerment is upheld even in an environment otherwise known for hierarchy, obedience, and chain-of-command. Is this seen as preceding a desirable development, a development more likely to come about if the language and the notions embedded therein are already present? Or is this an example of Orwellian newspeak, of misnaming social conditions and confusing peoples' minds with a cloud of veiled contradictions?

202 Fitzgerald/Murrell/Miller (2003), p. 7.

203 <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/ppNavy.cfm> [23 May 2011].

204 <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/ppNavy.cfm> [23 May 2011].

205 <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/ppNavy.cfm> [23 May 2011]. LGI stands for Large Group Intervention.

In the AI Navy summit, "input from all stakeholders" is claimed to have been assured. The question arises who is considered a stakeholder in this context and who has actually been included. The report refers to "260 people ranging from Seaman to Admiral".²⁰⁶ There is no indication that, for instance, civilians likely to be killed by Navy activity were considered stakeholders. What sort of voice were they given? What sort of voice would have been appropriate? How much weight should the perspective and the input of Iraqi civilians have carried, for example? How much that of Iraqi soldiers?

Thousands, indeed tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of people have been killed due to US military action in Iraq (figures depending in part on whether e.g. babies dying because of destroyed water supply lines are counted in, or only people shot and bombed directly).²⁰⁷ Of world military spending, the US accounts for over 40%.²⁰⁸ In absolute figures, that is more than ten times the amount needed to give primary education to all children, *and* cut infant mortality by two-thirds, *and* give everyone access to water and sanitation, *and* halve extreme poverty worldwide – according to World Bank estimates regarding the Millennium Development Goals.²⁰⁹ If appreciative inquiry practitioners are looking for "ways to positively contribute to the well-being of our global village", they might begin to wonder whether working for the US Navy is not to contribute to some enormous misallocation of resources, to say the least. That an organization is willing to embark on an appreciative inquiry process does by no means ensure that the organization is doing something useful, or at least not something tremendously harmful.

Appreciative inquiry articles do not seem to take up this kind of question. One might expect there to be a debate, disagreement among AI authors on whether or not it is ethically permissible to try to strengthen military institutions, or also on whether or not it is a researcher's or a consultant's role to question the aims and

206 <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/ppNavy.cfm> [23 May 2011], first paragraph.

207 <http://www.iraqbodycount.org>, and Burnham/Lafata/Doocy/Roberts (2006).

208 698 out of 1,630 billion US Dollars in 2010, according to the SIPRI factsheet on military expenditure for 2010, downloaded from <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex> on [3 June 2011].

209 40-60 billion US Dollars per year, according to www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/mdgassessment.pdf [3 June 2011].

impacts of an organization they are working with. Regrettably, this debate does not seem to be there.

Self-reflection of AI authors would ideally also include some honest words about the material and immaterial stakes authors have in the situation: What are jobs, livelihoods, identities, careers, or reputations dependent upon? Is it possible to raise questions that might have a bearing on any of these? Lynn Hoffman brings up this type of question in one of the texts labelled "classic articles" on the AI Commons website. After discussing the negative effects of naming mental illnesses and contributing to a spreading discourse of deficit in society, she asks what will become of her field of family therapy, if it goes on refusing to engage in naming. "The threatened extinction of our way of life is at stake", she says.²¹⁰ Whether or not one concludes, as she does in the article, to stick with the principle and risk the job, it seems highly desirable in the name of honesty and intellectual integrity to make it possible to table such very real concerns.

Clearly, a turn towards appreciation may hold dangers, drawbacks and disadvantages of its own. However, even if it is not fail-prove, and not a panacea by any means, appreciation as introduced by appreciative inquiry shall be retained as an idea for further examination in the context of social movements and the master frames they use. Whether or not appreciation, and the steps suggested by appreciative inquiry, might have any relevance for social movement master frames, or for the actual practice of existing social movements, is a question that shall be returned to later on.

First, however, another notion shall be introduced, a notion that will also feed into this question of potential alternative master frames for social movements: the notion of co-intelligence, especially as introduced through the writings of Tom Atlee.

210 Gergen/Anderson/Hoffman (1996), p. 103.
on <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu> [3 June 2011]

4. Co-Intelligence

This thesis has raised the general question of whether there might be master frames for social movements, or indeed for "the political" more generally, that are not centred on assumptions of antagonism. Asking what any potential alternatives might look like, and what concepts and notions might be central to those, the thesis aims to introduce two general terms into the discussion: appreciation as in appreciative inquiry, and co-intelligence, especially as understood by Tom Atlee. The following chapter will therefore be dedicated to a brief introduction of this understanding of co-intelligence. This should lay the foundation for discussions later in this thesis of possible functions and implications of co-intelligence in the context of potential alternative master frames.

4.1. Co-intelligence according to Tom Atlee

Co-intelligence is a notion emerging from a number of different fields and disciplines. The approach to co-intelligence that shall be introduced here is one that is directly related to the context of social movements, both in its origins and its orientation, and thus may be particularly useful for the purposes of this thesis: the approach presented by Tom Atlee, in particular in his monograph "The Tao of Democracy". Atlee's texts can be understood to be movement-generated theory, since he is writing from the perspective of a long standing activist and member of various social movements²¹¹, drawing also on the work and the thoughts of numerous other social activists. His texts can also be understood to be movement-relevant theory; at least that is their aim, as Atlee states quite clearly: "This book was written for all the people who want a better world than we have now. It is especially written for social change agents, community organizers, spiritually motivated activists, and the millions of people sociologist Paul Ray calls 'Cultural

211 Atlee (2003), p. i.

Creatives' -- the co-creators of a new culture."²¹² Tom Atlee makes himself clearly visible in the text, speaking about his personal experience, and relates to other authors and activists cited on eye-level, giving them the place of a colleague rather than that of a subject of study, which also sits well with the suggestions made, for instance by Bevington and Dixon²¹³, for the generation of movement relevant theory.

Atlee's texts could also be understood to not only be movement-relevant, but to actually constitute a (part of a) social movement: because of the call to action Atlee makes at the end of the book, including suggestions for concrete activities; or because of its influence on other people involved in social movements (like Rob Hopkins of the Transition Town movement, who also refers to him²¹⁴); or because of its intended effect of increasing self-awareness and strengthening a movement that is already there, but as a loose collection of individual initiatives without explicit common identity. The generation of theory and the direct intervention in a social context do not seem to constitute separate moments for Atlee; rather, he seems to place himself in the vein of the appreciative inquiry proposition that inquiry is, itself, an activity bringing about change.

Definitions

So what, exactly, is to be understood by co-intelligence in the sense of Atlee's proposition?

Atlee writes: "My favorite definition of co-intelligence is

*the ability to generate or evoke creative responses and initiatives
that integrate the diverse gifts of all for the benefit of all.*²¹⁵

He also offers a number of other explanations and illuminations of particular aspects. For instance, he says: "Co-intelligence is a capacity. It is also the field that explores theories and practices dealing with the dynamics of that capacity and how to use and enhance it."²¹⁶

212 Atlee (2003), p. vii.

213 Bevington/Dixon (2005), p. 197ff.

214 Hopkins (2008), p. 94.

215 Atlee (2003), p. 3.

216 Atlee (2003), p. xii.

Bringing it down to a more concrete level, Atlee says that "When I investigate the problems that we face in the world today, I seldom find that individual evil is a central cause. More often I find basically good, intelligent people *collectively* generating discord and disaster -- in families, groups, organizations, nations and the world. Meanwhile, in their own lives, from their own perspective (and usually that of their loved ones), most of them are doing perfectly good, decent things. How can this be?"²¹⁷

An attempt to answer that question may be found in Atlee's introduction: "Further investigation led me to see that these tragedies have something to do with our using intelligence in isolated ways, for our own ends, engaging only a piece of ourselves. I realized that 'truths' we find with our individual smarts are *inevitably* partial."²¹⁸ Atlee thus begins to search for ways to accommodate for this circumstance, and believes that he can point out a promising direction: "The answers we need lie in our own wholeness, and in our interconnections with each other and the world. Maybe if we were to take our wholeness and interconnectedness seriously, engaging our full selves, together with each other and the world around us, we would discover wiser, greater truths and saner, more joyous ways of living. And we could co-create a better future together."²¹⁹

Atlee elaborates on that theme. "As smart as we are individually, we are so seldom intelligent *together*. Brilliant, angry activists get in one another's way. Powerful nations squabble themselves into oblivion. Once-successful organizations shrink and vanish, unable to respond to change"²²⁰, Atlee writes, and, in a similar vein: "It is clear we need far better ways to perceive our world, to reflect on it, to act and to learn from what is going on around us. Of course, we need these things as individuals. But most of all, and urgently, we need these capacities as whole societies -- indeed, as a civilization."²²¹ "As a culture, we have abundant insight and know-how that just need to be pulled together and aligned so our whole society can see and think and feel and dream more effectively together."²²²

217 Atlee (2003), p. 53.

218 Atlee (2003), p. vi.

219 Atlee (2003), p. vi.

220 Atlee (2003), p. v.

221 Atlee (2003), p. xi.

222 Atlee (2003), p. xii.

Tom Atlee expands on the different aspects of co-intelligence in a more systematic way in an introductory chapter on co-intelligence.²²³ Citing wholeness, interconnectedness and co-creativity as the root notions that led him to explore a new understanding of intelligence, he lists a number of aspects that he refers to as "six basic manifestations of co-intelligence".²²⁴ In its most succinct form, the list reads as follows:²²⁵

1. There is more to intelligence than brains and logic. There is multi-modal intelligence.
2. There is more to intelligence than successfully predicting and controlling things. There is collaborative intelligence.
3. There is more to intelligence than individual intelligence. There is collective intelligence.
4. There is more to intelligence than solving the problems in front of our faces. There is wisdom.
5. There is more to intelligence than a solitary capacity exercised within the life of a single entity. There is resonant intelligence.
6. There is more to intelligence than human intelligence. There is universal intelligence.

Atlee's first premise is that "Intelligence must involve more than logical reason, since rationality constitutes only a tiny piece of our full capacity to learn from and relate to life."²²⁶ He expands on that notion by saying: "Multi-Modal Intelligence means there are many ways to learn, know and engage with the world. Our bodies, minds, hearts and spirits contain a full palette of intelligences--emotional, analytic, intuitive, kinesthetic, narrative, moral, and so forth. We can use more of these and integrate them better, especially in synergy with other people, since we are all capable in such different ways."²²⁷

223 Atlee (2003), chapter 1, p. 3ff.

224 Atlee (2003), p. 4.

225 http://www.co-intelligence.org/I-6_CI_manifestations.html [5 Aug 2011].

226 Atlee (2003), p. 4.

227 Atlee (2003), p. 5.

Atlee makes a reference to Howard Gardner here²²⁸, a developmental psychologist and professor of cognition and education at Harvard, best known for developing a theory of multiple intelligences. Even though the aspects of intelligence Gardner identifies are not identical to the ones listed by Atlee, the general idea that several aspects exist and ought to be considered is very similar, as is the notion that the integration of these aspects is a crucial factor.

Secondly, Atlee lists collaborative intelligence, and expands: "There is more to intelligence than successfully predicting and controlling things. We can creatively respond to life and join with its energies". Collaborative intelligence, writes Atlee, "means finding and working with all the available allies and cooperative forces around us – and there are many. There are always energies, both existing and potential, with which we can fruitfully align – even within the hearts of adversaries and within the problems we face. Working with one another, with nature, and with the natural tendencies in us and the world, we can accomplish more with less, and enjoy it more."²²⁹

Atlee gives an example of this principle in his collection of "tales and commentaries" meant to illustrate the concept of co-intelligence and its various aspects: "A farmer in Indiana was bothered by his neighbor's dogs who were killing his sheep. The traditional way that sheepraisers counter this problem is with lawsuits, or barbed wire fences, or even with shotguns as a last resort. This man had a better idea. He gave his neighbor's children lambs as pets. The neighbors then tied their dogs up voluntarily. In the process the families became friends."²³⁰

As an interpretation of that story, Atlee discusses general attitudes underlying responses to difficulties or conflict. Rather than turning away from trouble, trying to shut it out or imprison it, co-intelligence would suggest a bias towards building relationship and towards seeking solutions in cooperation. Relating to the farmer, his action and the attitude from which that action sprang, Atlee remarks: "The farmer may well have asked himself, 'How can I get these folks to join me in protecting my sheep?' Notice how different that is from: 'How can I stop these folks from killing my sheep?' This difference – a spirit of cooperation rather than

228 Atlee (2003), p. 5.

229 Atlee (2003), p. 6.

230 Atlee (2003), p. 11, referring to *Peace Network News*, May 1994, p.11.

resistance or domination – is an important feature of co-intelligence. It usually requires a good deal more creativity and courage to put into practice. But it builds bonds that will make future problems much easier to solve – and makes life more deeply enjoyable, as well."²³¹

A feature that occurs most prominently in Atlee's writing (and is perhaps most easily associated with the "co-" of "co-intelligence") is the idea that intelligence is not something restricted to the inner realm of one individual, but can arise as the feature of a collective. Atlee writes: "Co-intelligence often manifests as collective intelligence, the intelligence we generate together through our interactions and our social structures and cultures. Inclusiveness (finding effective ways to include all of the parts of the larger whole) and the creative use of diversity are two key elements for increasing collective intelligence."²³² He expands: "Collective intelligence means that families, groups, organizations, communities and entire societies can act intelligently as whole, living systems. What we believe, what we do, and how we organize our collective affairs can make or break our collective intelligence."²³³

Atlee relates this to the forms of political organization also on the national level, saying that "*we need greater collective intelligence than our democracy is able to deliver in its current form.* It is not that we need a better collection of intelligences, a mere sum of all our individual smarts. We need something that is significantly larger and more synergistic than that, an intelligence that is bigger than the sum of its parts. In other words, we do not need *collected* intelligence. We need *collective* intelligence"²³⁴

He refers to various possible paths and methods that could lead to such improved capacities for collective intelligence. One main suggestion he makes is the introduction of citizen deliberative councils,²³⁵ but he also points to methods usable on a smaller group level, as new forms for meetings and conferences, such as the World Café²³⁶ or Open Space Technology²³⁷.

231 Atlee (2003), p. 12.

232 Atlee (2003), p. 6.

233 Atlee (2003), p. 6.

234 Atlee (2003), p. xi.

235 Atlee (2003), p. 166.

236 Atlee (2003), p. 82.

237 Atlee (2003), p. 20.

Wisdom, in the way Tom Atlee uses the term to refer to an aspect of co-intelligence, means "seeing the big picture, the long term",²³⁸ as opposed to seeking short-term solutions to problems as they appear on the surface: "Intelligence needs to reach far beyond the obvious, since whatever is obvious is connected to things that aren't so obvious, and intelligence should engage with the wholeness and relatedness of things, as much as possible."²³⁹

Wisdom, the way Atlee understands it, "means seeing beyond immediate appearances and acting with greater understanding to affirm the life and development of all involved. It involves balance, mystery and tolerance of ambiguity and change. The expanded perspective that accompanies wisdom fosters wonder, humility, compassion and humor."

Resonant intelligence and universal intelligence are the last two aspects of co-intelligence Atlee referred to in his list. Resonance is a term used also quite prominently by Snow and Benford,²⁴⁰ mostly to understand how strongly a particular audience responds to the movement's messages. The term carries the image of striking a familiar chord, or producing an echo, of causing a neighbouring, similar string to start swinging in the same frequency as its kin. This is the sense Atlee uses to outline this aspect of intelligence: how tuning into the information available from other sources can bring forth new understanding, starting a new vibration in a string that, in turn, can inform and spark off others. "Resonant intelligence is intelligence that grows stronger or fuller as it resonates with other sources or forms of intelligence, or which deepens in empathic response to life."²⁴¹ In that sense, it blends into the next and final aspect of co-intelligence Atlee lists: universal intelligence, which he understands to be "the intrinsic tendency for things to self-organize and co-evolve into ever more complex, intricately interwoven and mutually compatible forms. Our human intelligence is but one manifestation of that universal dynamic."²⁴²

238 Atlee (2003), p. 7.

239 Atlee (2003), p. 4.

240 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 620.

241 Atlee (2003), p. 8.

242 Atlee (2003), p. 8.

4.2. Atlee's background and inspiration

Tom Atlee relates the story of his personal discovery of co-intelligence, or the beginnings of his personal search for principles and approaches of that sort. Growing up in a progressive family in the 1960s, he became immersed in the atmosphere and the intensity of that time, he writes, and has also from early on been filled with the wish to contribute to making the world a better place. Growing up, he joined various social movements, and, for two decades, "worked with numerous organizations bent on saving the world through political action, personal transformation or both. But I became increasingly frustrated with their dysfunction and combativeness. My efforts to change them and to build bridges between them were largely fruitless. Still, I carried on in my activist efforts, not knowing where else to turn to help remedy the tragedies of civilization."²⁴³

However, there was a growing sense of frustration. Atlee felt that the adversarial energy of the political work he and others were engaged in was a crucial point. He says: "The antagonism that was at the heart of anti-war, anti-pollution, anti-corporate globalization, anti-oppression work was not only projected against what we were trying to change, but often pitted activists against one another, making good group experience difficult. The emphasis on values, which is the strength of so much activism, was often used by us to attack each other for lack of this or that principled belief or behavior."²⁴⁴ In many social movement groups he was involved in, Atlee says, it was possible to experience "a lack of compassion and patience with one another, and a narrowness of sensibility that made some of us feel claustrophobic."²⁴⁵ As a result, Atlee writes, he was "only one of many activists and would-be-activists who dropped out of traditional political protest in frustration, searching for more life-affirming approaches to building a better world."²⁴⁶

First glimpses of what the essence of such a new approach might be came to Tom Atlee in the context of a Peace March across the USA, which started in Los Angeles in March 1986 with 1200 participants. After three months, the parent organisation for the march went bankrupt, leaving the marchers to their own

243 Atlee (2003), p. i.

244 Atlee (2003), p. 47.

245 Atlee (2003), p. 47.

246 Atlee (2003), p. 47.

devices in the Mojave Desert. About two thirds of the marchers went home, the remaining 400 decided to carry on on their own. Tom Atlee says that "Our leadership could not have been more tenuous, conflicted and diffuse. Our governing councils had virtually no power to enforce their decisions. By all traditional logic, the whole operation should have just fallen apart and blown away. There was no way it should have been able to work or survive. But it did. And in the process, it became an extraordinary crucible for personal and collective learning and transformation."²⁴⁷

Among the trials and insights that the group experienced on its months of marching across a continent, Atlee picks out one that seems particularly significant to him. Over time, the community of marchers had become more and more deeply divided over one particular issue. Some wanted to walk close together in a bulk, so that the march would be recognisable as such, and attractive to the media. Others wanted to march at their own individual pace, strung out along the road, stopping to relish the beauty of nature, and to talk to farmers and children they met by the wayside. Each group began to see the other as threatening the mission of the peace march. Tensions were rising. Then, Tom Atlee writes, "a simple miracle occurred. Somewhere in Colorado, a heavy late-afternoon storm drenched us as we tried to pitch our multicolored tents in a soggy field near a fertilizer factory. The storm became a deluge. Hundreds of us retreated into the smelly, cavernous confines of the factory. As we stood there dripping and jostling, joking and complaining about our lives, we noticed a couple of marchers setting up a microphone and portable speakers."²⁴⁸ When the small group had finished setting up the sound system to the point where all people present would be able to hear a speaker, Atlee reports, "they suggested we use this time to speak from our hearts about the issue that divided us. So we did that. Taking two minutes each, we shared passion and perspective with one another for more than two hours – weeping, cajoling, steaming and sweating in the muggy fetid air. Quite unexpectedly, as we talked and listened with great intensity, the answer to our problem began to emerge. We knew we had fully heard one another when the answer became as obvious as the rain on the sheet-metal roof."²⁴⁹

247 Atlee (2003), p. ii.

248 Atlee (2003), p. iii.

249 Atlee (2003), p. iii.

Atlee also gives the content of the answer that emerged: "All of us realized what we would do for the next few months: we would walk together through the cities (where there were rushing crowds, traffic, and media) and strung out in the countryside (where farmers and children had time to talk and nature had time to be beautiful). It was so simple, and it handled all our concerns."²⁵⁰ The pivotal point of this occurrence, however, was not the content of the solution; rather it was the process by which it had been arrived at. Tom Atlee writes "It was as if we had become a single sentient being, 'The March,' and our diverse thoughts and feelings had become the thoughts and feelings of this single but ambivalent March-mind wrestling with its problem. Increasingly, as the meeting unfolded, I had heard other marchers voice the thoughts in my head and the feelings in my heart. I had begun to sense us all sailing on a river of meaning that we had called up from our collective depths. It carried us to exactly the place we needed to go."²⁵¹ Atlee relates how that shared understanding that had emerged continued to function throughout the rest of the march. "In the months that followed, we were orchestrated by our newly shared understanding. We called it 'city mode/country mode.' Like iron filings arrayed by a magnetic field, each of us manifested the orientation of the whole with nobody policing it. We even understood why a few marchers marched to a different drummer, and we did not hassle them about it."²⁵²

"Let us put our minds together..." is the heading Tom Atlee put over his next subsection²⁵³. The process he describes is not to be thought of as something new, or something that only he has thought of. The common figure of speech of "putting our minds together" reflects some it. There also are a number of cultural traditions that know of similar approaches; Atlee refers to tribal councils of the Iroquois.²⁵⁴ Philosophical schools or spiritual traditions that propose an understanding of reality that would be conducive to the conclusions Atlee draws can also be found. A few shall be mentioned in the following section.

250 Atlee (2003), p. iv.

251 Atlee (2003), p. iv.

252 Atlee (2003), p. iv.

253 Atlee (2003), p. v.

254 Atlee (2003), p. v.

4.3. Some other philosophical backgrounds:

David Bohm, Thich Nhat Hanh

David Bohm, who has spent most of his life as a quantum physicist at US and UK universities, has developed an understanding of nature and the universe that is encompassed in texts such as "Wholeness and the Implicate Order"²⁵⁵. He has also drawn practical conclusions from his take on reality for society, especially in his suggestions on "dialogue". Since his reasoning starts from a different origin, but in its essence and many of its implications is so strongly aligned with Atlee's, Bohm's ideas shall be introduced here as another route to, or rationale for, the notion of co-intelligence.

At the beginning of his text "On Dialogue", which is a compilation of talks David Bohm has given on the subject, Bohm sketches a dire picture of the current state of Western societies: miscommunication, tension and conflict, a breakdown of communication between people living in different nations, or holding different political views, or belonging to different generations. "But if one observes efforts to solve this problem," Bohm writes, one "will notice that different groups who are trying to do this are not actually able to listen to each other. As a result, the very attempt to improve communication leads frequently to yet more confusion, and the consequent sense of frustration inclines people even further towards aggression and violence, rather than toward mutual understanding and trust."²⁵⁶

So where might be a starting point for disentangling this ever-growing knot? Bohm identifies one of the major ways forward in paying attention to the way thought processes function, in particular, to the way they shape and create social reality, but then perceive and present this created reality as a "given". A core difficulty, Bohm writes, is "that thought is very active, but the process of thought thinks that it is doing nothing – that it is just telling you the way things are. Almost everything around us has been determined by thought – all the buildings, factories, farms, roads, schools, nations, science, technology, religion – whatever you care to

255 Bohm (1980).

256 Bohm (1996), p. 2.

mention.²⁵⁷ Although Bohm never uses the term constructionism, much of the essence of his argument seems to correspond to central constructionist notions.

However, Bohm also holds a notion of the "actual" nature of reality. "In actuality, the whole world is shades merging into one", he writes.²⁵⁸ A core difficulty – a result of our thought processes – is fragmentation, making division between things that belong together; and before long, pitting them against each other. The world is shades merging into one, Bohm writes, but "we select certain things and separate them from others – for convenience, at first. Later we give this separation great importance. We set up separate nations, which is entirely the result of our thinking, and then we begin to give them supreme importance."²⁵⁹ According to Bohm, human problems, including problems on a collective and structural level, arise to a large degree due to fragmentation caused by the mind's activity, a mind which lacks self-reflectiveness, and which fails to see both its own doing and the essential interweaving nature of everything. A very similar argument is made by Harrison Owen, whose concept of Open Space shall be introduced later on. Open Space, Owen writes, to a considerable degree is "about reestablishing the wholeness of our lives."²⁶⁰ Western infatuation with taking things to pieces in an attempt to understand them, is, he says, at some point not so much wrong as simply inadequate to the task.²⁶¹

Bohm's understanding of interconnectedness and wholeness also brings him very close to some Asian philosophies. Jiddu Krishnamurti is one of the people Bohm has been in contact with, and is close to in his approach.²⁶² Of course the notion of interconnectedness or oneness is an old one, to be found in many Buddhist writings. Thich Nhat Hanh is one of the authors who has made core Buddhist notions accessible to a Western audience. He introduces the term "interbeing", and explains it as follows:

257 Bohm (1996), p. 10-11.

258 Bohm (1996), p. 10.

259 Bohm (1996), p. 10.

260 Owen (1997), p. 119.

261 Owen (1997), p. 121.

262 see e.g. Krishnamurti (1979).

"If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are."²⁶³ Thich Nhat Hanh continues this theme by saying: "If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger's father and mother are in it, too. When we look in this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist."²⁶⁴ All material and immaterial things inter-are, says Thich Nhat Hanh: "Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it, too. This is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here, and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You can not point out one thing that is not here – time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. 'To be' is to inter-be. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing."²⁶⁵

From this general understanding of the nature of reality as always and inevitably interbeing, Thich Nhat Hanh draws conclusions for the nature of engagement with reality, especially social reality, and causes such as justice, humanitarian aid or human rights. Thich Nhat Hanh and other Buddhist monks were active in the peace movement inside Vietnam in the 1960s, an activity that made them particularly prone to being targeted by various warring factions. Thich Nhat Hanh left for the US to study and teach, and, being denied re-entry into Vietnam in 1973, settled in France. There, he was in close contact with refugee camps elsewhere,

263 Thich Nhat Hanh (1988), p. 37.

264 Thich Nhat Hanh (1988), p. 37.

265 Thich Nhat Hanh (1988), p. 37.

and with "boat people" leaving Vietnam. Of all the stories of suffering that came to him, he relates one of a twelve year old girl on a small boat, who drowned herself in the sea after having been brutally raided by a pirate.

Thich Nhat Hanh writes: "When you first learn of something like that, you get angry at the pirate. You naturally take the side of the girl. As you look more deeply you will see it differently. If you take the side of the little girl, then it is easy. You only have to take a gun and shoot the pirate. But we cannot do that."²⁶⁶ After recalling the conditions into which many babies are born in the region, and the part everyone plays in perpetuating this situation, he concludes: "If you or I were born today in those fishing villages, we might become sea pirates in 25 years. If you take a gun and shoot the pirate, you shoot all of us, because all of us are to some extent responsible for this state of affairs."²⁶⁷ Thich Nhat Hanh says that after a long meditation, he wrote a poem on this theme. In it, he says "there are three people: the twelve-year-old girl, the pirate, and me. Can we look at each other and recognize ourselves in each other? The title of the poem is 'Please Call Me By My True Names,' because I have so many names. When I hear one of these names, I have to say, 'Yes.'"²⁶⁸ The poem reads:²⁶⁹

Do not say that I'll depart tomorrow because even today I still arrive.

Look deeply: I arrive in every second to be a bud on a spring branch,
to be a tiny bird, with wings still fragile, learning to sing in my new nest,
to be a caterpillar in the heart of flower, to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry, in order to fear and to hope,
the rhythm of my heart is the birth and death of all that are alive.

I am the mayfly metamorphosing on the surface of the river,
and I am the bird which, when spring comes,
arrives in time to eat the mayfly.

266 Thich Nhat Hanh (1987), p. 61.

267 Thich Nhat Hanh (1987), p. 62.

268 Thich Nhat Hanh (1987), p. 62.

269 Thich Nhat Hanh (1987), p. 62.

I am the frog swimming happily in the clear water of a pond,
and I am also the grass-snake who, approaching in silence,
feeds itself on the frog.

I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones,
my legs as thin as bamboo sticks,
and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

I am the twelve-year-old girl, refugee on a small boat,
who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate,
and I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving.

I am a member of the politburo, with plenty of power in my hands,
and I am the man who has to pay his "debt of blood" to my people,
dying slowly in a forced labor camp.

My joy is like spring, so warm it makes flowers bloom in all walks of life.
My pain is like a river of tears, so full it fills up the four oceans.

Please call me by my true names,
so I can hear all my cries and my laughs at once,
so I can see that my joy and pain are one.

Please call me by my true names, so I can wake up,
and so the door of my heart can be left open, the door of compassion.

Thich Nhat Hanh's notion of interbeing seems much more far-reaching than Tom Atlee's proposition of co-intelligence. Nevertheless, interbeing and similar conceptualisations of interdependence and oneness, be they of Buddhist or other origin, can no doubt be one source that leads people to embrace new approaches to social change. From this view of reality, antagonism and blame do not suggest themselves as helpful methods of social change. Helpful action, in this worldview, springs from both compassion and from understanding; understanding including

openness, awareness, and a coming together of many different perspectives. In that sense, co-intelligent approaches as suggested by Tom Atlee might lend themselves very well to social movements (or movement members) inspired by a view of reality as interbeing.

So, while one can clearly find a number of worldviews, traditions and schools of thought that support and suggest approaches of co-intelligence – what can be said about methods that could be used by social movements, or actual groups and movements that might operate within a master frame of co-intelligence? The Transition Town movement shall be introduced in more detail in the following section, accompanied by some thoughts on whether or not it might be seen as operating under a master frame of co-intelligence and appreciation, in particular with respect to the notions introduced by appreciative inquiry.

5. The Transition Town Movement

This thesis has asked whether it might be possible to have master frames for social movements, or indeed for "the political" more generally, that are not centred on assumptions of antagonism. It has also asked what notions or concepts might play a key role in such alternative master frames, and has introduced appreciation, as in appreciative inquiry, and co-intelligence into the debate: could there be master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence? What might they look like?

In the following chapters the question shall be raised whether it is possible to find aspects of such master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence in existing social movements. For that purpose, a few selected movements shall be introduced, first and foremost the Transition Town movement. The free culture movement, the hospice movement and the Cultural Creatives shall also be presented, as well as some tools used by social movements, such as talking stick circles and Open Space conferences. For all these movements and methods the same question shall be asked: is it possible to see aspects of a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence in them? To begin with, the following section provides an introduction to the Transition Town movement.

5.1. Introduction

"The Transition movement has rapidly become one of the fastest-growing community-scale initiatives in the world"²⁷⁰, Rob Hopkins, founder of the Transition movement, stated in The Transition Handbook, published (and reprinted three times) in 2008.

The first official Transition Town (TT) Initiative has been "unleashed" in Totnes, England, in September 2006²⁷¹, about one year after the seminal project of drafting

270 Hopkins (2008), p. 133.

271 Hopkins (2008), p. 177.

an Energy Descent Action Plan in Kinsale, Ireland²⁷². In The Transition Handbook, Rob Hopkins already lists around 120 local Transition Initiatives. At the end of 2010, the option "Find Initiatives in the directory" at <http://transitionnetwork.org/initiatives> led to a list of almost 700 initiatives; around 300 of these have undergone the official process of recognition as "Transition Initiatives" (like the 120 listed in 2008). The rest – and a number of others not even on the website yet – are what the website calls "mulling" – groups that are active, but that have not (yet) undergone the official adoption process.²⁷³ The Transition movement is strongest in the UK, where more than 300 of the roughly 700 Initiatives were based in early 2011.²⁷⁴ This is followed (in terms of number of groups) by the USA, Australia and Canada. However, an increasing number of groups are also forming in mainland Europe, while there are almost no groups in Africa, Asia or Latin America.

So, whether or not this makes the Transition movement "one of the fastest growing community-scale initiatives in the world", there certainly has been a considerable growth in the movement over the last few years, that is to say, since its inception.

What are the essential themes of the Transition movement? The title of Rob Hopkins' central publication already gives a good indication: "The Transition Handbook: From oil dependency to local resilience".²⁷⁵ The oil dependency of the current economy and society, especially in the West, together with the challenges of climate change and peak oil, are taken as the starting point for the assertion that a transition is not just desirable, but inevitable. The alternatives suggested are rooted in permaculture and revolve about relocalisation, such as growing food in the area, using local building materials, and revitalising life in communities, allowing for a high quality of life with low carbon consumption. The focus is on the local for the solutions, and it is on the local community as the locus of agency. It is meant to be practical, action-oriented, and is strongly based on vision and on joyful forms of transformation.

272 Hopkins (2008), p. 124.

273 see also Hopkins (2010), p. 84.

274 <http://transitionnetwork.org/initiatives> [26 Jan 2011]

275 Hopkins (2008), cover page.

"The range of issues addressed by Transition initiatives is wide-ranging, covering economic, social, environmental and personal systems", write Gill Seyfang and Alex Haxeltine.²⁷⁶ "In many ways," they go on to say, "this movement represents a rebadging and revitalising of previous community-based campaigns and activities around local environmental action, quality of life and social inclusion."²⁷⁷ It "can be seen as a New Social Movement, which capitalises on the need for a sense of belonging and purpose, identity and solidarity, which many people feel when faced with the enormity of current environmental and social problems."²⁷⁸

Rob Hopkins has offered a comparison table that, as he acknowledges, may portray a somewhat oversimplified version of "conventional environmentalism", but nevertheless give some helpful indications as to what may be considered new or special about the Transition approach:²⁷⁹

Conventional Environmentalism	The Transition Approach
Individual behaviour	Group behaviour
Single issue	Holistic
Tools: lobbying, campaigning and protesting	Tools: public participation, eco-psychology, arts, culture and creative education
Sustainable development	Resilience/relocalization
Fear, guilt and shock as drivers for action	Hope, optimism and proactivity as drivers for action
Changing National & International policy by lobbying	Changing National & International policy by making them electable
The man in the street as the problem	The man in the street as the solution
Blanket campaigning	Targeted interventions
Single level engagement	Engagement on a variety of levels
Prescriptive – advocates answers and responses	Acts as a catalyst – no fixed answers
Carbon footprinting	Carbon footprinting plus resilience indicators
Belief that economic growth is still possible, albeit greener growth	Designing for economic renaissance, albeit a local one

276 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 7.

277 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 7.

278 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 7.

279 Hopkins (2008), p. 135.

This table is not the result of empirical research on what Transition groups actually do, but a programmatic statement made at the beginning of the movement – and has to read as such. It is a self-description, or indeed a prescription, issued by the movement's founder or main protagonist at that time. A couple of years later, and given the considerable growth of the Transition movement, some empirical research into the actual developments has begun to emerge.

Gill Seyfang at the University of East Anglia has conducted a survey of UK Transition initiatives in 2009, revealing some features of group composition, self-image and activity. It comprised an email questionnaire (with a response rate of 79%) to all UK Transition initiatives, plus a more in-depth survey of Transition Norwich, focusing on characteristics and motivations of members.²⁸⁰

In the national survey, local Transition initiatives were asked to name their greatest achievement to date. Seyfang, in a joint article with Alex Haxeltine, reports that "beyond the fact of establishing and maintaining a group (which 52% reported) and building links with other local groups and government (reported by 47%), there was a distinctive bias to the activities the groups had been undertaking. While 69% described their awareness-raising and community engagement activities, the most popular substantive area of action was around food and gardening (40% were undertaking activities in this area, such as promoting local food, community-supported agriculture, organising allotments, garden-sharing and support, and community gardens). The next most commonly-cited areas were waste, with 12% of groups having some practical activity (often around reusable shopping bags), and energy, such as promoting conservation measures (11%)."²⁸¹

As to the question of who sets up local Transition groups, the national survey showed that "the vast majority of local groups (89%) are set up by individual citizens coming together to form a Transition Initiative.

280 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 6.

281 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 7.

Only 19% have one or more pre-existing groups involved in setting up the group, and none were started by local councils. This finding substantiates the Movement's claims to be a citizens' movement, generating energy and action from the grassroots", Seyfang and Haxeltine comment.²⁸²

Detailed data on membership composition is available from the smaller survey on members of Transition Norwich. A slight majority of women showed, and a comparatively large number of people aged around 50.²⁸³ Members were "disproportionately from lower income groups, but higher-education and employment groups than the average. To this extent, the members display the typical characteristics of 'post-materialists' who eschew high-status jobs and consumption in favour of personal fulfilment and (in particular environmental) activism – the typical demographic profile of social movement activists seeking identity, community and fulfilment through participation".²⁸⁴

The survey also showed that 32% of respondents reported that this was the first time they had been involved in a local environmental group, which Seyfang and Haxeltine take as an indication that the Transition movement appears to be successful at attracting and engaging community participation beyond those that are already involved.²⁸⁵ On members' motivation, the Transition Norwich survey showed that more than half (54%) the respondents had heard about the group "via word of mouth from friends, colleagues and through other groups they were involved with. Their motivations were: tackling climate change (reported by 67%), building local self-reliance (66%), preparing for 'peak oil' (57%), and community-building (50%). These priorities combine the overall objectives of the Transition Movement (peak oil and climate change) with more locally-focused motivations about economic resilience and social cohesion", Seyfang and Haxeltine conclude.²⁸⁶

282 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 7.

283 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 7.

284 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 8, referring to (Bate et al. 2005).

285 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 8.

286 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 8.

5.2. Transition Town and appreciative inquiry

The following section is dedicated to a more detailed introduction to the Transition Town (TT) approach. At the same time, the Transition approach shall be looked at in the light of some of the central features proposed by appreciative inquiry, such as constructionism, positive topic choice, focus on vision, discovery of achievements, positive emotion and a co-operative, inclusive attitude. Even though appreciative inquiry is not referred to in the Transition Handbook, and certainly not the official foundation of the movement: can some of its core elements be recognized in the approach of Transition Town? Any such parallels or analogous forms might give important information with respect to the question whether a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence might, at least in parts or aspects, be observed in existing social movements.

5.2.1 TT and constructionism

The Transition Handbook makes very few, if any, explicit references to the term constructionism, and certainly does not emphasise it the way appreciative inquiry does. However, even if the term is not used, a number of the implications associated with constructionism are nevertheless present.

For instance, Rob Hopkins says in the introduction: "The telling of stories is central to this book."²⁸⁷ He expands on the theme, saying: "Our culture is underpinned by various stories, cultural myths that we all take for granted".²⁸⁸ Citing a number of myths he perceives to exist relating to the economy, Hopkins claims that these stories "are profoundly misleading and indeed positively harmful for the challenges we find ourselves facing faster than we think. We need new stories that paint new possibilities, that reposition where we see ourselves in relation to the world around us, that entice us to view the changes ahead with anticipation of the possibilities

287 Hopkins (2008), p. 14.

288 Hopkins (2008), p. 14.

they hold, and that will, ultimately, give us the strength to emerge at the other end into a new, but more nourishing world."²⁸⁹

This sequence entails the idea that the telling of stories, that myths and ideas people hold about themselves and the world are a core constituent of social reality. It furthermore entails the strategic idea to change reality by changing these myths and stories. Thirdly, it gives a point of orientation for the creation of such new stories: the direction of vision, of enticing possibilities, of a more nourishing world – an aspect that will be examined more closely later on, in the context of focus on vision.

The first two aspects, seeing stories as a central component of social reality, and changing stories as a sensible way of trying to effect social change, already contain central elements of constructionist worldview and possible implications. It not only entails a certain perspective on how social reality is constituted, but already draws fairly concrete conclusions for the nature of political activism and the options of social movements. Rob Hopkins expands on this theme by saying: "Imagine if there were a way of creating that sense of positive engagement and new storytelling on a settlement-wide, even a nation-wide scale."²⁹⁰ One might also restate this as a call for discourse change, with the large scale implied.

A similar idea is expressed later on with reference to Tom Atlee: "Tom Atlee writes of creating what he calls an 'alternative story field'. This in essence is creating new myths and stories that begin to formulate what a desirable sustainable world might look like. He talks of the creative power of bringing together activists, creative writers and journalists to form 'think-tanks' that create new stories for our times. When we start doing Energy Descent work, we should be looking to draw in the novelists, poets, artists, and storytellers."²⁹¹

There are other examples in the Transition Handbook where construction plays a significant role, even at levels very different from the general story-telling referred to above. For instance, there is a suggestion to replace the term "peak oil" with

289 Hopkins (2008), p. 14.

290 Hopkins (2008), p. 15.

291 Hopkins (2008), p. 94.

"trough oil". The idea is that this might give a different feel to the situation. Instead of a sad downward journey from the mountain top, it would be a liberating resurfacing after a dive into a black, sticky liquid. "We can just about see distant sunlight glinting through the liquid above us, and our desperate urge to fill our lungs begins to propel us upwards, striving for oxygen."²⁹² This may be seen as an example of reframing, though not at the deepest level of sense of self, but on a more superficial level of getting the message across.

5.2.2. TT, positive topic choice and vision

The Transition Handbook not only points to the importance of stories, and to the creation of new stories as a means of changing social reality, it also suggests a direction for these new stories: one of vision and positive possibilities. "This is not a book about how dreadful the future could be; rather it is an invitation to join the hundreds of communities around the world who are taking steps towards making a nourishing and abundant future a reality",²⁹³ writes Rob Hopkins, and: "This book is an exploration of that potential [of positive engagement and new story-telling], an immersion in the possibilities of applied optimism, and an introduction to a movement growing so fast that by the time you read this book it will be larger still."²⁹⁴

These self-descriptive statements are interesting signposts when it comes to the question of whether aspects of a different type of master frame can actually be observed in the context of existing social movements. Could a master frame of appreciation be an applicable concept for a movement that proclaims such a strong sense of "applied optimism" and the potential for a "nourishing and abundant future"? The focus on vision, on what is deemed desirable, on how people envision a good life and what they wish to see more of is a core element in the Transition Handbook and other movement materials. This also makes it an interesting example to look at in connection with appreciative inquiry. Out of "six

292 Hopkins (2008), p. 93.

293 Hopkins (2008), p. 15.

294 Hopkins (2008), p. 15.

principles that underpin the Transition model", the first one the Handbook lists is "Visioning".²⁹⁵ That principle is elaborated further on the movement's network website, in the section about/principles:

"Transition principles: 1. Positive Visioning

We can only create what we can first vision

- If we can't imagine a positive future we won't be able to create it.
- A positive message helps people engage with the challenges of these times.
- Change is happening – our choice is between a future we want and one which happens to us.
- Transition Initiatives are based on a dedication to the creation of tangible, clearly expressed and practical visions of the community in question beyond its present-day dependence on fossil fuels.
- Our primary focus is not campaigning *against* things, but rather on positive, empowering possibilities and opportunities.
- The generation of new stories and myths are central to this visioning work."²⁹⁶

Already in the Handbook, the section entitled "The Heart" bears the subtitle "Why having a positive Vision is crucial"²⁹⁷, and the introduction to that section states: "Also important (and explored in this section) is the concept of visioning, and the power that a vision of the future can have. Too often environmentalists try to engage people in action by painting apocalyptic visions of the future as a way of scaring them into action. The question this part of the book asks is what would happen if we came at this the other way round, painting a picture of the future so enticing that people instinctively feel drawn towards it."²⁹⁸ The parallel to the appreciative inquiry suggestion to approach problems "from the other side" is rather striking at this point.

295 Hopkins (2008), p. 141.

296 <http://transitionnetwork.org/about/principles> [22 Feb 2011]

297 Hopkins (2008), p. 79.

298 Hopkins (2008), p. 79.

Stories from the future

Remarkable similarities between AI and the Transition approach can also be found in the methods applied to facilitate the creation of visions.

Appreciative inquiry interventions often contain a component where participants are asked to embark on a sort of imaginary journey into the future. "Close your eyes, and imagine that in your dream, you see your organization five years from now, and that it has developed in the most wonderful way. What is different now, and how do you know?"²⁹⁹ Those stories, images filled with details of a desirable future, are used to work with in the next steps of the appreciative inquiry process. Can such an approach, which has been developed in the mental framework of appreciative inquiry, also be applied in the context of social movements?

Transition Initiatives, at least, appear to have been using very similar methods. The Handbook gives an example: "In Totnes we have started to do this with our Transition Tales initiative, which aims to get people writing stories from different points during Totnes's transition, as newspaper articles, stories, or agony aunt columns."³⁰⁰ So people produce newspaper articles, very concrete and detailed clippings, about particular small events happening in their town 10, 15 or 20 years into the future. A new community garden has opened, someone has won a bet living on local currency exclusively for a year, this year's students are graduating from the new school focused on practical and gardening skills. These fictitious articles from the newspapers of the future serve to give a very real feel to future visions. In a sense, they may be similar to utopian novels, which have long been discovered as a possible means of political communication. The newspaper bits, however, are a form that is more easily accessible to a larger number of potential authors. Story telling and the production of TV news broadcasts are also suggested in the Transition Handbook for workshops in schools.³⁰¹

299 see e.g. Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 12.

300 Hopkins (2008), p. 94.

301 Hopkins (2008), p. 118.

THE Sun

14th September 2014

LETITIA LLOYD VOTED QUEEN OF CELEBRITY LOVE ALLOTMENT

VOLUPTUOUS CHANTEUSE
LETITIA LLOYD was last night declared winner of ITV's ratings-smashing show, *Celebrity Love Allotment*. She won 72% of the vote, knocking out the other finalist, rapper Stig Fresh.

The show began four weeks ago, with 12 celebrities, 6 men and 6 women, moving onto the allotment at Crouch End, London. None of the celebrities had ever gardened before, and to win the show had to demonstrate their aptitude with a range of produce. Initial favourite, soap star Trixie Bishop, came a cropper on her Mizuna greens, and celebrity chef Bob Lard was evicted from the show in disgrace after slug pellets were discovered in his trailer.

The show also had its highlights on the love front. Letitia Lloyd declared herself heartbroken when her beau (hunky children's TV presenter Nathaniel Ackroyd), was voted off in week three. Viewing figures peaked when Pixie Hargeaves and footballer Dwayne Adams were spotted intertwined behind the runner beans, the 'did they or didn't they' debate keeping the tabloids frothing for weeks. Pixie has since told *The Sun* they were merely practising safe bending techniques for double digging.

The show has triggered an unprecedented degree of interest in food production, with herb-filled window boxes now being the must-have item on souped-up cars in Essex. A new show, *Pimp my Patio*, is now in production. Basking in the glory of winning *Celebrity Love Allotment*, Letitia told reporters as she left the allotment, "I can think of nothing more enjoyable than gardening and growing food... having short nails is so liberating! I plan to open a designer salad smallholding in the West End now – 'Letitia's Lovely Lettuces'!"



An emotional Letitia meets the Press on emerging from the Love Allotment at the end of a trying month.

Image 1: Newspaper clipping "from the future", given as an example in the Transition Handbook³⁰²

302 Image from: Hopkins (2008), p. 108.

Oxford Times 15th March 2011

TAKING THE P★★★!

“We stopped being squeamish and started being practical.” By Paul Haig

VISITORS TO OXFORD this year may notice that things have changed a bit since their last visit . . . at least they will when they go to the loo! The city's public toilets and several of the hotels have installed urine-separating toilets. The loos themselves don't look very different from what was there before, indeed the urinals are almost identical. It is what happens after use that they may be wondering about.

The new set-up is the initiative of N • Pee • K, a new Oxford-based initiative. Why would anyone want to collect the liquid doings of the town? N • Pee • K director Imelda Platt explains: “With North Sea natural gas almost entirely depleted, nitrogen fertiliser production is being hit hard. Nitrogen is essential for our farming community, and is becoming unaffordable. The average human produces roughly the same amount of nitrogen in their urine as agriculture requires to grow their food. We decided to stop being squeamish and start being practical.”

Each participatory institution has a large sealed tank, reminiscent of the home heating oil tanks some of you may remember from a few years ago, tucked discretely behind the building. The tank is emptied

every two weeks, diluted and sold on to local farmers. Platt calls her product ‘liquid gold’. “When I approached all these places five years ago and asked to buy the rights to their urine, they thought I was mad,” she said. “We paid to install the loos, it was an investment that had paid back within six months. This is a business with a future,” she concluded. “We aim to continue expanding. Unlike natural gas, there is no danger of our raw material drying up!”²⁶



Imelda Platt proudly displays her company's 'Liquid Gold', harvested from Oxford's pubs and hotels, which has led to N • Pee • K becoming the city's fastest growing business in 2010.

Image 2: Newspaper clipping "from the future", given as an example in the Transition Handbook³⁰³

303 Image from: Hopkins (2008), p. 121.

What is of interest here, again, is the underlying basis for using – and suggesting – approaches such as the writing of fictitious newspaper articles. A crucial point here is that the articles are meant to portray a future as it is deemed desirable by the movement: a focus on vision, and in that sense, an approach that seems very much in line with a master frame of appreciation.

In that context, it may be interesting to note that Transition initiatives have used the newspaper-from-the-future approach in various ways. While it may be applied as a means of introducing the aims of the initiative to bystanders, like a flyer usually would, it has also been used in instances where a more traditional approach might have been a protest rally.

"The tool of visioning offers a powerful new approach for environmental campaigners. We have become so accustomed to campaigning against things that we have lost sight of where it is we want to go. One of the best examples of this recently was provided by Transition Town Lewes, which when confronted by a local developer who wanted to develop a key part of the town, responded not with protests and petitions, but with a vision" – a fictitious newspaper article from a future where all has turned out well in the sense of Transition Town perspectives.³⁰⁴

304 Hopkins (2008), p. 98.

Harnessing the power of a positive vision

SUSSEX EXPRESS

1 February 2017

TRANSITION TOWN LEWES: A VISION OF THE FUTURE

By Mavis Happen

Last Saturday Lewes celebrated winning the 2017 Synergen Town of the Year award with a festival at the North Street Centre that included a Southern Solar² disco and a local produce feast. Lewes was among 965 entrants for the award, for the 'most creative energy descent programme³ and improvement of living standards'. The judges were particularly impressed with the depth and effectiveness of the town's '2020 Vision', which was adopted unanimously by the Council in 2008,⁴ along with the Climate Change Strategy, written by the Sustainability Team in 2006 and Zero Waste Target⁵ reached in 2012.

'We're really proud of our achievements,' said Cllr Billie Turner of the transition committee. 'It's been a lot of work, but exhilarating. Of course, the floods of 2000 and 2008, and the hurricane of 2010 really helped focus our minds. That and oil prices hitting \$350 a barrel a while back.'

Jewel in the crown of the town is the North Street Centre, five hectares of land at the heart of Lewes's 2020 Vision. Youth worker Toma Stevenson pointed out the riverside ecovillage. 'They're on stilts to be flood-flexible. All 200 houses sold really fast. It was the first development in the UK to be a fossil-fuel neutral build,⁶ and because half were affordable housing, many of the people living there work in the North Street Centre too.' There's

now a ten-year waiting list for the car-free ecovillage;⁷ a recent survey put residents at the top of the UN Happiness Index.⁸

'The biomass plant over there was put in around 2015 to turn fast-growing willow from the floodplains into electricity,' Toma continued. 'That willow soaks up the flash floods we were starting to get a few years ago. The launch of the community wind farm (Lesco – Lewes Energy Supply Company⁹) made us one of the first towns to export electricity to the national grid.'

'Over there by Furniture Now,¹⁰ Plumpton has an urban agriculture training centre. Those raised beds have been producing 40 tons of food per hectare for 8 years now. Most of it goes to the big weekly riverside market and the dozens of local produce shops around town, and any surplus goes to Lewes Preserves. This, along with the twenty-odd CSA (Community Supported Agriculture¹¹) farms in the area, Lewes Allotments 2020, and the council's Home Grown initiative, means that 75% of Lewes's fruit and vegetables are grown¹² within 5 miles of the town, just as it was this time last century. The jury is still out as to whether the supermarkets in the town will win their legal action against smallholders preferentially supplying the local markets.'

The North Street Centre has become the transport hub for Lewes, linking the biodiesel bus station, cycle station,¹³ working horse stables and car club depot. Car ownership¹⁴ in Lewes is now well below the national average ratio of 1:4.

'Ten years ago, we had had a developer pitching to build intensive high-rise housing, car parks and a chain store centre in North Street. Our progressive council ran a weekend Appreciative Enquiry¹⁵ summit for that site, and found that people were very concerned about the environment. That form of effective consultation resulted in our 2020 North Street vision for a transition future with low-impact development that allowed the possibility of flooding.'

'Fortunately, our District Council unanimously adopted that 2020 Transition Strategy for North Street at the end of 2007. Things could have looked very different!'

Image 3: newspaper from the future as political communication tool³⁰⁵

305 Image from: Hopkins (2008), p. 95.

The next chapter in the Handbook³⁰⁶ consists of a longer example of that kind of approach. Entitled "A vision for 2030", it gives Rob Hopkins' version of what the future in Britain could and should look like. Detailed descriptions for the sectors food, farming, health, education, economy, transport, energy, and housing are interspersed with newspaper articles from the future, including photographs and stories of celebrity shows in allotment gardens or innovative local enterprises. The detail, the photographs, and the newspaper layout have a marked effect in making things appear more real, and therefore also more realistic. The format of the newspaper article is familiar and bears an element of recognition, of yes-this-is-part-of-my-life. It probably also benefits from the connotation newspapers have of reporting something factual; if it is in the news, it must be real. New visions of society may be much more readily absorbed if they are presented in a format that has a well-known, everyday feeling to it, and at the same time the (unconscious) expectation that what is being told is true and relevant, even though it may well contain something one has not heard about before. The official message of the article is a concrete event which is fictitious; the most important message from the point of view of the movement is actually in the background. As in every article, there is a background of unspoken assumptions, of things that can be taken for granted, that are well-known and obvious about the way things work and society is organised. It is at that level that the new vision is introduced, and probably introduced very effectively, along with perhaps some explicit references in the "event" the article describes.

Most of all, however, the stories benefit from the illustrative character they have. The examples and the personal stories make the vision come to life, adding both detail and emotion. There is much more of a real-life feeling to these everyday stories than to a descriptive planning document, theoretically outlining how things could be organized.

The Transition Movement is not the only movement that has come up with the notion that creating stories and writing texts from the future could be a possible form of activism. In the context of the Lewes 2017 newspaper article, Hopkins refers to Tom Atlee, saying: "This is a great example of what Atlee calls

306 Hopkins (2008), p. 104-117.

'imagineering', and the creation of what he terms *The Ecopian Grapevine Gazette* which he describes as 'contain(ing) imaginary news stories about events or innovators that had not happened yet, but which I and others would want to have happen, written as if they had happened. At the end of each article, I put the contact name of someone readers could call and participate in making that story a reality.'³⁰⁷

Writing articles or letters from the future has been discovered as a possible tool by other authors, too; however, apparently subtle distinctions in the mode of application may make a big difference in this context. One example comes from the area of Deep Ecology, an ecological strand that seeks not only to protect nature as some "resource" external to humans, but to kindle a deep feeling of connectedness, of experiencing human beings as part of nature, as part of one precious living whole, and to let environmental action spring from that root. Deep Ecology thus tries to integrate intellectual knowledge with emotional and spiritual experience and with practical action. Joanna Macy, a well-known author in that field, has gathered a substantial following not least because in her texts, she suggests a large number of exercises that can easily be used in groups wishing to explore the approach of Deep Ecology. Among these exercises are some that, at first glance, seem almost identical to the "newspaper clippings from the future" used by the Transition Town movement. In "Coming Back to Life", one of the exercises she suggests bears the title "Thirty Years Hence" and asks participants to "imagine a personal conversation with a child from the future." However, the child's question focus on "1) the reality of the dangers we faced 'back then' in that time of crisis; 2) how we felt about them; 3) how we found the strength to respond to them creatively"³⁰⁸

So the focus here is not really on vision. Although the exercise works with texts or conversations taking place in the future, the content has nothing about how good the future turned out to be, or what exactly it looks and feels like. Instead, it is largely used to describe how bad the present is, how bad that feels, and that one needs a lot of strength to cope with these difficulties: a reiteration of present problems. Notwithstanding the idea that the future is better (to the point where past

307 Hopkins (2008), p. 98.

308 Macy/Brown (1998), p. 142.

problems are so hard to imagine that they need detailed descriptions), there is practically nothing in the exercise to fill that vague assumption with detail or with emotional power. The detail and the emotion, in this and similar exercises in Macy's book³⁰⁹, go into present problems. This goes to show that although dream journeys and letters from the future are to be found in several different approaches to social change, that by no means implies that all of them have a focus on positive vision or on what is deemed desirable.

However, the Transition movement makes it very clear that working from vision is one of its core characteristics. This is even visible in the cover illustration of The Transition Handbook, which has become a kind of emblem for the Transition movement, and is reproduced in various contexts.

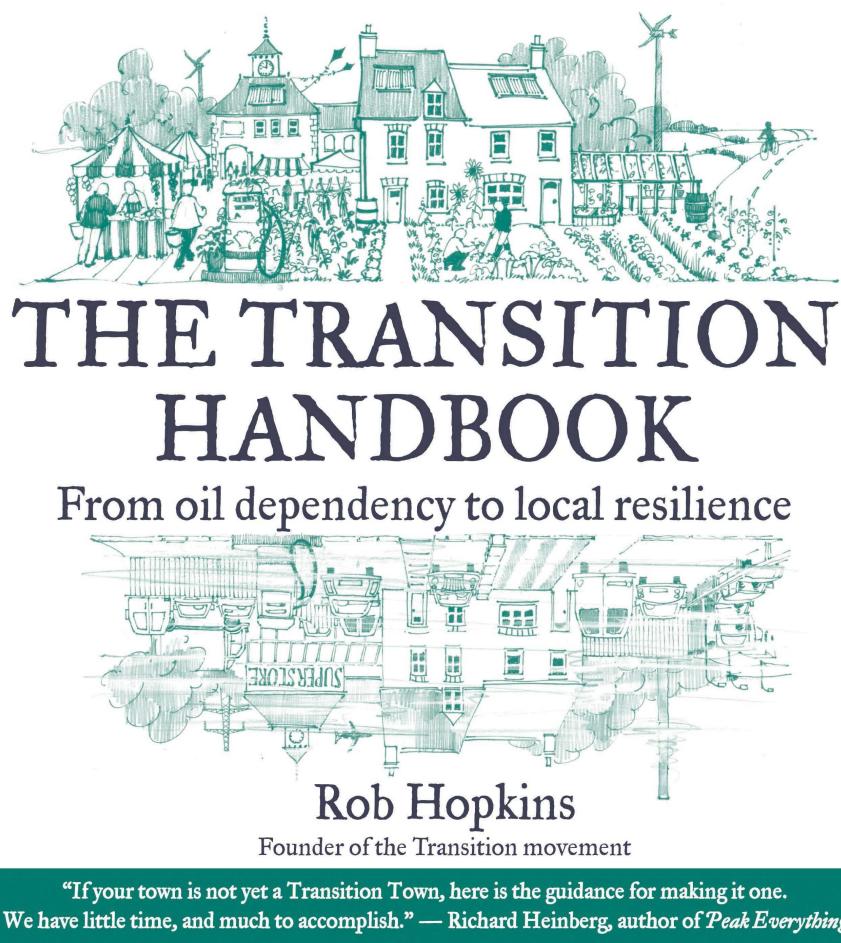


Image 4: The Transition Handbook – cover page

309 Macy/Brown (1998), e.g. Letter from the Future p. 145, Double Circle p. 146.

The vision, the image of the future desired, is on the top: It shows small gardens in front of the houses where people produce their own vegetables locally and organically, windmills, bicycles, clean air and local markets. The negative (present) mirror image of that town (including airplanes, air pollution, superstores and a lot of cars) is upside-down at the bottom of the cover: it is there, but one has to make an effort (for instance, turn the book around) in order to see it clearly. Two central movement websites (the Transition Network website³¹⁰ and Rob Hopkins' site³¹¹) use the image as header for the website – but only the top part, i.e. the vision.

The emphasis on vision is visible in different parts of the movement. Gill Seyfang from the University of East Anglia conducted a survey of the UK Transition initiatives in 2009,³¹² collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. She reports: "These internal visions therefore appear to be widely shared and specific, and are certainly accredited with giving the movement a positive, optimistic approach which is missing from some other environmental social movements, as reported by 29% of the respondents to the Transition Norwich survey. For instance, one commented 'Its primary means of motivation is offering a positive vision that inspires people to join in, rather than inviting people to join in with demonising and scapegoating a group or institution. 'What are we for?' is a much richer and empowering position than 'who are we against?'"³¹³

This sequence links nicely into the debate on whether a problem focus necessarily, or at least easily, leads to blame and antagonism, a progression practically assumed from the outset by Snow and Benford. The Transition Town activist here portrays a focus on vision not only as the alternative to a focus on problems, but already as the alternative to "demonising and scapegoating", or blame.

The focus on vision as an approach to social change is repeated in many instances in Transition texts. For instance, **the Transition Handbook** also quotes Marianne Williamson as saying: "Creating the world we want is a much more subtle but more powerful mode of operation than destroying the one we don't

310 <http://transitionnetwork.org> [7June 2011]

311 <http://transitionculture.org> [7June 2011]

312 Seyfang (2009a).

313 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 11.

want.³¹⁴ That quote already hints at vision as not only being in dream journeys and fictitious newspaper articles, but also in material and everyday practice. It is "creating the world", not just "imagining the world". And while in a constructionist perspective, imagining, naming and repeated citation are already forms of creating reality, there still are other additional levels to it. Transition initiatives are oriented towards creating small, visible, tangible, physical examples of the future they wish to see. A community garden, a local food orchard, a composting scheme, a cobweb bus shelter, a local skills exchange – anything that is part of the future vision, embodies the spirit and the general idea, and is prone to direct, small-scale, immediate physical implementation. "Transition Initiatives are based on a dedication to the creation of tangible, clearly expressed and practical visions of the community in question beyond its present-day dependence on fossil fuels... The generation of new stories and myths are central to this visioning work"³¹⁵, Rob Hopkins and Peter Lipman write in "Who We Are And What We Do" for the Transition Network.

Another aspect related to the focus on vision, and the ability to focus on vision, is related to shifting from preoccupation with probabilities to possibilities. In the Transition Handbook, Rob Hopkins writes: "We move from working with peak oil, which is about probabilities (how probable it is that it will be horrendous, how probable is oil peak in 2007, and so on) to possibilities. The shift is subtle but illuminating."³¹⁶ The idea is that possibilities are what is most interesting and relevant to people who consider themselves pro-active agents creating the future. Probabilities may bring people in a position of one who is waging a bet, as in a horse race, and then waiting for the outcome. As betters may be very concentrated and excited while watching the race, it can seem like someone very involved: well informed and clearly totally exited by the issue. However, it really is more of a spectator position. The better is not participating in the race, nor doing anything to influence the outcome in one way or the other. It is possible for people to adapt a similar position with respect to political issues and the development of society: they seem well informed, focused and committed, but really are putting themselves in a position where they do not feature as active agents, but as audience.

314 Hopkins (2008), p. 84.

315 Hopkins/Lipman (2009), p. 7.

316 Hopkins (2008), p. 126.

Rob Hopkins refers to Tom Atlee on this point, whom he quotes as saying: "I've begun to notice how the whole optimism/pessimism dichotomy is a death trap for my aliveness and attention. I watch myself acting as if my sense of what *might* happen *is a description of reality*. And what I notice is this: whether I expect the best or the worst, my expectations interfere with my will to act. (...) I've started viewing both optimism and pessimism as spectator sports, as forms of disengagement masquerading as involvement. (...) Probabilities are abstractions. Possibilities are the stuff of life, visions to act upon, doors to walk through."³¹⁷

5.2.3. TT and discovery

Within appreciative inquiry, the focus on what the people involved deem desirable, what they wish to see more of, has implications on several levels. Creating spaces for the formulation of visions is one of them – in the AI four-step sequence it is mostly located in the step entitled "Dream".

Before that, AI already suggests a positive topic choice, the formulation of an unconditionally positive question, which replaces "the problem" as a starting point and as an anchor for the whole process that follows. Then AI suggests beginning with "Discovery": the identification of instances, aspects, or niches where what is desired has already been experienced, even if only in small amounts or for a short time. Looking at the past and the present with an appreciative eye: this includes valuing what has been achieved, what is going well and ought to continue. It also includes identifying the seeds of what is to come next.

If one takes the appreciative inquiry approach as some indication of what working within a master frame of appreciation could possibly look like, it becomes interesting to ask whether anything similar can be observed in actually existing social movements, such as the Transition movement. Does the "discovery" of aspects to appreciate in the past and present play any role in the Transition movement?

³¹⁷ Hopkins (2008), p. 94-95, original text on www.co-intelligence.org/y2k_fatigue.html [7June 2011]

The Transition Handbook starts with a bit of appreciation³¹⁸, but mostly it does start with a description of a problem: peak oil in an oil-dependent society, plus climate change. However, the description of the problem is largely confined to chapter one (taking up only 26 pages out of a total of 224), with chapter two moving into scenarios and chapter three already picking up on positive visions again, and on Discovery. "Life before oil wasn't all bad" is the heading of a section exploring economic structures in Britain in the early 20th century. "In fact there is much that we can learn from and reclaim in our history"³¹⁹, writes Hopkins. Of the "Twelve Steps of Transition" suggested later in the Handbook, one is to "Honour the elders"³²⁰, and relates to the very same idea of discovering worthwhile practices in local history. Oral history interviews are one of the methods recommended,³²¹ which again is somewhat reminiscent of the appreciative inquiry interviews during the discovery phase.

In terms of content of the vision, the Transition Handbook may sometimes sound a bit much like going back to the past, or towards the local exclusively. Seyfang and Haxeltine note that "The current framing of resilience equates resilience with localisation in a rather unquestioning way".³²² They go on to say: "We suggest that, for many people, a more desirable future might be one where many products and services have been re-localized back to levels similar to 50-100 years ago, but where a knowledge economy in science, technology and certain cultural good and services continues to operate at regional-global scales. This opens up the future as uncharted territory, where the future will neither be like the past nor the present, but will learn from historical solutions."³²³ Or, as "one participant in a Transition workshop put it: 'I want to eat vegetables grown within a few miles of where I live but I don't want to live without the internet'."³²⁴

While on the one hand, the Transition Handbook does encourage discovery of good things in societies' histories, it also contains images that are not very

318 e.g. of Hunza Valley in Pakistan on p. 13.

319 Hopkins (2008), p. 57.

320 Hopkins (2008), p. 170.

321 Hopkins (2008), p. 171.

322 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 16.

323 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 17.

324 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 18.

appreciative of the present and the road that led to it. Using the image of addiction³²⁵ as an analogy for current oil dependency in society, for example, does not give a very positive ring to the current state or recent developments. A constructionist perspective would suggest that the form and tone of that presentation are not determined by "the facts". Even if the current situation of oil consumption is deemed unsustainable and about to change drastically in the near future, the road to the present could still be described in more appreciative terms, if one chooses. For instance, it would be possible to describe the oil era so far as a necessary and very useful learning period for humankind, where a lot of important discoveries have been made and have now advanced to a point where humanity will be able to move on to an era without cheap oil. For instance, without the oil interval, chemical industry based on renewable materials may never have developed to the point where now it is able to produce silky socks and disposable plastic bags from wood and corn. In that representation, the oil age was a very good period of learning, people may congratulate themselves for having entered it, and then move on and out of oil as is now appropriate. These examples of a different framing of the same issue again illustrate the idea that one and the same concern can always be framed in several different ways, and that the implications, or, as in this case, the emotional connotations can change correspondingly.

In the same way the Handbook starts with a description of the problem, it also recommends to start local activity with awareness raising focus on the problem – a fairly traditional approach for a social movement or for political activism that would also fit nicely with assumptions such as Snow's and Benford's that social movements have a problem as a starting point. In particular, the Handbook recommends the screening of films on the subject of peak oil and climate change – as Gill Seyfang and Alex Haxeltine note, the films suggested and classified in the Handbook "nearly all have high 'doom ratings' and low 'solutions ratings' (...) Interestingly, this conflicts with Hopkins' statements about the undesirability (and inefficacy) of shock-tactics to instigate personal change"³²⁶ However, in the meantime a film has been produced by the Transition movement itself, assembled from footage produced by several local Transition initiatives, and the tone of that film is again overwhelmingly positive. Peak oil is mentioned briefly at the

325 Hopkins (2008), p. 84ff.

326 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 11.

beginning, but the bulk of the film is about different local Transition initiatives, the beauty of them, the happy, active people engaged in them, and the good ideas implemented.³²⁷

5.2.4. TT and positive emotion

Notwithstanding some references to "the problem" and related negative imagery, the general tone in which Transition presents itself is very strongly characterized by positive emotions such as excitement, joy, elation, hope, or inspiration. "How might our response to peak oil and climate change look more like a party than a protest march?" is the first sentence that greets the visitor on Rob Hopkins' website³²⁸ under the heading "about this site". An adapted citation from Richard Heinberg's foreword to the Transition Handbook³²⁹, it is used on the website almost as a motto for the movement.

The turn towards positive emotion as a foundation for movement activity is also made explicit in Hopkins' table³³⁰ comparing the Transition approach to (admittedly somewhat stereotyped)³³¹ conventional environmental organisations. While in that table "Fear, guilt and shock as drivers for action" are attributed to conventional environmentalism, "Hope, optimism and proactivity as drivers for action"³³² are listed as characteristics of the Transition Approach. "What might environmental campaigning look like if it strove to generate this sense of elation, rather than the guilt, anger and horror that most campaigning invokes? What might it look like if it strove to inspire, enthuse, and focus on possibilities rather than probabilities?"³³³ asks Rob Hopkins in the introduction to the Handbook, and concludes: "We don't know for sure, but the Transition movement is an attempt to design abundant

327 The film is entitled "In Transition 1.0", available on: <http://vimeo.com/8029815> [10 Aug 2011]. An update is currently prepared under the heading "Transition 2.0": <http://transitionculture.org/2011/04/05/announcing-in-transition-2-0-and-inviting-your-support/> [10 Aug 2011]

328 <http://transitionculture.org> [9 June 2011]

329 Hopkins (2008), p. 10.

330 Hopkins (2008), p. 135.

331 Hopkins (2008), p. 136.

332 Hopkins (2008), p. 135.

333 Hopkins (2008), p. 15.

pathways down from peak oil, to generate new stories about what might be waiting for us at the end of descent, and to put resilience-building back at the heart of any plans we make for the future."³³⁴

Hopkins also relates stories of concrete occasions in the life of the movement where this intention was meant to be translated in actual practice. For instance, he recounts an event organised by Transition Town Totnes at the launch of a new regional currency. Every person attending that event was given a new Totnes Pound note at the entrance. Hopkins says that at some point during the evening "I invite the audience to each wave their Pound in the air – it is quite a sight. 160 people, Pound in hand, beginning the powerful journey of telling new stories about money, and also about the future, its possibilities and their independence as a community."³³⁵ "As I stood in front of the hall, watching the room full of laughing, twinkling people, waving their Totnes Pounds, I felt very moved. There is a power here, I thought, which has remained largely untapped. Surely when we think about peak oil and climate change we feel horrified, afraid, overwhelmed? Yet here was a room full of people who were positively elated, yet were also looking the twin challenges of peak oil and climate change square in the face."³³⁶

The emphasis on positive emotion in Transition fits well with the approach appreciative inquiry has to the same subject. "[B]uilding and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding – things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together", Cooperrider and Whitney write.³³⁷ Emotions are given considerable importance and attention throughout the AI process. The focus on what is desired, what people aspire to, what inspires them, and makes them and their organisations come alive is also emphasised at each and every step of the inquiry. The orientation of the Transition approach towards positive emotion, towards joy and elation, thus appears to be very much in line with recommendations made in appreciative inquiry.

334 Hopkins (2008), p. 15.

335 Hopkins (2008), p. 14.

336 Hopkins (2008), p. 15.

337 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 20.

Gill Seyfang and Alex Haxeltine draw attention to the fact that the Transition movement is remarkable in its ways of trying to bring inner processes and external action together. They see the emphasis on the importance of individual transformation and the building of an inner resilience as an important feature of the Transition model. "Many of the discussions", they say, "that we have encountered in Transition meetings, workshops and social gatherings have focused on the ways in which the individual is isolated, disempowered and de-motivated in the consumer society, and the ways in which enhancing individual well-being is therefore linked to transition. This aspect of the challenge of transition is explicitly acknowledged by the movement in a number of ways."³³⁸ They point out that local Transition initiatives are expected to have a "heart and soul" group, concerned specifically with "the psychological, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of Transition".³³⁹ Seyfang and Haxeltine also point out that there is a strong connection between the work these groups are doing and Joanna Macy's "work that reconnects", which also offers a frame that attempts to link an "inner world paradigm shift" with the outer process of change. Seyfang and Haxeltine continue: "This emphasis on the linking of inner and outer change, is a very particular feature of the transition movement and one that has attracted many people who previously experienced a disconnect at the personal or community level. In some ways it represents a linking of the environmental and social justice movements with psychotherapy and personal growth movements."³⁴⁰ That observation, the coming together of social justice and personal growth movements, is again reminiscent of one of the central arguments in Ray's and Anderson's book on Cultural Creatives.³⁴¹

338 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 19.

339 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 19.

340 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 19.

341 Ray/Anderson (2000), p. 210.

5.2.5. Antagonism and co-intelligence

As has been mentioned above, social movement studies not only tend to assume that social movements necessarily start with a problem, but also that they proceed to allocate responsibility or blame for the problem, and are in a situation of conflict and antagonism.

Appreciative inquiry, in contrast to this, suggests to begin with the identification of an unconditional positive question as a starting point, and to proceed with discovering good aspects of the status quo. From there, the next steps are to dream what could be, and to decide what should be. The questions arising in an AI context are not: "what is the problem and who is to blame?", but rather "where do we wish to go, and who can contribute?". If the search is for persons who have the positive capacities needed to bring the envisioned future into the present, the questions moves in the direction of "who and what should be welcomed, included, invited, encouraged...?".

The Transition movement also does not see itself as being a conflict party involved in attacks and counter-attacks in a setting of antagonism and struggle. Even though the movement aims to effect rather far-reaching changes in the social and economic structure in a rather short period of time, it does not subscribe to the logic of antagonism. Of course, it might be argued that precisely *because* it aims to effect rather large changes in a rather short period, it does not subscribe to a logic of antagonism, but one of cooperation and inclusion. If the supposition is that cooperation and inclusion are the most efficient modes of bringing about change, then of course, the more urgent and the more important a matter is, the greater the need for cooperation.

The Transition Handbook makes it fairly clear from the outset that inclusion is the approach it wishes the movement to espouse. While out of the "six principles that underpin the Transition model", the first one is "Visioning", the second one is "Inclusion".³⁴² Hopkins elaborates on that principle, saying that the aims of the Transition movement can not be achieved if people stay with their "comfort

³⁴² Hopkins (2008), p. 141.

zones",³⁴³ talking only to people with a similar social background, similar occupations, and similar worldviews. "The Transition approach", Hopkins says, "seeks to facilitate a degree of dialogue and inclusion that has rarely been achieved before, and has begun to develop some innovative ways of bringing this about. This is seen as one of the key principles simply because without it we have no chance of success."³⁴⁴

So here Hopkins is making precisely that sort of argument: because we need to be effective, we need to be inclusive. This is the inversion of an argument that might otherwise be expected in the context of social movements or political groups: "Being open, friendly and cooperative is all very well, but when the issue is too important or too urgent, then we can longer afford to be nice, and confrontation is needed" – based on the implicit assumption that confrontation will be faster or more effective. However, it could be that such an argument actually only amounts to saying: "Since we are not making enough progress by being cooperative, we will now make even less progress by being confrontational." Hopkins does not state it in these terms, and perhaps not quite as strongly. However, the general logic he is proposing does point in the direction of inclusion and cooperation being seen as the faster and more efficient paths to reaching the movement's aims of energy transition.

In "Lessons from the Kinsale project", the first Energy Descent Planning attempt that did much to spark the Transition movement, Hopkins' Handbook cites as the first lesson drawn: "Avoid 'Them and Us'.³⁴⁵ He elaborates by saying: "It would have been easy to fall into the same trap that so much campaigning and activism falls into of creating a sense us 'them and us'; painting the local council as being the villains of the piece because they had failed, thus far, to begin formulating responses to peak oil, and indeed had done very little that could be called 'green' at all. It could also have resorted to attacking the business community for its ungreen ways, but instead it sought to involve them."³⁴⁶ So Hopkins clearly sees the option for antagonistic relationships for the Transition movement, for instance with business or with local government. However, perhaps unlike a number of

343 Hopkins (2008), p. 141.

344 Hopkins (2008), p. 141.

345 Hopkins (2008), p. 125.

346 Hopkins (2008), p. 125.

social movement scholars, he also sees, and chooses to focus on, the element of choice inherent in this situation, and then recommends going down the other route: not one of antagonism, but one of inclusion and cooperation.

A survey conducted by Gill Seyfang of Transition initiatives in the UK in 2009 showed that indeed, 83% of groups had begun to establish links with local government, and 59% with businesses. 74% were co-operating with other voluntary organisations, 45% with charities, 39% with social enterprises. Contact with political parties was at 23%, direct involvement with the national government at 8%.³⁴⁷ So the general suggestions of the Transition Handbook appear to find some correspondence here at the group level.

Intrinsic value of inclusion and co-operation

Hopkins in part argues for inclusiveness by pointing to increased efficiency, or to preconditions for potential success. These could be considered tactical and strategic arguments: whatever means are most likely to lead to achievement of the movement's aims of energy transition should be employed. However, the aims of Transition are broader than just energy use. The Transition movement aims to rebuild local resilience, and that includes functioning social networks and reasonably harmonious relationships between people in the area. It aims to create a future with a high quality of life for all – and that includes emotional wellbeing. There are more intrinsic arguments for cooperation and inclusion than the ones cited above. In a more recent text on diversity posted on his website, Hopkins writes: "Transition, an approach designed to build resilience at the community level, needs to actively include the needs of everyone in that community in order to truly create resilience. Also, inclusion is simply the right, fair and just thing to do."³⁴⁸

Hopkins says: "The more I have been involved in this work and met people working in positions of authority, be they planners, engineers, councillors and even

347 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 13.

348 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14June 2011]

politicians, I have seen that they are ordinary people, often with families, just as bewildered by the turn of events as everybody else. For us to scream 'why aren't they doing anything?' does nothing to help.³⁴⁹ Once the people that might otherwise have been labelled "the antagonists" are seen as "ordinary people", having a personal life just like anyone else, and being just as bewildered as anyone else, the perspective changes. While "the antagonists" may be more readily seen as the one who will "attack and be attacked", "ordinary people" like me and you are perhaps more readily seen as someone to talk to.

A similar theme is evoked by Hopkins in his table contrasting the Transition approach with conventional environmentalism. While conventional environmentalism, he claims, sees "The man in the street as the problem", Transition sees "The man in the street as the solution."³⁵⁰ So even ordinary people are not treated as antagonists – even though they could be, by focusing on their oil-intensive and climate-damaging behaviour, their lack of interest in the movement's aims, and their hostile reaction to the movement's reproaches. Again is it interesting to note the element of choice involved; it is not that the Transition movement could not be antagonistic. Its theme and the environment it is in would lend themselves very easily to antagonism. However, the Transition movement, or the Transition Handbook, are making a – relatively conscious – choice to go for a different frame, one of inclusion and cooperation rather than one of antagonism.

Inclusion: from business to race

"The project [of the Kinsale Energy Descent Action Plan] was always carried out in a spirit of inclusion and openness", writes Rob Hopkins in the Transition Handbook, and points out that rather than seeing and presenting itself as an opposition group, the initiative approached many members of the local council, asked for their views, and invited them to the Open Space event, which was actually held in the Town Hall.³⁵¹ When Hopkins refers to openness, inclusion and diversity as necessary and desirable for Transition, he is usually taking about

349 Hopkins (2008), p. 125.

350 Hopkins (2008), p. 135.

351 Hopkins (2008), p. 125.

bringing in groups like businesspeople or local government officials, people that do not traditionally feature as environmentalist activists. It is a call to reach out beyond a particular sub-culture. What does not seem to feature prominently in his considerations are categories like race, class, ethnic background, or gender.

In a thesis entitled "Reaching out for resilience: Exploring approaches to inclusion and diversity in the Transition movement", Danielle Cohen³⁵² looks at precisely these categories – while paying little if any attention to the aspects Hopkins raised in the Handbook, such as the inclusion of businesspeople. Hopkins attended Danielle Cohen's presentation of her thesis and included his reactions to it in a draft "pattern" or "ingredient for transition" on diversity, intended for the Transition movement.³⁵³ In it he repeats a quote from Cohen's thesis, made by a former participant in a local Transition initiative: "Our meetings have often been quite formal and quite quiet and quite sit-downy and chaired and stuff, whereas in a lot of other cultures you don't get that, you just get people talking in a really animated way and over each other and blah blah blah and...like...there is no right or wrong way of doing things and I felt like as well if I brought my family or something there it would be...they would be disapproved of and it would be looked at as if they're not serious or they're not doing things in the right way because they're not taking notes and they're not blah-di-blah. I don't think Transition Town Stoke Newington was in a place to...would have welcomed a whole new way of doing things."³⁵⁴

The issue of diversity had by far the largest discussion on the Network's website general forum³⁵⁵, and in comments on Rob Hopkins' draft pattern text. A lively and substantive debate had been sparked, including comments such as one by Bart Anderson, who also referred to the difference between bonding (with similar people) and bridging (across different sets of people). "Diversity and inclusivity are wonderful goals. And yet ... There is often an underlying assumption that *if only we were sensitive enough and tried hard enough*, our group would be one happy

352 Cohen (2010). Danielle Cohen makes a bid for movement-relevant scholarship, and gives thought as to how research methodologies can establish respect eye-level cooperative relationships with movement members (p.15ff).

353 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14 June 2011]

354 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14 June 2011]

355 <http://transitionnetwork.org/forums/process/general> [8 Aug 2011]

homogeneous pudding."³⁵⁶ "A different model is that of the network, in which people and groups maintain their separate identities, but come together when it seems right and comfortable to work on specific projects."³⁵⁷ In his draft pattern text on diversity, Rob Hopkins reiterates the general commitment to diversity, this time naming a broader range of possible differences: "Every community has a diversity of political opinion, incomes, backgrounds, gender and sexuality and so on, as well as of dominant and non-dominant people. In practice Transition initiatives need to start out from a position of recognising that everyone is important and has a role, regardless of the above, and should seek to acquire the necessary tools to make diversity and inclusion central to their work."³⁵⁸

Mobilizing and being mobilized

The discussion inside the Transition movement on issues of diversity and inclusion also holds some very interesting sections on how people should – or should not – be approached. There seems to be potential here for making some remarkable new entries under the heading of "mobilization" as used in social movement studies.

In his draft pattern on diversity, Rob Hopkins writes: "There is a danger that people involved in Transition, as with many of those in the wider environmental movement, can sometimes see inclusion as being about bringing more people over to 'our' agenda, that it is about winning over those who don't 'get it'. This somewhat smug and superior approach is not appropriate for the work Transition is doing."³⁵⁹ Danielle Cohen, who is also an active member of a London Transition initiative, refers to statements made by Transition members in the course of her research interviews. The reasons movement members gave for doing joint projects with other groups varied, Cohen reports. Some said that for them, "is about

356 <http://transitionnetwork.org/patterns/getting-started/inclusiondiversity#comment-847> [8 Aug 2011]

357 <http://transitionnetwork.org/patterns/getting-started/inclusiondiversity#comment-847> [8 Aug 2011]

358 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14 June 2011]

359 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14 June 2011]

'bringing people in' to Transition or even finding things to lure them 'like children',³⁶⁰ other presented it more in a light of mutuality, saying "it's not about getting people to come to me, it's about me coming to them" and aiming to appreciate what other people have to offer and are interested in.³⁶⁰ She concludes later on: "People in Transition – in this study at least – often talk about inclusion with a view to bringing different people into the movement. I have argued that this view of inclusion can imply and perpetuate hierarchical power relationships underpinned by assumptions of assimilation and integration. As one co-operative inquiry participant put it, Transition should perhaps not be seeking to include others but should be seeking to be included by them."³⁶¹

This section is also referred to by Hopkins in his draft pattern. He adds that "There is a perception often in environmental groups that some sectors of society are 'hard to reach'. What is less often considered though is the possibility that it is actually we who are 'hard to reach', that for many people, due to how we work, communicate and position ourselves, we can be seen as remote, distant and irrelevant."³⁶² Under the heading "the solution" of the draft pattern, Hopkins writes that it "means starting with everyone in that community and interweaving diversity into everything you do. In practise, it's about a lot more than putting up posters in a few carefully chosen places. Rather than inviting people to your meetings and expecting them to come along, it's about going out to other people and listening."³⁶³

This certainly offers some very interesting perspectives on movement mobilization, if it is thought of as mobilization in the context of social movement studies at all. "Going out to other people and listening" would be considered a classical mobilization technique if the intention is to learn their language only to be able to win them over to the movement's own agenda, wrapped in a new form of presentation. Actual listening, with the intention of understanding and possibly adopting other people's causes, is a very different matter.

360 Cohen p. 33.

361 Cohen p. 51.

362 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14 June 2011]

363 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14 June 2011]

6. Other Movements

The Transition Town movement has been introduced in the previous section and examined in the light of the methods and ideas put forward by appreciative inquiry. A number of other movements, too, might be looked at in order to examine whether there is potential for – or indeed actual use of – a master frame centred on co-intelligence and appreciation. While it is not possible to go into depth for any of these movements, a brief introduction to some of them shall be attempted, in order to provide some helpful background to comments and references made in the last chapters of this thesis.

6.1. Free Culture

Within what may now be called the free culture movement, free software had an important pioneering role. Free software has created impressive examples of how projects as complex and demanding as developing software can thrive when contributions are made voluntarily and products are given away for free for anyone to use. The free software movement has also formulated some important core principles for free culture generally.

What Richard Stallman defined as the four freedoms in free software³⁶⁴ is essentially what can be found on the websites like that of the Open Knowledge Foundation today³⁶⁵:

1. Free and open **access** to the material
2. Freedom to **redistribute** the material
3. Freedom to **reuse** the material and to **build upon it**
4. Any altered or improved versions shall be **made available again** under the terms listed above.

364 Stallman/Gay (2002), p. 43.

365 <http://okfn.org/about/> [17 Feb 2012]

This points to two main aims of the free culture movement: one is to do with individual access to the cultural heritage of humankind, and the possibility of unfolding one's own potential or simply enjoying practical benefits, which means learning and consumption. The other is to do with production and renewed innovation, that is, the other half of a cycle of ongoing creativity.

Lawrence Lessig, US law professor and co-initiator of the Creative Commons licenses, states in that respect that

1. Creativity and innovation always build on the past.³⁶⁶

We are all standing on the shoulders of giants, as Isaac Newton might have put it. Observing developments in law and society, Lessig goes on to postulate that

2. The past always tries to control the creativity that builds upon it.
3. Free societies enable the future by limiting this power of the past.
4. Ours is less and less a free society.³⁶⁷

He uses the Disney company as an illustration. Walt Disney created Mickey Mouse in 1928 in the form of "Steamboat Willie", drawing on the film "Steamboat Bill" released the same year. Many of the most famous Disney films to day draw directly on existing work, on past creativity: from Cinderella to Snow White, from the Little Mermaid to the Hunchback of Notre Dame Disney has read and reused existing works, changing, remixing and expanding them, and creating something new in the process. A new work growing from an existing one: the Brothers Grimm draw on folk tales, Disney draws on the Brothers Grimm – but no one, no one should draw that same way on Disney to create something new; or so Lessig³⁶⁸ says one might interpret the policies advocated by the Disney company, or those implemented by the US Congress. Lessig points out that the duration of copyright (even for existing works) has been extended eleven times in the course of 40 years in the US,³⁶⁹ with the effect that Mickey Mouse, having been close to entry in the public domain several times, has not arrived there to the present day. At the

366 Lessig (2002), min. 0:30

367 Lessig (2002), min. 0:35 – 0:50

368 Lessig (2002), min. 7:20

369 Lessig (2002), min. 6:30 – 6:50

end of the 18th century (a time of inventions and discoveries, after all) copyright on printed works lasted for 14 years in the Anglo-Saxon world; today, it lasts for about one hundred, and extends way beyond printed works.

That Mickey Mouse can not be freely used to create parodies and spin-offs of all sorts by the thousands may be regretted by the free culture movement, but is perhaps not classified as a major catastrophe. Much worse, as James Boyle, another law professor and free culture advocate points out, is the fact that millions of others works got locked up out of reach at the same time.³⁷⁰ Works which – unlike Mickey Mouse – no longer promise to yield any commercial benefits are usually not taken care of by the copyright holders. Films, music recordings and texts of all sorts sit and rot in archives, unavailable to the public. Digitalising them and making them available online would mean a lot of work – and who is going to do that without any commercial gain on the horizon?

Thousands of specialised enthusiasts, suggests Boyle,³⁷¹ picking up one of the main notion of the free culture movement. The world is wide, and a scattered community of fans is sufficient for creating websites of high quality on the most obscure subject. However, they need the legal permission to do so, which currently is often denied. An example, and a symbolic figure within the free culture movement, is Eric Eldred, who set up a high-quality website making classical American literature available to the public, and who found a good portion of his work made impossible by yet another extension of copyright (and concomitant pushing back of the public domain) in 1998. Eldred, supported by Lessig and many others, tried to secure his rights by way of a law suit, referring to rights guaranteed under the US constitution. He lost the case.

Nevertheless, or perhaps precisely because the attempt to secure rights through law suits and courts had failed, another important free culture initiative emerged in the wake: the Creative Commons licenses. In order to protect the cycle of creativity and to help ensure that the creativity of today will be available to be built upon, Lessig and others invented a system of licenses that make use of existing copyright. Creative Commons (CC) licences give authors, i.e. copyright owners,

370 Boyle (2007), p. 125 ff.

371 Boyle (2007), p. 127.

the possibility to permit certain uses of their works; it is a move from 'all rights reserved' to 'some rights reserved'. Authors may chose to allow free use of the work as long as there is accreditation (BY), as long as the use is non-commercial (NC), or as long as all derivatives are shared under the same license (share-alike, SA). It is also possible to demand there be no derivative works (ND), and to combine these elements in various ways.

Creative Commons licences by now have been adapted to a number of national legal systems throughout the world,³⁷² and cover millions of works, including the texts on Wikipedia, or thousands of music tracks on jamendo.com.³⁷³

Wikipedia itself is, of course, a flagship of the free culture movement. In the ten years since its inception Wikipedia has grown into a major reference work, featuring over ten million entries in more than 250 languages, and having its place among the most frequently consulted websites of the world.³⁷⁴ It is an illustration of the free culture notion that there is a huge wave of creativity, research and cultural production just waiting to be released; that people like contributing, given half a chance – even to something as boring as an encyclopedia. The heading on top of the webwiki of Wikimedia (the mother organisation of Wikipedia and other projects) reads: "Imagine a world in which every single human being can freely share in the sum of all knowledge. That's our commitment."³⁷⁵

This commitment may also be seen to lie at the core of Open Access, a strand focusing on the availability of academic research to the public.³⁷⁶ Ironically, much research that is funded by the public is not freely available to the public, but gets locked up behind high paywalls of commercial academic journals at the moment of publication. University libraries pay high fees, and individuals who are not connected to universities, such as practising medical doctors, or indeed their patients, find it almost impossible to access research articles that might be relevant to them. Open Access (OA) proposes to academics to make use of the option they

372 <https://creativecommons.net/>

373 <http://www.jamendo.com> [10 Feb 2012]

374 http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Our_projects [21 Feb 2012]
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Statistics> [21 Feb 2012]

375 <http://wikimediafoundation.org/wiki/Home> [1 Jan 2012]

376 for an overview see e.g. Peter Suber (2010).

have, such as auto-archiving their articles in online repositories, for instance under a Creative Commons license. Although this appears to be little known, almost all contracts with traditional academic journals leave authors this option, which is referred to as Green OA. An alternative, of course, is to publish in Open Access journals directly (Gold OA). The list of OA journals is quite long by now,³⁷⁷ as is that of OA repositories.³⁷⁸ While some OA initiatives are limited to providing access free of charge, others extend to the right to create derivative works.

With a similar rationale, initiatives of Open Learning or Open Educational Resources have begun to make course materials freely available online, pioneered not least by universities such as MIT.³⁷⁹ The academic community has also discovered free culture as a research topic, as is evidenced for instance by the free culture research conferences, such as the one 2010 in Berlin.³⁸⁰

The relevance of notions of collective intelligence, especially in relation to the internet, has also been taken up by the Western academic community. In October 2006, the MIT Center for Collective Intelligence was launched.³⁸¹ In the same year, Yochai Benkler at Yale published "The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom", in which he examines decentralized, commons based peer production not only in relation to the production of software, but as a general mode of production, and a new basis for freedom. Peer production as a new paradigm of co-operation and complementarity based on abilities and voluntarism is a theme pursued with passion outside the academic community, too. Obviously, thousands, if not millions of people participate by writing free software, contributing to wikipedia, or providing free content on websites and blogs. There are also forums for discussion and meta-level exchange. The p2p-foundation³⁸² serves as one such hub for peer-to-peer related topics. So developments in information technology, in particular concerning the internet, have given rise both to increasing theoretical interest in collective intelligence and to a large number of – often large scale, and high quality – examples of practical applications.

377 for a list of OA journals see e.g. <http://www.doaj.org/>

378 for lists of OA repositories, see www.opendoar.org/ and <http://roar.eprints.org/>

379 see <http://ocw.mit.edu>

380 <http://wikis.fu-berlin.de/display/fcrc/Home>

381 <http://cci.mit.edu/news/events.html> [8 July 2011]

382 <http://p2pfoundation.net> [6 July 2011]

The terminology, of course, overlaps, and part of what has been referred to as the free culture movement here sometimes appears under different headings; peer2peer, open knowledge or knowledge commons are terms that all have some relevance. Networks, and, not least, collective intelligence are also keywords, which of course is of interest when considering the possibility of a master frame of co-intelligence for social movements.

The Pirate Parties now emerging in several Western countries may also be considered proponents of free culture issues. In that sense, one might say they have co-intelligence issues at the heart of their programme, even though they often follow fairly conventional forms of party behaviour, and do not eschew antagonistic and confrontational approaches.

In contrast, parties such as the Integral Politics aim to differ from conventional parties not only in content, but in form, in ways of being and acting in the setting of party politics.³⁸³ These, however, should probably not be counted as part of the free culture movement, but as part of another strand, which shall be sketched in the next section.

6.2. Cultural Creatives

In the US, Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson conducted surveys examining values and attitudes, defining three broad categories which they found each described the general kind of worldview people in that category held. One of the three categories, the "Cultural Creatives" gave the title to their book³⁸⁴ and became the focus of their attention. According to Ray and Anderson, the rise of the group of Cultural Creatives can be understood in a context of a coming together of what used to be separate movements: the personal growth movement and political activism.

383 Verein Integrale Politik (2008), p. 49ff

384 Ray/Anderson (2000).

Cultural Creatives in the sense of Ray and Anderson are people who care about the environment, are open to spirituality yet sceptical of organized religion, give little importance to material wealth and much more to relationships and inner values such as happiness and fulfilment.³⁸⁵ They do see themselves as part of a larger whole, and wish to contribute to the positive unfolding of that larger whole, bringing in a strong sense of commitment and propensity to volunteer or become involved. In their contribution to larger structures, however, they make a very strong link back to the personal, to their own experience, their own emotions.³⁸⁶ A central feature is the coming together of inner and outer change, of social movements and consciousness movements.³⁸⁷

The Cultural Creatives, Ray and Anderson state, do not know themselves as a movement yet. Individuals with this kind of worldview and lifestyle tend to feel they are the only ones, lost in a mainstream running along completely different lines; yet the Cultural Creatives already number millions in the US alone, say Ray and Anderson. As soon as they recognize each other and the size of the movement, the momentum gained might be considerable, they suggest.³⁸⁸

The name they suggested in order for the movement to gain awareness of its existence – Cultural Creatives – has been picked up by some.³⁸⁹ However, there seem to be many more who fit Ray's and Anderson's basic description, but who operate under different labels. The borders, as is perhaps typical for social movements, are blurred, and it may not be easy to say where the space of Cultural Creatives ends and the purely spiritual or personal development groups begin. Thich Nhat Hanh has already been cited as an example of a Buddhist author introducing a philosophical background that may feed directly into notions of co-intelligence, or into master frames based on such notions. A number of other spiritual and philosophical strands stressing interrelatedness and wholeness also seem to be increasingly prevalent in the West. In addition to Buddhism, there also

385 Ray/Anderson (2000), p. xiv.

386 Ray/Anderson (2000), p. 8ff.

387 Ray/Anderson (2000), p. 211.

388 Ray/Anderson (2000), p. 5.

389 A Google search on "Cultural Creatives" on 21 Feb 2012 yielded over one million results.

appears to be some interest³⁹⁰ in the West in discovering – real or imagined – ancient traditions, including variations of shamanism, animism or similar ways of relating to all parts of the world as alive (and perhaps as precious). Coming from a different background, more strongly rooted in the field of ecology, the Gaia hypothesis³⁹¹ may be seen as pointing in a similar direction. The same is true for Deep Ecology³⁹² and Ecopsychology,³⁹³ or even systems thinking. Apart from a large amount of literature that has been produced in this vein, groups have also formed that gather regularly, or attend some of the many seminars and retreats offered. Apart from organisations and institutes offering such courses and encounters, a relatively visible and institutionalised form emerging within this movement can be found in intentional communities.

Eco-villages and intentional communities such as Sieben Linden,³⁹⁴ Tamera,³⁹⁵ Damanhur,³⁹⁶ or Findhorn³⁹⁷ accommodate large numbers of visitors every year, visitors who often take their experience back to their home communities, or locally organize seminars similar to the ones they have attended. The number of eco-villages and intentional communities is huge, and good overviews are provided by respective guidebooks.³⁹⁸ Eco-villages are comparatively large and easy to trace; it is much more difficult to perceive, or estimate in terms of size and composition, the numerous local groups that forms and disperse, that sometimes consist of friendship networks, sometimes of websites alone.

Transition Town initiatives might also be counted in here, in the sense that they combine an ecological focus with alternative economic models and visions of community. Also, they intend to build practical, hands-on small scale examples of the models they envision, and include emotions and inner developments in their

390 e.g. a search on "Schamanismus" on amazon.de yielded 1.128 results [24 Feb 2012]

391 see e.g. Lovelock, James (1979)

392 see e.g. Macy/Young (1998)

393 see e.g. Roszak (1993)

394 www.7linden.de

395 www.tamera.org

396 www.damanhur.org

397 www.findhorn.org

398 e.g. Eurotopia (2005), Fellowship For Intentional Community (2010)

work – even if people like Rob Hopkins warn against an explicit inclusion of spiritual approaches.³⁹⁹ Some other parts of the larger movement may have a very strong spiritual component, and see themselves as starting modelling the society they desire both in terms of economic models and inner states, or ways of relating to each other. These can have a strong Hippie touch to them, such as the Rainbow Family Gatherings,⁴⁰⁰ or the Kulturwandel Werkstadt⁴⁰¹ in Vienna. Interestingly enough, the alternative economic models practised there may be the same as those occurring in some leftist anarchist settings, such as for-free shops and corners, or Volxküche, a meal cooked communally (often with ingredients rescued from the garbage rooms of supermarkets) and distributed for free (not to the needy, but to everyone). Also the forms of self-organisation, with a minimum of formal structures or hierarchies, preferred for instance in Rainbow Family Gatherings (a camping site for up to several thousand people, after all) are reminiscent of leftist anarchist settings. Nevertheless, the tone and atmosphere, the language and body language used, can differ substantially between a love-and-light Rainbow or Hippie group chanting Mantras, and an anarchist group discussing anti-capitalist action and theory.

Yet another community that might in some ways belong to the overall movement is the one that describes itself most commonly by the word "integral". This includes people who are deeply impressed by the writings of Ken Wilber, and discuss these in local Salons or similar meetings,⁴⁰² but it also encompasses a number of groups that understand the word "integral" more generally in the sense of "holistic", or making a link to the notion of "Cultural Creatives".⁴⁰³ These strands have also brought forth nascent formations of political parties, such as the Integral Politics in Switzerland.⁴⁰⁴

399 Hopkins in Pattern Number 1b "Critical Thinking" August 25, 2010
<http://transitionculture.org/2010/12/22/an-update-on-the-ingredients-of-transition-project/> [25 Feb 2011]

400 see e.g. <http://welcomehome.org/rainbow/>

401 see <http://www.kulturwandel.at>, and: www.facebook.com/groups/kulturwandel

402 see e.g. <http://integralesleben.org>, and: <http://integralesleben.org/nc/il-home/if-integrales-forum/integrale-salons/>

403 see e.g. <http://www.integrale-politik.org>

404 <http://www.integrale-politik.ch>

6.3. Hospice movement

One more type of movement shall be recalled here, one that may be helpful to keep in mind when discussing the possible use of master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence by social movements. Snow and Benson mentioned the existence of self-help movements, religious movements and identity movements, and note that their framings might differ in some significant aspects from those of other, more antagonistic movements.⁴⁰⁵ Likewise, Della Porta and Diani point to movements that may not need to define 'opponents', or see conflict and antagonism as central to their identity or situation. They give the example of coalitions of charities and voluntary organizations focusing on service delivery, self-help, or personal and community empowerment. The practice and promotion of alternative lifestyles is another example they cite. Movements that focus on personal change, in beliefs or daily practice, and those that focus on solidarity and providing assistance to aggrieved collectivities, they say, may be ones where conflict is difficult to identify.⁴⁰⁶

Since this type of movement may be particularly interesting and important to keep in mind when considering the potential of master frames beyond antagonism, or master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence in particular, the hospice movement shall be briefly introduced here as one possible example of such a movement.

While hospices have many historical precedents in Europe, the rise of the modern hospice movement is usually traced back to the 1960s and 1970s, sparked not least by the work of Cicely Saunders and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. By the mid-twentieth century, Western societies had seen a substantial rise in average life expectancy, an enormous growth in the prowess of medical professions, and perhaps a concomitant tendency to see death as a sort of embarrassing medical failure which really ought to have been avoided. Death had been further and further removed from society, compared to previous centuries where people often

405 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 615.

406 Della Porta/Diani (2006), p. 23.

died young, and, even when old, usually died at home. By the 1960s, most people in Western societies died in hospitals, hidden from the sight of the young and healthy, who were expected to get on with life, not wasting too much time on grieving, either. In this world increasingly deprived of rituals but equipped with professionalized management of the dead and of dying, the hospice movement set out to move death back into society, and dying people into the centre of terminal care. What started out as isolated experiment, and a movement strongly carried by volunteers, quickly reached a breadth and strength sufficient to induce attention by formal, including international, institutions.

The WHO issued a statement on palliative care in 1990 and revised it in 2002⁴⁰⁷, defining palliative care as an approach which, *inter alia*,

- provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms;
- affirms life and regards dying as a normal process;
- intends neither to hasten nor postpone death;
- integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care;
- offers a support system to help patients live as actively as possible until death;
- offers a support system to help the family cope during the patients illness and in their own bereavement;
- uses a team approach to address the needs of patients and their families, including bereavement counselling, if indicated;⁴⁰⁸

Johann-Christoph Student lists the following aspects as characteristic for hospice and palliative care work:

- the dying and their relatives are at the centre
- the team is interdisciplinary, including e.g. social workers and people giving spiritual support
- work by volunteers
- high degree of competence regarding the relief of pain and physical symptoms
- continuity of the services offered, i.e. people on call around the clock, and

407 Student/Napiwotzky, p. 10.

408 <http://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en/> [21 Feb 2012]

continuation after death⁴⁰⁹

The hospice movement first started with the establishment of separate units, such as St. Christopher's hospice founded by Cecily Saunders, but soon came to see that a large number of people preferred to die at home, and that therefore an ambulant hospice service would be needed.

One might say that the hospice movement started under less than favourable conditions, in a society holding taboos around death, and strong institutions, especially medical ones, already having established their position and discourse as central. However, within just a few decades, core movement aims have made it into mainstream institutions, mostly under the heading of palliative care. From palliative wards in hospitals to palliative care becoming a formal sub-specialty in medical training, from the inclusion in state health insurance schemes to the growth in numbers of facilities and ambulant services – the movement issues have made quite some advances in terms of institutionalisation. Whether this is accompanying, preceding, or foreclosing the aim of bringing death and an awareness of mortality back into society is a matter more difficult to judge.⁴¹⁰

7. Social Movement Tools

This thesis has raised the question whether there can be master frames that do not start out with assumptions of antagonism, and whether appreciation and co-intelligence might be key notions in such alternative master frames. It aims to explore this question not only on a conceptual level, but also by looking for possible examples of such master frames in existing social movements. For that purpose, a few selected social movements have been introduced, and for that same purpose, some tools and methods used by social movements shall be presented here: in order to see whether these might fit well with master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence.

409 Student/Napiwotzky, p. 9.

410 For an interesting discussion on this see IFF (2007).

What master frame a movement uses is likely to show in the language, tone and imagery used, but also in the tools and methods employed. For a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence, the methods and tools used can also be expected to embody, to resonate with or to be based upon the main strand of the master frame. It may therefore be interesting to take a closer look at some of the concrete tools and methods possibly related to such a master frame. For that purpose, the long lists suggested by Tom Atlee in the name of co-intelligence shall be mentioned, and a short introduction be given below to listening circles and dialogue in the sense of David Bohm. A longer section shall be devoted to a discussion of Open Space as a method for organizing conferences, and possible implications beyond that function.

7.1. Listening circles and Bohm's dialogue

One of the methods suggested by Tom Atlee to foster co-intelligence is the use of Listening Circles.⁴¹¹ While a number of variations of that method exist, a common form is the use of a "talking stick". The person holding that object is supposed to have the attention of the whole group, and to be able to speak at her or his own pace, until s/he feels ready to put the talking stick back into the middle, or pass it on to the next person in the circle. This method is meant to slow down the pace, give people more time to listen deeply, to speak from the heart, and to speak to the heart of the matter. It also tends to draw in people who otherwise rarely speak; it forestalls interruptions and discourages direct to-and-fro arguments. Instead, a variety of opinions and feelings tend to come up and sit next to each other in the middle of the circle, without any immediate comparison, judgement or sorting taking place.

That effect is very much what David Bohm aims for with the dialogue groups he

411 Atlee (2003), p. 65ff.

suggests, which are also referred to by Tom Atlee.⁴¹² Bohm writes that "people in any group will bring to it their assumptions, and as the group continues meeting, those assumptions will come up. Then what is called for is to *suspend* those assumptions, so that you neither carry them out nor suppress them. You don't believe them, nor do you disbelieve them; you don't judge them as good or bad."⁴¹³ Rather than expressing anger outwardly, for instance through verbal attack, that reaction is supposed to be suspended. Indeed, not only the outward action is supposed to be suspended, but the inner emotion, the inner judgement, too. That is not to be understood in the sense of a repression of feelings and value judgements, as a pretence that they are not there or should not be there. Instead, Bohm writes, one "may also think of it as suspended in front of you so that you can look at it – sort of reflected back as if you were in front of a mirror."⁴¹⁴ Bohm goes on to say, and to stress: "*We are not trying to change anything, but just being aware of it. And you can notice the similarity of the difficulties within a group to the conflicts and incoherent thoughts within an individual.*"⁴¹⁵ That comparison Bohm makes between the different voices in a group, and the different voices inside an individual trying to make up his or her mind is reminiscent of what Tom Atlee said about his experience at the peace march. "It was as if we had become a single sentient being, 'The March,' and our diverse thoughts and feelings had become the thoughts and feelings of this single but ambivalent March-mind wrestling with its problem."⁴¹⁶

The similarity between, or indeed interrelation between individual and collective thought is expanded on by David Bohm. While there is individual thought, Bohm says, a great deal of thought is in fact better understood as collective. Most individual thinking springs from the collective, writes Bohm: "Language is collective. Most of our basic assumptions come from our society, including all our assumptions about how society works, about what sort of person we are supposed to be, and about relationships, institutions, and so on. Therefore we need to pay attention to thought both individually and collectively."⁴¹⁷

412 Atlee (2003), p. 64.

413 Bohm (1996), p. 22.

414 Bohm (1996), p. 23.

415 Bohm (1996), p. 24.

416 Atlee (2003), p. iv.

417 Bohm (1996), p. 12.

On the process within a dialogue group, Bohm says that "there is both a collective mind and an individual mind, and like a stream, the flow moves between them. The opinions, therefore, don't matter so much. Eventually we may be somewhere between all these opinions, and we start to move beyond them in another direction – a tangential direction – into something new and creative."⁴¹⁸ In dialogue, Bohm says, "a different kind of consciousness is possible among us, a *participatory consciousness* – as indeed consciousness always is, but one that is frankly acknowledged to be participatory and can go that way freely. Everything can move between us. Each person is participating, is partaking of the whole meaning of the group and also taking part in it."⁴¹⁹ That would mean, Bohm goes on to say "that in this participation a common mind would arise, which nonetheless would not exclude the individual. The individual might hold a separate opinion, but that opinion would then be absorbed into the group, too."⁴²⁰ In fact, Bohm says, it "may turn out that the opinions are not really very important – they are all assumptions. And if we can see them all, we may then move more creatively in a different direction. We can just simply share the appreciation of the meanings; and out of this whole thing, truth emerges unannounced – not that we have chosen it."⁴²¹ Again, this is reminiscent of what Atlee says about his experience at the peace march, how the answer emerged spontaneously out of people's sharing.⁴²²

Bohm's notion of dialogue seems to be far-reaching. Yet, even Bohm's dialogue appears to have been adapted to business meetings,⁴²³ and a number of other methods suggest similar proceedings, without going quite so deeply into philosophy or questioning of identity. In his chapter on "Ways to have real dialogue",⁴²⁴ Tom Atlee not only refers to David Bohm and to Listening Circles, but also lists a number of further methods that could be used: Gestures of Conversational Presence, Strategic Questioning, Dynamic Facilitation, Open Space, World Café, Participatory Decision-Making, Principled Negotiation, and Transformational Mediation. Appreciative inquiry is also among the approaches

418 Bohm (1996), p. 32.

419 Bohm (1996), p. 30.

420 Bohm (1996), p. 31.

421 Bohm (1996), p. 30.

422 Atlee (2003), p. iii.

423 see also Senge (2006).

424 Atlee (2003), p. 63.

listed by Tom Atlee.⁴²⁵ Throughout his book, Atlee lists a large number of related approaches, for instance a list of over a hundred keywords in chapter 9.⁴²⁶ Atlee gives some room to approaches to deliberative democracy, such as stakeholder dialogues, alternative dispute resolution, Future Search, Holistic Management, Consensus Council, or the study circle movement plus the related Resource Center.⁴²⁷ He locates some organisations in that context, for instance Search for Common Ground, a mediation NGO,⁴²⁸ or the National Issues Forum, trying to present a nonpartisan collection of arguments on matters of public debate.⁴²⁹ Atlee's own favourite institutional recommendation is that of Citizen Deliberative Councils, to which he devotes several chapters.⁴³⁰ The Participatory Budgets in Brazil are mentioned, as well as a number of methods to develop a better understanding of the future:⁴³¹ Scenario work, Visioning Work, Imagineering, or Widening Circles exercises. Approaches to public conversation Atlee recommends include World Café, Conversation Café, Commons Café, From the Four Directions, and Listening projects.⁴³² The Public Conversations Project is one he lists under the heading "Conversation and Conflict", together with the Mediators Foundation, Process Worldwork, and Non-violent Communication.⁴³³

So Tom Atlee lists a large number of methods suitable for a co-intelligent approach, some of them already widely used in a large number of different contexts, and sometimes also points to organisations he would see as using co-intelligent approaches. I would like to introduce just one of these methods in a bit more detail below.

425 Atlee (2003), p. 85.

426 Atlee (2003), p. 100ff.

427 Atlee (2003), p. 200ff.

428 Atlee (2003), p. 202.

429 Atlee (2003), p. 198.

430 Atlee (2003), p. 130-180.

431 Atlee (2003), p. 212ff.

432 Atlee (2003), p. 219ff.

433 Atlee (2003), p. 222ff.

7.2. Open Space

Open Space is one of the methods recommended by Tom Atlee with a view to co-intelligence, and is also used and endorsed by the Transition Town movement.

The term Open Space Technology was coined by Harrison Owen in the 1980s, originally for a new way of setting up conferences, even though by now the approach has been adapted to a large variety of settings, including small working groups and permanent organizational structures, community peace projects and technological development within companies.⁴³⁴

Open Space has been primarily used as a new form of organizing conferences, meetings and symposiums. Since conferences, meetings and symposiums are recurrent and important forums for political activity, any substantial change in how actors go about them is already a change in the nature of their political work. But the philosophy of Open Space includes an important reframing with respect to the nature of the situation, the role and identity of various actors, and the notions of causality and effectiveness, that might well have analogies for the framing of the work of a social movement as such. These possible implications or analogies will be looked into after a brief introduction of the core elements of Open Space Technology as a way of organizing and facilitating conferences.⁴³⁵

434 see e.g. <http://www.openspaceworldscape.org/> for an archive of Open Space events, with topic, convener and facilitator. [21 Feb 2012]

435 One of the first and most intense encounters I have had with Open Space Technology was at the yearly 7Generations Symposiums in St.Pölten in Lower Austria organised by Markus Distelberger. As a participant in 2006 and a co-facilitator from 2007 to 2009 I experienced one real-world version of this general approach. Much of my understanding of Open Space as I describe it below stems from that experience.

7.2.1. Open Space as conference tool

For Open Space conferences, no detailed list of presentations to be given or the questions to be addressed in workshops is determined beforehand. Just the general theme or intention for the conference is provided, and the framework in which the conference can unfold.

This framework includes a general schedule. The day usually starts with a plenary session. In that plenary session, all participants are invited to announce workshops they would like to offer or organise. They write the title of the workshop on a card, read it out to the plenary, and explain in a few sentences what it is meant to be. Then they stick it on a pinboard, indicating the time and the room where the workshop is meant to take place. "Workshops" can take a number of different forms, depending on the nature of the conference. They can be lectures, or discussion groups, or even meditation or dance groups, or physical construction teams. The person announcing a workshop in the plenary can be the one who offers, for example, to give a lecture, but it could also be someone who wishes to listen to a lecture and is looking for someone who could give it.

After all proposed workshops have been briefly presented in the plenary in this way, the pinboard holds the preliminary conference programme for the day. There is a brief period for readjustments, then the programme for the day is ready, and visible on the pinboard. Participants can then decide where they wish to go.

As Harrison Owen points out, there is always a moment of suspense at the point where participants are asked to come forward and suggest workshops they would like to initiate. Will it work? Will people indeed get up to offer workshops, and will that result in a good conference programme? By now, Open Space settings have been tried by a large variety of people in a large variety of circumstances, and it appears to work at least in a considerably large number of cases. Harrison Owen seems to be persuaded that Open Space will work with all kinds of people in all

world regions and all types of institutions;⁴³⁶ while such sweeping statements leaning towards universalism might be greeted with caution, there seems little doubt that Open Space did indeed work in a large number of different settings where it had been tried.⁴³⁷ It has also been adopted and adapted by parts of the free culture movement, or by the netcommunity more generally, under the name of BarCamp.⁴³⁸

Moving the decision on the conference programme, on who is to speak, when and on what topic, out of the hands of a small organizing committee and into the hands of the whole group of conference participants is a first major step of creating conditions for co-intelligence.

One of the most consequential decisions for any conference is: how to frame the question? What aspects to pick and to focus on, what angle to take, which issues to single out for closer examination? What ideas and approaches to present and which ones to leave out? If answers given are primarily determined by what question is being asked, then asking the right questions is of utmost importance. The task of identifying the right question and the aspects to be addressed may be handled by preparatory committees for conferences, or sometimes even be delegated to individual people. Open Space Technique makes it possible to move this crucial but extremely difficult task much more into the sphere of collective intelligence. Simultaneously, it gives it much more time, and allows for constant adaptations, for new insights to emerge in the process and to be integrated in the ongoing conference.

So this is a first important avenue which Open Space conferences give to the participants to contribute to the definition of the topic, the precise questions to be asked, the methods to be chosen: they all have the possibility to offer talks and workshops. In addition they have the possibility to shape the process on an ongoing basis, not least through exercise of the so-called "law of two feet".

436 Owen (1997), p. 26.

437 see e.g. <http://www.openspaceworldscape.org/> for an archive of Open Space events, with topic, convener and facilitator. [21 Feb 2012]

438 <http://barcamp.org>

The law of two feet – do as you wish

Open Space Technology suggests four principles and one law.⁴³⁹ The law is the law of two feet: people letting their own two feet carry them to the place that seems most appropriate to them at that time. Participants who feel that they are no longer learning or contributing in a particular workshop are expected to get up and go to another one. Participants may move between workshops, thus bringing ideas from one discussion into the next, or following impulses that have arisen in them halfway through an exchange.

The assumption behind this is that by following their own inner impulses, people will allow the best structure for the overall conference to emerge; that this way issues can emerge and be noticed that really are of relevance at the moment; that this way the most pertinent ideas can be pursued. Participants freely go to whatever attracts them most. Thus it may happen that one or several workshops have no participants at all, while others have so many that they begin to split into sub-groups, or continue after the break. By making decisions as to where to place their own body, time and energy, all participants contribute to the decision of which workshop or aspect gains a lot of attention, and which one very little. This is an ongoing process of prioritization, organised in a highly decentralised manner. Thus in an Open Space conference it is not considered impolite to leave or to join in the middle of an ongoing workshop. To the contrary, it would be impolite, or rather, it would be a pity for both the individuals and for the group, if they stayed in a place where they are neither benefiting nor contributing. Following their impulses is supposed to lead participants to the place where they indeed can both benefit and contribute, which is expected to be pleasant for them individually and beneficial for the whole.

This approach may be seen as having another remarkable side-effect: it calls upon all participants to listen to their inner promptings all the time. This includes the intellectual level, but also the physical, the emotional or the social.

⁴³⁹ Owen (1997), p. 11.

Those who are here are the right ones

Open Space conferences work on the assumption that whoever turns up at a workshop are exactly the right people to attend that particular workshop at that particular time. In the words of Harrison Owen: "*Whoever comes is the right people*, which reminds us that it is not how many people show up, their title or position, but rather the fact that they share, in some way, our passion, which makes all the difference, and therefore qualifies them as the 'right' people."⁴⁴⁰

Workshop organisers thus need not worry about how to attract the largest number of people possible, or how to stop them coming so the group does not get too big. Every size has its own quality. Two or three people talking together may reach a level of intensity, depth and confidence that would never have developed in a larger group. Likewise, a large number of people focused on the same topic may also develop a strength that would not have been there otherwise. Every group size has its own positive qualities; there are many ways in which good outcomes can come about.

This implies another move away from determining desirables beforehand (and then working hard to make them happen) towards trusting the process, and towards collective intelligence. What the exact questions to ask are, and who are the people to ask them of whom, the conference organizers do not know; but fortunately, they do not need to know, either. It can be determined together by the whole group once the conference has started.

Whatever happens is what can happen here and now

The other Open Space principles are:⁴⁴¹ Whenever it starts is the right time. When it's over, it's over. And: Whatever happens is the only thing that can happen here and now.

440 Owen (1997), p. 11.

441 Owen (1997), p. 11.

Perhaps a workshop will not come up with any brilliant ideas. That does sometimes happen. Perhaps participants even feel that they did not get ahead on the issue at all, and nothing much developed. That, too, does happen. It may be that at that particular point in time, people present were not yet ready to deal with the question proposed. Perhaps other steps are needed first.

Open Space principles propose to accept what is. Participants may have tried, may have given whatever they could at that point, and then whatever the result is, it is the best that they could have done, and in that sense it is always all right, even if on other counts it may have been rated as disappointing. That there may be limits to our potency and ability is perhaps a message that is not welcome; it may nevertheless be the case. A point that may be interesting to come back to when considering implications for political work in general.

7.2.2. Open Space principles and social movements

So what is the relevance of Open Space Technology for social movements, or for a potential master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence?

Hierarchies, self-organization and co-intelligence

Conferences and symposiums are frequent tools of political work, and therefore any significant changes in the way they are set up already amount to a change in the way political work is approached. All conferences have a lot of non-verbal communication inherent in the way they are set up: in who is present and who isn't; in the size and furniture of the room; in the nature of the food available or unavailable during breaks. In that sense, conferences on democracy send and embody a lot of messages on environmental sustainability, simply by the way the conference setting deals with energy use and natural resources. Likewise, all conferences say something about democracy, hierarchy, and participation. These

messages may be less conscious, and often even go unnoticed on the level of mental or verbalised thought, but they may nevertheless be extremely powerful.

Open Space conferences can be thought to embody a number of messages and principles, among them a diminishing of hierarchies, participation, process orientation, self-organization and use of collective intelligence. The diminishing of hierarchies in Open Space, as compared to more traditional conference settings, can be seen to lie in the lack of formal distinction between "speakers" and "audience" in the invitation, and thus also less of an institutionalised assumption as to who has important contributions to make and who hasn't. All present have the possibility to declare themselves speakers at some times, audience at others. This approach not only reduces hierarchical distinctions among participants, but also between participants and organisers. The organisers no longer decide for everyone else what the important contributions are; that decision is moved back into the whole group.

While Open Space Technology has been used primarily as a way to organize conferences, for Harrison Owen it is much more than that. To him, it is also "a metaphor for life and a means to navigate our curious environment as we approach the millennium. In effect, Open Space has become a natural laboratory in which to perceive and explore the emerging potential of our common humanity in a transforming world."⁴⁴²

For instance, Owen examines the possibility of generalizing Open Space principles into organizational life as such, with a particular focus on the lessening of hierarchies and the increase in self-organization and potential for collective intelligence it may entail. While small change, according to Owen,⁴⁴³ often happens simply because the Open Space principles linger on in peoples' minds and behaviours even after the end of a conference, he also believes that these principles could become the overall, everyday mode of operation in organizations. He gives the example of a local administration delivering social services in Canada, which switched to operating in Open Space mode as a way of daily organization. According to Owen, this approach was very successful in terms of

442 Owen (1997), p. 1.

443 Owen (1997), p. 56.

the number of people serviced, but was nevertheless not tolerated by superior authorities, who interpreted it as chaos and loss of control in the organization and eventually ended the experiment.⁴⁴⁴ Owen nevertheless postulates that "the possibility of scaling up to a full-size, real-time 'Open Space' organization might exist. It is a jump, for sure, but why not?"⁴⁴⁵

Such a change in organizations, from ministries to businesses, would surely represent quite a significant change in society. Owen writes: "Assume for a moment that organizations in the next millennium will look rather like an Open Space event. Leadership pops up where it is needed and as it is needed. Work groups form, reform, and disappear. Diligent search for the leader comes up empty-handed, and management, as an exclusive command and control function exercised by a special class of people, is absent from view."⁴⁴⁶ There would be no more "fixed positions with predetermined authority and responsibility", writes Owen, which surely would represent quite a change from the mode in which Western societies are currently organised – from businesses to ministries.

The relationship between the Open Space situation and the everyday mode of operation will be crucial, in any case. As Owen writes with respect to training: "You can train people any way you want, but when they are placed back into a system that will not tolerate the very thing they are trained for, the net result can be only be nil or worse."⁴⁴⁷ They same can be assumed to be the case with Open Space principles: if there is no possibility of continuity or transfer into everyday operations, for instance because of power structures still in place there, any miracles supposed to emerge through Open Space can be expected to fall flat.

Control, plan, hard work

Harrison Owen works on the general assumption that a lot of what is desired is in existence already, and is mainly hampered from emerging by a strenuous attempt to make it happen, and to keep everything under control.

444 Owen (1997), p. 57f.

445 Owen (1997), p. 77.

446 Owen (1997), p. 103.

447 Owen (1997), p. 106.

"Distributed leadership, self-managed work teams, celebration of diversity, meaningful community" are all issues that elaborate training programmes have been built around – yet Owen finds they emerge without effort in Open Space settings. This leads him to conclude that all the qualities and abilities desired were already present anyway, "obscured only by our attempt to keep everything under control."⁴⁴⁸

Control, and letting go of control, are key issues for Owen: "If you are in control mode, think you are in control, or want to be in control, Open Space is not for you, and you are not for Open Space."⁴⁴⁹ This may relate to some rather deeply ingrained beliefs, Owen points out: "Somewhere along the line we came up with the absurd notion that if everybody did what they wanted to, nothing would get done. My experience, and the experience in Open Space, is precisely the opposite. The best way to ensure that nothing is done, or that something is done poorly, is to assign the task to somebody who does not care to do it."⁴⁵⁰

Moving away from the attempt to control also means moving away from a lot of hard and strenuous work, Owen points out. The traditional approach to organizing conferences implies a lot of work, in planning and implementation; according to that approach, one would assume that Open Space, which does not include all this planning work, should not work at all. "But since it does work," Owen concludes "perhaps it is we who do not need to toil quite so hard."⁴⁵¹ There may be a simpler way. Less planning and control are key, in Owen's approach. A substantial part of his role as Open Space facilitator, he writes, consists of letting go. After being fully present and highly concentrated at the opening of the conference, he steps back and lets participants get on with announcing workshops and carrying out the conference. Letting go, he finds, "is the hardest part. When the sessions become hot and fully engaged, there is a natural tendency to feel that we have both the skills and the duty to 'make things come out right'. Doing less or doing different is

448 Owen (1997), p. 106.

449 Owen (1997), p. 39.

450 Owen (1997), p. 33.

451 Owen (1997), p. 4.

somehow repugnant."⁴⁵²

What if social movements were to treat most of their events the way they would treat their own workshop in the setting of an Open Space conference? Rather than trying to maximize the number of people attending their event, or trying to ensure that the "most influential" people or the members of some pre-defined target group attend, they might be more open about who comes, assuming that there is a particular quality that can arise precisely because these are the people present: whoever comes are the right people.

Both the role of the facilitator (letting go, less control, more trust in the group process) and that of the participant (following inner promptings, taking responsibility for going where it feels right, and taking the initiatives that seem right) may have interesting implications for social movements and the frames they apply to themselves.

Would the law of two feet in this analogy imply that movement member allow themselves to move to those places, people, issues and ways of working that feel good to them? That they may trust their – perhaps only intuitive – promptings, and stop forcing themselves to perform strenuous, unpleasant tasks out of a sense of duty, or to "make sacrifices", as Benford said about motivational framing?⁴⁵³ Where the latter approach has been quite an important component of political work, the idea of giving it up may feel like heresy at first. What, no more duty? Or even worse: what, no more going through with strenuous, unpleasant tasks? But will we ever get anywhere if people start running away as soon as the slightest difficulty arises? Isn't it important to stick to your commitments, and to see them through, making all the sacrifices that may imply?

Perhaps it is. Perhaps it isn't, or at least not to the degree that has been assumed. The logic of Open Space would suggest that perhaps there is another way, a way that is at least as effective and a lot more pleasant. A key notion in Open Space is that if people find the place that is most pleasant for them, it means not only they are most productive individually, but also that the best possible structure for the

452 Owen (1997), p. 95.

453 Benford (2011), p. 70.

whole conference can emerge through these individual actions.

Just as traditional conference organizers have spent considerable time trying to decide what topics need to be presented at the conference and by whom, social movement groups may have made an enormous investment in figuring out what the political issues are, how they need to be handled, and what it takes for that to happen. Furthermore, there might have been an expectation that any serious advocacy group, for instance, needs to have certainty about the correctness of their analysis and resulting positions.

Perhaps, in a different master frame, this kind of expectations wanes, or changes. The conference conveners in the analogy may relax, and give up the struggle for the perfect agenda, and move back to make space for the group and its collective intelligence. Likewise, political activists and movement members may switch perspective. From feeling that they ought to know, and ought to make happen, to the role of an Open Space facilitator, or of an Open Space participant, who knows herself to be part of a larger group and entrusts decision-making to the collective intelligence of that larger group.

An interesting question for this analogy is, of course, who is seen as the group (of participants) whose collective intelligence is trusted. Is it only the other movement members? Like-minded people? Or is it humanity? Perhaps even life on earth? If it is humanity, that will of course also include what used to be "political opponents", and move towards the assumption that they, too, have something important to contribute. Again, such an approach, if pursued more thoroughly, may constitute an important change in a social movement's master frame.

8. A New Master Frame of Appreciation and Co-Intelligence ?

Bearing in mind the movements and methods introduced so far, and the notions of appreciation and co-intelligence as presented here through the writings of Tom Atlee and appreciative inquiry authors: what can be said about a possible master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence for social movements?

While a number of issues have already been touched upon in the preceding chapters, some pertinent questions shall be taken up here in more detail, including some potential problems and criticisms. In particular, Chantal Mouffe's⁴⁵⁴ critique of deliberative approaches to democracy shall be considered. Even though Mouffe does not base her critique directly on the authors and approaches discussed in this thesis, a number of her arguments may be relevant, at least in terms of analogy. Her arguments, especially those relating to agonism and antagonism, shall therefore be introduced here and the question raised what relevance they might have for the propositions made in this thesis.

8.1. Appreciation, vision and taboos

One of the core notions for a potential new master frame for social movements that has been referred to in this thesis is 'appreciation'. 'Vision' may be a term that is more commonly used in other contexts, or more readily filled with an intuitive understanding of what the essential suggestion is with respect to movements. Appreciation, as understood here, does indeed include an emphasis on vision, but also includes other aspects, such as viewing past and present with an appreciative eye. Indeed, the steps suggested by the appreciative inquiry approach include a positive starting point in the form of an unconditional positive question; discovery of

454 Mouffe (2005)

(aspects of) what is desired in past and present experience; and then the phase of dreaming and vision.

It may be interesting to return for a moment to the core framing tasks as envisaged by Snow and Benford,⁴⁵⁵ and look at potential changes that might come about by looking at them with the perspective of appreciative inquiry, or a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence.

8.1.1. Core framing tasks

It may be recalled that Benford and Snow identify three core framing tasks for social movements: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing.⁴⁵⁶ Diagnostic framing, in their terminology, involves the naming of the problem which is at the core of the social movement, and also identifying a locus of responsibility or blame. Prognostic framing involves the formulation of the desired alternative outcome, and of measures to be taken. Motivational framing, finally, includes putting forward a rationale for active participation in the movement.

Diagnostic

What might diagnostic framing look like within a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence? Rather than defining "the problem", the first step in a co-intelligent master frame might be to define "the core theme" of the movement. Appreciative inquiry would suggest the formulation of an unconditional positive question. That a movement could have a question at its centre, rather than a demand, and that a movement might understand itself as a process of inquiry rather than of advocacy is an interesting notion that shall be pursued further a bit later on. For the moment, let's keep the focus on the aspect of appreciation as an alternative to defining the starting point in the form of a problem.

455 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 199ff.

456 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 199ff.

Appreciation, in such a framing process, might well begin by constructing a positive framing of the past and the present situation, and by making that positive basis the starting point for a change process. In analogy to the process of "discovery" suggested by appreciative inquiry, social movements might identify positive experiences and strengths of the current system, discovering that which they deem desirable in past and present reality, even if only in small amounts or brief instances. The change process would then be understood as fanning these existing little flames, as nourishing those seedlings. It could also be described as building on past achievements, or a rediscovery of ancient treasures. The evolution of life on earth is a narrative that would lend itself to an analogy here: each more complex life-form is thought to emerge out of the existing ones, and all previous evolutionary steps are seen as positive, and preconditions for what is supposed to come next. A common view of technological progress is similar: in a process that is constructed as generally positive and desirable, each step incorporates and builds upon all the good inventions that have come before. In this kind of narrative, the new is not born as an antidote to and replacement of the old, but as "further development", as continuation-transformation of what has come before.

Such a general appreciative evolutionary perspective might sit comfortably with, for instance, parts of the free culture movement, where the development of the internet, and computing before that, are seen as the necessarily preconditions for new forms of social sharing and production arising now. The Transition movement does not construct any kind of linear positive development through recent history, but it does, as has been pointed out, engage in "discovery" of present and past practices that are – at least in seminal form – examples of what the movement deems desirable.

That a narrative focused on the combination of past achievements and vision for the future can be chosen as core and anchor point for change, and for a social movement, may be worth stressing in the face of assumption that problems "naturally" form the starting point of social movements and the frames they use. Framing the starting point and core issue of a movement in the form of a problem certainly is one option, but it is by no means the only one. A combination of past achievements and vision is also a possibility for defining the core issue of a movement.

The notion of vision of course leads on to the second core framing task of social movements, as identified by Snow and Benford: prognostic framing.

Prognostic

It may be recalled that in the terminology of Snow and Benford, prognostic framing is not about what will happen, but what should happen. While Snow and Benford may refer to this as "solutions to the problem",⁴⁵⁷ in a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence it may be called "vision". In appreciative inquiry the process of visioning may be seen to lie in a combination of the phases "dream" and "design": the dreaming being deliberately left open and wide, with the design phase making more concrete decisions on what should be – from among all the things that possibly could be, imagined in dreaming.

A number of movements in the past have already been named after the vision rather than the problem: for instance, "peace movement" (rather than "anti-war movement"), "civil rights movement" (rather than "anti-discrimination" or "anti-segregation movement"). From a constructionist point of view, the power of language has to be taken seriously, and it would appear an important question for each movement or movement group what label they choose for themselves and for their issue. Groups that currently label themselves as anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-hierarchical, or anti-capitalist might find themselves immersed in very interesting processes examining the terminology they would chose to name their vision, and, even when consensus is reached, find themselves undergoing subtle but profound changes due to the shift in framing that goes along with a shift in language.

Of the movements that have been mentioned in this thesis, the free culture movement clearly carries the vision in the name. The hospice movement is named after the positive practice; the general vision of "dying in dignity and character" and of nurturing a mindful awareness of mortality in society does not (yet?) appear to have one short catchword to be described by. That may also be the case for the movement or movements that Ray and Anderson have suggested to name Cultural

457 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 201.

Creatives – a name that refers to the people and the change process, more to the vision than to a problem, but then again is perhaps not quite the name of the vision. The Transition movement, too, is named after the change process; while the change process is deemed desirable, transition is not the term for the envisioned end result of that process, of a localised, permacultural economy, of vibrant communities, of a resilient society.

In framing its core issue, the Transition movement, while also mentioning a problem (peak oil) as a starting point, has a very strong emphasis on vision. The vision both of a new society and of a happy, vibrant movement that makes it enjoyable to be part of the change process dominate the concepts and the anecdotes in the Transition Handbook. Vision is meant to be named and described, but even more importantly, made visible and concrete in the form of small, hands-on examples. It is also meant to be felt: elation, enthusiasm, and similar emotions are described as being of paramount importance to the movement.

This links directly into the third core framing task Snow and Benford mention: motivational framing.

Motivational

According to Snow and Benford, motivational framing constitutes "a call to arms or rationale for engaging in ameliorative or corrective action."⁴⁵⁸ It is also thought to "stimulate people to make sacrifices for the cause, assert agency, and act collectively."⁴⁵⁹

The assumption that participation in a social movement means making sacrifices may be rather rare in a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence. Instead, active participation in a group of like-minded people, and in the shaping of a future society, may be framed as one of the most fulfilling experiences people can have, and something they are naturally inclined towards. Social movements thus come to

458 Snow/Benford (1988), p. 199.

459 Benford (2011), p. 70.

be presented primarily as a locus where the rewarding human experience of creating something meaningful together can be sought and found.

This approach is made explicit on a number of occasions throughout the Transition Handbook, for instance, when Hopkins talks about the need to "create this sense of anticipation, elation and a collective call to adventure on a wider scale".⁴⁶⁰ The emotional basis for this kind of change process is given considerable importance, too. Inner states and qualities such as attraction, curiosity, enthusiasm, hope, feelings of community and belonging, feelings of empowerment and capability, joy, health, happiness, aliveness, playfulness, or sense of urgent purpose are regarded as key factors, both in the Transition Handbook and in texts on appreciative inquiry.

The nature of these emotions and inner states may differ significantly from those in a frame that is problem-focused: if motivation is framed primarily with a view to fighting injustice, alleviating suffering, or opposing dangers, then outrage, pain and fear may be much more likely to play a prominent role, too. Indeed, Rob Hopkins devotes a few pages of the Handbook to the description of what he terms "post-petroleum stress disorder": reactions that may be expected in response to intense presentations of the problem of peak oil: clammy palms, bewilderment, fear, nihilism, survivalism, and denial, among others, says Rob Hopkins.⁴⁶¹ Which in turn may have led him to choosing the sub-title for that section of the Handbook: "Why having a positive vision is crucial".⁴⁶²

8.1.2. Taboos and balance

However, what happens with feelings of bewilderment and fear, or anger and outrage, if they do arise? Are they supposed to just go away, in order not to interfere with the enthusiasm and elation that would be so pleasant to experience, or that perhaps everyone else in the group seems to be experiencing?

460 Hopkins (2008), p. 15.

461 Hopkins (2008), p. 80.

462 Hopkins (2008), p. 79.

It may be worth reiterating Gervase Bushe's warning against an indiscriminant application of appreciative inquiry, calling for careful consideration of what may be the right time and place to use an approach so strongly focused on strengths and visions. "From a purely practical standpoint I believe researchers and practitioners will find that systems full of deeply held and unexpressed resentments will not tolerate an appreciative inquiry until there has been some expression and forgiving of those resentments. From a theoretical perspective there is the question of what happens to negative images and affect if they are 'repressed' from collective discussion by a zealous focus on the 'positive'. Experience from psychoanalysis, sociology and medicine suggest repression usually results in some nasty side effects."⁴⁶³

There certainly is a danger that a focus on "the positive" does not, in fact, transform or authentically replace the fear or anger that might have been there, but simply repress them, making their expression a taboo, and perhaps even the existence of that taboo unmentionable. Group pressure, proclaimed normality, the will to belong, and of course the will to be happy, elated and enthusiastic, may lead individuals to pretend (perhaps even to themselves) that they fully are in the flow of "the positive".

It may thus be helpful to balance out different approaches. Appreciative inquiry itself seems to have very little to offer in terms of dealing directly with despair, anger, or fear. The literature focuses on giving the general rationale, practical guidelines, and examples for the possibility of "approaching problems from the other side", of using appreciation and vision as the basis for change. This contribution may be much needed in order to achieve a balanced approach in settings beset with an overload of problem focus, fighting and blame. However, appreciation, vision focus and a turn to joy and enthusiasm may, themselves, need to be complemented in order to achieve a balance and to keep the space open enough for truthful expression of what is of relevance in a given situation.

463 Bushe (2000), p. 100.

A look at the Transition movement reveals much more of that mixture of approaches than a pure one hundred percent representation of an appreciative and vision-focused frame. Vision clearly does play a predominant role, and that probably is one of the major innovations the Transition movement brings into the field of environmental groups which may often have focused on fighting problems, dangers and catastrophes. However, the Transition Handbook still has some of that more traditional approach, too, especially by suggesting that a local group might start their work in public by screening unsettling films about the dangers of depleting oil in an oil-dependent society. The Handbook also includes a whole chapter on dealing with difficult emotions, and of going through the challenges of change processes on a personal level, by drawing analogies from drug addiction and from the ways people find their way out of addiction. So it could be said that the Transition Handbook, with all its overall emphasis on vision and excitement, also gives room to dealing with fear, denial, or anger.

In addition, people in the Transition movement also bring in resources not mentioned in the Handbook. An example would be Joanna Macy's approach to Deep Ecology,⁴⁶⁴ well known not least because of the many practical group exercises she suggests, aimed at bringing emotional, mental, spiritual and practical aspects together, reconnecting humans to the larger living world they are a part of, and inspiring action that is helpful for that whole living being. A large portion of Joanna Macy's exercises deals with despair work, assuming that despair is a natural reaction as soon as awareness of the state of the earth is no longer blocked out from individual consciousness, and that it is necessary for people to go through this experience of despair in order to emerge at the other side strengthened, passionate and ready for action.⁴⁶⁵

The Transition Initiatives Primer, a document complied by Ben Brangwyn and Rob Hopkins, includes a number of passages that recall much of Joanna Macy's affinity to despair, and much less of the motto of "making our response to peak oil look more like a party than a protest march". For instance, the primer states that "each of us needs to travel closer to a heartfelt understanding that if we want to stay living on Earth, we'll have to weave ourselves back into the fabric of the planet,

464 Macy/Brown (1998)

465 see e.g. Macy/Brown (1998), chapter 2.

and comprehend that the 'humans are separate from the earth' duality underpinning our industrialised societies is false, misleading and a one-way ticket to a hell on earth far hotter than we can handle. This journey involves fully feeling the unbearable weight of accountability for what's happening, the complicity we all have in supporting this unsustainable paradigm. For some, it involves feeling the pain of the planet, and that can be overwhelming."⁴⁶⁶

This section, which is indeed followed by a number of quotes by Joanna Macy, exudes a sense of danger and duty much more than one of elation, or of "making our response to peak oil look more like a party than a protest march", as Rob Hopkins suggested on his website.⁴⁶⁷ Perhaps the despair work that Macy's approach brings in can, in some contexts within the movement, help to restore a healthy balance. There seems to be some disagreement within the movement as to what place different approaches should be given, especially when they include what could be understood to be a spiritual dimension. Rob Hopkins, for example, has argued passionately on that point, saying that "I see a significant potential danger that the idea that an overtly spiritual aspect needs to be explicitly integral to the Transition Training becomes accepted. This, for me, would be wildly self-defeating, deeply excluding for many people, and utterly pointless."⁴⁶⁸

Apart from the question of spirituality, the relative weight that should be given to despair and elation, to problems and visions, is a matter of debate within the movement. Gill Seyfang argues that the recommendation of starting work in a local initiative by showing films that have a high doom rating and a low solutions rating is unproductive and out of tune with the Handbook's general line.⁴⁶⁹ She suggests that starting with small practical examples of another mode of living, such as communal gardens, may be a much more reasonable and fruitful approach. In an interesting argument, she questions some strategies that are very common with political groups and social movements, namely the idea that consciousness raising comes first, and action second. Seyfang suggests that starting with the action is

466 Brangwyn/Hopkins (2008), p. 31.

467 <http://transitionculture.org> [9 June 2011]

468 Pattern Number 1b "Critical Thinking" August 25, 2010

<http://transitionculture.org/2010/12/22/an-update-on-the-ingredients-of-transition-project/> [25 Feb 2011]

469 Seyfang/ Haxeltine (2009), p.11.

another option, perhaps even a more productive one. People may agree on action, such as a communal garden, for a wide variety of reasons, and with all kinds of consciousness: some may enjoy having their hands in the earth, some might like meeting other people, some may wish to save the world from climate change by producing food locally, some may hope to get vegetables cheaply. Whatever their reasons, if people get to join in the communal garden, the practice is established.

Starting with the new practice is of course something that also features prominently within the free culture movement. Coding free software, or writing articles for Wikipedia, is a practice that people may engage in for a large number of reasons, from the fun of technical tinkering and showing off knowledge to political visions of a new economy.

However, diverse as the original motivations may be, once people have engaged in a new practice, a general rationale may be more quickly accepted by hindsight. People may be quite open to arguments that spell out why something that they are already doing anyway is a good thing. And even if the states of consciousness and the values held by people stay as diverse as they were at the beginning: what does it matter if the desired practice is established, and working? Approaching things this way around might also be a good way to allow for pluralism within a community, in a form that is not anticipated by approaches that start with "consciousness-raising", assuming that people ought to share rather similar states of consciousness if joint action (or living together in the same society?) is to be possible.

8.2. Antagonism, agonism; co-operation, complementarity, co-intelligence

Whether it would be possible to have social movement master frames that are not centred on assumptions of antagonism was one of the core questions of this thesis. However, one might argue that the general thrust of that question is inappropriate, that trying to find alternatives to or do away with antagonism in social movements – or politics generally – is an unhelpful endeavour. Chantal Mouffe could be seen as making an argument very much along those lines. In 'On The Political', she fervently defends a view that defines the political as antagonistic, and decries as misplaced, even dangerous, attempts to arrive at political arrangements based on deliberation or consensus models.⁴⁷⁰

Mouffe writes her essay in response to authors like Ulrich Beck,⁴⁷¹ Anthony Giddens⁴⁷² and Jürgen Habermas.⁴⁷³ Appreciative inquiry, Tom Atlee or the Transition Town movement are no reference points for her argument. Therefore, it may be that a number of ideas she develops in that text are not directly applicable to what has been discussed in this thesis. Nevertheless, there appear to be a number of commonalities, or at least possible analogies, that might make it worthwhile to relate some of her criticisms to what has been suggested in this thesis.

By way of definition, Mouffe writes that "by 'the political' I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by 'politics' I mean the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political."⁴⁷⁴

470 Mouffe (2005), p. 2.

471 Mouffe (2005), p. 35ff.

472 Mouffe (2005), p. 35ff.

473 Mouffe (2005), p. 83ff.

474 Mouffe (2005), p. 9.

From that basis, she expresses her opposition to attempts to move beyond antagonism in the political sphere: "Notions such as 'partisan-free democracy', 'good governance', 'global civil society', 'cosmopolitan democracy', 'absolute democracy' – to quote only a few of the currently fashionable notions – all partake of a common anti-political vision which refuses to acknowledge the antagonistic dimension constitutive of 'the political'. Their aim is the establishment of a world 'beyond left and right', 'beyond hegemony', 'beyond sovereignty' and 'beyond antagonism'. Such a longing reveals a complete lack of understanding of what is at stake in democratic politics and of the dynamics of constitution of political identities and, as we will see, it contributes to exacerbating the antagonistic potential existing in society."⁴⁷⁵

There are several angles from which Mouffe arrives at her perspectives, and several possible implications, both for the context Mouffe writes in and for the contexts referred to in this thesis. A few of these shall be examined more closely individually below.

Western triumphalism and dialogue

One important step may be to differentiate between "free-world triumphalism" and the call for dialogue and deliberation. Chantal Mouffe primarily refers to authors such as John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. In the ideas put forward by these authors, she suspects tendencies to proclaim some version of the triumph of the Western model of liberal democracy and market economy, a message she roughly paraphrases in the following terms: "The 'free world' has triumphed over communism and, with the weakening of collective identities, a world 'without enemies' is now possible. Partisan conflicts are a thing of the past and consensus can now be obtained through dialogue. Thanks to globalization and the universalization of liberal democracy, we can expect a cosmopolitan future bringing peace, prosperity and the implementation of human rights worldwide."⁴⁷⁶

475 Mouffe (2005), p. 2.

476 Mouffe (2005), p. 1.

While a number of authors, including those she mostly refers to, may indeed be making such an argument, it nevertheless seems possible to differentiate between these two aspects: the call for dialogue, and the belief that the Western model is best and should or will spread worldwide.

It seems quite possible to call for processes of deliberation and deep dialogue without believe that "West is best", or, indeed, without having any one single model in mind that everyone needs to agree to. Indeed, many of the social movements referred to in this thesis do not see themselves as proclaiming the victory of the current Western model of society. Cultural Creatives, as described by Ray and Anderson, experience themselves as a minority within a mainstream consumerist culture they largely disagree with. Transition Town sees the current mode of operation, especially in the economic field, as totally unsustainable and in urgent need of profound change. The free culture movement questions not only copyright, but – at least in parts – envisions and embodies a mode of production based on free cooperation between peers, on voluntary contributions and free sharing of products – not quite the conventional economic model of current Western societies. Co-intelligent methods such as Open Space, but also Bohm's notion of dialogue, explicitly call for a strong element of diversity within the group of participants in order for the process to work. So, perhaps calls for deliberation or dialogue can be found in different strands, fuelled from a variety of sources, and not necessarily linked to Western triumphalism.

A problem arises, however, if one assumes that the only possibility to avoid antagonism is agreement. If all (major) differences are automatically hostile differences, then indeed the elimination of these differences is the only way out of hostility.

Antagonism – agonism

Mouffe differentiates between antagonism and agonism, picking up precisely this issue of hostility. If antagonism is struggle between enemies, she writes, then agonism may be the term for struggle between adversaries.⁴⁷⁷ The adversary is understood as an opponent, but as a legitimate opponent. Chantal Mouffe argues that deliberative approaches in politics eliminate options for meeting others as adversaries, and that this approach, instead of resulting in peace and harmony, makes the existing differences come out elsewhere in a much more violent form: as a confrontation between enemies, between opponents who do not recognize each other's right to differ. Mouffe asserts that "the consensual approach, instead of creating the conditions for a reconciled society, leads to the emergence of antagonisms that an agonistic perspective, by providing those conflicts with a legitimate form of expression, would have managed to avoid."⁴⁷⁸

She suggests that "from the perspective of 'agonistic pluralism' the aim of democratic politics is to transform *antagonism* into *agonism*. This requires providing channels through which collective passions will be given ways to express themselves over issues, which, while allowing enough possibility for identification, will not construct the opponent as an enemy but as an adversary."⁴⁷⁹

Allowing space for the opponent to be a legitimate adversary becomes difficult if, for instance, one political perspective is not presented as a political perspective at all, but rather either as fact, as 'the way things are', or as a moral issue, as 'obviously good'. If, Mouffe writes, "instead of being formulated as a political confrontation between 'adversaries', the we/they confrontation is visualized as a moral one between good and evil, the opponent can be perceived only as an enemy to be destroyed and this is not conducive to agonistic treatment."⁴⁸⁰

477 Mouffe (2000), p. 16.

478 Mouffe (2005), p. 4.

479 Mouffe (2000), p. 16.

480 Mouffe (2005), p. 5.

A turn of that sort can happen if the focus is on "rational" solutions, since what is "rational" can be implied to be objectively right, rather than just representing one view or one experience among many. With authors such as Habermas or Beck, rationality plays an important role.⁴⁸¹ Also, Mouffe states that theorists of reflexive modernization, such as Beck, claim that they are merely drawing the logical consequences from a change in society that is actually happening, and are thus giving "an appearance of scientificity and incontestability to their post-political vision" that impedes expression of disagreements with their views.⁴⁸²

Having predicted that the attempt to move beyond adversarial relations will lead to eruptions of enemy relations outside the proclaimed sphere of consensus, Mouffe identifies very much this kind of occurrence within the texts of Beck and Giddens. It is telling, she writes, that "while announcing the end of the adversarial model, Beck and Giddens cannot escape defining an adversary or enemy, who is the 'fundamentalist' opposing the process of reflexive modernization."⁴⁸³ These "fundamentalists", Mouffe continues, are not allowed to "take part in the dialogic process, whose borders are in fact constituted by their very exclusion. What is this, if not a typical friend/enemy discrimination, but one which, as I have indicated, is not recognized as such because it is presented as a sociological fact and not as a political, partisan gesture?"⁴⁸⁴

While presenting political views as scientific facts is one way of impeding open political argument, moving the question to the realm of morality can be another, says Mouffe: "What is happening is that nowadays the political is played out in the *moral register*. In other words, it still consists in a we/they discrimination, but the we/they, instead of being defined with political categories, is now established in moral terms. In place of a struggle between 'right and left' we are faced with a struggle between 'right and wrong'. "⁴⁸⁵ Of course such a move eliminates the legitimization of opposing positions, and, as Mouffe argues, leads the existing differences to show up in the form of much more violent conflicts, as silenced voices are trying with a vengeance to make themselves heard, and are treated as

481 see e.g. Beck (1994), p. 33.

482 Mouffe (2005), p. 54.

483 Mouffe (2005), p. 55.

484 Mouffe (2005), p. 55.

485 Mouffe (2005), p. 5.

enemies when they do. Mouffe also goes through recent political developments in a number of Western countries and attributes phenomena such as the rise of right-wing parties in Austria or terrorism directed against the United States to the prevalence of consensual politics or the lack of true alternatives.⁴⁸⁶

Mouffe calls for the (re-)establishment of clearly defined political alternatives; alternatives, that is, that are explicitly political, and that are clearly different from each other, thus allowing a meaningful choice. She refers to this as a revitalization of the left/right divide: "By suggesting that the solution lies in fostering the agonistic character of politics through the revitalization of left/right divide, I do not call for a mere return to their traditional content, as if the meaning of those terms had been fixed once and for all. What is at stake in the left/right opposition is not a particular content (...) but the recognition of social division and the legitimization of conflict."⁴⁸⁷

A central point, for Mouffe, therefore is the existence, in any society, of "a plurality of interests and demands which, although they conflict and can never be finally reconciled, should nevertheless be considered as legitimate. The very content of left and right will vary, but the dividing line should remain because its disappearance would indicate that social division is denied and that an ensemble of voices has been silenced."⁴⁸⁸ For Mouffe, this means that democratic politics is by nature necessarily adversarial. She also concludes that, as "Niklas Luhman has stressed, modern democracy calls for a 'splitting of the summit', a clear divide between the government and the opposition", since this gives citizens the possibility to decide between different ways of organizing society.⁴⁸⁹

For, after all, what is the meaning of words such as 'dialogue' or 'deliberation', asks Mouffe, "if no real choice is at hand and if the participants in the discussion are not able to decide between clearly differentiated alternatives?"⁴⁹⁰ One might say, of course, that deliberation ought to be the process out of which clearly differentiated alternatives arise. For the definition of the question, and the carving out of options, is by no means a straightforward process. Before any yes/no, or left/right decision

486 Mouffe (2005), p. 66ff, p. 81ff.

487 Mouffe (2005), p. 119.

488 Mouffe (2005), p. 120.

489 Mouffe (2005), p. 120.

490 Mouffe (2005), p. 3.

can ever be made, the options have to be defined, and in that process, hearing a large number of divergent voices without immediate sorting or judgement may be very valuable. It might be possible, therefore, to imagine a process more like Bohm's dialogue as preceding the stage of clear choice that Mouffe seems to be calling for. Or, of course, it may be that the open process of dialogue already leads to the emergence of an option that the people involved to in fact agree on, as Tom Atlee recounted in his experience with the peace march.⁴⁹¹

Nevertheless, Chantal Mouffe certainly raises a very valid and important point in drawing attention to certain dynamics that may result from an undue focus on harmony or consensus. An emphasis on consensus can indeed lead to group dynamics that, in effect, stifle free expression. The unexpressed views and sentiments may, in turn, come out elsewhere, and in a much more violent form, not least because of all the steam added during the experience of being stifled and having to find a way to overcome that barrier. This is no doubt an important consideration for any approaches that might fall under a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence.

Whether a particular method or conceptual approach does indeed increase the possibility of people to be heard, or perhaps inadvertently produce the opposite effect, may depend both on the method and on the context into which it is introduced. While a move towards more careful listening may be liberating in a context where everyone had simply been shouting their own messages, the same move may be stifling in a context where everyone had been geared towards listening anyway, and no one felt free to express anything, for fear of appearing a bad listener. Here, as in many other areas, the question of balance may be crucial. The general question of this thesis was born out of a context in which I perceived social movements and political groups in my environment to be dominated by a mode of critique, opposition and struggle. Antagonism seemed to the general condition. In that situation, it seemed unusual – but potentially highly productive – to ask whether perhaps there are avenues for political work and social movement activities that are not antagonistic.

491 Atlee (2003), p. iv.

Chantal Mouffe seems to have a very different experience as her starting point. She seems to see herself in a context where calls for consensus and deliberation are ubiquitous, and a call for antagonism or open conflict is an obscure minority position. Her argument therefore could be understood as an attempt to restore balance in an environment that is in need of more room for open conflict. Mouffe writes of "the rationalist approach dominant in democratic theory"⁴⁹², and says that a view "of human sociability, as being essentially moved by empathy and reciprocity, has generally provided the basis of modern democratic political thinking."⁴⁹³ That may sound surprising to those who thought that neo-liberalism has, for the last few decades, been an almost all-pervasive current, invading practically all areas of life and politics with its vision of the homo economicus, who is certainly not a sociable being moved by empathy. Mouffe even seems to feel that current developments in Western governments and societies can be taken to show the effects of deliberative democratic theory, rather than, say, of neo-liberal ideologies.⁴⁹⁴

It will not be possible here to further pursue the question of whether Western governments can actually be seen as implementing the recommendations Habermas or Beck would make for political processes; or whether shortcomings in one are the result of shortcomings in the other. Instead, I would like to return to the question of scholarship, and what strands and perspectives are perceived to be hegemonic by different people.

While Mouffe apparently has experienced deliberative strands as dominant, at least within Western academic scholarship on democracy, there probably still are substantial parts of scholarship that do focus on antagonism, or assume that antagonism is a given. In particular, views on social movements and social activism often seem to fall into that category. It may be recalled that Mario Diani defines social movements as necessarily being "involved in conflictual relations with clearly defined opponents",⁴⁹⁵ and elaborates on the need for blame, and for blame being directed at an opponent. Snow and Benford assume that attribution of

492 Mouffe (2005), p. 9.

493 Mouffe (2005), p. 2-3.

494 for instance, Mouffe attributes the rise of right-wing movements in Europe to "the belief in the end of an adversarial form of politics", p. 119.

495 Della Porta/ Diani (2006), p. 20.

blame is an integral part of diagnostic framing, and use terms such as "plan of attack"⁴⁹⁶ or "call to arms"⁴⁹⁷ to describe prognostic and motivational framing.

If that is the dominant perception, then perspectives suggesting deliberation or a search for co-intelligent solutions may be bringing in quite a new element; an element that, in itself, may be far from flawless, but that, in this context, opens up helpful avenues, avenues whose existence might not have been perceived otherwise.

It may be worth recalling here how the issue of antagonism is referred to by some of the authors mentioned in this thesis. Tom Atlee, with his focus on co-intelligence, elaborates on the usefulness of a search for complementarity rather than confrontation. For instance, Atlee writes that "we avoid nailing down blame or isolating single linear causes for any condition or event. To the best of our ability, we try to understand and address the many causes and fields of influence at work co-creating any situation."⁴⁹⁸ "We seek out all actual and potential allies instead of focusing on opponents",⁴⁹⁹ Atlee says, and, referring to an underlying understanding of interconnectedness, states that "we do not focus on trying to control or blame individual people, situations, and problems. Instead, we take a relational and systemic perspective to help heal the whole. We may follow the example of family systems therapists who attend to a family's patterns of interaction, not allowing a scapegoat to take the blame for an entire family's dysfunction."⁵⁰⁰ Again, in this Atlee may be seen as being close to not only systems thinking and family therapy, but also to authors like Thich Nhat Hanh, who suggested to see interbeing as the basic condition of reality, and to focus blame not on a criminal, but to see everybody as contributing to the problem, and hence potentially to a solution.⁵⁰¹

496 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 616.

497 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 617.

498 Atlee (2003), p. 32.

499 Atlee (2003), p. 32.

500 Atlee (2003), p. 32.

501 Thich Nhat Hanh (1987), p. 62.

Atlee writes: "Right now, there is much wisdom on earth, scattered here and there. But our collective actions as societies are clearly not wise. It is far too easy to imagine that the problem is 'out there,' with all of the various powerholders and interests groups that keep the wise solutions that already exist from being implemented."⁵⁰² What is needed instead, Atlee argues, are new forms of cooperation and coalitions that allow the wisdom and the solutions that already exist to find their way to practical implementation.

Similar tendencies could be seen in Transition Town texts, as has already been pointed out in the chapter introducing that movement. It may be worth reiterating that one main lesson Rob Hopkins draws from his experience is to "Avoid 'Them and Us' ".⁵⁰³ "Transition, an approach designed to build resilience at the community level, needs to actively include the needs of everyone in that community in order to truly create resilience. Also, inclusion is simply the right, fair and just thing to do"⁵⁰⁴, Hopkins says, and: "The more I have been involved in this work and met people working in positions of authority, be they planners, engineers, councillors and even politicians, I have seen that they are ordinary people, often with families, just as bewildered by the turn of events as everybody else. For us to scream 'why aren't they doing anything?' does nothing to help."⁵⁰⁵ Transition, Hopkins says, could "have resorted to attacking the business community for its ungreen ways, but instead it sought to involve them."⁵⁰⁶ Inclusion has thus been named one of the six principles underpinning the Transition model.⁵⁰⁷ Similar ideas are also sometimes also suggested for the internal dynamics of Transition groups. On the website of Transition California "Both...and rather than either/or – Let's do it your way and my way" is given as their example of an application of the permaculture principle "Use and value diversity".⁵⁰⁸

502 Atlee (2003), p. xi.

503 Hopkins (2008), p. 125.

504 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14 June 2011]

505 Hopkins (2008), p. 125.

506 Hopkins (2008), p. 125.

507 Hopkins (2008), p. 141.

508 <http://www.transitiontownsca.org/page/permaculture-principles-and> [2 Aug 2011]

With all that emphasis on complementarity and inclusion, is there still room not only for diversity, but also for irreconcilable positions, or for confrontation of any sort?

Tom Atlee writes: "Many of us are already familiar with the limits of adversarial activism. Being against something does not build that which is needed, nor does it tap into the resources hidden in people and institutions we may be fighting. Neither does it illuminate how our own approaches may be reinforcing the very problem we may be trying to change. Although critical analysis of what is wrong can hone our awareness, concentrating on adversarial struggle can contract our thinking and limit the possibilities we see."⁵⁰⁹

However, although adversarial activism has its limits, Atlee also believes that "adversarial activism has an important role to play in making the world a better place."⁵¹⁰ Even within a co-intelligent master frame "the paradox is that sometimes principled opposition is still required in order to advocate for non-adversarial approaches to conflict",⁵¹¹ says Atlee. He continues: "Of course, some kinds of nonviolent direct action can be necessary in existing political systems in order to bring distracted citizens and resistant power-holders into dialogue on important issues."⁵¹² May action also be necessary in order to make movement members ready to enter into dialogue? Tom Atlee says that "if direct action is not held within the larger context of a call for creative dialogue, it can become simply another way in which we are attempting to impose our views, however noble, on others."⁵¹³

The question of bringing important parties into the deliberation process, and of establishing the conditions necessary for all voices to have equal possibilities of being heard, of course brings in questions of power, and there seems to be no panacea solution for this issue in sight. A shift in perspective from power-over to power-with,⁵¹⁴ or from competition to complementarity, may help in some

509 Atlee (2003), p. 46.

510 Atlee (2003), p. 46.

511 Atlee (2003), p. 43-44.

512 Atlee (2003), p. 46f.

513 Atlee (2003), p. 46f.

514 see for instance Tom Atlee (2003), p. 110.

instances, but not in others. Sometimes, such a shift may lead actors to engage in co-intelligent processes, rather than exercising the power over others they may currently be holding. Other times, collaborative processes may simply fail. Likewise, sometimes antagonistic struggle will succeed in changing the power balance, and in bringing about concrete results. Other times, it may simply fail.

While it is impossible here to engage in a detailed analysis of what situations and circumstances might lend themselves to what kind of approach, in what form and to what extent, the point that shall be retained here is that an approach of appreciation and co-intelligence should not be expected to be a panacea. If it can open up some productive avenues, that will already be a valuable contribution. The practical applications of this approach will always have to be context-specific, and the need to be complemented may be as great with this approach as it is with any other.

8.3. Rationality and passion

One of the terms Chantal Mouffe brings up in her critique of deliberative approaches is the notion of rationality. Rationality can, of course, be understood in a number of different ways. It may be seen as the opposite of emotion and passion; it could imply that what is "rational" is best, in some objective sense; it could be used to describe a relation between means and ends, as in efficiency; or it could even be used to refer to the pursuit of a particular end, implying that rational behaviour means maximizing individual material gain.

The first two of these various possible connotations of the term "rational" shall be examined more closely here. Chantal Mouffe refers to rationality as opposed to emotion in her critique of deliberative approaches: "By privileging rationality, both the deliberative and the aggregative perspectives leave aside a central element, which is the crucial role, played by passions and emotions in securing allegiance to democratic values."⁵¹⁵ She also points out that an "important difference with the

⁵¹⁵ Mouffe (2000), p. 10.

model of 'deliberative democracy', is that for 'agonistic pluralism', the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, in order to render a rational consensus possible, but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs."⁵¹⁶

For Mouffe, passions in the context of politics seem to be directly related to the formation of collective identities and a we/they opposition: "To be able to mobilize passions towards democratic designs, democratic politics must have a partisan character. This is indeed the function of the left/right distinction and we should resist the call by post-political theorists to think 'beyond left and right'."⁵¹⁷ And, elaborating on passion in politics, Mouffe says that the "part played by 'passions' in politics reveals that, in order to come to terms with 'the political', it is not enough for liberal theory to acknowledge the existence of a plurality of values and to extol toleration. Democratic politics cannot be limited to establishing compromises among interests or values or to deliberation about the common good; it needs to have a real purchase on people's desires and fantasies."⁵¹⁸

While it may be that the authors Mouffe primarily refers to do indeed seek to replace passion with rationality, the approaches cited to in this thesis do not at all aim to get rid of passions or emotions. Instead, they see them as a necessary and valuable resource.

It may be recalled that Cooperrider and Whitney, in their introduction to appreciative inquiry, say that "it has been our experience that building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding – things like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, camaraderie, sense of urgent purpose, and sheer joy in creating something meaningful together."⁵¹⁹

516 Mouffe (2000), p. 16.

517 Mouffe (2005), p. 6.

518 Mouffe (2005), p. 6.

519 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 20.

Or Rob Hopkins, recalling the launch event of the local currency in Totnes: "As I stood in front of the hall, watching the room full of laughing, twinkling people, waving their Totnes Pounds, I felt very moved. There is a power here, I thought, which has remained largely untapped. Surely when we think about peak oil and climate change we feel horrified, afraid, overwhelmed? Yet here was a room full of people who were positively elated, yet were also looking the twin challenges of peak oil and climate change square in the face."⁵²⁰

The kind of emotions Rob Hopkins refers to in the Transition Handbook resemble very much those considered important by appreciative inquiry. Hope, excitement and a feeling of empowerment predominate. Even the "sense of urgent purpose" is not directed against someone, but towards an idea of a desirable future and the path towards it. Passion is not centred on being "us" rather than "them", it is centred on the "sheer joy of creating something meaningful together." And it may be that quite a degree of passion can be harnessed along these lines, and brought productively into the political process of shaping the structures of a future society.

Harrison Owen writes about Open Space: "There are two engines powering Open Space: passion and responsibility."⁵²¹ He expands by saying: "For some people the notion of passion is too wild and uncontrollable; they would prefer something like interests or concerns. For myself, I like passion. Anything less just doesn't bring the juices up to a rolling boil, which is absolutely essential if Open Space is going to be other than boring."⁵²²

The hospice movement centrally revolves about emotions, and deep personal questions, although largely not in the category of enthusiasm and elation. Grief and loss are central themes connected to dying, fear and regret are as central as gratefulness and hope. So while the quality of emotions at play may be much more varied, their centrality is unquestionable. Giving emotions their proper prominent place is, in the face of a "cold", "rational", "professional" medical environment, one of the central concerns of the hospice movement.⁵²³

520 Hopkins (2008), p. 15.

521 Owen (1997), p. 27.

522 Owen (1997), p. 27.

523 Reitinger (2012)

So emotion, and even passion, appear as something not only existent, but also welcome in the context of the social movements mentioned; something to be integrated and harnessed, certainly not something to be done away with, pushed aside or replaced with "rationality".

Linking this discussion back to the question of potential master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence, one might conclude that such master frames need not necessarily be predisposed to idealize rationality. It seems quite possible, on the contrary, that they might active espouse and integrate passion and emotions into what is understood to be the political sphere, and into social movements themselves. Passion and emotion may feature among the aims of the movement (as with the hospice movement), and may also be seen as playing an important and welcome part in the means and methods, as well as the driving forces of a movement. An interesting question that is likely to arise is whether emotions such as joy and elation are to be given greater prominence in such master frames, and what role is assigned to states such as anger, fear, grief or resentment.

8.4. One universal model

Another connotation of the term "rational" that is picked up in Mouffe's critique is that of "rational" as "best", and, related to this, the search for one rational, universal, best model.

Mouffe argues for the importance of the realization that "the domain of politics – even when fundamental issues like justice or basic principles are concerned – is not a neutral terrain that could be insulated from the pluralism of values and where rational, universal solutions could be formulated."⁵²⁴ She demands that "Democratic theory should renounce those forms of escapism and face the challenge that the recognition of the pluralism of values entails. This does not mean accepting a total pluralism and some limits need to be put to the kind of

524 Mouffe (2000), p. 8.

confrontation which is going to be seen as legitimate in the public sphere. But the political nature of the limits should be acknowledged instead of being presented as requirements of morality or rationality.⁵²⁵

This may recall the critique James Ferguson has made of the "anti-politics" machine of development, which is turning political questions into questions of neutral expertise, to be answered by "development experts".⁵²⁶

To what extent can the approaches presented in this thesis be seen as falling into the trap of "neutralizing" political questions, of presenting a view that clearly there is only one best, rational or natural way for society to go? How much is that the case on the level of process, how much on the level of content?

There certainly are some tendencies that could be interpreted in that way. Perhaps it is understandable that an idea or new approach is first presented in its pure form, without too much reference to other approaches that might complement it and perhaps offset some of its drawbacks. Nevertheless, that also entails the danger of treating it as the only (sensible) possibility or as a panacea. It has already been pointed out that the appreciative inquiry approach gives very little consideration to the ways in which feelings such as anger, fear or grief can be expressed, or to the notion that this sometimes may be necessary. Nor does it point to other methods that may be a useful complement to appreciative inquiry. While this does not necessarily imply that appreciative inquiry is meant to be a panacea or "the only way", it could nevertheless be interpreted in that way, which would probably be unhelpful.

Likewise, Transition movement texts may well sound as if not only peak oil and climate change were given facts, but also their relative importance compared to other issues, and perhaps even the type of response needed. In his PhD thesis, Rob Hopkins goes so far as to quote other authors as saying that against the background of peak oil, economic localisation "stands, at best, at the limits of practical possibility, but it has the decisive argument in its favour that there will be

525 Mouffe (2000), p. 9.

526 Ferguson (1990)

no alternative.⁵²⁷ However, the Transition Handbook as such does not directly put forward a TINA argument. A sense of there-is-no-alternative might, at most, be read into the general tone of the proposal. In any case, the Transition movement might stand to gain from linking up with other strands of thinking about alternative economic and societal models, such as the free culture movement or proposals that see a relocalization of material production primarily in connection with the internet. These suggest that immaterial goods, including ideas, software and production designs, are shared worldwide, and make local high-tech production relatively easy.⁵²⁸ The perhaps best-known image for this is the individual who uses design templates in the internet to design her new glasses, then goes to the local printshop and prints the glasses out on the fabber or 3D-printer there. Whether or not one believes that 3D-printers will ever gain importance outside nerdy fab-labs and the limited commercial uses they are already put to – giving more thought to the role of the internet in a future society, and perhaps linking up with the free culture movement may be a fruitful avenue for the Transition movement. It may well be that movement members – unlike the Handbook – are already making this connection anyway; the web platform Transition Town and Alternativenforen in Austria, for instance, does host a special interest group on Open Source Ecology.⁵²⁹

With respect to the danger of proclaiming one model to be the one, best and only Tom Atlee, in his inquiry into co-intelligence, seems to be on the safe side in the sense that he already lists a large number of possible approaches and methods. Of course, it may nevertheless occur that the people practising one of the proposed methods, for instance, holding a Citizen Deliberative Council, act as if the results of that process were some kind of supreme and objective truth, or the method the one right method to apply in political contexts. A good way of avoiding the trap of the "one right model" may be a turn towards process and towards continuous openness and renegotiation.

527 Hopkins (2010), p.14.

528 see e.g. Bergmann (2004), p.193ff.

529 <http://transitionaustria.ning.com/group/opensourceecology>

Tom Atlee makes a move in that direction when he says: "We are shifting from thinking of social change as an effort to solve problems and achieve an ideal society, to realizing that social change is an ongoing process that we can enhance and make wiser. Our goal is no longer a desired state for society, but rather a desirable unfolding of society."⁵³⁰ He adds: "So we are not talking about utopia any more. Perhaps we are talking about utopianation – an ongoing journey towards ever-better societies."⁵³¹

Doubt

Ulrich Beck introduces the notion of doubt as a potentially crucial ingredient in the political realm. Whether one believes, as Beck seems to do, that the world has become overwhelmingly complex in the wake of modernization, or whether one believes that it has always been overwhelmingly complex – the resulting insecurity regarding "truths" and one's own position may have important consequences.

Doubt, and the acknowledgement of the ultimate uncertainty of one's own position, as proposed by Beck, fit in well with the basic assumptions of co-intelligent approaches that one's own views always need to be complemented by others. It also tends to lead away from antagonism.

As Beck says: "When one is doubtful whether one is right or in possession of the truth, when the questions lie in that area where correctness and falsity overlap, when self-doubts chew up the arrogance, then enemies are no longer enemies, nor are they brothers with whom one dances in festivals of solidarity; instead, they are fellow or opposing doubters. Their interests may be diametrically opposed. They will be seen as such, relativized, negotiated and arranged."⁵³²

A problem arises, in Beck's view, if doubt is distributed in an extremely unequal manner: the exclusion of self-doubt and the concentration of all doubtfulness on the side of the other. These, says Beck, may be the preconditions for war. "Truth and military originate from one and the same conceptual box."⁵³³

530 Atlee (2003), p. 49.

531 Atlee (2003), p. 50.

532 Beck (1997), p. 169.

533 Beck (1997), p. 170.

Doubt, on the other hand, writes Beck, "is kind and deeply humane. It reminds us, irrevocably and implacably with pedantic arrogance, of the limits and the error-ridden forlornness and bottomlessness of even the proudest, most certain thought and action, no matter how much machine power it may boast and regardless of the technical perfection with which it advances. Doubt giggles at this, whispers, roars, bickers and dodges: it's all doubtful!"⁵³⁴

Doubt, in Beck's view, leads to caution and tolerance, to productive engagement with others. It in no way leads to nihilism: contrary to a widespread mistaken belief, he says, "doubt makes everything – science, knowledge, criticism or morality – possible once again, only different, a couple of sizes smaller, more tentative, personal, colourful and open to social learning. Hence it is also more curious, more open to things that are contrary, unsuspected and incompatible, and all this with the tolerance that is based in the ultimate final certainty of error."⁵³⁵

Openness

Apart from doubt, uncertainty and the need to be complemented, openness could be chosen as one core notion related to co-intelligence. Open Space Technology, of course, makes openness the pivotal point: openness in the sense of undetermined outcomes and the provision of a frame within which collective intelligence can productively unfold. The provision of that frame is a very active act: the calling of the conference, the decision of the general theme, the settings for the process. After that, there is strong emphasis of letting go of control, and certainly on not trying to push one particular model or solution.

That approach is mirrored somewhat in notions put forward by James Boyle, a law professor and very active member of the free culture movement. Reflecting on ways to imagine free, decentralized access to most cultural and scientific material, Boyle makes an argument about innovation and the use of new technology. Boyle suggests that collective intelligence may be much better in finding suitable uses of new technology than any expert committee possibly ever could, and that the best

534 Beck (1997), p. 171.

535 Beck (1994), p. 33.

way to harness the potential of new technologies is to create the condition for as many people as possible to understand the design and to experiment. If the history of technology teaches us anything, Boyle says, "it teaches us that we are extremely bad at predicting *ex ante* the uses of technology. This fact has an overlooked, but absolutely vital design corollary; wherever possible, design the system to run with open content, on open protocols, to be potentially available to the largest possible number of users, and to accept the widest possible range of experimental modifications from users who can themselves determine the development of the technology. Then sit back and wait to see what emerges."⁵³⁶

So openness and a frame which allows for input and modification by as many people as possible may be one direction in which one may try to avoid the trap of having one "best" or "rational" model. Harrison Owen also points out that existing conflicts can perhaps been dealt with more productively if parties are given more room to express themselves, in the form they choose, which an Open space setting is supposed to be helpful with.⁵³⁷

Another important point, of course, is the place explicit pluralism has. The assumption that there is not only one political space, but several political spaces, of course lessens the need to fight for dominance or hegemony. The image of society, of cultural and political space as plural and pluralistic, may make it much easier for social movements to listen to other visions without feeling that their own vision is threatened. It may lessen the sense of competition, and ease the path towards co-intelligent approaches.

536 Boyle (2007), p. 134.

537 Owen (1997), p. 35ff.

8.5. Pluralism

The framing processes within social movements take place within a larger cultural context, they shape that context, but are also shaped to a large degree by that context. It may therefore be interesting to take a look at the more general cultural setting within which Western social movements develop, and at the role pluralism plays in it. Does pluralism feature in the collective imagery, prominently or marginally, and if it does, in what form? One source of information on these questions might be sought in an examination of Western utopian novels, utopian novels being a well-established form of expression for political visions and for imagery of "the good society". A few novels and their take on pluralism shall therefore be presented here.

How much pluralism is integrated into the visions presented by utopian novels? Even if novels are not outright authoritarian as Thomas More's original "Utopia"⁵³⁸ – do they portray a perhaps appealing, but very uniform notion of how people live? Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland*⁵³⁹ may be seen as falling into that category. If pluralism or diversity appears to be built into the utopian society – as in Marge Piercy's "Woman on the Edge of Time"⁵⁴⁰ or Starhawk's "The Fifth Sacred Thing"⁵⁴¹ – does it stay limited to the levels of language and clothing, while people in all of the utopian society share the same political, reproductive and economic system, the same concepts of gender, age, and relation between humans and cosmos? How much pluralism is that, really? The Swiss author p.m. seems exceptional with his notion of "Bolo'bolo"⁵⁴², built around communities that do indeed differ in their cosmology and internal organization. An interesting issue related to the depth of imagery of pluralism is also represented by the relation between the utopian society and other societies (if there are any). Are other societies taken over by gentle persuasion through (possibly manipulative) missionaries, as in Cory Doctorow's science fiction novel "Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom"?⁵⁴³ Is it a relation of war, or of hostile takeover by the outside world, as in Aldous Huxley's

538 More (2010)

539 Perkins Gilman (1992)

540 Piercy (1990)

541 Starhawk (1994)

542 p.m. (1990)

543 Doctorow (2003)

"Island"?⁵⁴⁴ Is the war to be fought mercilessly (also by the utopians), as in "Woman on the Edge of Time", or is it transformed by members of the utopian society who manage to create a human bond with members of the invading army, as in "The Fifth Sacred Thing"? "Herland" presents a similar solution, but with the utopian society portrayed as much stronger from the outset and war not even occurring. In Doris Lessing's "The Marriages between Zones Three, Four and Five"⁵⁴⁵ different societies learn from each other, although not without pain and disruption, and even the society closest to utopia ultimately benefits from the interaction. Very interesting is Edward Bellamy's "Looking Backward"⁵⁴⁶ in the sense that it includes a vision for the transition from the (problematic) present into the utopian future, and proclaims that both the solution and the transition were so easy that, looking back, one wonders how people could ever have believed their problems to be insurmountable.

It may be that the Transition movement's portrayal of a desirable future fits well into this tradition of utopian novels – although it is, of course, not a novel itself. It gives a vision of future society, and while diversity is valued very highly in the sense of including different people in the process, there is no vision of pluralism in the sense of fundamentally different system in the future society – neither as friendly neighbours, nor as terrible enemies.

Chantal Mouffe makes an explicit argument for pluralism. The question may remain whether she insists that the keywords for all societies should be modernity, enlightenment or rationality⁵⁴⁷ – albeit in their own respective form thereof – or whether societies may also choose to revolve around other keywords. In any case, Mouffe argues for a more explicit plurality of views and opinions, also within current Western societies. Indeed, it seems possible to understand that to be one of the main arguments behind her call for agonistic politics. While she often refers to the necessity of a revitalization of the left/right divide,⁵⁴⁸ we will assume here that pluralism is not meant to be limited to merely two opposing positions, but can well include a much larger number of options or positions.

544 Huxley (1962)

545 Lessing (1980)

546 Bellamy (1967)

547 Mouffe (2005), p. 124-125.

548 Mouffe (2005), p. 119.

Of course the whole field of multiculturalism offers a wealth of literature, considerations and experiences relevant to questions of pluralism. Democratic theory also has made some interesting advances in that direction, for instance Paul Hirst's notion of associative democracy.⁵⁴⁹ Associative democracy proposes a model for a society where the creation of niches by like-minded people is a constitutive part of a system which nevertheless also provides a frame holding all this different niches together.

Such developments in the overall political system might be highly relevant to movements which regard the creation of niches and practical examples as an important part of their strategy.

From permacultural eco-villages to free software, the creation of possibly small, but functioning models is a significant feature. Starting to create own spaces or niches where the future model is already presented, tested and implemented in practical terms is an important aspect in a number of approaches discussed in this thesis, and shall be examined in a bit more detail in the following section.

8.6. Creating own spaces: the niche and the system

In The Transition Handbook, Rob Hopkins included the following quote by Marianne Williamson: "Creating the world we want is a much more subtle but more powerful mode of operation than destroying the one we don't want."⁵⁵⁰ The Foundation for Peer to Peer Alternatives starts its website with a quotation from Buckminster Fuller: "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."⁵⁵¹ The approach of starting with a new model could also be seen in many projects of the economía solidaria, in eco-villages and intentional communities. Stefan Meretz

549 Hirst (1996) and Hirst/Bader (2001).

550 Hopkins (2008), p. 84.

551 <http://p2pfoundation.net/> [6 July 2011]

at keimform.de, working on commons-based peer production, draws on psychologist Klaus Holzkamp to outline five steps in which a new seminal form may arise, take over more functions when the old system faces a crisis, become dominant and finally have the whole system restructured according to the new logic.⁵⁵² The hospice movement could also be looked into as an interesting example of a perspective and a practice that started out in small niches, such as one individual hospice set up, or one ambulant service being established, and then has made it some way into the existing institutional settings, possibly one case of niche extension.

The question of how a new seminal form can arise and eventually spread or transform the system is one that is also dealt with by the field of strategic niche management – literature Gill Seyfang at the University of East Anglia refers to in her articles on the Transition Movement. In an article with Alex Haxeltine she finds that in the general situation of peak oil the "Transition movement, as here evidenced, does not intend to trigger a transition, but instead is responding to those landscape pressures at a micro level, and seeking to grow a niche of new infrastructure and practices which can replace the incumbent regime when that regime fails to function."⁵⁵³ They conclude: "So, rather than contesting or contending with the regime, the movement seems to assume the existing regime will wither away"⁵⁵⁴. A structure that is already waning, in that perspective, will leave in its wake "an agency vacuum, into which Transition initiatives can move, offering a more positive future scenario than the societal collapse or authoritarian green state that might otherwise emerge."⁵⁵⁵

Of course the old system, rather than just withering away, may also put up some resistance. The free culture movement offers a number of perspectives on that. For one, the self-confident view that free culture represents the model of the future is quite common, often accompanied by a general mood of optimism or even

552 <http://www.keimform.de/2011/fuenfschritt-methodische-quelle-des-keimform-ansatzes/#more-4445> [5 Aug 2011]

553 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2010), p. 9.

554 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 7, referring to North (2009) for the notion of old regimes withering away.

555 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 7

elation.⁵⁵⁶ That the new model should – and will – come to pass may be the implicit assumption. However, while the free culture movement has made the experience of the new system simply spreading because of its merits, it has also made the experience of fierce opposition from proponents of the existing system. These may range from the creation of technical problems from major producers of proprietary software to the creation of legal obstacles such as a massive extension of copyright terms. Lawrence Lessig, law professor and passionate advocate for the need to actively struggle against attempts to undermine the conditions for free culture, writes about major incumbents of the current economic model: "These modern-day equivalents of the early twentieth-century radio or nineteenth-century railroads are using their power to get the law to protect them against this new, more efficient, more vibrant technology for building culture. They are succeeding in their plan to remake the Internet before the Internet remakes them."⁵⁵⁷ So struggle against the old system – that is fighting to remain in place, instead of withering away due to the arrival of a better alternative – also has its place within the free culture movement.

In addition, the free culture movement knows a large variety of forms in which the new and the old system merge and form synergies. Commercial companies such as IBM or Red Hat have integrated free software into their business models,⁵⁵⁸ and Lessig himself has co-initiated the birth of the creative commons licences,⁵⁵⁹ which are themselves a way of making some of the new compatible with the existing legal system.

So there are a number of notions and experiences revolving around the idea of the old system withering away, or putting up a struggle, or being integrated and fused with the new. Rob Hopkins contributed an image of a possible change process, saying, in 2006, that is, at the outset of the Transition movement and before the publication of the Handbook: "I also think it is important to be realistic. For example, I don't imagine that anything approaching a majority of the population would embrace this approach yet. However, what we can do is start putting in

556 David Bollier's description of the development of the free culture movement in the US may be a good example of this. Bollier (2008).

557 Lessig (2006), p. 14 pdf version.

558 Bollier (2008), p. 37.

559 Bollier (2008), p. 93ff.

place the infrastructure that will be needed", such as seed saving clubs or compost schemes.⁵⁶⁰ The ideas and the skills, new everyday practices and the resources needed for them are quietly built up on a small-scale, decentralized basis, perhaps barely noticed by the mainstream until the time when the old system fails visibly and the need for alternatives becomes pressing. "When people say 'but where will our fruit come from?', we can say 'from the five-acre orchard over there that we planted seven years ago.' We can begin to build systems around people", concludes Hopkins.⁵⁶¹

The idea that a movement may not need to invest energy to bring the current systems down, but instead in alternatives and acceptable forms of transition for the time when the old system will collapse (for reasons quite outside the movement) may also be reflected in the texts by David Korten, author of the book "The Great Turning".⁵⁶² He writes: "Some critics will surely complain that 'Korten wants to change everything.' They miss the point. Everything is going to change."⁵⁶³

Such an assumption about the nature of change, the timing and the forces behind change, make it a lot easier for a movement not to be antagonistic. If the assumption is that the old system is going to wither away anyway, and energy goes into preparing a new model in a niche, ready for up-scaling when the time has come – there is much less need to fight, and much more need to build, and to be attentive. However, for a truly co-intelligent and appreciative approach, this theme would probably have to be continued in a particular direction. Co-intelligence would mean that groups are inclined to assume that their own suggestions are very important, but incomplete. That they need to be brought together with other ideas, to be integrated into a bigger picture, possibly changed but definitely complemented to be truly most helpful for society. It would not mean to assume that the group's suggestion should "win" in the end and take over the whole system.

560 Hopkins (2006a), and

<http://www.permacultureactivist.net/articles/EnergyDescent.htm> [5 Aug 2011]

561 Hopkins (2006a), and

<http://www.permacultureactivist.net/articles/EnergyDescent.htm> [5 Aug 2011]

562 Korten (2006), see also <http://livingeconomiesforum.org/great-turning> [5 Aug 2011]

563 Korten (2006a), p. 30.

However, that latter tendency still seems to be prevalent in a lot of theory and practice. The paragraph by Rob Hopkins quoted above continues: "This is fascinating work and should be started in every settlement. It is big-picture thinking, town-scale permaculture, and needs to be rolled out across the country as a matter of great urgency."⁵⁶⁴ On the cover of the Transition Handbook is a quote by Richard Heinberg: "If your town is not yet a Transition Town, here is the guidance for making it one. We have little time, and much to accomplish."⁵⁶⁵ That sounds a lot more like aiming to take over the whole system than hoping to become one piece of a mosaic.

Open Space Technology, a major achievement in terms of co-intelligent communication methods, claims that the ideal conditions for having an Open Space are: complex questions, much (potential) conflict, little time, and a great diversity of people and opinions.⁵⁶⁶ So maybe co-intelligence sits very well with urgency; as does co-operation. However, at the moment there may still be a strong tendency for people and groups to start rushing when it's too urgent, and to start pushing people out of the way, instead of forming an orderly queue, which of course would be faster in the end. Likewise, there may be a tendency for political groups and social movements to begin to be a little pushier than would be co-intelligent, to listen too little, and to try to impose their own view of "the solution" on everyone. David Korten even seems to be moving in the direction of a good-evil dichotomy with his division between "the ways of empire" (apparently all wrong) and "the ways of community" (apparently all good, and all packaged in one, just as all bad things come in one neat package, too).⁵⁶⁷

The literature on strategic niche management, or Stefan Meretz' adaptation of the five steps of seminal forms spreading in a system, could probably be read in a number of ways, too. One could focus on the assumption that the new form ought to spread out from the niche and take over the system. Or one could focus more on the ways the new form interacts with the existing system, gets changed and adapted and integrated by the system, and see that process as positive and

564 Hopkins (2006a), and
<http://www.permacultureactivist.net/articles/EnergyDescent.htm> [5 Aug 2011]

565 Hopkins (2008), cover page.

566 Owen (1997), p. 39.

567 <http://livingeconomiesforum.org/great-turning> [5 Aug 2011]

necessary, not only as a threat to the integrity of the new seminal form. An interesting aspect is also the degree to which the existing, but especially the new system, is thought to be homogeneous. Is it thought to be (necessarily) hegemonic? Or is the imagery used more that of a mosaic, the idea that of a pluralistic society with several loosely connected sub-cultures and niches in it?

From Opposition to Government

Another change that may be inherent in approaches such as the Transition movement's, or also that of eco-villages and projects of the economía solidaria, may be a change in the self-ascribed position of movement members. While social movements are often seen or self-defined as opposition (i.e. not those in power, and antagonistic to those in power), in a new master frame the prevalent self-image may be one of movement members as holding power. Power, here, is mostly understood not as power-over, but as power-with,⁵⁶⁸ as freedom-to, as the ability to shape one's own life and collective structures. This change in self-image occurs without much notable change in outward conditions: movement members have not become prime ministers, or acquired any other position of formal power that previous movements did not have. It is merely a change in perspective, in focus and in self-image, in matters of worldview such as the concepts of power used and internalised. A move towards power-with may be accompanied by an understanding of power spread throughout the population, rather than concentrated in the hands of a few. Rob Hopkins' notion of working for policy change not by lobbying politicians, but by making the desired policies electable⁵⁶⁹ may be indicative of this approach, as does his proposition that governments are generally reactive, not proactive, and that it is sensible to suggest that local communities take the lead.⁵⁷⁰

Tom Atlee moves in a similar vein when he writes that the co-creative philosophy he suggests "is based on a shift in perspective that begins with recognition of a simple fact: Together we create our communities, our societies, and our world. We

568 see for instance Tom Atlee (2003) on p. 110 and p. 117.

569 Hopkins (2008), p. 135.

570 Hopkins (2008), p. 76.

are always doing this, together. We can do it more consciously, intentionally and responsibly. Given any condition we want to change, we can ask:

- What are we doing to co-create and sustain this problem – through our beliefs, attitudes, behaviors and systems?
- What do we want to co-create together?
- What beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, agreements and systems would help us co-create what we want instead of what we do not want?
- What beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, agreements and systems would help us ask and answer these questions together – and act on what what we learn – most effectively?"⁵⁷¹

Some of these ideas are also reflected in one of the websites the peer2peer foundation links to: Attainable Utopias (AU).⁵⁷² AU in this sense might provide another example for what aspects of potential master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence might look like in social movements. "OK, so Utopia may not be Attainable..." is the heading in the website's section on vision. It continues: "AU believes that a monolithic 'Utopia' is neither attainable, nor desirable. However, a network of 'micro-utopias' (i.e. transient, local, or immediate utopias) is feasible...but only if we believe it to be. We therefore envision a much greater synergy in society."⁵⁷³ This reflects both the aspect of pluralism, as well as a belief in incremental change and process. It does not mean Attainable Utopias intends to play small in the long run. The sub-headings continue to run: "...if we join many positive things together... ...we will create new meanings... ...we can imagine how to design miracles..."⁵⁷⁴

The vision and aims of Attainable Utopias seem to take up many of the conclusions appreciative inquiry has drawn from its constructionist foundations. "We aim to make the 'impossible' more thinkable. This means daring to dream beyond what we believe to be attainable",⁵⁷⁵ the list of aims says, and vision

571 Atlee (2003), p. 52.

572 <http://attainable-utopias.org> [1 Aug 2011]

573 <http://attainable-utopias.org/tiki/tiki-index.php?page=VisionStatement> [1 Aug 2011]

574 <http://attainable-utopias.org/tiki/tiki-index.php?page=VisionStatement> [1 Aug 2011]

575 <http://attainable-utopias.org/tiki/AuAims> [1 Aug 2011]

continues: "By creating names for key issues that are nameless we make them more visible. Once they are sufficiently visible it is impossible to ignore them (...). AU's term entredonneurship, for example, refers to an imaginative, multi-layered mode of corporate altruism."⁵⁷⁶ In the end, "the right balance of luck-attracting approaches will lead to a global pandemic of optimism."⁵⁷⁷ "If we co-imagine the dream in a more shareable form", Attainable Utopias says, "if we exchange dreams and join them together"⁵⁷⁸, then a change in the nature of the political field might also become visible: "Politics would be more positive, spontaneous, co-creative and emergent."⁵⁷⁹

A focus on vision, on self-empowerment and on linking internal with external development also become apparent in the following statement: "We do not see technological nor political problems as the first hurdle. It is a psychological barrier that we can overcome, collectively. We need to find out what we really want (and need). Once we know this we can cooperate to make it real."⁵⁸⁰

While Attainable Utopias may not be a big organisation, and perhaps just a transient website, the prevalence of a particular language and approach even in small and informal groups could be taken to indicate that co-intelligence as a master frame does have a broader basis in parts of society, and is not just the approach of one or two larger organisations.

8.7. Co-intelligence and process innovation

576 <http://attainable-utopias.org/tiki/tiki-index.php?page=VisionStatement> [1 Aug 2011]

577 <http://attainable-utopias.org/tiki/tiki-index.php?page=VisionStatement> [1 Aug 2011]

578 <http://attainable-utopias.org/tiki/AuAims> [1 Aug 2011]

579 <http://attainable-utopias.org/tiki/AuAims> [1 Aug 2011]

580 <http://attainable-utopias.org/tiki/AuAims> [1 Aug 2011]

Facilitating or advocating?

Another question regarding the self-image of social change agents, and of the nature of social change, is whether change agents see themselves as facilitators, or as ones who contribute the content of the change supposed to happen.

A conventional assumption about social movements is that they are advocates, trying to push (or prevent) one particular policy. A view where the focus is on the content and on the end result could be contrasted with one where the focus is on the process, and the change agent the one who enables a good process to take place, without necessarily contributing to the content developed in that process.

The latter is the classical role of a facilitator. Practitioners of appreciative inquiry clearly see their role in that vein, as perhaps most people in organization development would. They are there to provide tools, to set up a good process of communication, to make sure people can get involved effectively. The content of the change, both the aim and the steps towards it, are supposed to come from the people concerned, the people working in the organisation and similar stakeholders. The consultants, i.e. the appreciative inquiry practitioners, do not intend to come with a good idea of how organisations should function and then to win people over to their cause. While the role of a facilitator may be a common notion in organisation development, it is a rather unusual one for social movements. Western social movement studies does often seem to assume that movements are not aiming to facilitate a good process, but have their own notion of what the end result of the process should be, and that they do try to win people over to their cause.⁵⁸¹

Tom Atlee may be moving a bit more in the direction of seeing social movements as facilitators. Co-intelligence already implies that any group or movement should seek not to impose its own vision, but to engage in a process with others, and to co-determine aims and means together. In addition, if activism moves from

581 see e.g. the attention given to "mobilization"

suggesting co-intelligent solutions, to using co-intelligent methods, to creating paths for co-intelligent methods⁵⁸² that may be very much a move towards the role of a facilitator, or one providing the frame within which everyone can deliberate and define content together.

Some of these tendencies may also be seen in the Transition movement. Gill Seyfang and Alex Haxeltine write: "To sustain itself the movement should find legitimacy in empowering people to discover their own answers to questions about the more desirable future they wish to be involved in creating."⁵⁸³ That picks up an aspect Rob Hopkins has included in the Handbook, in a table comparing "Conventional Environmentalism", which is thought to be "Prescriptive – advocates answers and responses" to the Transition approach, which Hopkins says "Acts as a catalyst – no fixed answers".⁵⁸⁴ However, the Transition movement also does have fairly specific visions for a desirable future, and the recent tendencies at least with Rob Hopkins have been to develop a "pattern language" for solutions, which resembles a "Frequently Asked Questions" answer sheet much more than a mere catalyst function.⁵⁸⁵

Of course the question of facilitation/process and advocacy/content is not likely to be an either/or decision. Especially when social change agents are concerned which change of a collective they themselves are a part of, it seems unlikely that they would find the most appropriate role for themselves to be facilitators exclusively. While trying to provide a frame that allows for a co-intelligent process, they may very well see themselves as participants of that process, too. This becomes even more obvious if one does not see visions or content as being fixed positions each party holds before meeting, but as fluid and emergent, as being created in the conversation, as appreciative interviews might do, or Bohm's dialogue in another way.

582 Atlee (2003), p. 45.

583 Seyfang/Haxeltine (2009), p. 18.

584 Hopkins (2008), p. 135.

585 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/12/22/an-update-on-the-ingredients-of-transition-project/> [25 Feb 2011]

Process or product?

Tom Atlee points out several levels at which co-intelligent activism can be aimed:

- “we can seek to operate on the assumptions of wholeness, interconnectedness and co-creativity;
- we can advocate co-intelligent solutions to problems (...);
- we can use co-intelligent methods, such as dialogue, to pursue our goals;
- our goal, itself, can become the creation of ways in which people can collaboratively arrive at solutions to their (and our) collective problems.”⁵⁸⁶

So co-intelligent activism, in his terms, can be constituted by

- underlying assumption of interconnectedness
- finding co-intelligent solutions
- using co-intelligent methods
- focus on introducing co-intelligent methods

Atlee also makes a clear statement regarding the level which he would like to give preeminence to: "Given the kinds of problems that our society is facing, one of the most urgent needs I see is this last option – to advocate for the use of co-intelligent methods to increase the capacity of society as a whole to act in a co-intelligent manner."⁵⁸⁷ With this line of argument he is very close to the rationale David Bohm uses for introducing his notion of dialogue: that what is needed are new ways of thinking and of communicating with others.⁵⁸⁸

There is a significant change of orientation inherent in this approach. It may be worth reiterating Tom Atlee's suggestion to no longer think of social change as an effort to achieve an ideal society, but instead to envision social change as an ongoing process that can be enhanced and improved. The goal, then, would no longer be desired state for society, but rather a desirable unfolding of society.⁵⁸⁹

So focus shifts from solutions towards ways in which solutions can be found. In terms of analogy, this could be thought of as introducing multi-party elections in a

586 Atlee (2003), p. 45.

587 Atlee (2003), p. 45.

588 Bohm (1996), p. 1-2.

589 Atlee (2003), p. 49.

society, rather than installing the "right" party, the "right" ministers, or the "right" policy directly.

In that vein, Tom Atlee is calling for "certain innovations which will (we hope) elicit society's conscious and continuous re-creation of itself"⁵⁹⁰, and that "to its own changing specifications, as needed".⁵⁹¹ That leads Atlee to a consideration on the evolution of activism as he has come to know it and to identify with. "For years", he writes, "most of the people I knew, including myself, thought of our work as *social change activism*. But then I started meeting people who saw themselves as *facilitators of cultural transformation*, a term which suggests deep shifts in fundamental cultural assumptions. I liked that. It seemed a more accurate description of what I did."⁵⁹² He goes on to develop the terminology, arriving at an expression that seems even more appropriate: *social process activism*.⁵⁹³ This term is meant to stress that activism of this sort is aimed at finding "better ways for the society as a whole to change and transform ITSELF."⁵⁹⁴

So the focus now is on process, not product; on the tools of transformation, not the end result of transformation. Indeed, there is not supposed to be any "end result" of transformation. Transformation is thought to be a permanent process. A view which, given human history so far, seems to be a fairly realistic prediction at least for the next few centuries. That realisation, of course, makes it difficult, if not entirely impossible, to advance a kind of logic (perhaps mostly associated with violent revolutions) that calls for a very painful change process with the promise of a desirable stable state to follow. If one believes change to be a short period, an exception, then one might be prepared for it to be very disagreeable. If one believes change to be permanent, ongoing, then it seems advisable to look for ways that make the change process (which covers all our lives, and that of our children and grand-children) reasonably enjoyable. It will also give an incentive to bring means and ends together: to embody, experience, and radiate that which one deems desirable already during the change process.

590 Atlee (2003), p. 50.

591 Atlee (2003), p. 50.

592 Atlee (2003), p. 45-46.

593 Atlee (2003), p. 46.

594 Atlee (2003), p. 46.

Of course movements and movement members can try to embody, experience and radiate what they deem desirable already during the change process even if they do believe change to be a temporary phase, to be followed by a stable state. That may be the case of the Transition Town movement, which puts a lot of emphasis on joy as a driving force for change, on openness and co-operation. Nevertheless, the Transition movement, or Rob Hopkins, seem to see transition as a passing phase; an unusual, exceptional time full of challenges and redoubled efforts, which will, however, be over in a few decades at most.⁵⁹⁵ It is thought to be followed by a relatively stable state of a localised, resilient society – in case the transition proceeds well, of course. So change is pretty much envisaged as a passing phase, a short, exceptional time that will soon come to an end. Nevertheless that phase of change in itself is meant to be enjoyable – partly to avoid burn-out with members (for even a passing phase can take years or decades), partly because this is thought to be particularly attractive to potential new members or co-operation partners.

Likewise, the Transition movement may be bringing about innovation in terms of the modes of operation of social movements – without seeing itself as being about process innovation. If the Transition movement chose to define itself more as a movement bringing innovation both in the ways social movements operate, and in the way people interact and discover co-intelligent and appreciative forms of agency – the movement may be able to score rather well by these standards.

Appreciative inquiry, of course, explicitly focuses on process innovation – as is perhaps typical for organisation development approaches. Cooperrider and Whitney point out that "AI engenders a repatterning of our relationships, not only with each other, but also our relationship to reality itself",⁵⁹⁶ and that "AI's gift is at the paradigmatic level. AI is not so much about new knowledge but new knowing."⁵⁹⁷

They make a point in stating that they see the most valuable contribution as one at the process level, one of enabling people to carry out that type of process by

595 see e.g. Hopkins (2008), p. 65-67.

596 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 14.

597 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 14.

themselves. A focus on "outputs" in a more traditional sense begins to appear less necessary or even unhelpful. Cooperrider and Whitney say: "What we discovered, quite honestly, was that momentum for change and long-term sustainability increased the more we abandoned 'delivery' ideas of action planning, monitoring progress, and building implementation strategies. What was done instead, in several of the most exiting cases, was to focus only on giving AI away to everyone, and then stepping back. The GTE story, still unfolding but already attracting national recognition, is suggestive. It is a story that says organizational change needs to look a lot more like an inspired movement than a neatly packaged or engineered product."⁵⁹⁸

A broader view of activism

So while an increasing importance of the role as facilitator may already change the role of social movement members, Tom Atlee refers to some further aspects that may be considered regarding "activism". In particular, he suggests a broadening of the range of areas and activities that could be considered relevant, and possibly part of social movements and of activism. In addition to the many methods, approaches and organisations Atlee refers to in his book, he also gives a list of areas he feels people moved into to continue their social change work after and beyond adversarial activism: "Some of us went into community work, helping stakeholders to come together or communities to develop shared visions, or we joined the intentional community movement. Some of us took up spiritual paths or explored various aspects of the human potential movement, feeling that individual transformation was a necessary foundation for social change."⁵⁹⁹ Artists, performers, software programmers, natural foods retailers, teachers, facilitators – Atlee gives a long list of occupations in which, he believes, people may have pursued the same goals and values as before, only in a form not visible through the lens of a traditional understanding of "social movement activism."

Some of this echoes Ulrich Beck elaboration of the concept of sub-politics in current Western societies, saying that "what appeared to be 'an unpolitical retreat

598 Cooperrider/Whitney (2000), p. 14.

599 Atlee (2003), p. 48.

to private life', 'new inwardness' or 'caring for emotional wounds' in the old understanding of politics can, when seen from the other side, represent the struggle for a new dimension of the political."⁶⁰⁰ Absence in one (political) space may be presence in and creation of another political space – even if it is not immediately recognized as such. As Beck writes: "Individuals still communicate in and play along with the old forms and institutions, but they also withdraw from them, with at least part of their existence, their identity, their commitment and their courage. Their withdrawal, however, is not just a withdrawal but at the same time an emigration to new niches of activity and identity."⁶⁰¹

Tom Atlee suggests that while many members of social movements, like himself, have left adversarial activism, they "have never actually left the world of activism. Rather, we have changed it. Although there are thousands of adversarial activists still actively protesting and fighting, I do not believe activism is primarily adversarial any longer."⁶⁰² That, of course, is an interesting remark in the light of the main focus of social movement studies in Western academia.

The question of whether movements and movement members see themselves more as facilitators than purely as advocates has interesting implications for a number of other notions, such as "mobilization", a term of considerable importance in social movement studies. Indeed, the very notion of co-intelligence may suggest a rather fundamental reconsideration with respect to that term.

600 Beck (1994), p. 20.

601 Beck (1994), p. 20.

602 Atlee (2003), p. 49.

8.8. Mobilization

Snow and Benford write that they see social movements and their members to be "embroiled in the politics of signification. This means that activists are not able to construct and impose on their intended targets any version of reality they would like."⁶⁰³ That way of phrasing it might lead one to ask the question: Would they like to? If they could, would they want to "impose" their version of reality on their "intended targets"? What kind of an attitude would that be, or what kind of relationship is envisaged here? The undertone in Snow's and Benford's text may or may not be close to the actual atmosphere and attitude within a number of social movements. In any case, the way Atlee envisages for movements operating in a frame of co-intelligence and appreciation is clearly different. It may be worth recalling Tom Atlee's admonition that while movements may exert pressure to bring about a co-intelligent process, they should not exert that kind of pressure trying to push their particular content, or else it would just attempting to impose their "views, however noble, on others"⁶⁰⁴ – which is not what co-intelligence is all about.

Rob Hopkins also puts forward quite different notions, as has already been pointed out in the chapter introducing the Transition approach. It may be worth reiterating here the way Hopkins makes the warning explicit: "There is a danger that people involved in Transition, as with many of those in the wider environmental movement, can sometimes see inclusion as being about bringing more people over to 'our' agenda, that it is about winning over those who don't 'get it'. This somewhat smug and superior approach is not appropriate for the work Transition is doing."⁶⁰⁵ This perspective, coming from a social movement organizer, may raise some rather interesting questions about the notion of "mobilization", occupying such a central position in much of social movement studies.

The very concept of co-intelligence, of course, suggests a different logic from that of trying to convince others. Even if movement members were able to contrive some cunning strategies that would permit them to impose their view – that would

603 Benford/Snow (2000), p. 625.

604 Atlee (2003), p. 46f.

605 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14June 2011]

not be the right way to go about it, in this paradigm. Valuable information would be seen as getting lost when people are being persuaded or coaxed without feeding their own insights into the resulting policy. David Bohm makes communication a core element of his argument, in particular the ability to listen to others and not to identify oneself or others with particulars views and positions. Such identification, and the desire to spread the opinion one identifies with, to him are very much at the root of the problem – has it been seen as the root of a solution by social movements so far? Has it been typical for social movements to identify with an opinion, and to try and spread it? To what extent have social movement scholars assumed that that would and should be the nature of social movements?

David Bohm writes that "communication can lead to the creation of something new only if people are able freely to listen to each other, without prejudice, and without trying to influence each other."⁶⁰⁶ People ought to be ready to drop the ideas and opinions they were holding, and be open to moving on to something different when that is called for. "If, however, two people merely want to convey certain ideas or points of view to each other, as if these were items of information, then they must inevitably fail to meet. For each will hear the other through the screen of his own thoughts, which he tends to maintain and defend"⁶⁰⁷ However, says Bohm, "we need to be able to communicate freely in a creative movement in which no one permanently holds to or otherwise defends his own ideas. Why then is it so difficult actually to bring about such communication?"⁶⁰⁸ A very complex and subtle question, concedes Bohm, but one reason may be that "one tends to believe that one already is listening to the other person in a proper way. It seems then that the main trouble is that the other person is the one who is prejudiced and not listening."⁶⁰⁹

Could that be a situation found frequently with social movements and political groups? That they feel irritated by the difficulty they have to get people to listen to them – while they are themselves not at all expecting to spend their time listening to others, giving them a chance to bring up very different issues? To what extent were academic texts on mobilization based on the assumption that it is a task of

606 Bohm (1996), p. 3.

607 Bohm (1996), p. 3.

608 Bohm (1996), p. 4.

609 Bohm (1996), p. 5.

social movements to get other people to listen to movement member's views (and hopefully join their consensus), rather than movement members listening with an open mind to others?

A co-intelligent and appreciative master frame may lead to a reconsideration of some very fundamental notions, both within movements and within social movement studies.

However, it is worth stressing that it is not to be expected that any given social movement will represent a master frame of co-intelligence and appreciation in a pure, unambiguous or one hundred percent manner. Such purity of paradigm would be exceptional; it is almost impossible to attain and perhaps not even a desirable goal. It may be safe to assume that mostly movements will be centred in one master frame, but also show aspects of another. For instance, they may largely focus on vision, but still have some problem analysis as well. They may largely be geared towards inclusiveness and co-operation, but still be confrontational in some aspects, on some occasions, or in some parts of the membership.

9. Conclusion

So, what can be said in conclusion? Where has this journey through parts of academic literature, illustrative examples and movement generated theory taken us?

This thesis has set out to explore questions around the use of master frames in social movements. Noting that antagonism has sometimes been assumed to be an intrinsic or even defining characteristic of social movements, or indeed of "the political" as such, the question has been raised whether it might be possible to imagine master frames for social movements that are not antagonistic, and whether perhaps the use of such master frames can already be observed with existing movements.

Two notions have been introduced as possible key terms for one such potential alternative master frame: appreciation, as understood by the approach of appreciative inquiry; and co-intelligence, especially as used by Tom Atlee.

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach that is most firmly rooted in the field of organizational development. It has a strong focus on vision, and on discovering and appreciating the positive qualities that already exist in the present. It also suggests using unconditional positive questions as a starting point for change processes. Referring to notions such as self-fulfilling prophecies, placebos or the Pygmalion effect, appreciative inquiry suggests that the power of positive vision and emotions such as elation or enthusiasm are considerable, and might be harnessed to enable processes of change in social collectives.

Even though appreciative inquiry may seem a little one-sided with a zealous focus on "the positive", the question is raised whether it might nevertheless point out some interesting avenues that have received little attention in the context of social movement frames, which might, for instance, not have considered that there could be alternatives to defining the starting point of the movement in the form of a problem.

After appreciation, co-intelligence has been introduced in this thesis as a second possible key term in relation to a potential alternative master frame for social movements. Tom Atlee's texts on that notion have been complemented by references to other strands, represented by David Bohm or Thich Nhat Hanh, that might provide a background rationale for co-intelligent approaches. Co-intelligence may be read as cooperative and as collective intelligence, reaching beyond the thoughts of an individual to encourage productive synergies between aspects occurring to different people, on the mental or on the emotional level, as well as being informed by the surrounding cosmos and natural world. Co-intelligence points to the interweaving nature of individual thought and the collective, noting that the individual thought (and emotion) arises out of the collective context of language, discourse, and history. Different voices within a group may be seen as analogous to the different voices within an individual, and the suggestion made not to identify oneself or others with one particular opinion, but instead to allow meaning to flow back and forth as freely as possible, assuming that this process has the highest chances of coming up with a satisfactory conclusion. The need for co-intelligent processes is also seen to arise from a situation where, as Tom Atlee⁶¹⁰ put it, people create discord and disaster on the collective level, even though each of them, from their own perspective, appears to be doing perfectly decent and reasonable things as an individual.

Co-intelligence as part of a master frame might have some very interesting implications for the understanding social movements have of themselves and of their role. One central notion might be that social movements assume themselves to be part of a larger mosaic, and wish their own position to be complemented by others. This would be remarkably different from master frames which lead a social movement to assume that its task is to push its own position. "Attempting to impose our views, however noble, on others"⁶¹¹ is not what co-intelligent social movements ought to do, in the view of Tom Atlee. Instead, Atlee suggests that one role for social movements might lie much more in the direction of process innovation. Rather than figuring out internally what the right policy is and then pushing to have it implemented, movements might put their energy into having co-intelligent processes established – and being open to whatever policy emerges out

610 Atlee (2003), p. 53.

611 Atlee (2003), p. 47.

of that process. This may be akin to trying to establish a democratic system, rather than installing the right minister or the right policy directly.

The thesis then moved on to the question whether analogies can be drawn from appreciative inquiry or from co-intelligent approaches to the framing and functioning of social movements, and whether any of these can be observed in existing movements. For that purpose, the first example that has been introduced in a bit more detail was the Transition Town movement. The Transition movement, or the Transition Handbook in particular, do indeed show a strong emphasis on vision, in language and imagery, but also in the creation of tangible, real-world examples of the envisaged future society. Fictional newspaper clippings from the future thus complement actual community gardens being set up. Several of the methods employed for discovery and visioning are also not unlike the ones suggested by appreciative inquiry. However, the Transition movement also does name problems, and does refer to the need for and ways of dealing with emotions such as anger or fear. It may thus be that some of the balance which a pure introduction of appreciative inquiry might be lacking has been included in the framing and functioning of an existing and operating social movement.

Possible implications of co-intelligence as a key term in social movement frames have been examined more closely looking at some of the tools and methods movements use, such as dialogue and talking stick circles. Open Space Technology has been used to point out possible implications not only for the set-up of conferences, but also for the framing of movement activity more generally. Moving decision-making away from a small group into the large collective is a key notion here; it probably implies removing a lot of hard work and a lot of control from that smaller group, which may be the conference organizers, or, in analogy, a social movement group trying to influence the larger collectivity of society.

A focus on process innovation may also lead the role of social movement actors to lean more towards that of a facilitator than that of an advocate of one particular policy. However, since movement members are not neutral outside consultants, but part of the collectivity to be changed, their role may be assumed to have aspects of both facilitation and advocacy, perhaps, in terms of the analogy, often more like that of Open Space participants than that of Open Space facilitators.

Mobilization is another notion that may be affected substantially by a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence. Rob Hopkins refers to attempts of "bringing more people over to 'our' agenda" or "winning over those who don't 'get it'" as a "somewhat smug and superior approach" that is not appropriate for the work Transition is doing.⁶¹² Co-intelligent approaches would suggest much more emphasis on listening to others and aiming to be complemented by them than other social movement master frames might do. Spreading the movement's views to as many people as possible, and getting people to join the movement's action, may not be a central aim in a co-intelligent master frame. The aim might tend to lie more in the direction of getting people to join a co-intelligent process, and to contribute – as the movement members themselves might also do – to a joint process of looking for helpful paths forward.

Depending on how broad or narrow a definition of social movements one uses, movements operating under a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence may not even be recognizable as such. If movements are defined as antagonistic by nature, then non-antagonistic movements will pass under the radar of that definition. Nevertheless, they might be there in the sense that people do engage in such actions and do produce large scale changes in society. This may be reminiscent of what Ulrich Beck says about the shift of the political from formal, easily recognizable institutions such as parties and ministries to the realm of silent, but large-scale action by thousands of "private" citizens. The Cultural Creatives as identified by Ray and Anderson may be understood to fall into this type of category, bringing forth some visible institutions such as eco-villages, but mostly being spread out and not very visible, perhaps even to each other. Tom Atlee moves in a similar vein when he speaks of social movement activism as spread out way beyond any "formal" realms and includes teachers, programmers, facilitators, artists and people from all walks of life in his understanding of activists, activists who still hold the values central to the movement, and who find the appropriate form of action in their respective environments.

Finding own forms of action and creating own spaces may be another central feature in relation to a potential master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence.

612 <http://transitionculture.org/2010/11/26/ingredients-for-transition-inclusion-and-diversity/> [14 June 2011]

Creating a niche, a perhaps small but tangible example of what is deemed desirable is a key concept for the Transition movement as well as for others, such as eco-villages. For the free culture movement, a do-it-yourself approach was central to its self-image and to its growth, from free software to Wikipedia. The hospice movement, too, has begun not least by building individual hospices that practice and demonstrate the approach to dying in dignity and character as envisaged by the movement pioneers.

Creating own spaces and niches may be an approach that is not without implications for the self-image of movements and their participants. Rather than seeing themselves as opposition, as protesters often might, those engaged in creating the alternative in practical terms may frame their own role and position much more easily as one of holding power – as experienced in the small realm of the niche. Of course, even that niche and certainly its expansion may be threatened by outside forces, and a self-empowering do-it-yourself movement may quickly turn to protest and resistance, as the free culture movement did with respect to ACTA. So the framings of power-holder in the own niche, and protester / opposition in a larger environment are not thought to be mutually exclusive; instead, one might expect movements to show a mixture, and to emphasize one aspect or the other in different situations or in different parts of the movement.

The creation of own niches again raises questions as to whether that niche is meant to take over the system in the long run, or whether, very much in line with a number of arguments about co-intelligence, it is meant to be complemented, altered, and integrated into a larger, more complex change process.

Another interesting aspect of that question is whether other people, groups outside and very unlike the social movement, are also expected to create their own niches, both in the present and in what is imagined to be a desirable future society. How much room for pluralism is there? How much of an assumption that there will be one best, universal model that fits everyone? Chantal Mouffe makes a strong argument against any proposition of one best, "rational" model, especially in the light of a proclaimed triumph of a Western model of democracy and market economy.

More than that, she draws attention to the dangers of overly emphasizing consensus and deliberative approaches, fearing that this might effectively close off routes for the legitimate expression of disagreement and conflict, leading the suppressed conflicts to burst out in much more violent forms through other routes.

Even if one does not, as Mouffe does, define the political as "the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies",⁶¹³ the pitfall of inadvertently repressing dissenting voices in an overly zealous focus on the positive, the consensual or the deliberative should be seen as a very real danger. The application of any frames based on appreciation and co-intelligence, in this light, will have to be very sensitive to the respective situation and context. Any attempts to implement pure, one hundred percent representations of an ideal, including ideals of a process, probably risk becoming dogmatic, inflexible, and, perhaps, repressive.

However, as a complementary approach a master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence may have much to offer, especially in a situation where social movements have not been aware of options in that direction at all. A master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence is not expected to be a panacea, the one solution to successfully replace all other routes. However, if it is able to open up some additional avenues, both mentally and practically, that have not been perceived as a possibility for social movements (or for understanding "the political") so far, that will already be a valuable contribution to make. The discussion presented in this thesis is to be seen as no more than a scant skimming of the surface in that respect. A lot more in-depth analysis, both of theoretical implications and of empirical evidence would be needed in order to gain a proper understanding of the nature and the scope of movements operating under this type of master frame. It remains for the coming years to show how much research will be undertaken in that direction, and what the resulting insights will bring to the fore.

613 Mouffe (2005), p. 9.

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11. Abstract

This thesis raises questions about possible alternative forms of master frames for social movements, and perhaps even for thinking about "the political" as such. In particular, it questions whether such frames inevitably have to be based on assumptions of antagonism. If not, what are the alternatives? What could be the key notions, the core elements, of alternative master frames? And can aspects or traces of such alternative master frames be observed in existing social movements?

The thesis introduces two key notions for discussion: appreciation as in appreciative inquiry, and co-intelligence as used by Tom Atlee. Appreciative inquiry suggests starting change processes not by defining a problem, but by crafting an unconditional positive question. It suggests a focus on "the positive", on that which is deemed desirable; a focus on vision, and on discovery of what already works in the present, building on positive experiences. Rooted in constructionism, appreciative inquiry suggests harnessing the power of collective imagination for the construction of a social reality deemed desirable by a collectivity.

Under the heading of co-intelligence, Tom Atlee suggests that collective, co-operative intelligence, an intelligence able to tune into the whole, will bring forth much better results than (a mere aggregation of) individual intelligences. His reasoning fits well with the call for dialogue as made by David Bohm, or with Buddhist notions of the interdependent nature of everything.

For social movements, co-intelligent framings might mean less focus on pushing one's own position and more listening to others. It may also mean a move from focus on a position to working towards the establishment of co-intelligent processes, perhaps moving the role of a movement from advocacy towards facilitation. If social movements do not aim to "win", nor to "win people over", but seek to be complemented by others, interesting implications may arise both for the self-definition of movements, and for core concepts in social movement studies such as "mobilization".

The thesis looks at existing movements (Cultural Creatives, the free culture and the hospice movement) and some of their methods to see whether any aspects of a potential master frame of appreciation and co-intelligence can be observed. The Transition Town movement is examined in more detail to see how much of a focus on vision and positive emotion (in the vein of appreciative inquiry) it exhibits. With a view to co-intelligent processes, Open Space conferences are explored as a method used by movements, and a tool that allows moving decisions from a small group of organizers into the larger collective of all conference participants. The concomitant reduction of workload and of control experienced by the organizers suggests interesting analogies for the role and self-image of social movements.

A number of the movements looked at in this thesis place a strong emphasis on creating that which is deemed desirable, an example of a new system in a niche, rather than putting energy into fighting the old system, which may be assumed to fade away in time anyway. The general emphasis of movements on creating examples of the new goes together well with a self-image of holding power, of being in (self-)government rather than opposition, of being the ones implementing rather than the ones calling for implementation. Nevertheless, oppositional action may arise swiftly when the old system takes steps to threaten the emergent niche.

From the perspective of co-intelligence, it will be interesting to ask whether a movement aims to have its niche “take over” the system in the end; or to remain part of a large, pluralistic mosaic; or be complemented and transformed by merging with other approaches.

In conclusion, it may be said that appreciation and co-intelligence seem to provide some interesting starting points for thinking about alternatives to antagonistic framings of social movements or “the political”. It may be essential, though, to avoid pitfalls connected to striving for panaceas or perfectly pure paradigms. For instance, it will be important to ensure that space for the legitimate expression of dissent and resentment is not smothered by an overly zealous focus on “the positive”. However, if approached with temperance and seen as complementary rather than exclusive, master frames of appreciation and co-intelligence may have valuable contributions to offer, pointing to possibilities that deserve a lot more attention than they have received so far.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Dissertation stellt die Frage nach möglichen alternativen Formen von Master Frames für soziale Bewegungen, vielleicht sogar für das Denken des „Politischen“ schlechthin. Sie fragt insbesondere, ob solche Frames notwendigerweise auf der Annahme von Antagonismus aufbauen müssen. Wenn nicht – was wären Alternativen? Wie könnten die zentralen Termini, die Kernelemente alternativer Master Frames aussehen? Und: Können Aspekte oder Spuren solcher alternativen Master Frames in existierenden sozialen Bewegungen beobachtet werden?

Die Dissertation führt zwei zentrale Begriffe als Grundlage einer Diskussion ein: Appreciation (Wertschätzung) in Sinne der Appreciative Inquiry (Wertschätzende Untersuchung), und Ko-Intelligenz im Sinne Tom Atlees. Wertschätzende Untersuchung (WU) schlägt vor, den Ausgangspunkt eines sozialen Veränderungsprozesses nicht in Form einer Problemdefinition zu suchen, sondern im Erstellen einer positiven Frage. WU schlägt einen Fokus auf das „Positive“ vor, darauf, was für erstrebenswert gehalten wird; einen Fokus auf Vision und das Entdecken all dessen, was bereits in der Gegenwart gut funktioniert, ein Aufbauen auf vorhandenen positiven Erfahrungen. Von einer konstruktivistischen Basis aus versucht WU, die Kraft des kollektiven Imaginierens zu nutzen für die Konstruktion einer sozialen Realität, die von den betroffenen Menschen für erstrebenswert gehalten wird.

Mit dem Begriff Ko-Intelligenz führt Tom Atlee seine These ein, dass kollektive, kooperative Intelligenz, Intelligenz, die in der Lage ist, sich in das Ganze, in die Gesamtheit einzufühlen, wesentlich bessere Ergebnisse liefert als einzelne Intelligenzen oder ihre bloße Summe. Atlees Argumentation passt dabei gut zu David Bohms Ruf nach Dialog, oder auch zu Buddhistischen Lehren von der interdependenten Natur allen Seins. Ko-intelligente Framings könnten für soziale Bewegungen bedeuten, dass sie weniger Gewicht auf das Durchbringen ihrer eigenen Position legen, und mehr darauf, anderen zuzuhören. Es könnte, statt eines Fokuses auf Positionen auch eine Verschiebung in Richtung Etablierung ko-intelligent Prozesse bringen. Die Rolle sozialer Bewegungen verschiebt sich damit vielleicht von der Befürwortung von Position im Sinne einer Advocacy mehr in Richtung einer Moderation und eines Bereitstellens von Rahmen, in denen Prozesse ko-intelligent ablaufen können.

Wenn soziale Bewegungen nicht versuchen zu „gewinnen“, oder „Leute zu gewinnen“, sondern von anderen ergänzt werden möchten, so könnte das interessante Implikationen haben, sowohl für die Bewegungen, als auch für die Bewegungsforschung und einige in ihr zentrale Begriffe, wie etwa den der „Mobilisierung“.

Die Dissertation fragt auch, wie weit Aspekte potentieller Master Frames of Appreciation and Co-Intelligence, gedankliche Rahmensetzungen von Wertschätzung und Ko-Intelligenz, bereits in existierenden sozialen Bewegungen und ihren Methoden beobachtet werden können. Kulturkreative, die Bewegung für freie Kultur und die Hospizbewegung werden vorgestellt. Transition Town wird näher untersucht, vor allem in Hinblick darauf, inwieweit sich ein Fokus auf Vision und positive Emotion im Sinne der Wertschätzenden Untersuchung erkennen lässt. Open Space Konferenzen, als ein Methode sozialer Bewegungen, werden speziell unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Ko-Intelligenz betrachtet, da sie vorzeigen, wie Entscheidungen von einem kleinen Organisationskomitee an das größere Kollektiv aller Konferenzteilnehmenden abgegeben werden können. Die damit einhergehende Reduktion von Arbeitsaufwand und von Kontrolle, die sich für das Organisationsteam ergibt, lässt einige interessante Analogien für die Rolle und das Selbstverständnis von sozialen Bewegungen erahnen.

Eine Reihe der hier vorgestellten Bewegungen legen ein Schwergewicht darauf, das Neue, das, was für erstrebenswert gehalten wird, zu erschaffen, als ein Beispiel eines neuen Systems, in einer Nische. Wesentlich weniger Energie fließt in das Bekämpfen des alten Systems, von dem angenommen werden mag, dass es von selbst zerfallen wird, wenn die Zeit reif ist. Diese generelle Ausrichtung auf das Erschaffen des Neuen passt gut zu einem Selbstbild als machtvoll, als (Selbst-)Regierung vielmehr denn Opposition; als diejenigen, die umsetzen, vielmehr als diejenigen, die nach Umsetzung rufen. Nichtsdestotrotz können oppositionelle Aktionsformen sehr schnell entstehen, wenn das alte System Maßnahmen setzt, um die entstehende Nische zu bedrohen. Aus ko-intelligenter Sicht ist auch die Frage interessant, ob Bewegungen anstreben, ihre Nische letztendlich zum neuen hegemonialen System zu machen, oder ob sie anstreben, ergänzt und transformiert zu werden; oder, langfristig Teil eines großen, pluralistischen Mosaiks zu sein.

Abschließend kann gesagt werden, dass Wertschätzung und Ko-Intelligenz interessante Anstöße zu bieten scheinen für ein Nachdenken über alternative Master Frames für soziale Bewegungen oder auch für „das Politische“ generell. Es mag dabei jedoch essentiell sein, die Fallen eines Strebens nach Allheilmitteln oder reinen Lehren zu vermeiden. So wird es etwa wichtig sein, sicherzustellen, dass Raum für den Ausdruck von Dissens oder Ablehnung nicht erdrückt wird von einem übereifrigen Streben nach dem „Positiven“. Aber wenn mit Umsicht vorgegangen wird, und Master Frames der Wertschätzung und der Ko-Intelligenz als Ergänzung, nicht als vollständiger Ersatz gesehen werden, dann könnten diese sehr wertvolle Beiträge zu bieten haben, und auf Optionen hinweisen, die weitaus mehr Beachtung verdienen als sie bisher erfahren haben.

Curriculum Vitae

Lecturer at the University of Vienna	Vienna
Research Project „Holistic Politics“	Vienna, Berlin
Lectures, Workshops and Networking in Civil Society	Vienna, Berlin
FIAN Austria - Food First Information and Action Network Chair	Vienna
Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Human Rights Head of Institute	Vienna
European University Center for Peace Studies Secretary General	Austria
Amnesty International Standing Committee on the Mandate	London / internat.
Communauté de la Poudrière	Brussels
Amnesty International European Union Association	Brussels
Amnesty International Board	Austria

Previous University Degrees

Development Studies Master Phil.	IDS, Univ. of Sussex, UK
Political Science in Combination with Law and Economics Magister Phil.	Univ. of Vienna, Austria