

# ORGANIZATIONAL INTERVENTION: ACTS OF WILL AND MOVEMENTS IN PRACTICE

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## Introduction

Where are we going with intervention? Who gains, and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? Is this development desirable? What, if anything, should we do about it? These are in a slightly circumscribed version the sort of questions Bent Flyvbjerg poses as part of a discussion on how to make social science matter (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 145). Increasingly social scientists are demanded applicability. Interventionist research is often seen as commendable, active and useful, whereas descriptive research is seen as passive, detached, old-school and ivory tower-like. On an administrative level this endeavour may for instance be seen through the initiative *From Research to Invoice* (In Danish: 'Fra Forskning til Faktura') (2003) taken by the Danish government. In scientific context the notion *Mode 2* (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2003) and *Engaged Scholarship* (Van de Ven, 2007) and a new interest in action research (Duus, Husted, Kildedal, Laursen, & Tofteng, 2012) exemplifies this movement.

But what does interventionist research imply? Who pays, and who benefits and what are the costs? We ask whether it is possible to be an interventionist researcher without aligning yourself with an undisputed quest for 'organisational effectiveness' (Argyris & Schön, 1974 [1978]: 6), and whether an interventionist can only be captured as "*a man struggling to make his model of man come true*" (Argyris & Schön, 1974 [1978]: 28)? In other words, we ask whether it is possible to question what 'doing good' for enterprises consists of, and we query interventionist practices as only reverberating around human action?

There is a long tradition for participative inquiry (Reason, 1998), which goes under names such as: Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987); Action Science (Argyris & Schön, 1996); Co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1988); and Participative Action Research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). Acting in close collaboration with practitioners to make a difference is, however, not without difficulties. Czarniawska (2001) for instance claims that it is difficult to help practitioners as a constructionist, because this malleable perspective stands in front of a powerful presentation logic in the field. Strong political forces uphold the ostensive and may downplay alternative observed performances by the researcher. This raises pressing questions like: What is intervention, and what does it mean to intervene as well as what sort of problems is treated in intervention? Also, why should we intervene? And, how and by what means and ends to intervene in contemporary enterprises and institutions? In this paper, the questions are treated by way of going through two bodies of literature: Action Science as an instance of a classic organizational development (OD) perspective, and actor network theory (ANT) as an instance of contemporary material-relational social science. We attempt to answer the above questions through the issues of the perceptions of individuals and organizations; of tensions, conflicts and learning as well as of the sources of inspiration within these two overall perspectives.

What we traditionally see as organizational intervention embraces an overarching label for the mainly planned activities based on the work of Kurt Lewin (1947), Warren Bennis (1976 [1961]) and the OD movement. This kind of intervention is typically set in motion to simultaneously improve efficiency, attitudes and satisfaction. We discuss Action Science by Chris Argyris et al. (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985) as an example of a classical OD perspective on organizational intervention and change. We take this to be an instance of intentional and planned intervention, i.e. intervention as an act of will carried out by sovereign subjects. We discuss this well known, successful and praised perspective in opposition to a more contemporary approach. Thus, we take up a currently widely used perspective in science and technology studies, namely that of actor network theory (ANT) (Latour, 2005). We take that as an instance of a performative or translational perspective of organizational intervention. In order to analyse the circulation and becoming of organizational intervention, we will first present some central notions from actor network theory. ANT has for 20 years constituted the most well-known theoretical and methodological construction within science and technology studies. In ANT, agency is not privileged to a performing subject and the plans of subjects, but is distributed in multiple networks consisting of humans and non-humans. Interventions, thus, take the shape of a number of enunciations and partial connections (Strathern, 2004) intending to enrol and mobilize alliances. This leads to a number of more or less wished for interferences and effects. This leaves, we will argue, the question of organizational intervention no less interesting, far more nuanced and somewhat more unresolved. In a performative perspective, the social researcher intervenes whether s/he thinks so or not.

In the paper, we pursue the purpose of contributing to a contemporary view on organizational intervention by revisiting a classical perspective on organisational development with a focus upon intentionality in light of a performative perspective on organisational development and change. In this endeavour, we bring forward some tensions and we discuss the intricate dilemmas in being a researcher engaging in intervention. We begin by presenting a performative perspective followed by an intentional perspective on organisational intervention. Towards the end of the paper, we discuss differences regarding aims, means, mechanisms and tensions among the two perspectives. We conclude by discussing the possibilities and shortcomings of a revitalized intervention perspective.

### **A Vocabulary for a Performative Perspective on Organizational Intervention**

Wanda Orlikowski has consistently argued that we the need to focus on the 'sociomaterial' aspects of organizational life in order to understand what an organization is (Orlikowski, 2007, 2010; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008). She proposes the notion of sociomateriality not only in order to pinpoint a critique of what she calls the human centeredness of current organization studies, but also general absence of technology in large parts of organization studies. How can we understand organizations without focusing on what they consist of? She poses. Accordingly we pose the question: How can we understand organizational intervention without focusing more closely on the mechanisms they consist of. An organizational intervention is not simply a social and cognitive endeavour; it involves and takes the shape of networks, technologies, strategies and instruments.

In the following, we present the ANT notions of translation, intermediaries, assemblage, and symmetry. We do this in order to clarify and discuss what we understand as the tensions among an intentional and a performative perspective on organizational intervention.

Because ANT is engaged in understanding the contingent and material character of the networks of the social it is sometimes called 'relational materialism' (Law, 1994). In line with symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) and Foucaultian post-structuralism (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003), Latour argues that actors should be seen as relational effects emerging from recursive attempts to order the sociomaterial world. Assuming no *a priori* distinctions between the social and the material, it explores empirically how patterns of social and technological order take form as a consequence of ordering efforts by the different entities in the network. Latour (1987) suggests that people interact not only with each other, but also with the non-human in a symmetric way, i.e. humans are not the centre of all actions. The main concern is to study the tactics through which hitherto porous and heterogeneous entities are put together and made durable (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2003: 209. The following draws on this text). The term 'translation' originates from the philosopher Michel Serres (1974) and involves creating convergences and homologies by relating things that were previously different. It conveys both the original semantic meaning of the Latin word 'translatum' in physics and mechanics, and the linguistic one of undertaking a change from one language to another in which betrayal is inextricably implicated (Law, 1997).

The 'model of translation' contrasts 'the diffusion model' of epidemiological heritage, which is widely used to interpret organizational interventions and their effects. In the diffusion model some object whether a technology, a command or an idea, is transmitted by virtue of the initial impetus imparted by an authoritative source. Often we find this model implemented through 'change agents' or 'ambassadors' for the new organisational model (Elkjaer, 2005). On the other hand in the translation model, a command is obeyed because it is passed from actor to actor by translation, where the agents have their own reasons for performing an action or not (Latour, 1986). In contradiction to epidemiological models, ANT emphasizes that the propagation in time and space of anything, statements, orders, artefacts, products or goods depends on what the concerned individual or collective actors do with it. Each of the actors may behave in a different way, they may change it, supplement it, lay it aside or adapt to it. In relation to each passage the translation is revitalized and this carries it further on. In this chain of translations each actor modifies the item in accordance with their own emerging interests in order to use it for their own purposes. The process of translation, thus, produces the network and the actors as well as the object, in this case a certain organizational intervention. Accordingly, it is to the point when Brown and Capdevila states that the translation model denotes more of a perpetuum mobile than a conveyor belt (1999).

Central to the translation model is the notion of intermediaries. Intermediaries circulate among various actors and include natural objects or artefacts, individuals and groups with their competencies, texts and inscriptions. Actors and intermediaries both embody and perform ordering arrangements. They are both the visible result of the assembling of heterogeneous elements by a network elsewhere in time and space and the active effort of that network to produce some distant effect. The intermediaries, thus, represent the network, both in the sense of making it visible and

in standing for it, and they translate it in time and space. The notion of intermediaries comprises a wide variety of elements of social interaction, and it relates to aspects rarely considered by other theories. ANT stresses this feature by asserting the fundamental heterogeneity of the networks that define the creation and circulation of for instance organizational intervention and change.

The term 'network' refers to the broader notion of assemblage. The following presentation of the notion of assemblage refers to a work done by Abildgaard, Nickelsen & Bendixen (2012). An assemblage is originally a concept appropriated from visual arts. It refers to artistic works with several dimensions and materials, such as collages. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) introduce the notion 'A Thousand Plateaus', and argue that assemblages constitute the substance of society. The notion of assemblages has several meanings; it refers to meetings between discursive formations and material practices, and to elements of actors being put together, but not forming a unified entity. This is in opposition to the use of *a priori* terms such as 'class', 'group' and 'society'. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) indicate that assemblages are ontologically heterogeneous. Assemblages exist in relation to other entities and have effects on other assemblages and they always consist of, supplement and compensate for other assemblages (DeLanda, 2006).

*'We will note that assemblages have elements (or multiplicities) of several kinds: human, social, and technical machines, [...] We can no longer even speak of distinct machines, only of types of interpenetrating multiplicities that at any given moment form a single machinic assemblage [...].'* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 36)

Deleuze and Guattari present several aspects and forms of assemblages (machinic, abstract, enunciation etc.), and the book title 'Reassembling the Social' (Latour, 2005) refers to how the concept of 'society' should be replaced by the concept of assemblage. Thus, the notion of assemblage is taken up as a critique of hierarchy and stratification. Instead of a layered and categorical ontology, an assemblage stresses the complex infinite movement and embraces macro, micro, discourse, material and technological, which all come together across conventional ontological 'levels'. This refers to the notion of generalized symmetry. ANT researchers suggest that the normally dichotomous poles 'nature' and 'culture' are not separate, but interwoven and need to be explained by way of the same glossary (Latour, 1993). The social, technological, biological etc. is in other words co-produced (Latour, 2005). The doctrine of 'generalized symmetry' may best be described as a radical methodological ambition to avoid assuming a distinction between the social and the material, the human and the non-human.

This sociomaterial vocabulary has far-reaching consequences for exploring and understanding organizational intervention. Bruun Jensen (2007) differentiates between intervention as a necessary and indivisible part of working in the field as a researcher, and on the other hand intervening 'as an act of will'. Whether intentional or not, an organizational researcher leaves some kind of traces and in that sense every study is an intervention. Therefore being ethical as a researcher embraces to make clear what the researcher brings with him or her and what s/he wants to achieve as part of the study, and furthermore the researcher needs to tread lightly and consider which participants and collectives are empowered and which are

marginalized by the study made, and, thus, of the planned intervention (Star, 1991). Summing up the sociomaterial perspective, several things may be pinpointed. Firstly, organizational intervention seems to be more like an unfaithful vessel consisting of heterogeneous *alliances* between politics, discourses and technologies than something to be traced back to one singular agency. Secondly, the researcher intervenes whether s/he thinks so or not. The apparatus of intervention is *performative* in the sense that all social research embraces intended and unintended intervention in the field studied. Intervention is not simply 'an act of will'.

### **The Intentional Model of Organizational Intervention**

The intellectual beginnings of carving out the field of organisational interventions can be traced to the works of Kurt Lewin and his concepts of action research. In his work during the Second World War, Lewin's action research was characterized by six features: 1) It was problem-driven and 2) it was client centred as well as it 3) challenged the status quo, and was simultaneously concerned with 4) producing empirically disconfirmable propositions that 5) could be systematically interrelated into a theory designed to be 6) usable in everyday life. As action research, however, became more mainstream, practice oriented scholars became more client centred in the sense that they failed to question how clients themselves defined their problems, and ignored the building and testing of propositions and theories embedded in their own practice (Argyris, 1983). Learning is in this perspective defined as detecting and correcting errors, and subsequently occurs whenever a match between intentions and outcomes is detected and corrected. Detecting and correcting errors and, thus, learning is done by individuals. The intentional model differentiates two types of learning. One type involves learning without changing the underlying governing policies and values. This is called single-loop learning. A second type, double-loop learning, requires a re-examination and change of the governing policies and values of an enterprise. Single-loop learning is usually related to the routine, immediate task whereas double-loop learning is related to the non-routine, and the long range outcome.

The idea behind the intentional model is that human beings design their diagnoses of reality as well as their actions to deal with this reality. It is unlikely that under every day time constraints individuals can be totally informed about problematic situations and have unlimited time to design and implement their actions towards these situations. To operate within these everyday constraints, people have a master program showing how to design and implement effective action. This master program is called a 'theory-of-action' of which there are two. The espoused theory-of-action made up by the beliefs, values and attitudes that an individual can state in the form of 'if-then' propositions that defines effective action, and the theories-in-use, which are the operating assumptions of effective actions that can only be detected through observations and analysis. Although people hold dear their espoused theories, they rarely behave consistently with them, which is why the theories-in-use are necessary to work with during organizational intervention. These are the set of 'if-then' propositions individuals use when they act. Individuals may or may not be aware of the discrepancies between their espoused theories and their theories-in-use. It can be shown that propositions in theories-in-use keep humans unaware of these discrepancies making them undiscussable. Human ignorance is in other words a programmed one. To elicit this ignorance of the theories-of-action is one of the main issues and tools that the intentional model yields during intervention.

The intentional model understands human defensiveness as the general problem, which has predominantly to do with the theory-in-use, but also has to do with inhuman organizational structures and the human nature as such. All humans will, according to the intentional model, act defensively when threatened or embarrassed. They will cover up their insecurities by way of defensive reasoning. Organizational intervention, thus, circles around getting rid of embarrassment and vulnerability, which are emotions that are perceived to lead to cover-up mechanisms. Cover-up mechanisms constitute barriers to double-loop learning (Argyris, 1992), and the work of Argyris and Schön (1978, 1996) demonstrates how to move from defensiveness to comprehensive organisational learning systems. In their work on 'overcoming organizational defences', it is shown how these are embedded in the organisational learning systems, and, thus, make it difficult for organizations to detect and correct errors. Defensive routines make it difficult to detect errors, because doing so would reveal emotions like embarrassment, vulnerability and feelings of threat. This 'if-then' proposition is the basic mechanism of what they call the defensive program, the Model 1 theories-of-action.

### **Left Hand Column Exercise**

In order to get rid of the barriers of learning following Model 1 theory-of-action, intervention is needed, and the left hand column exercise is a simple technique to do so. The idea being to analyse the theories-of-action of key organization members, often managers in the hope they will spread a new way of acting by helping them to make their defensive reasoning discussable (Argyris, 1992; Argyris & Schön, 1974 [1978]). They are asked to produce a rudimentary case study. This should be a real business problem that the individual wants to deal with or has already tried unsuccessfully to address. A piece of paper is divided in two, and the person in focus is asked to write down the concrete dialogue of a specific meeting over a few paragraphs much like a script for a movie or a play, describing what s/he would say and how his or her subordinates would likely respond. This is written in the right hand column. In the left-hand column, thoughts and feelings would be written by the person in focus of how he or she would likely have thought and felt during this meeting, but that s/he would not express out of fear they would derail the discussion or create a tensional atmosphere. The writing of the actual case usually takes less than an hour, and the case embraces the potential to be the focal point of an extended analysis of the theories-of-action, the espoused and the theories-in-use. In the following, we illustrate this technique through a small excerpt from a research project that one of the authors have been involved in (Nickelsen, 2009). We will use this small excerpt from the post-natal ward to illustrate and discuss some pivotal differences between the intentional and the performative perspective on organizational intervention

### **Tensions in the Post-natal Ward**

Over the past 10 years, the hospitals in Copenhagen have been accredited. During accreditation, all procedures are to be based on standards, clinical descriptions, and evidence-based practices. The Senior Managing Nurse of a post-natal ward at a big hospital in Denmark talks about the resistance, she experiences among nurses in relation to what she believes to be "*very urgent initiatives in the preparation for the accreditation*". Following this urge, she is planning a meeting with a small group of nurses who claim they are exposed to bullying by older and more experienced

nurses. They claim this is the case due to the fact that they are positive towards the on-going development of evidence based practices. The Senior Managing Nurse expects a difficult narrative of two oppositional groups of nurses in the ward that may play out between 'Evidence-based nurses' (EBN) and 'Traditionalists'. These two groups disagree about the most basic things; for instance how to initiate breast feeding and maintain hygienic procedures. Here is how the situation is explicated in a left hand exercise by the Senior Managing Nurse before the actual meeting with the EBN.

Left hand column: What am I thinking?	Right hand column: What is said?
<p>They see themselves as victims instead of arguing their point of view in the larger group.</p> <p>That is typical. Instead of facing the differences and bring it into the open, the Assistant Matron hides the conflict, which only makes things worse.</p>	<p><b>EBN Nurse1:</b> The postnatal ward ought to adapt to clinical descriptions based on evidence-based practices instead of obey existing old-fashioned traditions.</p> <p><b>EBN Nurse2:</b> We are being bullied for saying this aloud.</p> <p><b>EBN Nurse3:</b> That is true! Some of us are simply not able to attend the workplace at the same time.</p> <p><b>Assistant Matron:</b> I can confirm that. Silently I construct rotas, which ensure that certain nurses are never on duty at the same time.</p> <p><b>Senior Managing Nurse:</b> Perhaps we should plan a large personnel meeting among all the nurses where these differences are discussed openly. I think we need to invite a consultant to lead the meeting.</p>

Table 1

**Acts of Will or Unfaithful Entanglements?**

In an intentional intervention perspective you may learn a great deal about your theories-of-action and defensive reasoning just from writing out the case. The case becomes an instrument by which organizational members may scrutiny their own thinking as if one were looking at the thinking of someone else. It is not only useful at the level of a manager planning his/hers activities, but may also be helpful in understanding the organisational learning system and its behavioural consequences. The fact that the Assistant Matron constructs running rotas, which ensure that certain nurses are never on duty at the same time, is an indication that the nurses are not able to share their differences. In the perspective of the intentional intervention model this points to a system of limited learning and it is likely that the identified vulnerability among nurses will lead to further withdrawal. Following the intentional model of intervention, the theories-of-action have to be confronted and exchanged with more appropriate governing values by which differences may be seen as an asset.

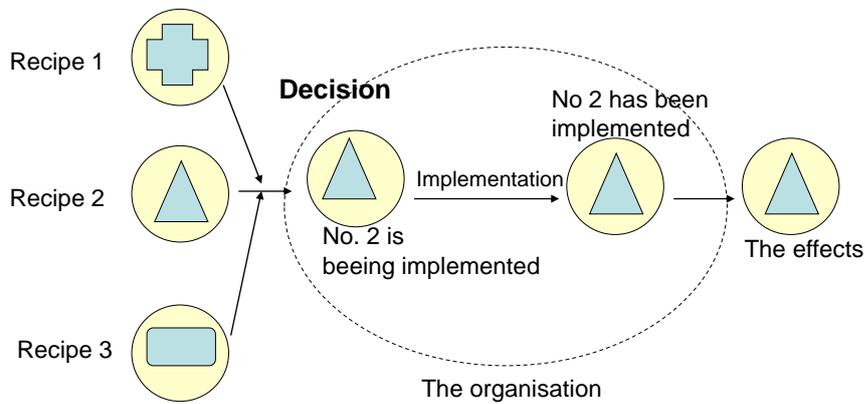
In a performative perspective of organizational intervention, instruments like for instance the left hand column may be seen as intermediaries, which have the capacity to affect other intermediaries. The focus of interest is performances, assemblages and effects; not cognition, attitudes and defensiveness. All intermediaries uphold performative potential as they play a role in defining what is emphasized, acted upon etc. These artefacts constitute inscriptions and as such they co-produce local understandings of efficiency, leadership and well-being. The left hand column, the rota and the accreditation standards are not just tools representing a truth lying out there; they are not simply representing the order of things more or less correctly. The rota for example, is not just an effect of conflict. It has effects, too, and its mere presence and application either strengthen or weaken vulnerability and defensive reasoning. Accordingly, the left hand column contributes crucially to the production of an intervention and, thus, to an understanding of reality in accordance with its own norms and method. The left hand column exercise co-produces values of reflective and confrontational dialogue, which in a given context may be productive or counterproductive.

Based on this argument, ANT researchers criticize the plan-rational model of diffusion (Suchman, 2000). An intervention or a change program is not just an 'it'. Perhaps it is launched as such, but soon it translates in unfaithful ways into the existing assemblages of the enterprise in question. The left hand column may for instance be seen as very fruitful by some and seductive by others. The performative model of organizational intervention stresses that all attempts to change social systems rather than certain patterns of communication or tools call for persistency, negotiation, persuasion and substantial amounts of footwork (Larsen, 2001). The Senior Managing Nurse cannot simply rely on eliminating defensive reasoning by way of the left hand column nor have faith in a certain set of attitudes. The 'Traditionalists' have practiced differently with success for years, and this kind of intervention will most likely not lead to acceptance of accreditation standards. Rather, she faces series of fragile negotiations, adaptations and struggles. Exploring the theories-of-action and the organisational learning system through the left hand column exercise may just be one of several techniques to take advantage of in this endeavour.

### **The Diffusion Model and the Translation Model**

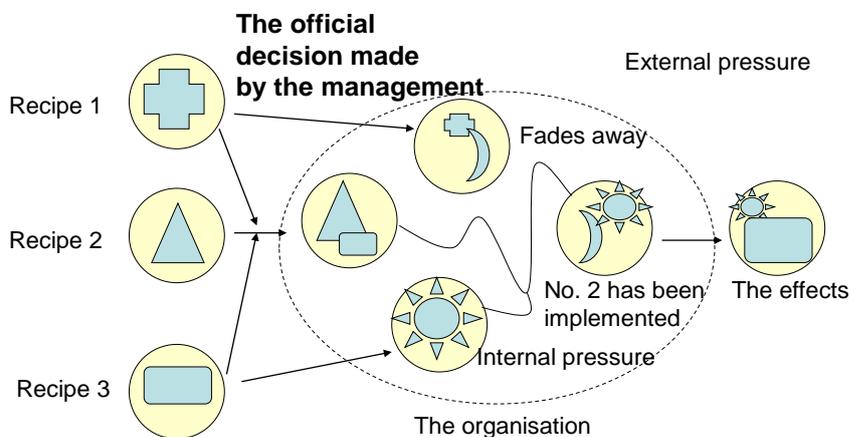
Figure 1 and 2 illustrates organizational intervention seen through the optics of the diffusion model and the translation model. According to the diffusion model a planned direction is transmitted by virtue of the initial impetus imparted by an authoritative source. A management may set strategy work in motion and may or may not be able to enrol allies in that endeavour. In the translation model, to pursue a certain goal is complicated due to the intricacies of a number of involved power and parties and their emerging interests.

Figure 1. Organizational intervention  
Intentional perspective by way of the diffusion model



Source: Larsen, 2001

Figure 2. Organizational intervention  
Performative perspective by way of the translation model



Source: Larsen, 2001

Building on this intricacy, Vikkelsø (2007) points to the kinds of problems researchers face when invited into struggles in organizations by one party in order to suppress or break another party's resistance. She raises the possibility that analyses, reports, and executive summaries are actually capable of causing effect of comparable scale to 'interventions as an act of will' since they may co-constitute organizational meaning-making. This may be the case despite the fact that neither the researcher nor any participants is able to fully anticipate the effects of the change initiatives set in motion. Nickelsen (2009) explores this point and argues that interventionist researchers are not entering neutral grounds, but rather highly hybrid and politicized

grounds. The researcher and interventionist are met by numerous agendas and by several parties with a potential interest in crafting alliances and enrolling the researcher to further their own emerging goals. The researcher also brings certain interests with him/her for instance to continue the study or to focus on certain aspects of interest. Nickelsen suggests that to conduct interventions in a translation perspective is in many ways analogous to seduction. The seduction revolves around defining what the goal of the intervention is. Thus, observing organizational intervention in a performative perspective, it is obvious that any attempt to improve an enterprise is conducted on partial, incomplete and normative grounds. It may best be seen as an attempt by one interested semiotic actor to influence other interested semiotic actors forming networks of interpretation systems.

### **Aims, Means and Mechanisms**

As these studies illustrate embracing concepts such as symmetry, heterogeneity, intermediaries and assemblage is not exactly facilitating a straightforward conclusion on how a certain organizational intervention is conducted, neither what it leads to. This is the case although the performative perspective may be very helpful in providing an eye for complexity, the queries, the intricacies and the partiality of interventions. Contemplating intervention as complex may in itself be a means of usefulness in practice. Nuances and subtleties can lead to important analytic capabilities and to pivotal insights on behalf of members of an organisation in question. In a performative perspective, an organizational intervention is not only a matter of stepping into a field of hybrid relations, do the footwork and take up the discursive role of advocacy for new organizational realities. It is also a matter of appreciating intervention as some kind of vessel potentially extending in time and space. The translational model carries with it a move from focusing on organizational intervention as an isolated and parsimonious genre with predefined aims and mechanisms like communicative styles to see intervention as interwoven with a number of other aspects such as politics, production, service, management, legislation, norms etc. By sticking to a too rigorous intentional model of for example 'unfreezing, refreezing and changing'; or as overcoming organizational defences (Argyris, 1990), it is most likely that history, traditions and the work itself are downplayed or ignored and not seen as embedded in the problem in question.

To observe and analyse organizational intervention in a performative and sociomaterial perspective is, thus, to focus on continuous enrolment and mobilization of emerging interests. Enrolment of employees, managers and non-humans constitute in a performative perspective the predominant mean and mechanism to obtain some kind of aim such as efficiency or employee satisfaction. On the part of the intervening researcher, this embraces to engage in fatiguing footwork and collective and continuous constructions and re-constructions of local realities. It should be obvious at this moment that the adoption of a performative perspective is not without difficulty, there are no quick fixes and as such it makes an important difference to the adoption of an OD perspective. The performative perspective is modest when it comes to aims and stresses the complexity inherent in the semiotic translations that take place while ideas, strategies and instruments trespass entities, groups and networks, and it acknowledges the massive amounts of persistency needed to keep other actors in place in certain wished for roles, keep things on track and make planned changes happen.

The decisive mechanism in a performative perspective is whether some kind of interventionist initiative actually has the capacity to enrol and stabilize allies. The success and failure of intervention relies on whether the alliances between intermediaries hold and facilitate some initiative (Callon, 1986). The consequence of this somewhat Machiavellian view of human nature is that intervention is performed as a struggle for positions, relations and effects and as part of that, a series of fragile and discursive manoeuvres. This underlines the importance of acknowledging that a number of emerging interests affect the plan, idea or initiative during intervention, while also highlighting the demanding and porous translations, momentum and allies that are necessary to stabilize certain initiative and organizational becoming. Below, in Table 2 we have summed up key notions from the intentional and the performative perspectives and ordered them in relation to each other.

	<b>Intentional perspective</b>	<b>Performative perspective</b>
<b>Human nature</b>	Rational and autonomous 'Enlightenment wo/man'	Socio-material Machiavellian wo/man
<b>Basic mechanism and problem</b>	Theories-of-action and different stances	Translation and movement
<b>Organization</b>	Learning system	Socio-material assemblage
<b>Task/aim for the intervening researcher</b>	Create awareness of defensive reasoning	Understand stabilization of order
<b>Technique/mean for intervention</b>	Self-reflection Left hand column	Mobilization Enrolment
<b>Problem to be defeated</b>	Defensive reasoning	Anti-program, unfaithfulness

Table 2

## Conclusion and Discussion

We have taken our point of departure in the currently spreading demand for applicability of social science and particularly the problem of organizational interventionist research and practice. Interventionist research has a strong and praised tradition and goes back at least to the 1920's and 1930's. We have looked at Action Science as an instance of a tradition focussing on the amelioration of human action for the betterment of enterprises. We have questioned the connection between the mollification of defensive reasoning and the usefulness hereof for intervention, and we have contrasted with more contemporary social science; actor network theory. We have introduced these two traditions highlighting the differences between them as being mainly a question of intentionality versus performativity. We argue that the intentional perspective is related to the idea of a diffusion model, where change is understood as transmitted by virtue of an initial impetus delivered by some authoritative source. The performative perspective, on the other hand, is related to the translation model. In relation to the translational model, a command is obeyed as it is passed from actor to actor. Here, the agents have their own reasons for performing the commanded action or not. Thus, the faith of a command or message is in the hands of the receiver and unfaithfulness, lack of unity and lack of control characterizes organizational intervention in this perspective. We have illustrated the analytical interests of the two bodies of knowledge by way of a short excerpt from a post-natal ward at a Danish hospital and coined the dilemma as one of interventionist

practice as 'acts of will or of unfaithful entanglements' as well as contrasted them in their view on human nature, aims/task, basic mechanisms, organisations, technique/means for intervention and problem to be defeated (Table 2). The means of intervention as an act of will is explicit work with key individuals in an organization studied to mollify resistance, create awareness of the detrimental effects of defensiveness and the benefits of more openly to share knowledge as well as to learn to discuss assumptions openly. In the perspective of unfaithful entanglements, intervention takes place whether you like it or not. In this perspective detailed descriptions of sociomaterial coming together is argued to be connected with understanding.

The puzzle we are still struggling with is how to balance these very different points of view as researchers, and what these differences may imply for wanting to be 'helpful' in practice seen from the perspective of those we study. Are mere descriptions useful, and is it still useful to intervene as an act of will at normative grounds, or is it perhaps even counter-productive in relation to well-educated and increasingly multiple populations? We have intended to articulate and make space for a view of organizational intervention between mere description as useful in itself versus a stated normative aim to make organisations more effective and efficient. What this latter means is perhaps the fulcrum, which needs to be explored in more detail. What it means to be useful often appears to be saliently undiscussed; associated with a management view; boiled down to numbers on the accounts ('red or black' bottom line numbers) or in a social constructionist view completely dependent on voice i.e. who you ask.

With this paper, we want to challenge and open a discussion of what it means to be 'useful' as a researcher in contemporary enterprises and public institutions, i.e. to add to existing rationality or to get away with it all together? When we observe organisational intervention initiated 'from above', we for example see an active communication department as instrumental in creating stories and folders (intermediaries) about intervention as part of mobilisation and enrolment. Here it is apparently not enough to work with the participant's defensive reasoning. As such, the performative perspective launches a completely new agenda of usefulness; namely that of 'interessement'. How can we make something interesting? The reasoning goes like this; what is interesting also has the capacity to enrol allies and in this sense, it is useful. Although we are fascinated by this idea, we are also worried about what mere enrolment legitimizes. The Machiavellian ontology legitimizes all sorts of efforts and possibilities to break down seemingly misplaced resistances. Kurt Lewin argued that resistances should not be abandoned, but listened to and he argued that they emerge, when an appreciated norm is challenged (1942 [1951, 1967]). Appreciating this golden nugget from the past of organization theory; the task for social researchers cannot be to help one party to break down another party's resistance. Rather the challenge for social researchers must be to anticipate, articulate and elaborate how resistances have emerged. Furthermore, this points to the possibility of doing social research and organizational intervention as an ethical and political endeavour, which cannot be freed from explicating the emerging leitmotif.

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